



all nations
BUSHWALKERS INC



Winter Newsletter
June 2007

PO Box 1113 Meadowbank, NSW 2114
www.bushwalking.org.au/~allnations

Keeping Track

NEWSLETTER OF ALL NATIONS BUSHWALKERS INC • FORMERLY ANC BUSHWALKERS INC & ALL NATIONS CLUB WALKABOUT GROUP • FOUNDED 1962 • INCORPORATED 1992

FEATURE

The Routeburn and Kepler Tracks South Island NZ

3 - 11 March 2007

Leader: Liam Heery

After a very successful trip to NZ the year before doing a private walk on the Milford Track I promised myself I'd come back to do more walks in NZ.

That led me to organise an ambitious 6-day 2-walk trip this time around, joining the Routeburn and Kepler tracks together.

With six other willing participants we were all in training leading up to the trip. Unfortunately 2 other people had to pull out the day before we left due to personal problems.

So, five of us met up in Queenstown where we had dinner with Trish and Suseela who were doing the luxury pampered guided Routeburn Track.

The following morning we set off for the Routeburn and stayed overnight at Routeburn Falls, before crossing the saddle to overnight at Lake McKenzie. On the way we crossed paths with the guided walkers and compared notes with Suseela and Trish. We were glad we were doing it our way. The scenery was to die for with views down the fiords to the ocean. Next day we arrived in some drizzle at the divide and then headed to Lake Te Anau for a welcome overnight break.



The following day we were off to the Kepler and a quick boat trip took us to the beginning of the climb to our hut below Mount Luxmore. After much frivolity over dinner when Jacqui dropped and broke all of her 6 fresh eggs, the next morning we were climbing to the summit of Mount Luxmore and viewing the world below through breaking clouds. Today was the best day of all with the finest scenery ever. Down to Iris Burn Hut, our last overnight stop.



The last day on the Kepler is all downhill and a fair distance, so it makes for a long day, but very rewarding when you get to the finish in time to catch the 3pm bus which gets in to Te Anau with time for a shower before the journey back to Queenstown.

The next couple of days were spent enjoying the various activities that Queenstown has to offer, including jet boating, white-water rafting, kayaking, paragliding, rock climbing and for the more adventurous a glacier walk.

Thanks to Jacqui, Charles, Jenny and Andrew for a magnificent week.



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

What a fabulous 3 months we have just had, with a huge range of activities..... walks, snorkelling, social events, a 4 W Drive trip, and an international trip.

This is what our association is all about and it's only possible because of you. You are a participant and, if the rest of us are lucky, you are a leader/event organiser too. Keep up those suggestions and don't be afraid to try something new.

On our forthcoming Winter programme we have some new walk leaders. Please support them and encourage them to continue putting on more events.

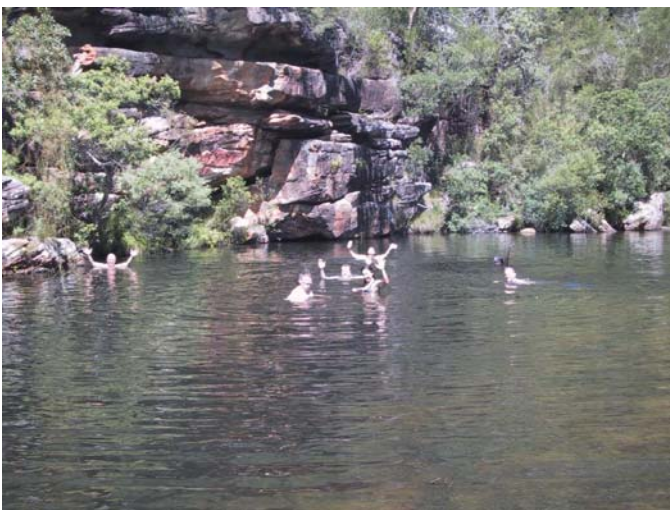
Also remember to come along to your AGM and don't be afraid to put up your hand for a position. We also need new committee members.

..... See you in the Bush!!

Liam Heery

AGM - June 24, 2007

**Meeting commences 11am
Woodstock,
Community Centre**



Not drowning!

WALK REPORT

Waterfall to Engadine Royal National Park

Sunday 18 February 2007 Leader: Charles Bowden

This pleasant walk follows Kangaroo Creek from its source near Waterfall until it meets Engadine Creek at which point it becomes navigable for canoes & kayaks coming from Audley Weir. There are several swimming holes along the creek, the first and best known being Karloo Pool which marks the halfway point of the walk.

A faint and at times overgrown track parallels the creek most of the way to Karloo Pool. Occasionally we had to scramble over rocks and boulders but most of the going was fairly easy. At Karloo Pool, someone had cast squares of bread in the water but, with another larger pool in mind for lunch, about 2kms further away, we pressed on.

It was a hot day so we lingered in the cooling waters for a relaxing lunch before heading further downstream. The next couple of kilometres involved a bit more effort as there was no track to speak of; we walked along the creek bed or rocky ledges with the occasional detour up small slopes.



