

Brindabella Bushwalking Club

May 2024

Issue 82



From the President



I previously committed to provide an outline of what being on the clubs Executive Committee entails, as a number of our Executive Committee members will not be re-applying for positions at our next AGM. Last month I outlined the role of President and this month I will cover the role of Secretary.

As Secretary, responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Annual General Meeting arrangements, including preparations for, completing the minutes of the meeting and lodging formal documentation with Access Canberra
- Manage/document Committee meetings (typically 3 per annum) – agenda, papers, minutes
- Annual renewal of insurance policy under the umbrella arrangement with Bushwalking NSW.
- Maintain all club files, mainly electronic, as per the clubs Retention Policy
- Manage/maintain the Heritage Library archival files
- As Public Officer be the point of contact for Access Canberra concerning changes to the *Associations Incorporation Act 1991 (ACT)* and the Model Rules and monitor changes that might impact on the club's constitution.
- Handle club correspondence in a timely manner and log all relevant correspondence

This is an important role on the Committee and as such the current Secretary has comprehensively documented what is involved and how to execute these responsibilities. Julie (the current Secretary) would be happy to chat with



Wed 3 April. Slabs SW of Booroomba Rocks. On this medium/hard Interclub walk we finally made it to the slabs (after having to abandon the attempt last May because of an icy wind, sleet and wet scrub). This time we had beautiful autumn weather and good views to Gorilla Rock, Blue Gum Hill and Booroomba Rocks. There were still some difficult sections of scrub to push through but Linda persuaded us to climb a massive boulder for fun! *Leader and report Prue D. Photos by David and Henry*

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Editor - Peter Ford

CONTRIBUTIONS WELCOME

[Email here](#)

anyone who is considering nominating for this role to further expand on what is involved.

I do hope to see you on a walk soon, until then do take care.....Bill

NORTHERN NSW NATIONAL PARKS

6 to 14 April 2024

You learn something each time you embark on one of these trips. On this occasion I learnt that the Taralga Road is a council managed road and road blockages are only reflected on livetrafficnsw.com if they are notified by council. And of course, council is hard to contact on a Saturday, which was our departure day, so we were not aware that the Taralga Road was cut off just north of the town by a metre worth of floodwater until two of our group reported having to turn back! After some anxious texting about alternative routes to Capertee, most of the group made it for the first day.

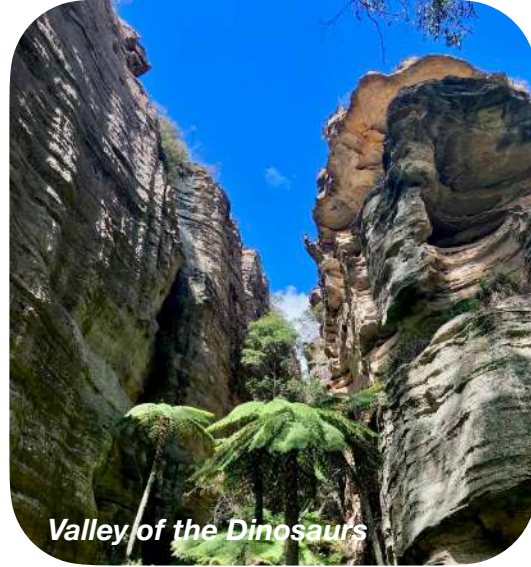
Our first walk was a signature walk for the area – Genowlan Trig and the Valley of the Dinosaurs and Ultimate Slot. After a steep but rewarding trek up a 4WD track between sheer rock walls, we reached the summit for wonderful views of the pagoda rock formations scattered across the valley. These magnificent tiered rock structures are a combination of soft sandstone overlaid by a very hard ironstone layer which has protected them while the rest of the cliff-line or outcrop has eroded away.



The Pagodas from Genowlan summit

After morning tea, an off-track diversion took us down a narrow, steep path between two huge pagodas, opening up into the Valley of the Dinosaurs - so named because it looks almost prehistoric. It was quite magical wandering through the tall tree ferns and the leafy fern gully with the swirling rock walls surrounding us.

