



NEWCASTLE RAMBLERS BUSHWALKING CLUB

NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2008

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Contributions to Editor

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The Nepal Trek with World Expeditions and Friends. February 2008

Robert & Val Gasgoine

There are lots of fascinating stories to tell about Nepal. I could talk about Kathmandu, the Himalayas, the culture and the people, but this small story is about my experiences trekking in the foot hills of the massive 7555 metre monolith of Annapurna mountain.

The story really begins at the Radisson Hotel in the centre of the bustling and frantically busy city of Kathmandu. Here we will meet our Sherpa leader and mentor, Ang Tshering Sherpa, solidly built with handsome Tibetan features, who will, throughout the trek, guide us, take good care of us, and put up with all our foibles, and eventually become a special friend to us all. We wait in the hotel foyer, four Australian couples and two English girls, all with

orders to be there at 4pm sharp. When Ang arrives he introduces himself. He is very polite and speaks very softly so we are forced to listen carefully to his advice and instructions. He patiently answers all our silly questions. "Are there snakes?", "Will we see a tiger?", "Have you ever lost anyone?"

We now get down to the basics. Are we all fit? We will need to be because we will trek up and down perhaps 600 metres as much as four times a day. We should not be affected by altitude; we will not venture above 2500 metres. Each of us is allowed 15kgs and that includes large carry bag, sleeping bag, thermarest and a warm coat, all of which is provided by World Expeditions. Porters will carry two of these bags plus a four man tent and their own gear. And all we have to carry is a day-pack with water, rain gear and something warm to wear, but if we feel sick the porters will carry our day-packs as well. And we may get sick. We are strongly advised to drink and clean our teeth with only bottled water. We have, at our service, 25 people, made up of guides, cooks, and kitchen staff and porters. And we will need them all; the amount of gear we use is immense.

We break up to join later at the hotel restaurant, where we dine and wine and get to know each other. I am very pleased with our crew; they are friendly, good humoured and ready to enjoy themselves.

Today we fly to Pokhara, where shops selling incredibly cheap trekking gear are everywhere. We stock up on gear we need and more we don't need; the prices are irresistible. For example, I pay \$16.00 for a polar fleece jacket and an excellent walking pole.

Day One; the trek begins.

After a long bus trip on a scary, narrow and potholed road we finally reach the small hamlet of Khala. From here we will commence our Annapurna trek. We walk for about an hour up a steep incline through farmland then wet misty forest to Australia Camp (No one seems to know the origin of this name).

The porters have already arrived and the tents are up. It's very cold and misty up here at 2000 metres so we quickly don our down jackets and scarfs. The camp setup is simple; a fenced field, usually near a village, with a small building used for cooking, six tents for the trekkers, two for the guides, large mess tent with table and chairs, and two toilet tents with freshly dug holes. The mess tent and the building will be used later as sleeping quarters for the cooks and porters.

I wake up about two in the morning for a toilet need. The mist has lifted and I am stunned by the unexpected beauty of the place. The full moon has brilliantly lit up the magnificent snow covered massif of the Annapurna and Fishtail mountains. The reflection off the snow adds light to green forest that surrounds us. I shall never forget this moon and snow forged spectre.

Day two we wake up to cups of hot tea, warm water to wash our selves, a bright clear blue sky, inspiring mountains, and trekkers up and about taking photos. We will discover over the next few days that by late afternoon the clouds and mist will obscure the views, but we will wake each morning surprised and delighted by again blue skies and magnificent vistas.

After packing our bags and eating a hearty breakfast we are on the track again. The porters and cooks will now have breakfast, break camp, clean and pack everything, and, carrying very heavy loads, will still reach the lunch spot before we do. Today we walk through a rhododendron forest, small terraced farms, and quaint villages that seemed to be still in the twelfth century. We arrive at Landrung, village where we camp for the night.

I now realise that we are not walking on bush tracks but stone roads built by the villagers. These roads go up steep mountains, down into steep rugged valleys and across wild rivers. Because there are no vehicles everyone, young and old, has to walk from village to village on these cobbled stone roads. Children are forced to walk long distances to school. Everything has to be carried in by people or by animals. The cheap beer you are enjoying at the end of the day was carted to you on someone's back.