We reached another deep waterhole, about 500 metres before the Engadine Creek junction, where we took the opportunity to pause for afternoon tea. The hot weather encouraged another refreshing swim featuring some un-synchronized swimming before heading on to Engadine along the well-established Engadine Track. A recovery meal was later held at a pleasant bistro in Heathcote for those wishing to linger.

Thank you to Liam Heery, Jacqui Joseph, Peter West, Wade Wyatt, Michael Thompson, Sue Ives, Janice Besch and William Meats for sweating and swimming in unequal measure!

BIKE RIDING

Guildford Station to Prospect Reservoir

Sunday 4 March 2007

Leader: Carol Cox

It was threatening to be a very hot day with thunderstorms forecast for the afternoon so this small group of 5 bicyclists headed out mid-morning for a pleasant and uneventful ride along the bike path that roughly follows the Sydney Water Supply Pipeline from Guildford Station to Prospect Reservoir. Much of the track is in the old canal which in yesteryear carried water east from the Prospect Reservoir. Lunch was taken under the gum trees in a barbecue area of the parkland surrounding the reservoir.

The return journey ran beside Prospect Creek on a bike track that finished in Fairfield, then a 2½ kilometre dash along suburban streets to rejoin the original bike track back to Guildford Station.



Prospect Reservoir

Denise, Edward, Paul, Carol - Photo by Peter Bonner

Timing was good as the heat of the day was starting to hit on the return journey and we enjoyed some re-hydration in Guildford before going on our separate ways. Carol thanks Denise Kruse and Edward Youds, Peter Bonner and Paul Goessling for their company.

Barbecue breakfast and ride Bicentennial/Olympic Parks

Sunday 6 May 2007

Leaders: Carol Cox & Sharyn Mattern

We kept saying to ourselves, but we couldn't have asked for a better day !!!

A beautiful sunny day with the slightest of breezes to stop it getting too warm – what more could we ask for.

Denise, Edward, Leigh and William joined Sharyn and Carol for a not-too-early barbecue breakfast in Bicentennial Park before meeting up with Zvonko and his 7-yr-old daughter Eva and setting off on a sedate ride. There's 35 kms of bike track in these two parks but we didn't cover them all.

Some members had to depart before lunch, leaving Leigh, William and Carol to continue the very enjoyable ride for the next few hours, breaking only for lunch on the banks of the Parramatta River and the obligatory stop for coffee - at the Novotel Sydney Olympic Park, of course.

A major upgrade has taken place on the river's edge outside the Newington Armoury area with the installation of sheltered picnic tables along the riverbank, water fountains, car parking inside the armoury site ... and it was being well used the day we rode through.

Thanks to Denise, Edward, Leigh, William, Zvonko and Eva for joining us on this lovely day – Carol & Sharyn

Photographic Competition



to be held at
the next
AGM

**Sunday June
24th 2007**

Prizes as well as
a certificate will
be your reward.

The winning
photos will be
published in the Spring issue of
Keeping Track and on our website.

There's still 3 weeks left to snap
that special photo at one of the
Club activities.

Photos must have been taken since
the previous AGM.

Categories are:

**PEOPLE
WATER SCENES
FLORA
FAUNA
NATURES WONDERS
CAMPING**

We need 4 entries per category to
run a viable competition, so en-
courage your fellow members to
enter with you.

(Sorry, only one entry per member
per category)

How to Enter

Mount each photograph on a sheet
of A4 size paper.

On the reverse side put your name,
category, the date and place where
your picture was taken.

On arrival at the AGM, hand your
entry to **the organiser Len Sharp.**

The organiser's decision is final as
to eligibility in accordance with the
rules.

*If you don't have a (decent) colour
printer, email the photos to Charles
Bowden, our Web Master, who will
arrange printing for you at no cost.*

GARDEN WALK

Hunter Valley Gardens

Saturday 3 March 2007 Leader: Peter Bonner

I was pleased to see William Meats, who had not booked on my walk around the Gardens, at our Saturday 9:30am meeting place of Hornsby Station Car Park. This brought up our numbers to 10 - the number required to obtain the concession entry rate of \$15 (single person rate of \$19). So good to see you William. Later at the Garden's turnstile ticket office we received a further discount of 15% when Zac used his credit card to pay for all the tickets so in the end we only paid \$13 each - a nice surprise indeed. So, there were 10 walkers 5 each in Zac's Lexus and my Nissan 4WD.

