BANKSTOWN BUSHWALKING CLUB INC.

THE OUTDOORS CLUB THAT DOES IT ALL!



It just undulates a bit

by Meela Davis

The Larapinta Trail is a 234-ish kilometre trail stretching from Alice Springs to Mt Sonder, which rises above Redbank Gorge. It is considered the best (and toughest) trail in Australia.

I walked the Larapinta trail over 15 days in early July, 2018. Like many Australians, I harboured a secret belief that central Australia was somehow a vast and empty void. However much I studied about the cliffs, crags and hills, I quietly imagined shuffling over a red ocean of dust, toward a sunset that would never come.

Often I felt like the Larapinta was playing a practical joke with my expectations.

I expected it to be hot but most mornings I woke up to icy water in the bottles. I expected it to be tough - it was almost disappointingly pleasant. I expected to be alone, but in fact I befriended a number of fellow hikers on the trail. I had anticipated snakes, dingoes and kangaroos. In fact I saw 2 euros, and heard 1 dingo from a distance. I expected massive ranges to punctuate stretches of flatlands. Those flatlands, they just undulate a bit.

Day one, a long drive from Alice to Redbank Gorge. I pitch my tent in a shady creek and then just wonder what to do next. Ascend the iconic Mt Sonder, I guess. It feels so strange to be starting the trek after the months of planning and dreaming. Mt Sonder marks a high point in the Heavitree Ranges, pushed out of the ground 350 million years ago. The ranges are formed by razor-thin folds of hard Heavitree quartzite, only found on these ridges. Hard and smooth, the chips that flake off can be used for cutting. So much for flat red dust. The undulating climb to the peak of Sonder is ascends 600m over roughly 8km. There is a 'true peak' 3km to the North, but with no track leading to it. Looking east toward Alice is a trail marker pointing cheekily over the cliff: "ASP 234km".

Quite a lot grows on the Heavitree Ranges, yet it is sparse and offers little protection from the elements. Much of the ground is carpeted by blue spinifex. Fluffy and inviting to look at, a slight touch will leave needle-like splinters under the skin. There are sprawling fields between ranges where rock plates jut out the ground, rising out of the spinifex like a stegosaurus burial ground.

The first thing you learn on is that the trail markers are creative with their interpretation of distance. In fact, one of the hardest sections has recently had a sneaky and undocumented 3km increase due to track improvements. The Larapinta attracts the kind of person who wants to challenge themselves against nature. The creative trail markers are the first clue that the desert is working to soften your structured and logical perception of reality.

Somewhere on day 2 I caught kilometre fever and ticked off 26km of undulating hills between Redbank Gorge and Finke River. Coming into Finke River Camp at dusk, I found several other hikers eating their meals. My second night was spent sleeping in close company on the shelter platform provided. Chatting, we got to know each other - a couple from Poland, some colleagues from France, and Jordan. The 17 year old local gal speed-hiking the trail in 6 ½ days for her school holidays. She hiked in darkness. She hiked with a swollen knee, and with shredded shoes. In the coming days I would ask every hiker if they had met 'Wonder Girl', just to spread her fame. (cont'd pg 4)





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PRESIDENT'S PIECE

Summer is here again! One could be deceived into thinking it's Autumn or Winter again some days, but then we encounter another scorcher, and we see the fire danger metre dialled up to the max. Please check the online sites to keep up to date with potential **fire issues** in any outdoor activity areas that you want to visit. The vagaries of the **weather** continue to play havoc with some of our scheduled trips. But we go with the flow and re-schedule, no problem.

We have another varied **Activities Program** on offer for Summer 2018-2019, with some new leaders, which is pleasing to see. There's sure to be something for everyone. Have a look. Thanks to Wai-Lin for compiling all the trip suggestions into an exciting program.

We are having a different style of event and venue for our **Christmas Party / Social get -together** this year – at a members' place on a Sat night. We thank Julie & Vaz for their generous offer and look forward to a fun evening, and the revelation of who our **Leader of the Year** is for 2018!