Day three we descend through rice terraces into a steep gorge to the glacial fed river Modi Khola (Milk river). After crossing the river on a swing bridge we begin the very steep slow climb to our campsite at Chomrong village, which perched high on a mountain top (2210m), affords wondrous views of Annapurna, Hiunchuli and Machapuchare mountains. Lindsay, who became so sick yesterday he refused his chips, now has his day-pack carried. His usual side splitting humour is somewhat dimmed, but we all know it'll be back soon.

Day four started with a memorable sunrise and lots of photo taking. Today we trekked up and down to cross tributaries through beautiful oak forest and farm terraces before a gradual ascent to the substantial village of Ghandruk. This village supplied most of the formidable Ghurkhas who fought in WW2 with the Indian and British armies, and they are very proud of the fact. We are here early so have time to explore the village and visit the local museum. The museum consists of one tiny room packed with Ghurkha swords and daggers, local dress wear, farming and household implements. The only light is via a small door so it's very difficult to see the exhibits properly but we are allowed to pick up and examine the objects, which we all enjoyed. We were taken next door to a room full of traditional dresses, where we were entertained when Ang and Ann (a very likable effervescent lady who we called "The Diva" because she loved to sing) were dressed in traditional Gurung costumes with daggers and veils etc. And, of course, lots of photos were taken.



Nepal Adventure Seekers

Day five starts with a beautiful morning as we trek down an easy track through the widening valley and river of the Modi Khola. We are at a lower altitude here, about 1000m, and we notice an increase in farming activity. Except for occasional buffalo pulling a plough, we see farmers, men, and women and children ploughing, fertilising with cow dung, and seeding their small plots all by hand. We pass through the bustling bazaar of Naya Pul where we spot a vehicle; the first for five days. We arrive late in the afternoon at our riverside campsite just below the village. Here we have a cool refreshing beer and two Tibetan hawkers waiting for us. Tonight, one our crew Elwin, is celebrating her birthday. After dinner a cake is presented to her complete with candles. The guides, porters and cooks join us singing "Happy Birthday", which Elwin enjoys immensely. It's incredible that the cooks under difficult conditions always manage to cook varied, tasty and nutritious meals every day.

Day six and our final day. We have a short walk, about two hours, to a road, where we board a bus for

the transit back to Pokhara. There is a permanent campsite here not far from the centre of Pokhara and fairly close to the lake. Here we will stay for the night. Some of the crew go shopping, others to the World Peace Buddhist temple, and Val and I go to a picturesque restaurant on the lake. After the meal and beers we watch a snake charmer with cobras and a python doing his very impressive tricks. We were the ones being charmed however and before I knew it we had given him a very large tip. Well, you don't see snake charmers every day. That evening we were invited to a party by the guides, porters and cooks. Using only a drum as accompaniment they sang Nepalese songs with such joy and exuberance that we all joined in, dancing and singing to exhaustion. We learned during this trip that the Nepalese, despite hard conditions, are friendly, helpful, enthusiastic and joyous people, and full of life. They helped make the trip a very enjoyable and unforgettable experience.

Mid Week Myall Lakes Meander 6th August 2008

John Counce

Surfing dolphins, dingos, aboriginal artefacts, jet fighters, and wet feet. We experienced all these and more on Bob Clifton's mid week Myall Lakes meander.

Our group of eight drove to Mungo Brush camping ground and rucksacks were repacked and clothing adjustments made while Bob and David arranged a car shuffle.

We headed off close to the lake edge on a fire trail skirting around flooded sections. Whilst it was damp under foot the surrounding rain forest was magnificent with many cabbage tree plants and also stag horns (or were they elk horns)?

After walking for nearly an hour we arrived at the little fishing village of Tamboi where the Myall River flows out of Bombah Broadwater. Shortly after we found an area of dry grass in the sunshine overlooking the river and stopped for morning tea. Whilst hot drinks were being poured from thermos's Jim said there was a penguin paddling down the river. This caused some excitement until Jim quickly corrected himself. He meant to say a pelican.

