

# BUSH TELEGRAPH

2021 No. 1  
AUTUMN



## KAYAKING: TALLOWA DAM - LAKE YARRUNGA 27-28 FEB 2021 BY THAIS TURNER

After a late notification that NPWS had decided to do an aerial feral animal control program in the Shoalhaven area exactly where, and on the very week / weekend, that Ivars had programmed his kayak/camping weekend for Tallowa Dam / Lake Yarrunga, it seemed Plan A had been scuppered. Plan B was then decided upon – we would try out Mooney Mooney, the Hawkesbury River and into Marramarra Creek to places unknown, with bush campsites a mystery.

However as luck would have it, the aerial program was postponed and the group was able to return to Plan A, which we were all quite happy about. Flat water with only human powered craft allowed, would be easier than negotiating tidal waters, with a variety of other unknown craft in the vicinity.

Setting off from Sydney early morning on Saturday, the weather seemed to be settling into one of misty rain and gloom, which looked a bit foreboding for the weekend ahead. Once at Lake Yarrunga though, we loaded up the craft with whatever camping gear, food, water, etc we could fit into the hatches or secure to the deck, and had a rain-free but overcast morning. Then it cleared in the afternoon to blue sky and warmth for the rest of our 14km paddle up river towards Fossickers Flat, with Morton National Park surrounding us. (Campsites here could only be reached via paddling, or by a long arduous trek which few would consider).

Scenic vistas and having the place to ourselves for most of the day made for

happy paddlers. Later in the day various other groups appeared and we exchanged greetings. Some were day trippers who revelled in the fun of leaping off rocks into the water at various spots, after they'd secured their kayaks / canoes nearby. There were enough areas for us to beach our crafts and find campsites beside the Lake so that we were all a decent distance from the next group, and the addition of long drop toilets strategically placed along mostly the eastern side of the waterway, made for happy campers too.

(Continued Page 2 & 3)

(Pics by Thais)



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All opinions and recommendations contained in this magazine are the individual authors' alone, and do not constitute official endorsement by the executive or members of the Bankstown Bushwalking Club Inc.

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# EDITORIAL

BY THAÏS TURNER

Our thoughts are with members and their families who may have been impacted by the recent flood events. The climate seems to be continuing to throw curve balls at us mere humans.

Activities, especially walking, with our club (or even individually) can keep us grounded and improve our resilience so we can better cope when nature brings us the series of challenges we've all been presented with over the past 12 – 18 months. As we know, these challenges have included droughts, fires, rain deluges, COVID-19, floods... We're hoping the weather becomes more stable soon, but climate change modelling shows that it may not. See Snippets on page 7 for further comments/links to articles.

Inside this issue of the Club newsletter there are some retrospectives that remind us of the interesting variety of activities the Club has been conducting

over past decades, as well as more recently.

Our Club is similar to other bushwalking clubs in having received an influx of new members once COVID restrictions eased. A warm welcome to all new members, the most recent list is on page 6.

The most important meeting of the year (face to face, not via Zoom) is the Club's AGM which is being held on Tue April 13 in Bass Hill. Check the recent email message from the Secretary (29/3/21) for times, location, directions, agenda etc, and to contribute to helping run the Club into the future. New perspectives are welcome so please consider nominating for one of the many available Club positions.

See you down the track sometime soon.

Thaïs

Editor

Submitted by former Club member Lyn McMillan and previously published in Spring 2016 Bush Telegraph.

### The Walking Obsession by John Dennett

It happens very quickly, unexpected you might say,  
You plan it for a lifetime, keenly waiting for the day,  
Retiring from the workforce even though you'll miss your mates,  
There's lots of things to do in life before the pearly gates.

You may decide to take up golf or bowls or maybe bridge,  
Or watch TV at home all day and raid the frost-free fridge,  
You hate to jog, so ask your friends, "Where are some walking clubs?"  
But they are either stay-at-homes or spend their time in pubs.

Before too long you join a club and hope it's one you'll treasure,  
But climbing up the steps from Wondabyne – that can't be a pleasure!  
There's forty people with you and you think that you may quit,  
You'd no idea how many walk from Manly to The Spit.

