



## Paddy Pallin Rogaine

**19 June 2011**

Co-ordinator: Charles Bowden

**Grade 3-5**

When the organisers inadvertently let the cat out of the bag ahead of time that this year's Paddy Pallin rogaine would be located in Belanglo State Forest, I feared the unsavoury reputation of this locale would deter would-be rogainers in the club. Instead we had our best numbers for a long time and entered four ANB teams (11 participants in total) in this iconic event. Indeed the event itself was as popular as ever with around 240 teams and over 600 competitors.

Mind you, this didn't stop some of us from being the butt of jokes by friends and colleagues, from mournful farewells ("it's been nice knowing you") through unsavoury allusions to bones, cadavers and decomposition to exhortations of "don't walk, run... away!" etc (sigh).

We camped overnight in an area that had been closed off to the general public which meant we weren't subjected to midnight visits by bushbashing trailbikes and 4WDs. After initially erecting our tents on what we thought was a suitable site, we had to relocate after being told that we were actually in an out-of-bounds zone. Fortunately this was a minor setback as we soon found a good spot in the approved zone.

However there was one significant downside to the venue this year: no campfires were allowed, unless they were lit in above-ground braziers, as the area we were camping in was scheduled for regeneration. This ban quickly polarised opinion as it was a freezing cold night. Some

wanted to flout the rules because they had seen evidence of one or two illegal campfires and used this as justification for inciting civil disobedience. Fortunately common sense prevailed and incipient pyromania was stillborn. It was disappointing to see as we left at the end of the event that the illegal campfire sites were strewn with rubbish and no attempt had been made to tidy them up, a sad reflection on those participants and a relief not to have been associated with them.

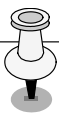


*The Campsite - photo Charles Bowden*



*The Lunchtime Legends - photo Rosetta Lee*

*Continued page 2*



## President's report-Spring 2011

*Spring is a great time for bushwalking. The wildflowers are out, it's slightly warmer without being too hot and the days are getting longer. I hope you make the most of the great variety of walks on the spring program.*

*The recent Annual General Meeting was held on 17 July 2011, where we elected a new committee. Many thanks to Charles Bowden who has stepped down as Webmaster after many years. Charles has done a great job in maintaining our website, Yahoo Groups site and email account. Welcome to David Cunningham who has taken over as Webmaster. If you do not yet have access to Yahoo Groups please contact David. It is an important way of keeping up to date with changes in the program and additional activities. It is particularly important to have access if you are an activity leader. The Club has recently purchased a Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) to provide additional safety for remote area walks. When activated, the beacon relays a message to emergency services via satellite. It is not suitable for use in areas where mobile phone coverage is available. Once you have activated the beacon, you should not move from your location. We will shortly be organising an information session on using the PLB appropriately. Happy walking this spring.*

**Suseela Durvasula**



*Group photo at the AGM*



*The Champagne Team - photo Charles Bowden*



*The Tortoises - photo Rosetta Lee*

After an early night and a good sleep, we all rose to a chilly but clear day with sunny skies, excellent weather for the event. Teams soon obtained their course maps and started their route planning. Before long we were off and... running (for some)... walking (for the rest of us). Most of the course area was along fairly open ground criss-crossed by forest trails and tracks. However some of the gullies were quite steep and those who attempted these descents/ascents in order to garner higher points soon found that out!

All ANB teams returned safe and sound, within the 6-hour deadline, and the intra-club rivalry saw the Lunchtime Legends lead the way with a very commendable 900 points, followed by Champagne with 700 points, the Hares with 540 points and the Tortoises with 420 points. The winning overall score this year was 1960 points. The Lunchtime Legends came 101<sup>st</sup> overall out of 244 teams and 50<sup>th</sup> out of 108 teams in the Mixed category; Champagne came 142<sup>nd</sup> overall, 71<sup>st</sup> in the Mixed and 55<sup>th</sup> (out of 83 teams) in Veterans category; the Hares came 195<sup>th</sup>, 98<sup>th</sup> and 73<sup>rd</sup> in the same categories while the Tortoises achieved 222<sup>nd</sup>, 113<sup>th</sup> and 79<sup>th</sup> placings.

All teams had a mix of seasoned campaigners and relative newcomers so it was an excellent all-round effort. Thank you to everyone for taking part and to David and Liam for contributing to the car pool.



# WALK

## Fagans Ridge, Marramarra Creek & Smugglers Ridge

Marramarra National Park

8 May 2011

Grade 5

Leader: Liam Heery

What a turnout for a Grade 5 walk. Twelve eager walkers willing to delve into the confines of the upper reaches of Marramarra Creek.

Our entry point was to be off the end of the fire trail at Fagans Ridge, which we reached after a short car shuffle and a pleasant morning stroll. Basking in sunshine we broke for morning tea and sat on the numerous rocky outcrops overlooking Marramarra National Park.

It was almost too good to leave, but work had to be done and the next section of the walk was to prove slightly harder than anticipated.

Leaving the fire trail we headed into the nearby bush and commenced our battle with thick undergrowth to summit the ridge that would lead us down to Marramarra Creek.

The undergrowth was at least two feet higher than my head and so thick you couldn't see through it. Following the GPS track was the only way we could maintain the right direction and luckily (although planned) the co-ordinates were spot on.

Reaching the top of the ridge I thought the going would get a bit easier along the tops, however I was mistaken. While not as bad the undergrowth had risen in leaps and bounds following the wet weather and is now in need of a substantial bush fire to clean it out.