Canyoning season is beginning again and we have a number of opportunities to get involved, whether you are a beginner, experienced, or just want to have a nice camping weekend away. Select your favourite spots from those on offer in the Summer season.

BY THAÏS TURNER

Look out for opportunities to learn navigation by going **rogaining in** 2019 (a 3hr minigaine event with individual entry allowed, in Feb, starts off the year), and get to know your fellow walkers from other bushwalking clubs, by coming along to the **BNSW** quarterly meetings in Redfern, and next year's annual bush camp.

We are on the lookout for people with **talks** and/or **slide presentations** to entertain/enlighten us after our meetings on the 2nd Monday night of most months. The Secretary would also like to hear form people, who can offer to take a place on the Supper roster for our meetings – reimbursements are available.

The Club's **40**th **anniversary** is coming up in 2020 – we would like your input for the celebrations. Let us know, we'd love to hear your ideas.

Reminder that the General Meeting **Minutes** are sent out to all Club members, so please take a look to keep up to date with what is being discussed within the Club, and how you too could have some input.

See you on the track sometime, Thaïs

THREE MEN ON A WALK BY J. R TURNER (THAÏS' GRANDFATHER)

(continuing the story from Spring 2018 Bush Telegraph)

Sunday was spent in a quiet manner, up till four o'clock, when an exhibition of aqua-planing was given by two Sydney visitors. The conditions however were against spectacular displays, and on one occasion a serious drowning fatality was narrowly averted. Owing to the rope attached to the plane breaking, one of the Sydney visitors was precipitated into the lake. His plight was unnoticed for several minutes but eventually assistance was forthcoming, and he was quickly dragged aboard a launch.

After a very pleasant farewell evening, at which several items were given by members of the walking party, preparations were made for an early departure on the morrow.

The boat for Sale duly left the Lakes Entrance wharf at 8 a.m. Several of the party from the house accompanied us on our seventy mile trip. It was a bright and clear morning and the lakes were seen at their best. Lake King and Lake Victoria are first met with. They are similar to our Tuggerah Lakes, perhaps larger in extent. Dinner was served on board and after some further steaming through Lake Wellington we entered the Latrobe River. For about three miles the vessel steams up this narrow river prettily bordered by trees of all descriptions. Much life abounds in the river and many swans, with their pretty cygnets accompanying them, were met with. The last stage of the journey is taken up the Thompson River, which meets the Latrobe just outside Sale. At three o'clock we reached Sale, and as the train left at four thirty, we made a hasty survey of this important Gippsland capital town.

Leaving Sale by train, we quickly travelled through the rich agricultural districts of Central Gippsland. Arrived at Warru-

gul at about eight o'clock. We made several enquiries from likely people as to the possibility of getting to Nerrim South but all to no purpose. At last one of the party was instructed to interview the local police constable who was doing duty on the station. He turned out to be the most eloquent, obliging, and generally diverting man we met on the tour. After some delay, he arranged an introduction with a Mr. Healy, the licensee of the Nerrim South Hotel.

In an hour we were driven out in the direction of the Baw Baw Mountains and were safely lodged with Mr. Healys hotel at Nerrim South. At this stage we found one of our party getting rather seriously ill. We scoured the township for a doctor but in vain. Hence a "council of medicine" decided on the sickly one returning to Melbourne, by train, leaving us to push on per boot.