Zac drove up the scenic way and I drove up the direct route. Arriving at the Gardens, after a refreshment break, we all set off to walk the Gardens more or less clockwise. This was not



Margaret, Sidney, Shirley, Zac, Karyn, Richard, Peter, William, Jill and Faridah

easy as each of the 12 Gardens could be approached by at least 4 different pathways. So the way to view and really enjoy these displays is to amble along meandering from path to path and sometimes taking the long way round to the next Garden. At the base of the Waterfall Lookout we stopped for a group photo and lunch was at the gazebo near the Indian Mosaic Tea Garden overlooking the water. This was reached by walking through the 189 year old antique Indian Elephant Gates fronted by bronze elephants. Other gardens of photographic appeal to me were the Chinese Moongate Garden, Italian Walk & Grotto, The Story Book Garden with its displays of well known rhymes & children's stories such as Goldilocks & the Three Bears, Jack & Jill, Humpty Dumpty, Puss in Boots, Old King Cole, The Mad Hatters Tea Party, Little Boy Blue.

At a little kiosk we were able to purchase ice creams. So, licking our way back to the Lake Walk, we waited in the shade for the promised Musical Fountain Display. After an hour, our disgruntled group made it's way back to the Gift Shop where I made a formal complaint in writing. This was backed up by Zac. After a talk with the lady manager, we were driven down

to the lake where, after some delay, the piped music came on. The fountains duly danced on the spot from spray jets set on a low raft almost at the other side of the lake. The show over we then had to walk all the way back. No problem, after all we are a Bushwalking Club. It seems a wedding was booked for the chapel on the hill overlooking the lake. The bride objected to some of the music i.e. Wagner's The Ride of the Valkyries (not appropriate music for the start of a wedding ceremony) so just cancel the fountain display. The staff knew this but, having advised us not to miss the dancing fountains, did not tell our group of the cancellation !!



Musical Fountain Display

Back at the entrance we got in our respective cars and arranged to meet Zac and his walkers at the CHOCOLATE Factory. Seems there were two so we didn't meet up again! Thanks to the magnificent ten: Zac, Faridah, Jill, Sidney, Richard, Margaret, Suseela, Karyn & William. It was a good day all round. Excellent weather a little hot at times with light cooling breezes, and the gardens well worth seeing. On the drive back I planned a Nursery Rhymes singing contest for my car but Shirley fell asleep, Sidney & Jill spoke in whispers all the time & William said not a word, so I just concentrated on my driving.

With the easy traffic we arrived safely back at Hornsby Station around 6:30pm.



Japanese Pagoda - Oriental Garden

SNORKELLING

Shelly Beach, Manly

Saturday 10 February 2007 Leader: Charles Bowden

It was a hot sunny day and no less than 17 people, including several visitors, turned up at the popular Shelly Beach to try their hand (or should that be feet) at snorkelling. After initially splitting into 2 groups with the sun seekers parked close to the water, we all eventually gathered at a shady spot near the ridge that shelters the beach from the incoming swells.

There was a steady procession of snorkellers into and out of the water, the most popular spot being the rocks next to the promenade that runs between Shelly Beach and Manly where lots of fish and other marine creatures could be found.

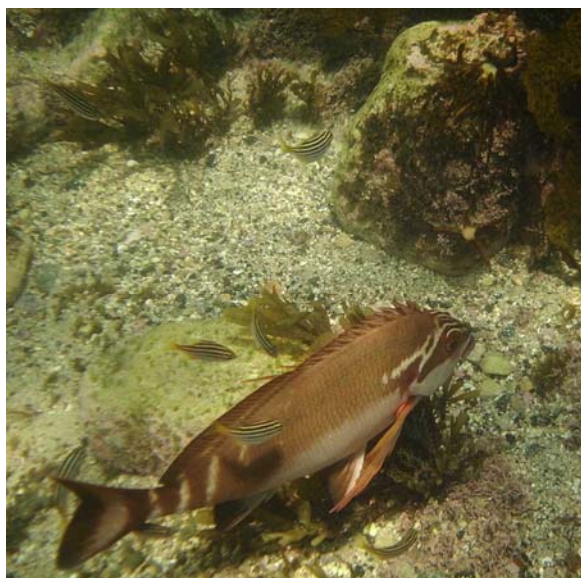
The nearby kiosk profited from us as well as other beachgoers and everyone had a very enjoyable day. When I finally left the beach at around 4pm there were still a few remaining to make the most of the conditions.

Thank you to all who came (too many to name) for sharing a very pleasant day.

Fairlight Beach, Fairlight

Saturday 24 March 2007 Leader: Charles Bowden

Fairlight Beach is tucked in a sheltered North Harbour alcove, about 1 km from Manly. It is not popular with the casual beachgoer as the sandy beach area is very small and there is no surf. But it has a broad rock ledge that extends out a 100 metres or so into the water, providing a haven for marine creatures and ideal snorkelling in calm waters at depths of a metre or less for the most part.



The fish (red morwong)!

As a first time snorkeller I have to say this was a truly fantastic experience.....Thank you Charles.....Editor



Shelly Beach Group



Fisheye view of Peter Bonner

Ten members, including several novices to snorkelling, and a visitor turned up at 11 am on this occasion: another good turnout. After explaining some techniques and demonstrating items of equipment, gear was handed out to those in need and they all took the plunge with varying degrees of caution. However apprehension quickly turned to delight as appreciation of the shallow waters and abundant marine life began to sink in.