The track then headed south following the river to Brambles Green. A short detour was made to inspect an old boiler which was all that remained of a timber mill. Heading on we crossed the Mungo Brush road and in a short time we were on the beach.

Whilst eating our lunch someone shouted "dolphins!" and we looked up to see a pod of about ten swimming parallel to the shore. They then

turned into a breaking wave in perfect formation before turning to their left close to shore and repeating the whole display several times. Another pod of dolphins then appeared from the same direction and did the same thing. This was followed by a dingo trotting along the beach and then two F/A 18 jet fighters passing overhead!

The rest of the walk was fairly tame by comparison. The final stage was through sand hills down to the beach at Dark Point where we noticed the shifting sands had exposed aboriginal shell middens and stone cutting tools.

Thanks Bob for arranging such an "action packed" walk.

The Six Foot Track in 1886

Contributed by Athel Molesworth

The following article was given to me and I found it wonderful reading especially as a group of Newcastle Ramblers did this walk last year. Some things might have changed since 1886 but certainly not our sense of adventure.

Three ladies and four gentlemen set out one March morning in 1886 to walk the bridle track from Katoomba to Jenolan Caves. This is an excerpt from *The Pursuit of Wonder: how Australia's landscape was explored, nature discovered and tourism unleashed* by Julia Horne.

Steep mountains, dark caves, wild dogs, bull ants, thirst, hunger, these were all reasons likely to diminish the pleasure of travel, and in the context of the times, with its heightened awareness of the distinction between feminine and masculine attributes, this was particularly so for women, or so it was often claimed.

Yet alongside the desire to protect women from many adventures, there were also codes of behaviour that allowed women at least some space to move.

At 6am one March morning in 1886 three ladies, four gentlemen and Punch the black horse set off to walk the recently opened bridle track from Katoomba to Jenolan Caves. Excited at the prospect of their visit to the Blue Mountains, most famous of colonial natural wonders, the friends had arrived from Sydney the night before provisioned with food, clothing and two tents. They planned to spend one night camping out on their journey to the caves, four nights at Caves House, and then another night camping on their return.

The idea of three young ladies in a camping party had raised at least one eyebrow, but the member of the party was finally reassured when arrangements were made for suitable supervision. The ladies themselves were concerned only about actually

surviving the 84 kilometre round trip—a sentiment shared by the gentlemen about their own physical capabilities.

Anxiety had been fuelled by friends and family who had been clamouring to outdo one another with possible calamities: 'thunderstorms, rivers too high to ford, snakes, kangaroos, snowstorms, want of water, tight boots, teeth-aching, cold, heat, wild dogs, bull-dog ants, spiders, no tracks, blackfellows, crows, want of food, milk, butter'. The list went on, with the general feeling that the ladies should travel to the caves by coach while the gentlemen pursued the rigours of the outdoors.

The gentlemen took it for granted that they would protect the 'weaker sex': this was how one behaved, and they admired the determination of their feminine companions to undertake the trip, to see for themselves the far-famed scenery and experience the 'novelty of the venture'.

Lured by the thought of fantastic scenery both gentlemen and ladies refused to be put off by the threat of wild dogs or crows. And so preparations went ahead. Boots were forwarded to a reliable bootmaker to have grip pegs fitted to their soles. Preliminary walks were taken for endurance training. Accommodation was booked, tents organised, a packhorse arranged, billies and provisions assembled, articles of clothing chosen, a railway compartment booked. Finally departure.

Now, on an early autumn day, after several hours of walking the party had halted at a creek for a late breakfast of billy tea, bread toasted on green twigs over the fire, potted meat and fish. The division of labour would have been approved in any respectable parlour. It was a feminine pursuit to supervise the breakfast spread and a masculine one to attend to the fire and organise comfortable seating for the ladies. They weren't in a parlour though, so the gentlemen also kept a watchful eye out for bull ants. The conversation was cheerful with much comment on the lovely surroundings, the beautiful mountain air and its energising effect on the mind and body.

When they were on their way again, the day was hot, the ascent tiring, and the creeks dry, a matter of concern since they had expected to find water along the route at regular intervals. But the party made light of the situation: 'Oh for the Arcade' quipped one of the ladies as they talked about the delights of lemon squash. They finally found a little water mid-afternoon, then continued to ascend until they reached the campsite on the bridle track where there was plentiful water from a small watercourse.