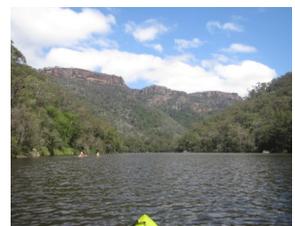
But nonetheless it has you hooked, you join another lot,  
And then you're walking weekly, even if it's wet or hot,  
You're now discussing shoes and gear with others on the track,  
And how much drink you need a day and what's the lightest pack?

Then later on you graduate to walks demanding power,  
Like Waterfall to Loftus, Mount Kuring-gai to Berowra,  
You're in the bush three times a week, your housework's never done,  
Kanangra Falls, Bungonia Gorge, Grand Canyon, here we come!

Then maybe you'll go overseas, you buy the largest pack,  
And trek in England, Spain, Nepal and do the Milford Track,  
So there you are with new-found friends, part of a long procession,  
You realise you've caught the bug, it's called the "Walking Obsession"

(Taken from "The Bright and Breezy Poems" of John Dennett)

## TALLOWA DAM—LAKE YARRUNGA 27-28 FEB 2021 (PICS BY THAÏS)



# KAYAKING: TALLOWA DAM - LAKE YARRUNGA

BY THAÏS TURNER

(CONT'D FROM PG 1 & 2)

Pulling into various little bays and paddling among submerged trees, seeing the various tree types/ colours, waterbirds, and even a goanna at our lunch spot, were highlights. We saw a lot of regrowth on burnt trees close to the waterline as well as other cliff and mountain areas that had been fire affected.

Our party of 4 set up our 4 small tents on the sand/ grass, almost at the end of the Lake, where it became a river of fast-flowing shallow rapids again, though not quite far enough along to be at Fossickers Flat.

Unfortunately, as I found out later, the patch where I set up my tent wasn't actually as flat as it looked, so I was on a lean all night, sliding towards the tent door.

However, we had a wonderful evening of fun and hilarity sitting around our gas stoves, on our little camp chairs, and partook of the food we'd brought along: packet soups, freeze-dried or heat-and-eat concoctions, fruit salad, etc. We were all grateful that Ivars had a water filter, and we were also able to boil water to replenish our drinking supplies.

Earlier, before dinner, Les went exploring up a side creek which in wet weather would have flowed into the Lake, about fifty metres away from our campsite. The stars appeared in the evening (more than you'll ever see in Sydney), and Saturday night was a magical full-moon night, glowing on the waters of the Lake, so serene and quiet.

After breakfast and packing up our camp, we paddled the 14kms back to Tallowa Dam, on Sunday, which turned out to be gloriously sunny, after a foggy start. Ian tested out his sail arrangement both days, but there wasn't a lot of breeze to be harnessed, so it was back to the familiar workout with the arms.

Ivars, Ian and Les had sit-in kayaks while I paddled Les' sit-on-top kayak, easier I thought, than the con-

centration required to maintain balance with the sit-in variety, especially when loaded with camping gear.

All enjoyed the return paddle, sometimes zig-zagging across to the other side of the Lake, sometimes turning our craft around to look at (and photograph of course!), the view behind. How different it looked on a sunny day as opposed to the overcast day, even though they were the same scenes we'd seen the previous morning.

When we were getting close to the dam wall we required some strong paddling techniques - it felt as if the water was drawing us towards the glassy edge of the spillway, which was hard to see.

Below the dam wall the Shoalhaven River again becomes its normal size. There is also an innovative fish ladder at this dam so the fish can make it back into the lake to spawn, after they regularly get swept over the top of the wall.

Our final effort was to unload all our gear from the kayaks and help each other get them back onto car roof racks for the return trip to Sydney via the beautiful Kangaroo Valley, after a very enjoyable weekend away. Thanks Ivars, we are all looking forward to more kayak trips away next Summer.

(Pics by Thaïs)



## Bungling in Bungonia (but living to tell the tale)

23 July 2009

By Jon Gray

It was with feelings of anticipation that I drove down to Bungonia Caves early that Saturday morning, ready for some exciting adventure. Little did I know that it would be with feelings of relief that I would be driving back home. Relief at being on solid ground in the open air, and in one piece!