Notwithstanding the hard going we reached the cliff lines above Marramarra Creek and found a way down to take rest and have a reasonably leisurely lunch. The creek was flowing well and the pools looked very inviting, but no one was game to take a dip.

After lunch we then headed into the creek itself and criss-crossed wherever needed to make our way through. Some of this section is very picturesque, reminiscent of Tasmania or New Zealand. At one point we reached a large pool with an equally large overhang where there is evidence of recent occupation, either by locals or more permanent dwellers.

Further down the creek the going continued to be difficult and started to take its toll. Another rest was called for before we reached the tidal zone. Not long after, we needed to cross the creek again, however found that, with the tide in, the "old" crossing point of a fallen tree was under water and we had to back track to an easier crossing.

While this got us on the right side of the creek, the undergrowth became the thickest we had encountered so far. Our planned exit via Smugglers Ridge was now looking very remote as we would be lucky to get out of this undergrowth before darkness fell!

As I tired, I enlisted the help of Bob and Peter West to lead and take some of the strain of breaking through on a track that disappeared more often than it appeared.

Finally we made it through to the Marramarra Creek camp site and had a welcome late afternoon tea break, before heading off on the alternative return route via the Marramarra fire trail. It wasn't long before it was dark and so the decision to take the fire trail rather than the more difficult bush track up Smugglers Ridge proved the right one.

Walking with torches was very nice and it wasn't too long before we reached the car and shuffled everyone back to Hornsby, where some of us finished the day relaxing with food and beverages at the Waitara Pub.

Thanks to Peter, Adrian, Jacqui, Nick, Bob, David, Tu, Len, Faye, Fernando and visitor now new member Alex for joining me on this challenging walk.

### VALE WILF HILDER Julius Wilfred (Wilf) Hilder

Born June 14, 1934

Died June 29, 2011

Wilf Hilder was for many years the Tracks and Access Officer for the Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs. He also served for a term as its President.

His presence at Confederation meetings was always to make them interesting and entertaining.

Wilf accumulated a wealth of information about bushwalks and its history, but unfortunately this knowledge is now lost to us.

He assisted other well known bushwalking identities in their research and surveys and contributed to their books.

As others have described him, "a mountain spirit".

Wilf will be sadly missed.

Len Sharp (Confederation delegate)

# FEATURE STORY

## Ancient Angkor Cambodia

by Jan Steven



In May Julie Armstrong and I toured Vietnam which in itself was a fascinating journey and another story. We also took a 3 day extension trip to Cambodia and were amazed by what we saw. Not only these amazing structures enclosed by great forests, but a people who have suffered unbelievable hardship, struggling to make new lives for themselves, yet happy and smiling. 30% of the children never go to school, those who do have about 2 years schooling. Age expectancy for women is 53, men 49.

The Khmer civilisation built the Angkor region, bordering the Tonle Sap Lake with its generous supply of fresh water, fish and fertile soil, and was settled in Neolithic times. It covers an area of 400 square kilometres and flourished between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. A succession of Hindu and Buddhist kings created these magnificent temples in stone. From the 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries the site was cut off due to floods. Angkor Wat was abandoned in the 15<sup>th</sup> century when floods damaged the irrigation system, soil cultivation broke down and foundations of the buildings were severely undermined. The region was first visited by Europeans in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and restoration of the site has been managed by UNESCO to ensure this heritage area is preserved. Many thousands of local villagers also live in this region where rice paddies intermingle with ancient forests. The park is strictly controlled, photo security passes must be worn at all times and are checked daily on entry. The Angkor Park gates are closed nightly at 8pm to all, including villagers, and is only a short drive from Siem Reap where we stayed.



*Banteay Srei*

**Day 1** Our excellent local guide showed our small group of four the five most important temples, the first being Banteay Srei (Citadel of the Women) consecrated 967, which was a 25km drive north from Angkor. Built from pink sandstone with laterite walls, it has been partially restored and contains exquisite intricate carvings different from those we saw elsewhere. Sometimes described as the jewel of Khmer art, it is almost miniature in proportion compared with the temples we visited later.

In the afternoon we visited Angkor Wat, the grandest of all the Khmer temples and thought to be dedicated to Vishnu. It was also a city in its own right. Approaching this site from any direction affords a spectacular view of this beautiful serene place with great reflections in the huge moat surrounding it. Two causeways at west (the main gate) and east give access across the 190m wide moat. Angkor Wat is like a pyramid of 3 levels, each one enclosed by a gallery. The summit is crowned with five towers. The first outer gallery is decorated by bas-reliefs depicting scenes of battles and victories. The second level contains the cruciform cloister. This area was named the Hall of the 1000 Buddhas where only a few statues still remain. Most were removed in the 1970s, and others were destroyed by the Khmer Rouge. The uppermost level of the temple has stairs on 3 sides which look impossible to climb. The fourth west stairway is a little less steep (50°) and has a single iron handrail in the centre where visitors go up one side and down the other. Against our guide's wishes Julie and I made the 11 metre climb which was well worth the effort and walked around the inner sanctum. Leaving Angkor Wat from the east gate we enjoyed a pleasant stroll down a shady tree lined roadway and were entertained by a group of cute monkeys showing off in the trees and scampering alongside us.