The gentlemen made a campfire, erected tents and collected ferns to make the bedding more comfortable. The ladies put the finishing touches to their canvas boudoir, brightened by shawls and small bouquets of native flowers, then arranged a 'rough tea spread' of toast and potted meat. The party, exhausted, drank their tea and ate their food in silence. The cool evening air revived them to delight in the twinkling stars, the crackling fire and the joy of being a party of friends on an adventure.

Before they retired one member called the rest over to look at the effects of bright moonlight on the surrounding hills and valleys – 'grand and awful: no power of man could describe that wonderful picture by night'. The day's walk may have been physically demanding yet it had provided many such moments of deep contemplation.

The next morning the ladies took themselves off to a suitably private waterhole for a bath. The party breakfasted together, packed up the camp leaving the tents and some supplies for their return journey, and began their trek planning to reach the caves by nightfall. The long steep ascent was followed by a seemingly never-ending equally steep descent, almost the last straw for one of the ladies, although several of the gentlemen were also starting to tire. They all revived later in the day after refreshment at a pleasant halting place. The trek was beginning to raise concerns: a wrong turn was taken, and there was the possibility of having to stay out a night in the open without tents. But perseverance triumphed: they located the right bridle track and walked into Jenolan Caves by the light of the moon.



Later that evening they sat down to supper with Jeremiah Wilson, keeper of the caves who 'assured the ladies they were the first of their sex who had ever made the journey on foot'. Later, back in Sydney the gentlemen liked to tell the story of how on their return journey they met a local settler, a man, who upon seeing the party exclaimed, "Be them the ladies that walked all the way from Katoomba?" Then he scanned them from head to foot and added, "Bedad, then, they don't look a bit the worst."

Photo Competition

All photos need to be given to John Sharples 49458653 by 1st meeting in November. Photos on CD, DVD or use USB flashdrive, no emails.

Yerranderie August 3-10 2008

Tony Winton

I was sitting on my lounge room floor surrounded by my maps, with a glass of red wine and a mouthful of cheese and it all looked pretty straight forward, even easy. That was the easiest it ever became.

Setting off on my annual mid week backpack with four other intrepid adventurers saw a departure early on the Sunday morning in two vehicles. The almost 400 km trip to the Kanangra Boyd National Park via Oberon took nearly all day. After a lunch at the Hampden pub and a stop at Oberon we made our camp at Batsh Camp by 4pm. I had previously seen our campsite called either Bats or Batts on different maps. We later learnt that the Batsh was a more polite shortening of the original name Bat Shit. Apparently it was a base for the collection of bat guano from the nearby Colong Caves many years ago. At least it had a good well maintained pit toilet, if little else.

We were doing a circular six day walk leaving the cars there or at least we hoped they would still be there when we returned. After a cold night we arose to a brisk -5 degree welcome. We finally found the well hidden start to the Uni Rover walking track that we would follow for a short distance. Heading off the track we skirted the Northern side of Bent Hook Swamp until we had the choice of either taking the Colong Causeway or Barralliers Pass, which was to be eventually our access to Colong Creek along which we would camp. We took the easier Pass finally making the creek after falling off the edge of the Bindook map.

I had confidently told everyone about the availability of reliable water, so you can imagine my surprise when we found Colong Creek bone dry. After plenty of rain in the area and nearby Warragamba fuller than it had been for years I was quite amazed. This was going to put a whole new slant on the walk plans. We managed to obtain water from a couple of blokes on a remote property who told us the creek hadn't seen water in over a year. We went on and camped at Egan Swamp which was so dry it resembled a paddock. We borrowed more water from a nearby vacant property.

After a minus 4 morning we headed off briskly to warm up along the fire track that would take us to Yerranderie, passing through the Tonalli Gap. The rapid road walk had us there by lunchtime, after

looking at one of the many derelict silver mines which made this place famous.