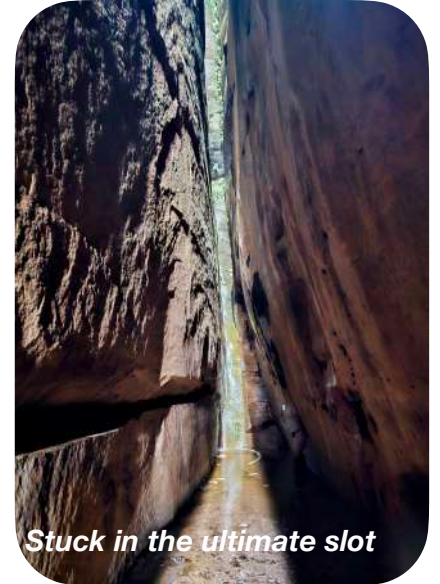
Shortly after getting back on to the track, we took a short side path into the Ultimate Slot where a massive vertical



Valley of the Dinosaurs

shard of rock, wedged between two huge rock walls, forms two single-person width tunnels (an in and an out we decided) into a open cavern. The final part of the walk took in some old ruins

including a diamond mine that was owned and operated by a local man until only a few years back.



Stuck in the ultimate slot

On day two we drove to Glen Davis to walk part of the Pipeline Track. Despite only just reopening after months of closure because of a landslip, this was a well-maintained walking track up through cycads, banksia and assorted Eucalypts. Our destination, 7km in, was the Pagoda lookout, where you get an expansive view of the Wolgan Valley, which is somewhat more wilderness-looking these days since the collapse of the Wolgan Road made it inaccessible from the Newnes side about seventeen months ago. After

lunch a small group decided to undertake the very steep (1 in 4) 250m decent into the Wolgan Valley in an endeavour to get to the Newnes Industrial Ruins, but were thwarted by the higher than usual water levels and murkiness of the Wolgan River which lay in between.

Our third day was a shorter 8k walk within the confines of the large property we were staying on – Turon Gates Resort. The Devil’s Climb as it is known is a steep walk up and then down a fire trail on one of the hills within the bounds of the property, finishing with a series of four river crossings along a 3km section of the Turon River. The group was surprised but delighted to welcome a new walk leader that day – one of the property’s dogs, a beautiful border collie, decided to supplant Bill and led the group every step of the way, rounding up the stragglers and those that tried to slip quietly off into the bushes, and taking us each time to the precise location of the water crossings, often at spots contrary to what our mapping was showing. The route is used by the property for horse-riding tours, so we suspect he had walked the track many times before.



Our leader for a day

Day 4 was a transit day, as we moved from Capertee to Lithgow. We enjoyed a short out and back walk down the Tramway Trail in Mugii Murum-ban State Conservation Area, so named because it follows the route of the old oil shale mine tramway around Mount Airly to a lookout over the valley. The trail is dotted with ruins from the area’s mining history, one of the most interesting being a small house built into a rock cave in what was the old Airly village. A quick look inside only, as the internals were totally infested with wasp colonies.

Bill and I had “outsourced” the second part of the trip, based out of Lithgow, to Wayne Holgate, who has first-hand knowledge of the area having been a local for quite some time. This turned out to be a real coup – Wayne’s program just kept the thrills coming.

On day 5 Wayne organised for a small group from the Central West Bushwalking Club to join us, and their leader, Bruce Mullaney, a legend in the bushwalking community, lead the combined group on a circuit through the Maiyngu Marragu Aboriginal Reserve including a viewing of Blackfellows Hand Rock. This was