After enjoying a pleasant lunch under the palm trees fringing the beach, an adventurous group with new-found confidence allowed me to lead them to a rocky outcrop just visible above the waterline which marks the spot where the ledge drops away into deeper water. We found a number of reef fish feeding frenzily on a sea urchin as well as a school of fingerlings, shimmering tantalizingly just out of reach. Several colourful soft corals could be seen and the outcrop also provided a haven for smaller shyer denizens.

Thank you to Carol Cox, Jan Steven, Alison Lyon, Faye Xu, Rubina Usman, Karyn Krawford, Annette Sudan, Peter Bonner, Richard Milnes and Bryce Wentworth for helping to make the day an enjoyable success.

WALK REPORT

Seaforth Oval - Bantry Bay - Roseville Bridge Garrigal National Park

14 April 2007

Leader: Suseela Durvasula

As the Club's programme co-ordinator, it's my role to nag other members for their walks and to try and encourage new walk leaders. I thought it was time to practise as I preach and put my own walk on the programme. The final impetus came when my sister gave me a couple of bushwalking books for Christmas - no more excuses!

I chose the Bantry Bay walk because, according to one of my books, it promised an 'isolated and untouched feel' through the bush and was only 40 minutes from the CBD. With the kind help of Len and Trish, I surveyed the walk on Australia Day. We missed the track a few times – but that's what the survey is for. Len was helpful in pointing out track markers to look out for.

The walk didn't disappoint, with its beautiful vistas around the edge of Bantry Bay. It has great spots for morning tea (a rock platform called the Bluff with spectacular views out to Middle Harbour and the city) and lunch (a cute beach called Flat Rock Beach). The walk has a mixture of steep bits and rough track to get those leg muscles working, and a wide flat track, which was very welcome after lunch. Part of the walk includes the curiously named 'Magazine Track', named after the small brick buildings (magazines) that were used to store explosives in the area. The only unpleasant part was walking across the busy Roseville Bridge after the tranquillity of the bush.

On the morning of the actual walk, the weather was kind. It turned out to be a beautiful sunny day after the black clouds of the previous Easter Saturday.

Although I was a bit nervous at first, I found that leading the walk was a lot easier than I expected, and fun. One of my greatest fears was missing the track and getting lost, but having surveyed the walk and written some notes, it all came back to me quite easily. We all managed to do our bit for the environment, catching public transport to and from the walk.

I realised that leading a walk is not that hard. You don't need to be super fit – you just need to be comfortable with the walk you're leading, plan ahead and do some research on the transport options to and from the walk. Let's continue to get 'more chicks in the bush'.



Thanks to Len, Karyn, Richard, Leigh, Margaret, Ehinomen, Elizabeth, Shirley and Jack for making my first walk-leading experience such an enjoyable one.

Special Road Rules for Cyclists

Cyclists are allowed to ride two abreast, no more than 1.5m apart. People riding a bike are allowed to take up a whole lane, (riding in the gutter is dangerous and leaves no room for avoiding obstacles and invites being squeezed by cars!)

Cycling on the footpath is permitted where indicated by signage, if the cyclist is under 12 years old, or if an adult is accompanying a younger cyclist.

Bicycles are allowed to travel in bus lanes and transit lanes.

and did you know.....

Almost half the households in NSW have at least one bicycle

People riding a bike are exposed to 2 to 3 times less pollution

(volatile organic compounds) compared with people driving cars on the same road

RTA cycling maps are FREE ph 1800 060 607

www.rta.nsw.gov.au



Deep Creek, Narrabeen Lake—Peter Bonner with Ursula and Paul Goessling

KAYAKING/CANOEOING

Deep Creek, Narrabeen Lake

Sunday 15 April 2007 Leader: Peter Bonner

I arrived at the Bilarong Reserve at 9:55am to find Alison Lyon was already there. As we were chatting, Richard Milnes arrived having travelled by bus and Shank's Pony! No one else had booked so we unloaded the kayaks from my 4WD. *This operation now requires 2 milk crates to stand on* as my new canoe racks are higher than the existing ones, something I found out too late!

In no time at all we were paddling the mirror calm waters steering East to circumnavigate the large unnamed island (recreation reserve on the map) which was guarded by numerous aggressive swans, ducks, geese and a myriad of smaller water birds so we decided not to land and dig for buried treasure.



Leaving the island behind us on our port bow we paddled West and up the mouth of Deep Creek having skirted around a pretty grassy sandy wet area, too shallow even for our kayaks. By now Alison & Richard had synchronised their paddle strokes and were paddling smoothly, making good progress. Morning tea taken at a nice grassy picnic area, we continued our journey up Deep Creek. We had hoped to get as far as the waterfall but about three quarters of the way fallen trees finally blocked further progress. So, back to the lake proper to a sandy beach at the most western point of the Lake for lunch.