We met the caretaker of the privately owned part of the town who had a frighteningly similar appearance to that of Ivan Milat. Knowing that the infamous man was well and truly locked up I imagined it may have been his brother. I was too scared to ask! After a bit of headshaking over a \$6 camping fee he finally told us about the adjacent free camp just up the road just as we were heading off for the bush. Planning to spend two nights in the town we took the free option, passing up the \$6 hot shower on offer.

The National Park camping ground in what was called Government town next to the airstrip was a beauty. Brand new pit toilets, water tanks and dozens of kangaroo's laid on and not a soul to be seen, and a good kilometre between us and Ivan.

Wednesday morning and a relatively mild start with the temperature in the low positive figures for a change and we decided to take in the delights of Yerranderie. We searched about for more old mines, the cemetery and old buildings. The NPWS had restored the old courthouse and some churches but there were quite a few privately owned houses still about. All on generators for power. We met the other resident who gave us a lot of local information. In the afternoon we took up Ivans \$6 offer of a museum tour, he seemed a nice bloke but didn't know a real lot about the history of the place. I couldn't stop staring at him. Arthur took advantage of the hot shower deal, the rest of us decided to stink a little longer.

Thursday and still mild and we set off on the road to Scotts Main Range, crossing the Tonalli River which did have water and climbing up to Byrnes Gap. We visited a large hut complex owned by some Catholic organisation and made the turn off onto the Inglis Selection track after many tiring undulations.

Memories flooded back of sitting on the lounge room floor with my map and wine looking carefully at the track shown clearly on the map. I had imagined a reasonable track put in years ago possibly for a horse and cart, perhaps a little overgrown but never the less gradually meandering down to grassy river flats. That's where any resemblance ended. I blamed the wine! In reality the track climbed another 100 metres to the base of the cliffline of the mountain that it contoured around. It was the faintest of foot tracks that I would defy any horse to follow, eventually ending on a ridge descending to the river. Even with two GPS as a backup, I managed to successfully put us on the wrong spur and then down in a creek where I'm sure bloody Inglis never ventured.

I was certain that my navigation was spot on, the others weren't so sure. Arthur finally put on his glasses, I swallowed my pride and back up the spur we went. Then it started to rain! It's amazing that when things are a bit grim it always rains. Anyway I told everyone that it was a really nice place to visit in

the rain, but was met with a stony silence. We eventually scrambled down the very steep and slippery spur into Church Creek which was a veritable jungle of thorn bushes, the likes of which I had never seen before.

It was then that I began a close relationship with these 20mm thorns that had the annoying habit of breaking off in your hands and any exposed flesh. As I write I am still aware of many pushed well under my skin. This creek was the site of the very remote Church Creek Caves, and through the maze of prickly bushes we could see a wall of limestone and what appeared to be a small hole. More concerned with escaping this mess and finding a campsite as soon as possible we left further exploration until tomorrow.

Soon we came upon a grassy area and a puddle in the dry creek and camp was made at what must have been the famous Inglis Selection. He had to be kidding! The rain had gone but any sleep was deprived by a wild dog that obviously had a problem with us camping on his patch. Very close to our tents he howled for about thirty minutes before wandering off in disgust. He probably didn't like the smell of us.

In the morning we spent a futile time back in the thorns trying to find the caves with little success. This day was planned back on the carpet as an easy 4km along the pristine Kowmung River which incidentally was flowing at quite a high level. A total surprise after all the dry creeks we had passed. After a slow progress along the river banks and with an over whelming desire to keep my cold feet dry which was soon thwarted by a cliff dropping down into the river. An unsuccessful attempt by me to force a way up and over the cliff by scrambling up the very loose side grasping desperately at bunches of saw grass for hand holds and every rock sliding under my feet, met with the realisation that I was going to get my feet wet. It was only an icy knee deep wade, I don't know what all the fuss was about!

Cutting off a large loop in the river by going over the top and scrambling back down resulted in another cliff and another tiring climb back up. Navigation glitches didn't help our cause any, and by the end of day we had only just made the dry Lannigans Creek where we again rejoined the Uni Rover Track. A weary group made camp a little way up the creek, carrying water up from the Kowmung.