In the very early morn we started out for Nooiee, eight miles distant. A strong head wind retarded us somewhat and the signs of approaching rain also added to our discomfiture. The road is a good metalled one, and passes through some old established dairy holdings. Away to the North is the mountain region for which we were heading. We obtained some necessary provisions from a local grocer, after disturbing all his family from sleep, and then breakfasted behind the butt of an old gum tree. As rain began to fall lightly we hurried on, and at eleven o'clock we entered the mountain region just outside Noojee. We descended into the valley and reached our objective in time for the mid-day meal. Noojee is the terminus of a branch line from Warrugul. It is of very recent origin, and as it depends on the forests for its wealth, the timber industry is strongly represented. In its appearance it is strikingly akin to movie towns so numerous on our film sheets when a small American country town is depicted. (cont'd pg 5)

REPORT ON BNSW AGM & PRESENTATION 21 AUG 2018 BY JON GRAY

Your faithful BNSW delegates, Thaïs, Kerry and myself, attended the BNSW AGM in August. The meeting commenced with a stimulating presentation titled "*Exploratory trips in the West MacDonnells*" by Meg McKone, an experienced walker from Canberra Bushwalking Club. Meg has extensively explored this beautiful and exciting area, that extends 160 km to the west of Alice Springs, and has written a book about it (*Mountains of Discovery: Exploring the West MacDonnell Ranges*). The wonderful pictures certainly inspired us to visit there one day!

During the AGM, the President Alex Allchin reported on the successful year for BNSW. He spoke of the two main environmental campaigns BNSW is actively involved in: *"Save our Wild Rivers"* opposing the raising of Warragamba Dam wall, and *"Save Kosci"* opposing feral horses in KNP. He was proud of BNSW's major project titled *"Its Sweet to Walk Soft"* which promotes minimal impact bushwalking (supported by the NSW Environmental Trust). He referred to the big change of Bush Search and Rescue (BSAR) becoming part of NSW SES, and the success of the ANZAC Day dawn service at Splendour Rock that 100 bushwalkers attended. Later, the Executive Officer, Kirsten Meyer, reported an overall 3% increase in membership of BNSW affiliated clubs (ie, 309 new people). Future direc tions were outlined, which included greater use of technology to improve services and endeavouring to attract more young people to clubs.

The 2018-19 BNSW Committee was elected, with most current key members agreeing to continue on for the coming year, including Alex as President. It was encouraging to see a few new people keen to take on other supporting roles. The next meeting is on 20 November, which will update us on the *Save Kosci* protest walk.



(Portals Canyon, West MacDonnells, M McKone)

HEN AND CHICKEN BAY SAT 18 AUGUST BY SHANNON

Our walk almost didn't go ahead thanks to extensive delays across the train network.

To add to our dilemma, we lost a participant before the walk had even started.

They arrived early at Circular Quay and decided to go for a wander - all the way to Chinatown!

After several texts and phone calls, our wanderer agreed the group should continue without them.

Ten became nine and off we went to explore the beautiful parks and sites along Hen & Chicken Bay.











BUSH TELEGRAPH

LARAPINTA (CONT'D FROM PG 1)

BY MEELA DAVIS

Talking with her though, I realised that I could 'win' the Larapinta or I could enjoy it. I switched gears down a bit and spent the next day resting (read: hiking the 7km Pound walk) in Ormiston Gorge.

Nothing is certain on the Larapinta. Place names are so obvious as to be laughable ('trig point', 'style', 'rocky talus'). Some were so obvious as to be ambiguous. It turns out there are a lot of places that could be described as 'hilltop' or 'base of hill'. Everyone knows that any place named 'water', 'creek' or 'waterfall' is just having play with you. I quickly learned not to camp anywhere named 'rocky', not even if it has a water tank and toilet.

This trail, named "Salty River", is carved by ancient and powerful water. Now gone, signs still remain everywhere. Dry creeks are the last vestiges a once massive inland ocean. The walls of the many gorges are polished smooth by gushing torrents. Giant stones in the dry creeks lie flat on the sand, washed smooth, looking like so many beached seals. The ridges rising 400m above Serpentine Gorge are home to 'ripple rocks' formed by sediment on an ocean floor.

Ormiston Gorge and Ellery Creek are still good for swimming. The remarkably beautiful and serene Fish Hole is an inviting waterhole swimming. The first real water in over a week, nestled in the lowlands untouched by icy winds, Fish Hole is a sacred cultural site. Passers-by are asked to simply share the beauty.