**Day 2** In the morning we toured down a canal off the Siem Reap River to visit a floating village. It was isolated from the outside world until 1½ years ago when a road was built above the flood level to allow access. The whole area floods for 5 months of the year. After a 1 hour drive we boarded an ancient narrow boat, driven by a converted car motor, for our tour. It was quite an experience along a waterway clogged at times with weed where people eke out a meagre existence from fishing, fish farming or harvesting wild corn for animal fodder which grows on the higher banks. A modern floating school built by UNICEF and run by volunteers, stood out amongst the flimsy bamboo rafts with a basic frame covered with rushes, plastic sheeting or bits of old corrugated iron. We even spotted 2 pigs in a floating covered pen. Over 1 million people live around Tonle Sap which is the largest freshwater lake in South East Asia.

Next we visited Ta Prohm, a temple-monastery erected late 12<sup>th</sup> Century and dedicated to the king's mother. Well known for its untouched state, where over 5 centuries the strangler figs and silk cotton trees have entwined the crumbling architecture with massive roots taking on a life of their own. This was our first sight of the 4 faced gates (gopuras) at the entrance to Ta Prohm. Some restoration work is taking place on the eastern side in preparation for a film to be made there next year called "The Great Khmer Empire". This site



*Ta Prohm Gopura*



also contains many beautiful statues built into parts of the walls.

**Angkor Thom** - This was one of the largest Khmer cities built late 12<sup>th</sup> Century and covers an area of 9 square kilometres, most of it now forest. The city is surrounded by a wall and a moat with impressive 4 faced tower gates on the four cardinal points.

The Bayon temple inside this enclosure features amazing massive face towers creating a stone mountain of ascending peaks. Today only 27 are standing out of 49. Said in ancient Chinese writings to be the golden temple, the galleries on three levels contain intricate bas-relief carvings of battles, court scenes, daily life and carvings depicting Shiva and Vishnu.

**Day 3** Returning to Angkor Thom on our final day, a fifth gate (The Victory Gate) leads

directly to the Royal Palace of which little remains today except the 12<sup>th</sup> Century Elephant Terrace with its Elephant steps. Great elephant scenes are depicted here along the walls below the terrace from which the king addressed his subjects looking out over the Royal Square. The 13<sup>th</sup> century Leper Terrace adjoins the Elephant Terrace featuring beautiful deep relief carvings. A second inner wall, only recently uncovered, is decorated with Nagas and deities from the underworld, royal consorts and sword swallowers.



*3 elephant heads flanking the stairways to the terrace pulling lotuses from the ground*



*Preah Khan - walls overtaken by a silk cotton tree*

Our final temple was Preah Khan (the Holy Sword) built 1191-1220 and dedicated to the king's father. Preah Khan was not only a temple but contained a Buddhist university and city within its walls. It also is surrounded by a moat and outer wall guarded by giant garuda sculptures. Ancient silk cotton trees have overtaken some of the masonry spreading their roots and threatening to topple the walls. The temple is large with a complex layout of buildings and passageways. Many beautiful carvings and friezes of dancing Apsaras (celestial dancers) are still in situ in galleries now minus their roofs with scattered fallen masonry one has to climb over.

We were farewelled by another band of cheeky monkeys at the north gate guarded by a spectacular double row of Azuras (anti gods) some of which have been restored.

Before our late departure we visited "Angkor Artisans" in Siem Reap where selected students train on a 2 year scholarship in many different crafts like stone carving (used in the temple restoration), silver work, wood carving, silk painting. Set up and trained in these arts by teachers from overseas organisations, these art centres are now flourishing throughout Cambodia and are completely self sufficient.

Angkor Wat is a place I will never forget and highly recommended to include in any visit to South east Asia.

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## SOCIAL

### Anne of Green Gables

3 June 2011

Another great opening show for the 2011 season from the Eastwood Uniting Church Musical Society .

In the great tradition a young orphan girl makes her way in the world, having been sent by mistake from an orphanage in Nova Scotia to a brother and sister farming couple. Marilla & Mathew Cuthbert wanted a boy to help with the hard work that always exists on their farm, Green Gables in Avonlea on Prince Edward Island, Canada.

Anne Shirley, a bright talkative 11 year old and regular chatterbox, finds much joy in life despite her situation in finding she was not wanted as a girl and was to be sent back to the orphanage. She eventually gains acceptance after several ups and downs.

Since publication of Anne of Green Gables in 1908, over 50 million copies have been sold around the world. Canadian author Lucy Maud Montgomery followed up with a series of books progressing Anne's Life into adulthood; i.e. Anne of Avonlea, of the Island, of Windy Poplars of House of Dreams, of Ingleside, of Rainbow Valley.

This show was for all ages with excellent casting, music and singing, especially Anne. Who could resist her. Certainly not us. We had to have coffee afterwards just up the road from our dinner spot so we could discuss the character of Anne in depth as none of us had read the story or had knowledge of 'Anne of Green Gables'. Thanks to my dedicated theatre-goers who always add to the enjoyment of the show by their presence.

**Next Show: 'JOSEPH and the AMAZING TECNICOLOUR DREAMCOAT'**  
by Andrew Lloyd-Webber & Tim Rice

Date: Friday 28 October 2011  
You must book early for this one.