Lunch over we were back on an easterly course to get round a rocky spit and into Middle Creek. This was just as pretty if not more so than Deep Creek. On our return to the launch spot at Bilarong Reserve we found we were paddling into a mild breeze making small waves which now and again just broke over the kayak bows. It was quite a long paddle, but by 4pm the kayaks were up on the racks and we were on the way home.

Thanks Alison & Richard for your company: It was a lovely day. Come again as we have another creek to explore and one more island to circumnavigate.

This trip was repeated on Wed 2 May with Paul & Ursula Goessling to take photographs as there were no cameras on the first trip. Once again, idyllic weather.

MUSEUM VISITS

Hyde Park Barracks, The Justice & Police Museum, May Gibbs 'Nutcote'

Saturday 21 April 2007 Leader: Peter Bonner

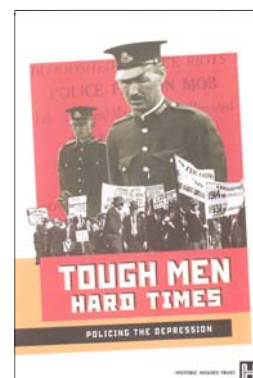
The North Shore trains were not running and my replacement bus from outside Waitara station was late. It was quite cold at 8:10am in the shade, nevertheless at 9:25am I was standing gazing at the statue of Albert The Good, Prince Consort Of Queen Victoria 1866, erected by The People of New South Wales.

At 9:35am Lee Brown appeared. He had actually arrived half an hour early by a 'bendy' express bus and had been wandering around killing time.

First stop was the BPB Coffee Shop for a shot of caffeine, then into the Barracks Museum which was built by convict architect Francis Greenway in 1819 to house male convicts. The museum is now an absolutely fascinating early social history of Sydney.

We left at 11:30am to walk down Phillip Street to the Justice & Police Museum's new exhibition **'TOUGH MEN HARD TIMES Policing the Depression'**. "The great depression of the 1930s forced police to confront strikers, eviction-rioters, the hungry and disaffected homeless, as well as extremist political groups who urged revolutionary action."

"Police spies infiltrated 'communist cells' while police raids on the quasi fascist 'New guard' exposed a plot to overthrow the Lang Government. Brutal times for many people!" Again, absolutely fascinating but since we were now running out of time, we went on to 'Nutcote' at Neutral Bay.



We just managed to catch the Neutral Bay Ferry with 2 minutes to spare and arrived at 2:20pm. Nutcote was the home of May Gibbs, famous children's author and illustrator 1877-1964. We were allowed in 'gratis' as they close early on weekends and were shown around by a trainee guide who unlocked numerous doors, cabinets, and drawers of original artworks and little treasures of May Gibbs. Then down to the video room for two short videos of her life and her garden at 'Nutcote', built in 1924 to the design of B.J. Waterhouse, Architect, to give compactness, convenience, and charm. It certainly has all of that. Come and see for yourself, but whatever you do, go by ferry!

It was a beautiful day, very informative of the good and bad times of old Sydney in the early days. Oh and I nearly forgot - May Gibbs and her husband were great campers, getting around in a soft top car nicknamed 'Dodgem' with their Scottish terriers, kero lamps, primus stoves, canvas camp beds etc.

Thanks Lee for your company. Some walkers failed to turn up and missed out.

WALK REPORT

Darkes Forest Circuit, Dharawal State Recreation Area

Sunday 22 April 2007 Leader: Charles Bowden

After gathering at the aptly named Café Fix, we collected another walker en route to the starting point, a broad fire trail, making it ten of us in all including two visitors. Bordering the trail red & spiky Mountain Devils (*Lambertia formosa*) were flowering in profusion. Russet Heath banksias were also plentiful and occasionally a pale yellow Silver banksia could be seen.

At the first ford where the fire trail crosses O'Hare's Creek, we were surprised to find that we would have to remove shoes and socks to wade across. This was the excuse we needed to stop for morning tea before heading up the slope to the derelict Westcliff colliery although the unremediated and dilapidated state of the site led some to believe it was simply "mothballed".



O'Hare's Creek ford

Adjacent to the colliery, we turned off the fire trail to follow an abandoned and overgrown telecommunications service track. Occasionally we found the remains of a marker pole, distorted by heat and fire. The track crosses a small creek with an attractive waterfall before eventually linking up with another disused trail. Here we found an expensive if rather grubby bicycle pump that had broken away from its mounting. It was still in good working order and quickly found a pleased new owner!

After negotiating numerous fallen trees during the descent back down to O'Hare's Creek and avoiding tripping over plastic water piping next to the creek, we had lunch on the rocks at the crossing where a cascade forms a large pool.

The creek was full from recent rains so the plan to walk along the creek for the first kilometre or so had to be abandoned. Instead we set off along the right bank keeping close to the creek, anticipating about 4kms of off-track walking. The weather decided to change for the worse at this point so jackets and hoods were soon donned by most.

However, after less than a kilometre we stumbled on a horse trail that led from a property across the creek. This made walking for the next kilometre or so considerably easier and we made good progress until we had to turn off when the trail started to head uphill to a nearby ridge.