The terrain changes so often to make your head spin. Most days are dominated by traversing inhospitable hill-and-gully systems, beaten by sun and hammered by wind. A sudden corner turns into a lush gorge bursting with life. Massive cycads dominate, unlikely ghost gums root themselves into impossible cracks in the gorge walls, high above. One memorable day, I pressed from Ellery Creek to Ghost Gum Flat. I walked through a hellish expanse where not even spinifex grew, the dolomite rocks absorbing heat, and the ground littered with fist-sized stones ready to trip me over on each step. Every few kilometres the terrain dipped down, the trail parted a sea of chest-high river grass and dropped me into a sandy creek shaded by ghost gums. Every time, it seemed unreal.

There were constant changes in the styles of walking. Climbing narrow cut-in stairs, scrambling on the side of ridges, tripping over boulders on the tracks. Boulder hopping in gorges and shuffling on sand in the dry creek beds, slogging it over pebbles to trace the creek lines between ridges. Sometimes even skipping through dense and cool acacia forests. The Larapinta never lets you get comfortable.

Even gender stereotypes are warped here. The Larapinta is a great place to meet women. We make up the majority of hikers, and the majority of solo hikers. So many women, like me, in the desert to search out adventure, challenge, solitude and beauty. I found a great pleasure in breaking my day chatting to passing hikers. Hikers have particular interests - where can you camp, how light is your gear, how is the terrain ahead, the quality of showers at Ormiston and Standley, and we love to pass on special tips and gossip about other hikers.

No matter how many times I interrogated hikers coming toward me, they described the upcoming terrain as "fine, it just undulates a bit". I said exactly the same thing to people who asked me for advice. Undulates - a word we all came to understand in a wry, visceral sense. Undulates a bit, it might mean 3 hours of rolling 300m hills; or 20m undulations every 50m. The maps were no help - the scale seeming to smooth out any features of the terrain.

The other memorable advice I got from fellow hikers was the excited exclamations about Ghost Gum Flat. "Ghost Gum Flat has a table!" was repeated to me over 15 times. Only people who've been sitting on sharp rocks for 2 weeks would get excited about a shabby picnic table, and neglect to mention the magnificence of the towering old ghost gum on the flat.

Playful trail markers, loose rocks underfoot, uncertain 'undulations', sudden changes in terrain, and unhelpful landmark names. The Larapinta would not be pinned down. It wears on you, clearing away the cobwebs of expectation. I let go of my kilometre fever, and I slowed to the pace of this ancient land. More and more I thought of people who lived on this land before the trail was cut. Barefoot gatherers picking through the spinifex. Women who walked waterhole to waterhole, without the luxury of rangers trucking water in each week, or food drops at the tourist traps.

Casting my eye forward, I could see the next ridge and estimate it would be 5km away by trail. Then the meaning of kilometres melted away. Thursday seemed like a ridiculous concept to me as I camped on a high ridge, snapping a photo rather than articulate my awe. Nowhere to be. Red grime covered everything, I had melded with the rocks and dust. Vehicles seemed obscene. The only place I was going is a day's walk away.



THREE MEN ON A WALK BY J. R TURNER (CONT'D FROM PG 2)

The Latrobe commences its long journey to the Gippsland lakes at a point some few miles at the back of Noojee. It courses through the small settlement at a very rapid rate. After partaking of a very homely meal at the local refreshment room we engaged in conversation with several townsmen. Eventually we learned that the Loch Valley timber train was about to start. We hastily approached the engine driver, a "hard case" who was only too delighted to offer us a seat on the top of the week's supply of oats.

The engine was of the Stephenson period and ran on a very narrow gauge. For eight miles we traversed some very interesting timber country before arriving at Loch Valley, at the foot of the Baw Baw Mountains. During the course of the trip the couplings broke loose on one of the trucks and the train proceeded separately in two different directions. The manner in which the offending trucks were retrieved created a great deal of amusement.