*Peter Bonner*



## **Our New Committee for 2011/12**

<b>President</b>	<b>Suseela Durvasula</b>
<b>Secretary</b>	<b>Nick Collins</b>
<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>Helen Hindin</b>
<b>Programme Co-ordinator</b>	<b>Catharina Muller</b>
<b>Membership and training</b>	<b>Bob Seibright</b>
<b>Co-ordinator (not pictured)</b>	
<b>Newsletter Editor</b>	<b>Jan Steven</b>
<b>Webmaster</b>	<b>David Cunningham</b>

## **Membership Cards Reminder**

**This is proof of your current membership and should be carried with you on all club activities.**

**Present your ANB card at -**

**Paddy Pallin Sydney stores  
CampHikeClimb in Hornsby  
Alpsport West Ryde**

**which entitles you to receive free store membership and/or discount.**

## **DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE**

**4 November 2011**

**SEND YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO.....**

[jcsteven@unwired.com.au](mailto:jcsteven@unwired.com.au)

Pictures submitted - 300DPI resolution preferred  
to achieve good reproduction quality

## **MORE FREE MAPS**

### **SYDNEY CYCLING GUIDE + MAP**

An excellent useful map 610mm x 640mm overall. Types of cycle routes graded in red, blue and green, all streets are named. On the reverse side 18 panels give a wealth of useful cycling information. However, there is no street Index so a small hand magnifying glass would be useful.

### **CYCLING & WALKING IN RANDWICK CITY**

Again a very useful map, 840mm x 410mm. Cycle routes similarly marked, with extra colours. Brown denotes coastal cycle ways & orange walking tracks. All streets named. On the reverse side, 15 panels show useful tips for cyclists & walkers. But again no street Index.

Maps available at Community centres and Councils.

**Peter Bonner**

## **FOR THE DIARY**

The ANB Annual Christmas Picnic BBQ

will be held Saturday 17 December:

**Site 22 - Tunks Hill**

**Lane Cove River Park**

BBQ, shelter, bathroom facilities  
etc.

Parking in the park is available - \$7 vehicle entry -  
we may need to pool cars.

This site is also a short walk from Lane Cove  
Road where bus stops are available.



# WALK

## QUO VADIS? QUAD BIKES!

5 June 2011

Grade 3

Leader: Charles Bowden

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On a cool but sunny and initially cloudless day, a group of 16 walkers met up at the end of Fairlight Road in Mulgoa. This is the starting (and finishing) point for a walk in the only sliver of Blue Mountains National Park west of the Nepean River, stretching from Nortons Basin to Regentville Road. We would be walking along most of the northern half, paralleling the river.

Setting off we soon reached the Rock Lookout, no more than 5 minutes away from the carpark, a large boulder platform affording initial glimpses of the Nepean River and surrounds. Twenty minutes later and we had reached the next lookout spot. This was a cliff-top ledge adjacent to a deep gash in the cliff down which a gully descended steeply to the valley floor. From here we could look along the Nepean as it headed north to Penrith as well as unimpeded views across the Blue Mountains.

We then wended our way inland onto the main firetrail that runs most of the length of this section of the Park as it backs onto private properties that edge Mulgoa Road. After about an hour we reached Riley Mountain lookout, a wonderful cliff-top ledge that overlooks Euroka Clearing. Here we stopped for morning tea to take in the scenery and enjoy the peaceful and sunny conditions.



*On the main firetrail*

Our musings were rudely interrupted by the noisy arrival of two quadbikes carrying locals from a nearby property. Too lazy to leave the quads on the firetrail they had decided to roar up the walking track to the lookout.

We hastily left them to it and made our way back to the firetrail. Sauntering along it, we were soon overtaken by the quads, leaving us to eat their dust – good riddance, I thought. A little further on we turned off the firetrail and headed up the narrow walking track that leads back to the top of the escarpment and more views of the Nepean. At the top, the track turns north and levels out. We followed it through pleasant bush surrounds, slightly overgrown due to recent rains, only to be confronted again by those \*@#! quad bikes! After

jumping aside to avoid being run over, we continued on fuming (at least I was) at this brazen breach of National Park rules. It soon became evident that landowners and others had decided to treat this section of National Park as their own private recreation area. What I remembered as a narrow walking track had broadened considerably. Motor vehicles, horses and mountain bikes had cleared a broad swathe of track, big enough for a truck to drive all the way to the final lookout at Nepean Narrows.

After pausing to catch our breath and take in the views towards Lapstone and Penrith beyond, we started the tricky 70m climb down the slope to reach an old 4wd track. This short section offered the walkers a sample of genuine off-track walking. It might have seemed to take ages for some who found it rather challenging but everyone made it down safely and in good time as well.



*Taking in the view over lunch*

A welcome break for lunch on top a ledge overlooking the Nepean then followed. On our way down the slope we had spotted the Nepean Belle paddle steamer heading up the river and were hoping to see it on its return before we had to head off but it was not to be. Instead we waved at various boats that plied the narrow channel, marvelling at how few bothered to look up at their surroundings and spot us.

We then set off along the old 4wd track which borders a wide gully full of tree ferns and young blue gums. The track was quite overgrown and had fortunately not been subjected to the depredations of quadbikes and other traffic although some in the group may have wished otherwise as the undergrowth snatched and scratched at limbs and clothing.

After 40 minutes or so, we emerged onto a heavily rutted horse & bike trail marking the end of the main firetrail which we soon reached. Dreading the prospect of a last encounter with the quadbikes, we strolled along the undulating firetrail which overlooks the private properties and fields of Glenmore Park. But the only close encounter was with a solitary mountain bike rider and an hour or so later we had made our way back to the car park where we all said our goodbyes in the late afternoon sunshine and scattered to our various destinations.

Thank you to everyone who came along to share in a pleasant day, undeterred by the invasive quad bikes.



# THE ALL NATIONS PHOTO COMPETITION 2011

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## And the winners were...

Helen Hindin, Charles Bowden,  
Fiona Bachmann,

Winners each received prize certificates with  
cheques for \$20.

The winners were decided by member's votes.