Saturday and we had about 8kms and a 500 metres ascent back to the cars in front of us. Easy Peasy I thought. The first half was along the UR track which followed the dry water course bed and proved to consist of very slippery rocks which had the nasty trait of rolling when you placed your boot on them. The thorn bushes were still enjoying themselves by ripping us to shreds. Soon the dry creek became a wet one, in the middle it was actually flowing. It took

four hours to cover the four kilometres to Colong Caves at the bottom of the big climb.

We had lunch in the jungle of thorn bushes that was the cave area, a 300m limestone cliff loomed over us as we searched for the caves. We found one small tagged cave, where the other couple of dozen were hiding we never did find. Very disappointing! Time was against us with the big climb out still to come.

The 400m climb was a shocker. Royce who had been carrying a shin injury all the way was still the first up. The thought of the early pioneers carrying buckets of steaming bat shit up this extremely steep ridge really impressed me. Real men! We finally made the cars with the threat of more rain. The cold night was made more agreeable by everyone consuming vast quantities of a whole uneaten fruit cake and left over wine.

Another -5 morning and the long drive home via Wombeyan Caves to Mittagong. Along the fallen rock strewn but excellent dirt road where we had lunch in a café, consisting of lots of lovely fat on china plates. I earnestly promised to the others not to drink any more wine when planning my next walk. Well maybe just one little glass!

The hardy souls. Arthur Radford, Royce Hirning, Ken Thompson, Richard Fielding, Tony Winton.

Mt Yango Property and the Macdonald River – 15-17th July 2008

Bob Clifton

This is a beautiful part of our country with the Macdonald River being a mini Colo River with similar vegetation, cliff lines, sinuous river sand flats, occasional rock block ups, however with easier access. Most ridgelines can be negotiated and once above the first 150m have gentle slopes and light vegetation. Bob had not returned to the river for about 18 years, since being introduced to the area by Joan. Instead of doing the walk in two days on this occasion we were to extend the walk over three days.

Bob, Aileen, John, Robyn, and Arthur departed from Newcastle early (7.30am) in time to have a pleasant coffee at Wollombi – what a good start! On the way we stopped at Finchley's Lookout to survey the western mountain range and identify peaks we have encountered over the years. It was a clear perfect winters day.

About midday we had arrived at the Mt Yengo Property gate, which is locked and requires a key from the Gosford NPWS Office. It is not that simple - one needs to be a contortionist with a torch to fit the key in the lock. Not far into the property and at the base of the ridge we encountered a wash out and bog hole which prevented Bob from progressing further in the Camry. Luckily, Arthur had taken his

4WD and we could all squeeze in with packs to travel about 6km to the Mountain Arm Camping location. Here we had lunch before donning packs to walk along the Mountain Arm Creek and then a ridge leading up to Mt Yengo to pick up the contour track, which circumnavigates the mountain peak. This was a fair bit tougher than planned – a 250 m climb through cliff lines on the northern side of Yengo. Finally on the track we headed west down onto the northwest ridge complete with scrub. The clear track of 18 years ago is now mostly overgrown. It was getting late so we picked a level spot on the ridge to set up camp – a nice spot and a good fire cheered us all. We were just short of the planned camping location near a dam, which Bob remembered and was marked on our maps. We were all pleasantly tired as the full moon rose in the east.



Bob, Robyn, and Aileen on the banks of the Macdonald River - no quicksand at this point.

Next morning (Wednesday) we continued walking down along the ridge heading for the junction of Forbes Creek and the Macdonald River. This was a gradual drop of 250m except for the least 75m or so through some cliff lines and thick vegetation.

Finally on the river by 10.00am we paused to enjoy our surroundings. The river had a good flow of water about calf deep with plenty of straight walking along sand flats. Robyn was the first to find quicksand. After a while we became adept at identifying the more risky sand locations. By 1.00pm we had found the most beautiful camping location – an elevated sand bank on a steep bend of the river opposite a significant re-entrant. With beautiful views both up and downstream and the prospect of winter sun for most of the afternoon we decided to camp and take time out. – this is what bushwalking is all about. The ridge behind us also appeared to be a relatively easy exit location for the next morning.

The next morning (Thursday) we were away by 8.30am to pick our way through the cliff lines, interesting rock formations, and wild flowers onto the ridge above. We encountered several thick

patches of vegetation from time to time but overall this was a beautiful morning's walk through wildflowers of the sandstone country. We had our morning tea about half way to the top of the ridge and lunch by 12.00pm at the elusive dam mentioned earlier.