I was glad to make it down to the Bungonia campground before the first cave trip left (my alarm having failed to go off at the scheduled time). I joined a group of about 10 to do the B4-B5 Cave, led by Tim Fox and others. It wasn't long before we were crawling along on our stomachs through several long tight squeezes. One such stretch was aptly called the "rat run". I was enjoying it, but wondering why people like us do this in the name of fun!

There were a few tricky parts, including a section where we had to slither down a sloping rocky ledge, holding on to a chain to stop from sliding off into the dark oblivion below. A couple of people found this a particularly daunting manoeuvre, and had to retreat before summoning the courage to have another go and eventually get down. A couple more tricky short climbs were required but eventually we all got through and emerged out into the daylight in high spirits.

After a bit of rest and sustenance over lunch in the camp dining hall, I was keen to join an afternoon caving trip into "Acoustic". We were a small group of five: Tim, Rick Webber, John Smith, Thaïs and myself. Another group was doing one of the other caves. After some initial crawling and squeezing along tight narrow passages we came out into a larger cavern and to the top of a dramatic 35 m drop down an almost perfectly cylindrical tube some 5 m in diameter. This was a spectacular abseil – a truly awe-inspiring experience that I savoured. Some coo-ees were perfectly amplified, making me understand how the cave got its name.

After we were all safely at the bottom we pushed on, which involved dropping deeper and deeper down the cave system. Of course, it goes without saying that there were plenty of tight squeezes and tricky manoeuvres; just what we like! Eventually we got to a particularly difficult point, which was near the bottom anyway, so we agreed it was best to start heading back.

Soon we were back at the base of the magnificent deep cylindrical tube, preparing for our 35 m prussic up. John was the first up the long slow ascent. He had problems with his lights when he reached the top and had to sit in the dark to wait for the next comer. This was me, but unfortunately it wasn't to be a short wait for John. After a slow prussic up, made slower by a too short chest loop, I eventually approached the top and was relishing the thought of a nice well-earned rest.

But this was actually when the ordeal started. What happened? I couldn't get over the extended sloping lip at the top edge. As all who have prussicked before would know, getting over the top edge can be tricky, as the rope is forced down on to the rock, making it hard to slide the prussic loops up. Normally it is not too difficult to manoeuvre your body so as to pull the rope away from the rock face, but this was in a constricted, irregular space and I just couldn't do it. I was able to make some progress by inching the loop upwards with great exertion, tearing skin on

my fingers and hand in the process. But I could only work in 60-second bursts, because I had to hold myself up in the standing position with my other hand due to the awkward orientation of the bulging rock. Then I would have to slump back down to regain my breath and strength.

The difficult situation was made worse by the fact that John sitting above couldn't help as he had no lights. Cramping in my hand and at one stage my stomach led me to fear that this may start to get serious. I tried to avoid thinking that it was only that miserable 6 mm cord that was stopping me from plummeting down the deep drop below. All the others above and below me gave constant advice and encouragement.

Eventually, after 30-40 minutes I was high enough to be able to shine light over the ledge, meaning John could at last come to help me. He was able to attach another long prussic loop above the lip, which I hooked onto and was soon able to pull myself up on to the top. I collapsed down with relief and exhaustion. Pheuwhhh!

Rick used jumars to quickly come up next, and he set up another rope should Thaïs need it during her prussic up. But Thaïs, being more experienced, was able to navigate the lip more expertly than I and didn't even need the 2<sup>nd</sup> rope. Finally, poor Tim, who had been waiting in the cold at the bottom for over 2 hours, jumarrup easily. We eventually got back to camp about 8 pm. I was mentally shaken and physically exhausted.

My story has gone long enough already so I won't tell you about the veritable feast we had in the warm camp dining hall that night, where everybody had brought along delicious food offerings to share. Next morning, the choice between another cave and a short gentle walk was easy. I have never enjoyed walking on solid land in broad daylight so much! Arriving home late that afternoon, I reflected on what had been a dramatic and certainly memorable weekend for me. I reasoned that putting one's self in tricky and potentially dangerous situations is an essential ingredient of adventure, and in fact part of the reason we love to do it. It wouldn't be so much fun or as memorable if it was always easy. One thing I do know is that I will now be spending more time practicing with the prussic loops, especially getting over those damn top edges!