No prize was awarded for the Camping category.

Our thanks to organiser Len Sharp and to all  
those who entered to contest.

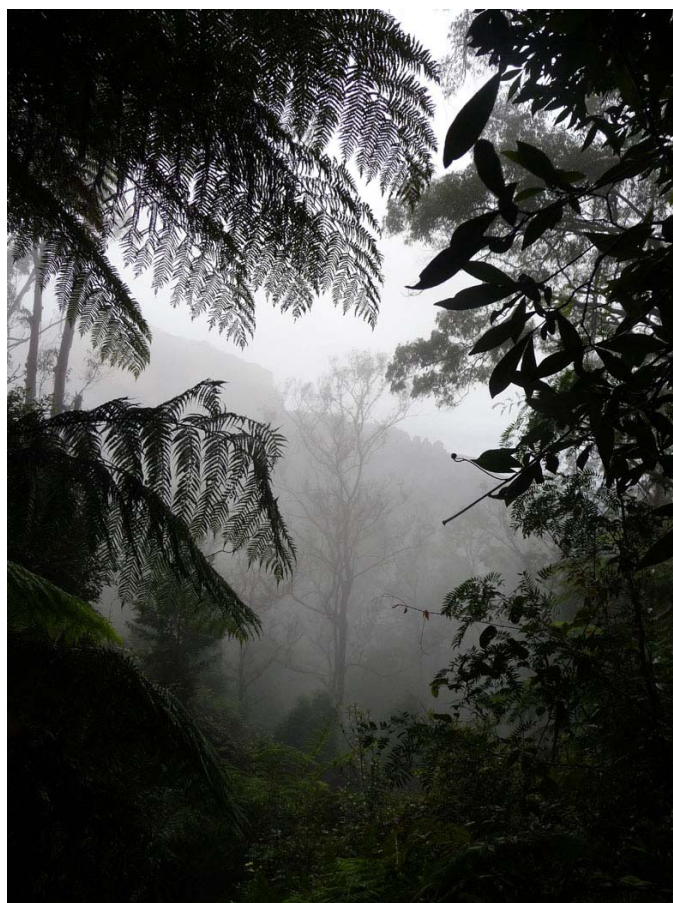
Held at the AGM July 17, 2011



**WATER SCENES - Charles Bowden**

The winning photos along with other entries are  
available for viewing in colour within the Club's  
Website and the Yahoo Groups page.

You will find them grouped in an album called -  
**"Photo Competition - AGM 2011"**  
within the 'Photos' folder.



**FLORA - Fiona Bachmann**

*Snap that special photo at a club activity to enter the 2012 photo competition...*

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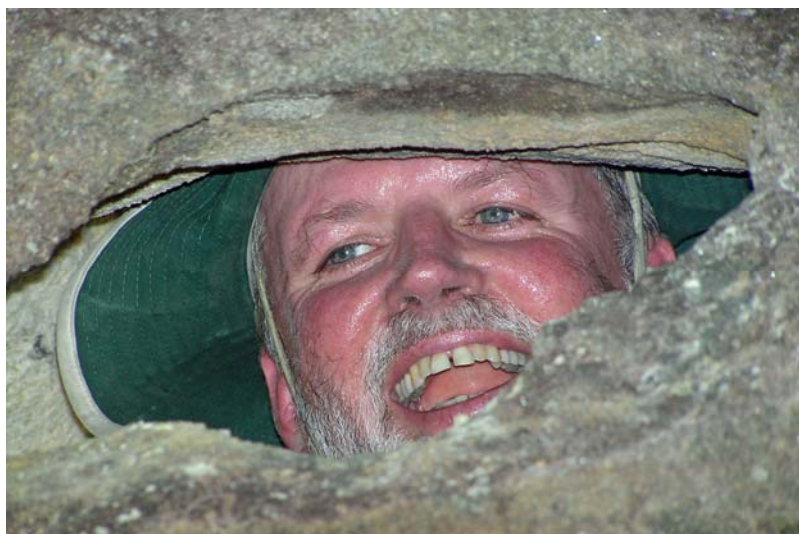
*Snap that special photo at a club activity to enter the 2012 photo competition...*

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**NATURE'S WONDERS -  
Flona Bachmann**

**FAUNA - Charles Bowden**



**PEOPLE - Helen Hindin**

# FEATURE STORY

## Sierra Hiking

by Andrew McRae

As part of my job in recent years, I've regularly travelled to California. When people think of California, images are usually conjured up of hippies, movie stars, clogged freeways, LA gangs, and stoned surfers. Whilst there likely is all this and more, California is also a state of great natural beauty and highly accessible wilderness areas. Most of these reside in the significant mountain ranges that extend from the central north of the state down through the eastern side along the Nevada border. The ranges, collectively known as The Sierra Nevada, take in some of the most visited and scenic parks not only in the continental USA, but the entire world.

My trips to California invariably include some visit to the Sierras - in winter time, when I snowboard in the ski resorts around Lake Tahoe, or in warmer times, when I have undertaken hikes throughout many parts of the Sierras, ranging from Trinity Alps in the north, to Mineral Springs in the south near Mt Whitney.

The Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) is a long distance trail that runs along the Sierras and the Cascade Range (and further north). The PCT also encompasses the famous John Muir Trail, named after the founder of one of the first environmentally aware outdoor clubs (The Sierra Club).

The John Muir Trail starts at Yosemite Valley, and extends southward for 340km to Mt Whitney. Many smaller trails traverse and interlink with the PCT and the John Muir Trail.