Lunch, O'Hare's Creek crossing

But luck was still with us as we first found and followed a line marked by coloured ribbons which in turn led to an unmarked walking track. These combined to lead us for a further kilometre without too much difficulty. The final kilometre made up for the earlier good fortune in being quite rough and difficult, made worse by the now drenching rain so that footholds became quite slippery.

Nonetheless we reached the waterfall at Maddens Creek, effectively the end of the walk, well ahead of schedule and were able to admire the triple falls in full gush. We then climbed up to the look out point above the falls before following the metal grating track to the nearby weir and car park. A recovery drink was later enjoyed at a pub in Sutherland by those still willing to linger.

Thank you to Tu Tran, Michael Thompson, Alison Lyon, Nick Collins, Susan Faucett, Len Sharp, Ross Musumeci, Jacqui Joseph and Liam Heery for ignoring the welcome rain!



Group at Darkes Forest Falls

WALK REPORT

Waterfall to Loftus via the Audley Weir and historic tram

Sunday 29 April 2007 Leader: Trish Gorring

It was a gorgeous day and with the rains the previous week I was hoping the creeks would be flowing. We set off from the Waterfall railway station and followed the track to the oval. From there it was fire trail until we reached a small hidden side track that is not marked on newer maps. This was a hidden gem of single track and great views.

As we walked we could hear the trickle of the running water. We made our morning tea beside the trickling brook and enjoyed the tranquility.

Setting off again we bush bashed through to Uloola Falls.



Above Uloola Falls

We then climbed to the top of the ridge which made for a very different walk. We had 360 degree views which stretched all the way to the city.

Whale Rock formation was reached shortly after and we soaked up more views and atmosphere until we reached Audley Weir. We were running early so we stopped in the National Parks office which I learned was a big mistake. Never let bushwalkers browse a book shop full of bush walking books. I was afraid I would never get them out of there so I extracted them with the promise of ice cream at the corner shop before making our final climb up to the Audley tram stop to take us to Loftus.

The tram conductor had never had so many passengers; the tram was full, with us 12 plus 2 families. If only he'd remembered to bring along his ticket book.



A recent Games Night at Woodstock

DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE

1 August 2007

SEND YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO

jsteven@unwired.com.au

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

Picture Quiz

Who is the skinny dipper?



The answer from the last issue
Charles and Jacqui



New Zealand March 2007

By Jennifer McCallan

I flew into New Zealand in good weather, sighting the snow covered mountains on the west coast, and towards Christchurch had my first view of the irrigation systems for the dairying industry and the barren brown hills for the sheep industry. Later I was to meet locals and visitors who explained to me the drought New Zealand was experiencing and their environmental problems too. An American we met said that in his home area sheep were known as 'mountain maggots'! (I think this is quite a good description)

On my first evening in Queenstown, the ANB club from Sydney all met at the Irish pub before the start of the Routeburn walk. Five of us were doing a 'private' walk and two had arranged to go on the commercial walk where more luxury huts were available with hot showers and food provided so only light packs need be carried. I was joining Liam's group for the Routeburn and Kepler walks.

We got a small bus to the start of the Routeburn Track in 'fair' weather and the mountains were clear and inviting*

**See articles by Liam and Suseela on the Routeburn and Kepler walks.*

Back to the noise (and clear skies!) of Queenstown and a day of sight seeing and preparation for the next part of the holiday. We had a farewell dinner and then next day I was on the bus to Fox Glacier and the next backpackers hostel.

The day's walk up the glacier started fair with some cloud but soon deteriorated into some serious rain again. Surprisingly I was not cold but certainly wet. Unfortunately I had also left my washing out on the line from the night before!

I continued up the spectacular west coast by shuttle bus to meet up with Len. After a puncture and two and a half hours delay we proceeded on our way to Nelson where Len and friends from the National Parks Association were waiting (and wondering) at the YH (Youth Hostel). There was great confusion and chaos as the repack was done in the bunk room ready for an early start. Next day we caught a bus to the start of the Heaphy Track. There had been rain overnight and as we arrived we ran into further heavy falls. There were two fords to cross and we just made it - the driver keen to rush off to make sure he could get back. The climb up the hill again was wet with some sleet about! We had to cross and re-cross several creeks as they surged over the track.

Towards the top there was a shelter and we came across an older but athletic looking walker. He turned out to have left after us but knew a 'short' cut ... straight up. He was actually portering, being part of a guided group, and his job was to take supplies to the hut and the following one so he shot off pretty smartly.

We arrived at Perry Saddle Hut wet once again! It looked full when we arrived (with mountains of wet gear) but after us when the guided group arrived, it was really full and turns were needed to get close to the gas burners. Gas burners, coal fires and full mattresses in these New Zealand huts felt quite luxurious compared to the Aussie ones - but then you do have to book and pay.