Because we all loved this delicious slice, which Louise Glynn used to bring to Club meetings, she sent us the recipe, for the Spring 2016 Bush Telegraph.

### MALTESER SLICE

1 Pkt Chocolate Biscuits (Choc Ripple / Choc Tiny Teddies)  
2 x 140gm pkts Maltesers  
100gm Butter  
2 Tablespoons Golden Syrup  
1 pkt Milk Chocolate Melts

- Grease and line slice pan
- Crush biscuits and 1 pkt of Maltesers
- 2<sup>nd</sup> pkt Maltesers - keep 30 aside for decoration and cut off the ends
- Melt butter and Golden Syrup in pan over stove
- Add biscuit mix and stir until combined
- Allow to cool slightly
- Cut remaining Maltesers in half and stir remainder through mixture
- Press mixture down well in slice pan
- Melt chocolate melts, spread over slice, top with remaining Maltesers, refrigerate
- Cut slice into 30 pieces

**MELONS AIN'T MELONS JUST AS OILS AIN'T OILS...**

By Wai-Lin McCaull (First published Spring 2016 BT)

Paddy melons – a bush weed?

When we were out central west NSW recently, we came across a paddocks full of melons – we thought, great, we can pick some for eating! We brought it to our country hosts (the melons were on their land) and their first remark was “Those paddy melons are weeds!” “They’re used for pig feed and only goats eat them.” So from me thinking I could eat them to someone’s Mum making jam out of the paddy melons, I thought I would do a bit of research on it.

These summer growing invasive melons were native to Africa and introduced into Australia in the mid 1800s; these being the prickly paddy melons (*Cucumis myriocarpus*) and the Afghan or camel melon (*Citrullus lanatus*) – a wild relative of the watermelon. These crops were thought to stabilize areas prone to wind erosion and provide stock feed when food is scarce (varied opinions on this though). It is a source of moisture for humans and animals in African deserts, with the fruit and oily seeds cooked as food.

Paddy melon is often confused with the Afghan/camel melon in Australia, where both species were introduced. The ‘Paddies’ have prickly looking small fruits (like golf balls) and contains more toxicity than the ‘Camels’ which have big smooth fruits. Horse, sheep and cattle losses have been associated with eating the Paddy melons. The smell of the plant generally makes it unpalatable so stock problems are not common, unless when feed is scarce. Tests have shown that sheep being fed with this fruit have not resulted in poisoning.

Unless you really know your melons, I suggest you stay away from these!



**MTB ride – Oaks Fire Trail 20 Aug 2017**

by Donna Mulholland

(First published 2017 BT)

What a great start to the ride.

Weather was great.

Saw volcanic rocks formations, good views, could see Sydney (in clouds) from part of the track, sunny where we were!

At the end on the wider track, Thaïs “had the wind in her sails” and just flew down that last decline, I couldn’t keep up!

The next bit was fun as it was built up for the mountain bike riders, with twists and turns and jumps.

We thought we did well to negotiate them, not bad for beginners!

Thanks for the day.



**Alpine Survival weekend – Snowy Mountains**

23-24 July 2016

by Chris Ward

(Previously published Spring 2016 Bush Telegraph)

The Alpine survival weekend was a huge success. We were given just the right amount of “solid” weather to make our day interesting but not too uncomfortable.

Thank you to everyone who took the weather with good spirit and humour.

I believe we covered all topics thoroughly and had some very valuable practical exercises.

I was very impressed that in 45 minutes the group was able to construct a snow mound shelter capable of accommodating seven souls, albeit a touch cramped.

Although we did not camp out in the snow due to severe

weather (Friday night saw a tent ripped apart due to wind!) we did have a wonderful Saturday night back in the warmth of the camper where we all survived quite well.

I hope to run a similar trip next year with similar enthusiasm and numbers of attendance.

Thanks again, Chris.



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Contributions to this newsletter are always welcome & can be emailed to Thais, during May for Winter 2021 edition.

**Club Meetings coming up in 2021**  
 April 13th AGM– Bass Hill



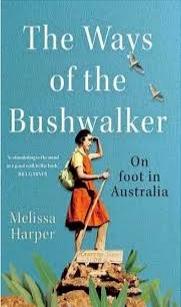
***NEW MEMBERS***

Please welcome our new members when you next see them on an activity.