A number of popular National Parks are contained within the Sierras, as well as National Monuments, and a significant number of Wilderness Areas. One of the very attractive aspects to the Sierras is their accessibility. From the Bay Area (part of the greater San Francisco area), it only takes 3 hours driving to reach the edge of the Sierras, so it is very easy to escape for an overnight hike on a weekend.

It is clear that glacial action is the primary force that shaped these mountains; they are many deep carved valleys, U-shaped hanging valleys, glacial colls etc. The rock is mostly white hard granite, easy to walk on, but definitely harsher on the footwear than we are used to here in Australia with our softer sandstone. The Sierras experience a significant winter snowpack, so in the spring and summer there are many rivers that are swollen with snow-melt, and early in the hiking season great waterfalls can be seen. The Sierras are also home to many lakes, small and large, which are refilled each year by the melting snow. Climatically, California has clearly defined seasons, with winter bringing snow and rain, and summer being almost completely dry (though summer thunderstorms can occur in the peaks of the mountains). The almost complete absence of rain in the warm summer means hiking is a very popular pastime. In fact, I have rarely if ever carried any wet-weather gear on my hikes there. The abundance of snow-melt also means that water is never far away, though filtering is necessary because of the wildlife.

The altitude of the Sierras is also something one has to be aware of, with some high passes topping 4000M (13,000 feet); once above the treeline, the white granite can reflect the warm sun, so walkers have be mindful of not having a combination of heat and altitude (and jetlag!) causing dehydration or other issues.

Wildlife is also common in these parts, though not as much as one would think. Most people think immediately of bears (much as visitors to Australia focus on sharks and venomous crawlies), but California is fortunate to only have Black and Brown Bears - there are no Grizzly Bears. Californian bears are best thought of as 200kg possums, which really just want to raid your gear for food. Hikers are required to store any food or consumables such as toothpaste in

Bear Canisters, strong plastic containers that are bear proof. At night these containers are stored away from the campsite, so bears are not attracted to tents. Back-country campsites may also have bear lockers, large metal containers where campers can store their food. I have seen far fewer bears than I expected to.

Other wildlife is commonly seen, such as chipmunks, squirrels, deer (white-tail), and more rarely marmot and coyotes. I have only seen rattlesnakes twice, and they at least are polite enough (unlike the Australian snakes) to clearly signal their presence audibly, so there are rarely any issues with them. I would dearly love to see a Mountain Lion in the wild, but these creatures are evidently quite shy, and normally keep well away from hikers.

Several areas I have hiked in are especially memorable. Trinity Alps in the North part of the state is a relatively unvisited area, but abounds in alpine lakes; most of these lakes are shallow and warm in summer, so are great for swimming. In other parts of the mountains, the lakes are often colder, which makes for a refreshing but sometimes brisk dip.



*Cathedral Peak*

Desolation Wilderness is an area west of Lake Tahoe that I have hiked several times, and has great lakes and mountains with easy access. The north section of the Sierras has lower altitude, making the passes easier to cross. The Pacific Crest Trail traverses this area.

The Eastern (Nevada) side of the Sierras is known for its aspens, which in late Autumn turn a wonderful gold colour; in a breeze, the leaves will shake slightly, giving the impression of the leaves shimmering in the sun - hence they are also known as Trembling Aspens.

Further south, the John Muir Trail passes through the Kings Canyon and Sequoia National parks, home to the Giant Redwoods. These parks receive a large number of visitors, but hikers can easily walk up the valleys into the backcountry areas where the Trail crosses several High Passes. The Rae Lakes loop is one such walk, a 4 day circuit (that I did in 3 days) that takes in rugged back country valleys with extensive lakes above the tree line, with some High Passes thrown in.

Around Yosemite Valley there are many trails, some of which take you up into the high country around Cathedral Peak and Tuolumne Meadows, great for getting away from the day crowds in the most popular National Park in the world.

So the Sierras give an almost perfect combination for hikers - seasonally predictable good weather, lots of water, fabulous views, great mountains, easy access, and a large range of tracks to avoid overcrowding. I can highly recommend this region for any walker!

My web site at <http://mcray.homeunix.net/photos/hiking/usa.html> is a photographic record of some of these hikes.



# LONG WEEKEND AWAY

## Trip to Lightning Ridge

Catharina Muller

Lightning struck us twice: when the trip to Lightning Ridge (750kms NW of Sydney) had to be postponed due to flu and when we found out that the B&B manager had forgotten to lock in our accommodation booking despite advance notice! To make matters worse, with just 2 days to go for the trip, all accommodation available at Lightning Ridge was booked out! Camping in tents was out of the question. This was meant to be a much needed holiday away from Sydney to relax and de-stress. Choice of accommodation mattered! Please, why this?

Then, 70 kms south of Lightning Ridge in a town called Walgett we found our accommodation. The moment we drove into the entrance of The Barwon Inn, the beauty of its 138 acre land along the banks of the Barwon River was breathtaking. Our hearts fluttered and our faces lit up at this moment of truth - we were so pleased, satisfied and very happy with what we saw. Suddenly, the 70 km distance between Walgett and Lightning Ridge did not matter anymore - regardless of accommodation availability!