In the morning we saw that overnight white patches had appeared on the far mountains! We took a morning 'stroll' up

Mt Perry and the ranger came with us 'for the ride'. It was a steep climb but in a very strong wind we decided not to go to the second peak as it was almost blowing us over on the rocky bits.



Interior Perry Saddle Hut

On to Saxon Hut and then to a misty Mackay Hut. Across the downs proved interesting walking with varied terrain and although wet going I don't think it actually rained! We came across limestone formations with the track bridging what were once caves. The surrounding beech trees gave it a weird look. Occasionally at the hut we were able to glimpse the valley below and the mouth of the Heaphy River.

Next day we were descending to the Heaphy River across a few side creeks and did not 'seem' too wet - but it must have been on the tops. We stopped for lunch at Lewis and left about 1pm, an English couple having left half an hour earlier. As we prepared to leave we noticed the water suddenly rising up the grassy slopes below the hut. We didn't think too much of it. A bridge across the Lewis and then a long one across the wide Heaphy River took us across the roaring waters. A bit further on we came across a couple coming the other way. They advised getting sticks from the bush as the track was under water and it would be helpful to probe to find the edge of the track and bridges to prevent slipping into the ditches. Fine as we waded ankle, calf, knee, thigh, waist high, and then it got serious!! Finally we decided it might be better to turn around whilst we could. We didn't know what was ahead but thought the track continued alongside the river. The return journey was even worse as the river was still rising. At one point we happened to look to our right and saw the top handrail of a wooden bridge - had we missed it we would have been in DEEP trouble. The track had taken a ninety degree turn to cross a watercourse. Even crossing the Lewis was difficult as the climb up to the swing bridge was deep in water too. Back at the hut the water was rising up to the footings of the verandah and the tanks were under water. We radioed from there to the next hut at the mouth of the river to alert them to the conditions and warn of the couple that had set out before us. We later found out the ranger and a guide had gone looking for them but when they got waist deep from the other end they too had returned. A helicopter was called out and found a pack on the side but not them. It came flying out to the Lewis Hut, lowered down right up to the verandah to check they had not returned. At about 4:30 the waters started to recede. The missing couple had actually stopped and waited 'on a rock' for 4 hours and finally made it out at 8pm. The pack had been left when the man piggybacked his wife.

In the morning the waters had gone down and, although still in

flood, we could see the banks now and the resting logs! The fast flowing waters did not contain the same floating logs. We took the short journey down to the mouth of the river through the changing vegetation and rock formations. After lunch at the Heaphy Hut we made our way along the spectacular coast track – a nice day walk. A bus met us at the end. As the telephone was out of order the considerate lady driver had come to meet us and waited having heard we were on our way.

We stayed at Karamea a small country ‘village’ in an interesting area and heard how it and Westport had been cut off by slides of mud and rock across the roads. Somewhere up on the mountains there must have been serious rain. The next walk was to be the Wangapeka. We started out but our leader, Paul, decided as there were long stretches along the river with steep sides he thought the going could be through mud and slides. We were to be the first through after the floods so it was decided to turn back. We were all disappointed particularly as it now meant a long coach journey to get to the next destination!

After staying again at Karamea we got the bus and finally arrived at Nelson with plans for another walk. The lift to the start once again was expensive and time consuming but it proved to be a very interesting area and we had excellent weather! This was the Cobb Valley thence to the Tablelands and Mt Arthur. We travelled high up a small twisty road to the valley which had been flooded for a hydro scheme. The first day’s walk up the valley was reasonably easy being mostly flat and scenic. The next day, on the advice of fellow hutters, we did a day walk up to Mt. Kakapo which was quite a climb and rocky over a cairn marked route. There were signs of snow as we climbed through the clouds which finally cleared.



Summit of Mt Kakapo

The following day we started out with a touch of frost in the valley and it turned into a clear blue sky day. A tiring climb in the afternoon and we were up on the clear tops towards the Balloon hut on the tablelands. We stayed a night in Balloon with 1 other ‘occupant’, an interesting American who actually bedded down on the verandah. He was a great talker (even Len found it difficult to get a word in) and Paul and Len had met him previously.

We still had clear skies with views of Mt Arthur in the distance. Another interesting ‘tramp’ across the tops and down through thick wooded valleys passing by some interesting camps and lunch stops. The New Zealanders equip even caves and rock faces with beds, mattresses, tables and chairs! We finally made it to the Mt. Arthur hut to be ready for an early start to the

climb. It was just as well as not only were we rewarded with a spectacular early morning but avoided the Sunday crowds. My 360 degree panorama would have been difficult with crowds on the open flat summit. Although quite a long energetic rocky climb it is a favourite day walk easily accessible from a car park – I think we probably passed about 30 people or more on the way up as we came down.



Tablelands and view of Mt Arthur

And this was to be the last of the walks and, with the weather, very memorable. It was back to the Nelson YH for the third time where we had been able to easily store all our gear.