After leaving the cluster of timber shanties which went to make up Loch Valley hamlet, we followed the timber tramline for a further five miles.

Through dense jungle the line proceeded for about three miles and then rapidly ascended. Giant timber was prominent everywhere. Towards the summit the undergrowth became less pronounced and finally we arrived at the sawmill. We made ourselves known to the Engineer who invited us to stay in the tin "humpy" for the night. After a frugal meal we spent some time around an immense fire and then retired to our bunks.

A fierce storm occurred during the night the lightning and thunder being very disturbing. A heavy fall of rain also accompanied the storm. The following morning was very discouraging as rain appeared to have set in. During one of the breaks in the weather we made off for McVeigh's, 14 miles on. The track was fairly easy to find, but on account of lack of directions we were doubtful during the day as to our ultimate destination.

It was unfortunate we did not happen on good weather as the walk was a pleasant one. Traversing the mountain we gradually descended through avenues of all descriptions of natural growth. There were very few signs of animal or bird life till we reached the Yarra on the opposite side of the Baw Baws. Our last stage on this part of the journey led us along the river for some miles and about four o'clock very tired and damp we dropped our "swags" on the verandah of the very well conducted guest house known as "McVeigh's" Hotel.

The Seymours, who now conduct this establishment, proved generous hosts, and in addition to providing us with a dry rigout each, entertained us in a very hospitable manner during our brief stay.

In driving rain we departed early the next morning for Warburton, 22 miles distant. The road in parts is quite good, but after passing McMahon's Creek, half-way to Warburton, it becomes a veritable quagmire. Settlers are practically isolated as traffic is exceedingly difficult and well-nigh impossible.

For the majority of the distance the road follows closely the Upper Yarra and affords some very fine views. Owing to the heavy rains the river was running strongly at the time and at some of the sharp bends presented a very animated scene.

The concluding portion of the walk was along the timber tramway line leading to the Warburton railway station. After a mile or so, we crossed the paddock belonging to the Seventh Day Adventist Society and so on into the progressive mountain resort of Warburton. After some failure with several boarding housekeepers we were successful in getting accommodation at Ballarat House kept by a Mr. Dunphy. Despite our unconventional and mudstained appearance we were made welcome. A hot dinner was soon prepared and so officially our walking tour happily ended.

An early departure was made by train on the following morning. Arriving in Melbourne we made for the "Federal" Hotel. Here a complete change of garments took place. We emerged ordinary citizens with all the marks of the average Australian city-dweller, and passed unnoticed in the busy thoroughfares of the acting capital city.

The following day our party left by the "Zealandia". It was an uneventful trip but nonetheless delightful. A calm sea and a beneficent sun welcomed us back to our native city and thus ended a tour that will be long remembered for its diversity of scenery and innumerable experiences.

J.R.Turner

2.12.24

(Editor's note: My grandfather was aged 26 when this walk was completed).