*The Barwon Inn cabins*

Chris, the Managing Director and new owner of The Barwon Inn, welcomed us on arrival and showed us our log-cabin where we were to stay. The cabin was cosy, clean, large, with all the needed facilities (bathroom with shower, amenities such as a mid-sized fridge, electric kettle, coffee, TV, phone, etc). We barbecued our meals outdoors on the patio of our cabin surrounded by fresh air, scenic beauty and quiet evenings. Hot breakfast each day was enjoyed at the Dining Hall. Just perfect! A morning walk on this property was beautiful. You could hear the birds singing, the sound of the river flowing, the morning mist and feel the dew drops on your face. The cabins were so well positioned providing privacy, quietness and beautiful scenery. The property has a pool and camping ground tucked away. To top that, the hot water from the shower was from the same artesian bore water found in this region. One could feel the effect of the water, it kept one warm, left skin feeling smooth, and helped the body and mind to de-stress! Oh, we must come back again - we all agreed.

It took us approximately 1 hour (one-way) to drive between Walgett and Lightning Ridge. We left The Barwon Inn at 9 am each morning - ready with our lunch packs in our car trunk.

The first day, we visited the black opal mines at 'The Chambers of the Black Hand' where we walked underground, saw some opal



*Welcome to Lightning Ridge*

stones, and learned about opal mining. This place was special from others as it had carvings on the walls. The next stop was at 'The Black Queen', the only award-winning outback theatre with a twist! This one-person three-act performance by Gale Collins is about the story of Joan Andrews who built the house using bottles. This is also the story of the 'gas light' which is based on the spectacular collection and display of antique lamps. The afternoon flew by in a flash. It turned out to be an entertaining 3-hour period. We walked away in awe wondering 'How creative and intelligent Gale is!'.

The second day turned out to be simple - a dip in the artesian pool (very therapeutic), walking in-and-out of opal stores and art galleries at Lightning Ridge.



We also visited the local market held at the Visitors Centre and took a stroll at 'Bevan's Cacti Nursery' which cost \$10 pp. While it was good to see interesting cacti, this visit was a disappointment for its price. Next day we returned to Sydney in rainy weather via Castlereagh Highway and Richmond town.

Despite the richness and success from the black opal mining, Lightning Ridge town consisted of mostly simple, economical homes, caravans, and some old stores - nothing extravagant or luxurious. The accommodation facilities there seemed to be packed closely to one another.

While touring was fun, at the end of the day, staying at The Barwon Inn and enjoying the hot bore-water was the best outcome. We got what we wanted - a therapeutic break from the chaos of Sydney life! I hope you will be able to visit these places too!



# WALK

## Brooklyn circuit via Peak Hill, Vize Spur and Porto Ridge Ku-Ring- Gai Chase NP

31 July 2011

Grade 4

Leader Liam Heery

After weeks of rain and cold weather the last day of July turned into a spectacular walking day. Temperature climbed to an impressive 24 degrees and, notwithstanding a few clouds later in the day, the views to the horizon were to die for.

Starting from Brooklyn pub we headed to the Great North Walk, but only stayed on it for about 100 metres when we turned off onto the bush track behind Parsley Bay passing the old squatter huts. It didn't take long before we reached Sandy Bay and took the opportunity of having a small break as we geared up for the next part of the walk which was to summit Peak Hill from the northern end rather than following the normal route up the creek line.

The climb up was exciting as we scaled numerous minor cliff lines, but the effort was worth it as we reached the top quickly and had plenty of time to relax and enjoy the 360 degree views over a leisurely morning tea.

The decision was then made to take the more difficult of 3 options I had in mind for the rest of the day. This would involve dropping into Porto gully and then climbing up Vize Spur to join the Great North Walk.

From Peak Hill we headed down the normal route and crossed the saddle over to Porto Ridge. From here we headed south through the bush and followed the spur leading into Porto gully. Close to the creek we were confronted with steep cliff lines and so made our way East to where we found a slippery slot through the cliffs to near the waters edge.



*Nick planking - photos Charles Bowden*

Again we were confronted with large boulders and as the tide was in, could not drop down to sea level. Making our way just above the creek we got to a point where we could drop down onto the mangrove mud flats which luckily were not as soft as we feared.

Knowing we had to cross the creek and not being able to tell how soft or deep it was we welcomed a fallen tree we came across

that straddled the creek nicely. Not wanting to pass up on this opportunity, I took the initiative and saddled the tree trunk being careful not to slip off as the trunk was slippery and slimy!!



*Jacqui crossing Porto Gully*

After I successfully made it across the others gamely followed, except for Bob who took his shoes off and waded over, getting an inexpensive natural mud treatment on his feet.

Waiting in anticipation for someone to lose balance and fall in or for the trunk to break when both Nick and Charles mounted it together, I wasn't game to tell them that the creek filtered out around 20 metres further up around the bend and they could have easily walked across!

Our next goal was to get to a high point on Vize Spur where we scrambled up some steep sections and found a wonderful spot in the sun for lunch. It was only later that we realised the smell that followed us was from the wet slime and mud we all had on our pants (except for Bob) from the tree trunk crossing.

Well rested we headed off further up Vize Spur and it wasn't long until we intersected with the Great North Walk. After another short break we continued on the only section of fire trail (about 2 km) for the day.

Just above Brooklyn Dam we again headed into the bush (except for one of our party who preferred to take the fire trail back to Brooklyn to read her Sunday paper) and headed over towards Porto Ridge. The going here while still without any track was fairly open and we made very good progress.

So much so that when we reached the Porto Ridge track we were able to take another leisurely afternoon tea break on the cliff lines above Sandy Creek with views over to Peak Hill, the Hawkesbury and out the heads to the open ocean.

Again well rested we headed off to continue the loop staying in the bush above the fire trail. The track we followed led to an encounter with a single guy camped out on his own. He looked as if he had been there for some time and was quite surprised to see us, thinking that we must be lost. I don't think he was too happy that we came across him and it wouldn't surprise me if he de-camped soon and moved elsewhere.