<b>Tina Artemi</b>	<b>Philip Artemi</b>
<b>Jennifer Attard</b>	<b>Mathew Blackwood</b>
<b>Joseph Hoang</b>	<b>Anna Ashenden</b>
<b>Kavita Joshi</b>	<b>Jessica Lai</b>
<b>Abbey LaPlana</b>	<b>Lee Mulholland</b>
<b>Amanda Osborne</b>	<b>Daniel Osborne</b>
<b>Kyle Osborne</b>	<b>Emily Osborne</b>
<b>Hayden Ryan</b>	<b>David Skennerton</b>
<b>Penny Sze</b>	<b>Peter Tappouras</b>
<b>Ilias Zotos</b>	<b>Vicki Zotos</b>

**Bushwalking in Australia and threats from luxury lodges in National Parks**  
**Report from BNSW General Meeting, (via Zoom), 16 Feb 2021, by Jon Gray**

The recent meeting of Bushwalking NSW featured an interesting and thought-provoking talk by Dr Melissa Harper, discussing her recently updated book: *The Ways of the Bushwalker*.



She canvassed some of the broader changes occurring with bushwalking in Australia. The increasing reach of the internet and social media has seen the rise of walkers in less formal groups such as Meet-up Groups. Apparently, there are now 130 000 registered walkers in these groups, which is several times more than those in organised Clubs such as ours.

Long distance walks are being established in each State. They are being supported by State Governments who recognise their contribution to community health, but perhaps even more, their potential to attract tourism dollars and create regional employment opportunities. There is a register of "Great Walks of Australia", which includes 21 iconic walks with international reputation. Whilst only one of these is in NSW, on Lord Howe Island, the NSW Government recently committed \$80M to nine long distance walking tracks around the State, including the Light to Light walk on the far south coast, and others in the Tweed Byron Hinterland, Snowy Mountains, Sydney region, Macleay River and elsewhere. \$257m has been allocated to boost nature-based tourism across the State.

We were shown some examples of these new long distance walking tracks, including Tasmania's Three Cape's Track, in the south coast region near Port Ar-

thur, which includes up-market and luxury lodge accommodation. Costs ranging from \$500 to over \$3000 are charged by the Government and commercial companies to do the four-day walk. This is where some rather disturbing elements to these long-distance walking track projects emerged.

It appears that in at least some of these long-distance walks around the country, walkers are not even allowed free access. They can only undertake the walk with the payment of sizeable fees. This issue was more fully reported on in a recent article titled "Luxury lodges = Wilderness lost", by James McCormack in *Wild Magazine* (2020). After hearing about a new exciting 65km Green Gully Track in NSW's Oxley Wild Rivers National Park, he decided to do it, only to learn that he could not do so unless he paid a minimum of \$600. In the article he bemoans this situation as not environmental protection but alienation of public land for profit, a nation-wide plunder of Australia's wilderness. This is clearly an issue we all need to be aware of and we must help to ensure it doesn't result in loss of ready access by all of us to our loved wilderness areas, irrespective of our financial status. *Images from Wild Magazine (Issue 178) article).*