GARIE BEACH TO WATTAMOLLA 9 SEP 2018 FROM SHANNON





SNIPPETS

- NPWS have experienced major staff cuts recently, however they have received a funding boost for 4 major visitor projects – developing a Snowies iconic walk, making the Light to Light (on the Far South Coast) into a Great Walk, track extensions in the Thredbo Valley, and a Murramurang South Coast walk.
- A peak body for canyoning has been formed you can read about this new initiative by looking at https://nswcanyoning.org.au/
- If you are thinking of going to Nepal for trekking or touring, Club members recommend Ambar Tamang who has guided many groups from BBC to date. He lives in Kathmandu and has local on-the-ground knowledge to also advise you about trekking areas in the countries surrounding Nepal. Check his website for the latest details at https:// www.blossomexpeditions.com/
- At the recent Australian Geographic Awards night it was pleasing to note that the 2018 Young Conservationist of the Year is a 15yr old school girl whose campaign is to ban plastic bags in NSW. Sophia Skarparis is rightly concerned about a future where plastic debris clogs Australia's and the world's oceans. Equally as noteworthy is Jade Hameister, the 2018 Young Adventurer of the Year, a 17yr old girl who has become the youngest person to ski to the North Pole, the South Pole, and across Greenland the Polar Hat Trick. Their inspiring actions will go a long way to paving the way for other young women to explore their possibilities, and to be game-changers of their generation.
- The Club has joined the **Gardens of Stone Alliance** by pledging support that our members agree with the proposal to protect and add additional lands to the National Park estate.
- Warragamba Dam and the wall raising proposal are still in the news for all the wrong reasons Parliament has voted in favour of amending the Act to allow the inundation of millions of hectares of wilderness and National Park lands. This is despite a rare bird the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater being found in the Burragorang; the destruction of irreplaceable Aboriginal sites; the chance for a land buyback being rejected; and the number of creeks coming into the Hawkesbury-Nepean system below the Dam meaning that raising the wall will not make the flood prone land any safer. All this to enable further reckless development of flood prone lands, without taking any notice of the environmental degradation that will occur in it's wake. The World Heritage listing would also be under threat from these developments.
- Make sure you come to the Club meeting on Mon 11th February 2019 to hear Keith Muir of the **Colong Foundation for Wilderness** speak about the 2 campaigns above, and other topical environmental issues they're currently working on.
- Western Sydney Airport has also generated another scandal they are buying biodiversity offsets, which allows
 them to raze Threatened Species and Threatened Ecological Communities in one place, and plant some trees or do
 some infrastructure works elsewhere, and claim a neutral effect.

Refer to an article in the BMCS (Blue Mountains Conservation Society) 'Hut News', No 364, November 2018, page 5, by Ross Coster outlining why the concept of buying biodiversity offsets is just plain scandalous in this case.

He describes this case (from a MOU signoff) of a \$70million cross subsidy payment, between Federal Govt Departments (Dept of Infrastructure & Regional Dvlpt and Dept of Defence). It is a case of one Government Department shifting money to another Government Department to legitimise their actions, which don't actually benefit the environment.

Also: leading to the destruction of 359 hectares of a Threatened Ecological Community and offsetting it with land that is already under Federal Govt ownership; using funds to pay the Dept of Defence to do works they should already be doing; species remediation being cast aside for putting up security fences and repairing bridges; offset land being inside a Defence establishment so that the public couldn't visit or admire, check on the progress of, or the works that will be done. In the future Defence could move their base and sell off the land for development, so these offsets are not protected forever, just for the short time until the Dept changes their mind. No protection of land for wildlife in new reserves or private land 'BioBanks' are proposed, just works the Dept of Defence is already obliged to do at their Orchard Hills (near Penrith) establishment.

- Maps 524 printed maps will only be available in e-version from 3 September. Quality and coverage varies for these topo maps of most of NSW.
- World Expeditions recently bought Blue Mountains Adventure Company (BMAC). It's now their office in the Blue Mountains with the original BMAC staff still operating for the time being.
- Works were mentioned in David Coleman's newsletter that were occurring at **Yeramba Lagoon**. Locals are not sure the actions have been very successful yet at restoring the water quality, animals and environment to their former status.
- Google search console has enabled mobile-first indexing for our website. You will now notice the sections, pictures
 and tabs of the website pages scrolling from top to bottom, in an efficient easy view, on your mobile devices and
 smaller screens. A link will take you back to the wider desktop computer screen version of the website. We are sure
 everyone with a mobile device will be pleased with this enhancement. Remember to check the Club website regularly.
- All **Rays** Outdoors stores will become **Macpac** Adventure Hubs early in 2019. You'll see the Macpac range and all the old Rays favourites.
- Be on the alert: as **hunting** is still permitted in State Forests, and you may not have much time to find out.

















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