Not long after we came out of the bush rejoining the Great North Walk only a couple of hundred meters from where we left it that morning.

A great walk, 10 kilometres off track and 2 on, starting at 9am and finishing at 5pm.

Thanks again to Jacqui, Bob, Charles and Nick for joining me in one of the best walks I've done in this area.



# WALK

## Trails & Trials, Mines & Memorials

24 July 2011

Grade 3

Leader: Charles Bowden

It was not really surprising, given the 60-year record-breaking deluge during the week prior, that just five walkers turned up at Café Fix in Sutherland for the trip to Mt Kembla; a pity in some respects as the day started out bright and sunny. Indeed no rain fell during the walk although clouds did start to roll in during the afternoon.

When we arrived at the carpark at Mt Kembla lookout I decided that we should make use of the fine conditions and start by heading up to the summit. This proved to be a good choice as we were able to reach the top in time for morning tea and to enjoy excellent visibility while taking in the wonderful views across Wollongong, Port Kembla and Lake Illawarra.



*Morning tea stop*

After returning to the carpark we then located the old bridle trail, now heavily overgrown and deteriorated, that descends to the Moss Vale railway line. Periodically trains could be heard chugging below us as we struggled with obstacles along the trail, at one point having to crawl on hands and knees through a tunnel in the undergrowth.

After crossing the railway tracks and peering unenthusiastically into two old automotive wrecks on the other side, we followed a couple of electricity service trails that I vaguely recalled from my last visit, believing they would link up with an exit point I had in mind. They didn't, although we did find a pleasant lunch spot with Mt Kembla looming over us, and we ended up doing an impromptu circuit finishing with a bushbash back to the railway embankment.

In the end, we walked along the access road beside the railway tracks, where we encountered several noisy trailbikes, racing alongside the tracks with reckless abandon which had us dodging aside to avoid this unexpected hazard. Whether it was the trailbikes or my own faulty memory (again) I missed the exit I had in mind and we ended up at the boundary between this part of the Illawarra State Recreation Area and the outer Wollongong suburb of Farmborough Heights.

I had just added 5 km to our walk and bumped it up a grade!

Fortunately my stolid companions seemed unphased by this and, as we had plenty of time left, we started walking up Farmborough Road, initially bordered by fields of cattle before giving way to regenerated bushland. After about a kilometre, we discovered a walking track which followed a line of telegraph poles away from the road and chose to continue along this instead. Aside from the sad discovery of a large dead hawk which appeared to have struck the power lines overhead, this was a pleasant alternative as it also managed to avoid the small hamlet at the end of Farmborough Road. Instead we emerged next to a very dilapidated as well as isolated concrete-paved tennis court and a large battered wooden shed, both of which had heritage protection signs affixed, much to our bemusement. I imagine they must once have been part of a community recreation centre long since abandoned.



*Steve in the foliage tunnel*

Nearby we found the start of the broad and well-maintained firetrail that forms part of the Ring Track around the base of Mt Kembla. Like most of the areas we had walked through, the vegetation alongside the firetrail was a mix of introduced and native species but the shrubbery and canopy were quite dense.

We passed the small reservoir, brimming from the recent rains, that had previously been used for water storage during the old mining days, as well as two narrow metal water pipelines that appear to have fallen into disuse. A little further on we found the sidetrack leading down to the old mine workings dating from the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. This had been cleared very recently so that we had a great view of the two adits and their sandstone walls. Someone had breached the brick wall that blocked off one of the adit entrances so we took the opportunity to venture in a little way into the pitch darkness and explore with our torches before adjourning for afternoon tea in the adjacent cleared yard.

We then continued along the firetrail another kilometre or so until we reached Cordeaux Road, following this to the small cemetery at Windy Gully commemorating the victims of the Mt Kembla Colliery disaster of 31 July 1902 when a gas explosion killed 96 men. The cemetery looked remarkably neat and tidy, with fresh plaques erected on some of the memorial stones. Sadly, one of these was to commemorate the death three years earlier of Cate Stevenson who founded the Mt



## Welcome to 13 New Members

Julie Perkins  
Jenna Hoa  
Tiffany Li  
John Renzenbrink  
June Zhang  
Sharon Russell  
Freda Moxom  
Sean Parsonage  
Amelia Parsonage  
Gillian Parsonage  
Edward Parsonage  
John Treuren  
Rita Alves



See you in the bush

Kembla Mining Heritage organisation which restored and maintains the memorial cemetery as well as holding an annual Mining Heritage Festival.

After lingering a little to absorb the peacefulness of the setting, we continued up Cordeaux Road and back to the carpark, arriving a little before 5:00pm.



*Memorial plaque & cemetery*

We held a well-earned recovery at the Mt Kembla pub with its welcoming log fire. Here we encountered an unexpected bonus - a Xmas in July menu - before heading back to Sutherland.

Thank you to Bob, Catharina, Steve (also for the GPS checks) and Alex (also for the driving) for not holding the leader to account for the extra distance and the occasional missed turn!



## Change of Details

Don't forget to notify Treasurer Helen Hindin of any of the following -

- change in address,
- email address,
- phone numbers.

Phone: 02 9331 1921 or email us at - [anbcomm@hotmail.com](mailto:anbcomm@hotmail.com)



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*Inside the left adit*

◀ *Left and right adits*

A big 'Thank you' to all who contributed to this newsletter - Editor