## SNIPPETS

Compiled by Thais Turner

- Don't forget to check out the details of the **Remote Area First Aid Course** currently being organised by the Walks Committee. Be sure to enquire about booking in. The skills you learn in a training situation (with other bushwalkers) can be of great benefit not only for yourself, but for your fellow walkers if ever a real life scenario presents itself while you're in the outdoors (or even at home or in the wider community).
- Recent heavy rain/flooding has **impacted access** to many areas that Club Members may have been planning for upcoming activities. Please check NPWS, RMS, SES, etc as there have been some recent closures and roadworks may be occurring for some time to come (e.g. Bell's Line of Road near Mt Tomah, and Megalong Road near Shipley Road in the Blue Mountains). Also check out access around the Georges River waterways and surrounding creeks.
- The debate about the **Warragamba Dam** wall raising has been re-ignited as a result of recent flooding. Check the recently emailed articles and video from Blue Mountains Conservation Society where you will find a wide variety of opinions/facts represented. Recently revealed was also the real cost of raising the Dam – with offsets it's expected to be \$1.6 billion + World Heritage offsets of \$1.3 billion. To note: a very large number of waterways enter the Nepean River/Hawkesbury River system below the Warragamba Dam wall and so these floodplains have been, and will always be, subject to large inundations during such rain events.
- A cycling network in the lower Mountains has seen some recent progress on having the old **Glenbrook Railway Tunnel** (under the GWH) re-opened for walkers and cyclists in the future. A future Club activity may incorporate this.
- The **Amazing Race** came to the Blue Mountains in early Nov 2020 to film an episode that aired on March 16, 2021. (Can be seen on TenPlay). The contestants negotiated **Empress Falls Canyon** (a canyon our Club members regularly do). Many local canyon guides and bush safety access crews were involved and were happy to showcase the region. The contestants also had to negotiate an 'Indiana Jones' style wobbly rope bridge set up at Mt Boyce which was 45metres off the ground and 40metres end to end with 600mm timber slats between the flooring. Special harnesses and overhead safety lines kept them safe when they were inevitably knocked off.
- Hargraves Lookout in Blackheath will soon have an **upgrade** since a ½ million grant has been approved. More opportunities for scenic bush views when your activity is planned in Blackheath. Katoomba Falls and Katoomba Cascades are now also lit up at night after an upgrade there in 2020.
- **Science for Wildlife** would like people to participate in koala counts whenever they are in the Campbelltown or Blue Mountains areas. Also when club members are near waterways (and there are many around the Bankstown area) to participate in crayfish counts, report on turtles and frogs, in an effort to gain data and track the emerging trends (generally it's thought there has been a decrease in many species). Visit [www.frogid.net.au](http://www.frogid.net.au) to identify the various calls and markings of any frogs in your area.
- For the budding, and experienced, navigators among members, a recently published book could be your next (Birthday, Mother's day, Father's day, Christmas or anytime!) gift. From Caro Ryan (<https://lotsafreshair.com>) '**How to Navigate**. The art of traditional map and compass navigation in an Australian context' is written in an easy to understand format. Affordable at \$24.95 (incl GST, shipping extra), currently in stock, but also able to be back ordered. Check her website (and you may wish to sign up to her blog).
- Members will have heard of the **Pink Flannel Flowers** (*Actinotus helianthi*) which have been blooming in proliferation after the severe fires of 2019/2020. Rarely seen (once every 50 years by some accounts) there were carpets of them to be seen at Mount Hay, Narrowneck, and several other Mountains locations. Among the blackened banksia, these small flowers may look like daisies from a distance. SMH published an article on the phenomenon on 15/2/21.
- SMH also published articles members may be interested to follow up: on 16/1/21 about National Parks receiving a \$100m boost to help recover from the Black Summer fires, and another on 14/2/21 regarding the **Kosciuszko** brumbies trapping plan, which then appears to set the 'most fertile' animals free, which may be defeating the purpose of reducing numbers, when the aim is to lessen the impact on the fragile alpine landscape.
- Many will be pleased to know that the **Wollemi Pines** site, saved from the 2019/20 fires by quick thinking National Parks officers following a strategic plan that saw teams and individuals inserted in the field especially to work to keep them hydrated and safe, has been listed as an 'asset of inter-generational significance' which will help to protect them in perpetuity. Refer to the website [www.bluemountainsgazette.com.au](http://www.bluemountainsgazette.com.au) for articles about how they were protected during the fires.
- A somewhat alarming trend of **private** villages (labelled as **huts**) in **public parks** is highlighted in recent Wild magazine articles. <https://wild.com.au/conservation/luxury-lodges-means-wilderness-lost/> Jon also refers to this article in his BNSW meeting report in this current issue of the Bush Tele, on page 6. Part 2 on this topic was published in the Autumn 2021 issue (No. 179). Compelling reading.
- Further north at **Mount Warning** some insight is given in this article from Quadrant: [www.quadrant.org.au/opinion/doomed-planet/2021/02/the-warning-in-mount-warnings-closure/](http://www.quadrant.org.au/opinion/doomed-planet/2021/02/the-warning-in-mount-warnings-closure/) . Such closures, and the rationale behind them, do not bode well for the future.



 **Black Diamond**



icebreaker.com  
PURE MERINO



For specials,  
Join the Alpsport club  
Free to join on our  
website or in store.

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