I then took the coach back to Christchurch for some sightseeing. I said goodbye to Len on the way at Blenheim as he was continuing on one more walk on the North Island. I found the trip across to near Picton and then down the eastern side different again. A lot was through cleared countryside. The coast road winds in and out of the bays through tunnels and hangs to the edge of sea. You could even see a seal colony from the coach. We stopped for lunch at the whale watching town of Kaikoura which was very touristy and slightly bleak.

Christchurch felt ‘autumnal’. The trees were getting ready to drop their leaves and it was a bit damp and cool - definitely time to head north and home.

We later learnt that they run the Kepler in a few hours!

We couldn’t believe the times when we first heard.

I found the following on a web site:

“This event has been held annually since 1988, and follows the 60km Kepler Track. Starting at the Control Gates of Lake Te Anau the route follows an easy first 6km before it takes a steady climb to the Luxmore Hut. The next 12km offer wonderful views of the South Fiord along the undulating tops before a spectacular descent to the Iris Burn Hut. A gradual 17km journey down the Iris Burn brings competitors to the Moturau Hut on Lake Manapouri and from there a 6km run to the last checkpoint at Rainbow Reach. The home straight follows alongside the Waiou River and back to the Control Gates. This is the 19th year of this popular event and it remains the premier Mountain Running event in New Zealand. Competitors are drawn from all corners of New Zealand as well as around the globe. The men’s race record of 4:37:41 is held by Phil Costley and was set in 2005. Zelah Morrall smashed the women’s race record again in 2003 by a further 10 minutes setting the record at 05:23:34. A number of competitors should complete the course in less than 5 hours. Others may take up to 11 hours.”

Welcome to New Members

Tracey Lane
Wenrong Huang
Jenny Kuo
Derek Holt
Peter West
Subashini Thyagaraiian
Kristin Walsh
Nirosha Gunaseker
Louise Sudan Gilroy
Henry Sudan Gilroy
Brian Goodwin
Diane Goodwin
Tony Deguara
Sangeeth Prakasam
Bob Seibrigh
Nicole Tyler
Yung Shwen Ho
Wendy Lee
Julie Armstrong

See you in the bush

FEATURE

Confessions of a Sherpa Queen – Part 2

by Suseela Durvasula

I knew we were in for an interesting night when one of the women sharing our room pulled on a pair of leopard skin print pyjamas. Who brings PJs on an overnight walk, let alone in leopard skin? Miss Leopard Skin and her friend then proceeded to tell us how they had just walked the Milford Track in New Zealand where everything was bigger and better than the walk we had done that day—bigger lodges, better food, better scenery. Trish (my walking companion) and I looked at each other. We had met a true Sherpa Queen!

We had just finished our first day walking the Routeburn Track in New Zealand's South Island. This is a three day walk that starts about three hours away from Queenstown through the spectacular Fiordland and Mount Aspiring National Parks. Contrary to Miss Leopard Skin's opinion, the scenery *is* spectacular – snow capped mountains, waterfalls, raging rivers, swing bridges, lakes, alpine passes and enchanted forests that looked as if they could come alive – it had the lot. It really was *Lord of the Rings* country and I felt as if I was going to bump into Treebeard at any moment.

The accommodation and facilities on our guided walk had exceeded *this* Sherpa Queen's expectations – scones with jam and cream even before the walk started, wine and cheese on arrival at the lodges each evening, a lovely hot shower to soothe those aching muscles, three course dinners and more food than you would want or need.

Apart from Miss Leopard Skin and her friends from a rival Sydney bushwalking group (which shall remain nameless), the rest of our group were a friendly lot. A mixture of Aussies, Americans, Britons and one Dutch woman. You could walk at your own pace so you never felt crowded in. At times, I walked on my own and really felt that there was no one else except me and the wilderness.

The walking was neither easy nor difficult. The second day was the toughest as we had to climb above tree line and cross the exposed Hollyford Face. We had a steep 300m climb up Conical Hill, but as they say, the views from the top were worth it and we could see out to the Tasman Sea. As I climbed up, I had a few of those 'how am I going to get back down?' moments, but with patience and help from my trusty walking stick, I made it down in one piece.

On the third day, it rained steadily in the morning. I realised to my shock/horror that walking in the rain can be a pleasant experience! It helps if you're walking through a beautiful forest past a flowing river. Trish has already told me I'm going to be held to that comment the next time it threatens rain on a bushwalk and I want to wimp out.

So, would I do a guided walk again or go it alone? This is a tough one. I think I enjoyed the walk more because I didn't have to worry about cooking meals, carrying food, etc. Those hot showers also worked a treat at the end of a long day. But at least I now feel that I have the confidence and ability to do it independently. In many ways, the guided walk was more than I needed. But for those who have never done an overnight walk and feel a bit daunted, a guided walk is a great way to start and see one of the most spectacular places in the world.

As I look through my photographs now, I'm trying to remember those moments of serenity and the sense of achievement I gained through my New Zealand walking trip. There's nothing like the act of putting one foot in front of the other and enjoying the scenery of the moment to take the stress away. I'm also reassured by the realisation that there are bigger Sherpa Queens than me.



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