The walk after lunch was mostly along fire trails before a steep drop along a trackless ridge to Mountain Arm Creek, and the 4 km walk to the cars. Wattles along the creek line had commenced flowering and were a picture.

We reached the car by 3.00pm well satisfied with our efforts. It was getting cold and we stayed very briefly at the Wollombi Pub before returning to Newcastle by 6.30pm.

Queen's Birthday Long Weekend

Leader Peter Rye

We drove down to the Mogo Creek property on Friday night and set up camp in the bottom paddock. In spite of the light rain and some issues with a new trailer tarp, we were soon set up and having a cuppa.

Saturday morning and breakfast was conducted at a leisurely pace while waiting for more of the group to arrive before starting the day walk up the Boree track to Frying Pan Rock.

By the end of the day the walkers had returned to join the late arrivals around the camp fire for happy hour and the sausage tasting competition. Everyone had purchased plain beef sausages from their favourite butcher and we were all issued with score cards. The sausages were to be marked between 1 & 5 – those receiving the highest total score were judged to be the tastiest. Some of us will be unable to face eating another sausage for years, but the exercise was a great success.



Sunday was a day of rest for some, others participated in another walk up the Boree track and a few unfortunates returned from a coffee expedition to St Albans claiming that they had been poisoned.

Apparently the coffee was not particularly good!! The group needed a serious bonding session – so we launched into the Billy Boiling competition with gusto.



Billy boiling as a competitive sport is probably under rated. Preparations started early with much gathering of sticks – all the right size etc. Then it was on. The audience was subjected the hilarious sight of many ‘experienced’ bushwalkers struggling to get their fire going – that is when you could see through the clouds of smoke that soon covered everyone! There were some sad scenes as people’s reputations plummeted – many of the competitors have been scarred for life and some members of the audience are still giggling behind closed doors. The evening was saved by a local wine maker plying us with liberal amounts of his best brew around the camp fire.

We had a relaxing start on Monday morning and really did not start to pack up until after lunch, but before we left we helped the property owner with some scrub clearing and soon had several bonfires roaring. We had fun and she was very impressed with our efforts.

Backpack west of Finchley Trig 21/22 June 2008

Leader Peter Rye

The group met at Wollembi Friday evening for dinner at the pub before heading out to the Finchley Trig camping area over some very wet and slippery roads – the proceeding week had been very wet. It was not raining while we set up our tents and soon we were sitting around a lovely fire warming up with a cuppa before bed.

A dry Saturday morning saw us packed and off early. We walked down an old overgrown track which leads off from the back of the camping area and down a long spur with views of Mt Yengo surrounded by low clouds and the morning sun casting long shadows of the hills

The day’s walk was all off track with one valley to cross and the rest ridges. We reached Rileys paddock early and had time to sit around the fire and celebrate Ali’s birthday. Various bottles appeared from packs and the evening was passed very comfortably while debating walks grading. Most of the group claimed that Peter had sorely misrepresented the difficulty of the day’s ramble – if only we had known what the next day had in store for us!!.

The next morning we found ourselves in a frost hollow surrounded by a heavy mist. While packing we watched the sun light up the hill across the creek and decided to take ourselves over and stand there to thaw out before starting the days walking.

Peter led us up the hill to the south and onto Tumbledown Trail for a short while before heading east across Nowlands Creek. From there we walked over a ridge line and down the other side. This had us at the end of a spur with quite a sheer drop to the creek level but eventually we found a way down and after crossing the sandy creek at the bottom headed up the other side. Talk about out of the frying pan.....this lead us through some particularly nasty jungle – but we found the fire trail Peter kept assuring us was there – and a very well kept fire trail it was too. It eventually crossed Diplock Creek – which some people will remember was the name of one of our former members. Apparently his family were involved in this area in the past.

The last stage after leaving the trail took us along a knife edge ridge with very spectacular views and back to the cars at Finchley camp ground. It was a great walk with lots of adventure, views and plenty of wildflowers – and of course good company.