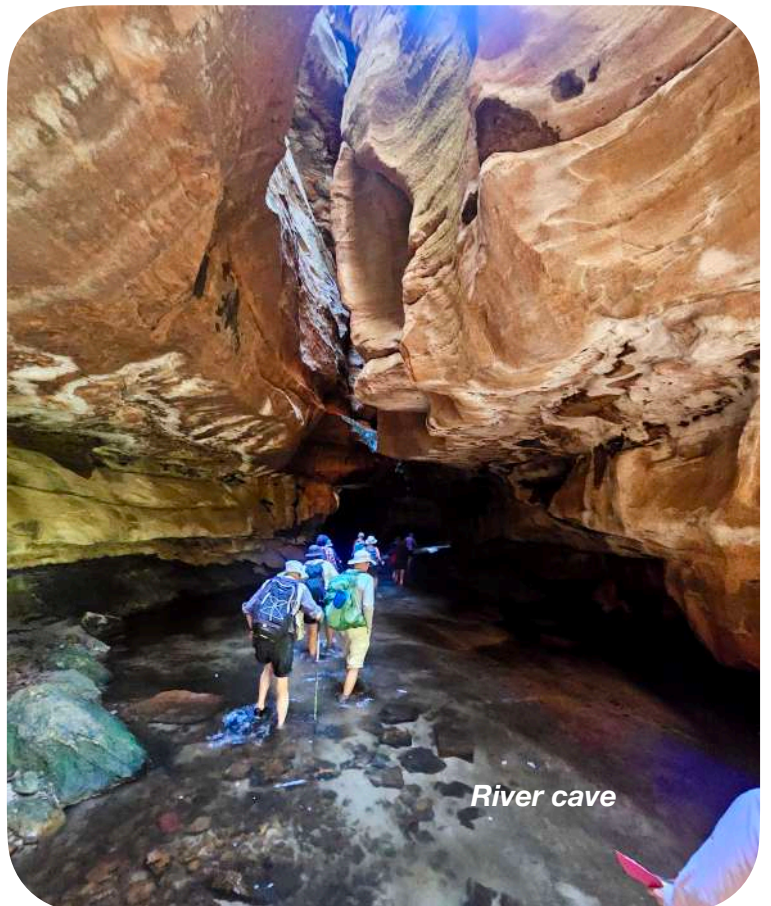
an all-off-track walk, and as Bruce observed, the bush was a lot denser than when he had last visited some three years back, so somewhat slow-going with a group of 21, but after some rock scrambling up a number of pagodas, the group was rewarded with impressive views of the Wolgan Valley. We continued weaving in and out of numerous pagodas and creek beds where we walked amongst lush tree ferns as well as under many water-carved rock overhangs where large outcrops of moss and



Blackfellows Hands Rock

orchids were flourishing (unfortunately not in flower).

Wayne took over on day 6 for a magical day visiting the River Caves, a stunning rock-roofed canyon, with as the name suggests, a river running through it, reached by an unmarked trail down through the scrub. It’s eerily quiet as you enter what feels like a secret world. Makes for some great photos too. Getting out of the River Caves was a steep and challenging climb up through large rocks and dense bush, but once we had all surfaced unscarred,



River cave

the majority agreement was that this day was a highlight of the trip.

Our last day was a different experience again. We drove to the Mount Victoria area and followed a couple of tracks along the escarpment overlooking the majestic Grose valley. A great end to a great trip.



River cave



The Group

Bed and Breakfast



Autumn/ Octogenarian /Nonagenarian Picnic! Saturday 20 April, Weston Park

Wendy Thompson



Passing the Siev X Memorial in Weston Park

What a beautiful time of year autumn is in Canberra.....and also a great time of year to gather, recognise and celebrate the contributions to our club of a special bunch of people.

On Saturday 20 April, 44 club members gathered at Weston Park, 17 of the over the age of 80 and 5 of them proud of their life of 90+ years to reminisce old times and enjoy the fantastic weather.

Many enjoyed an hour's walk around the park and all delighted in catching up with friends. Club president Bill Gibson gave a speech acknowledging the efforts of this special group over the years, their contribution to the club and passing on their bushcraft skills. He also mentioned interesting anecdotes and reports of past club walks. Many of which raised a knowing smile and chuckle. A toast, glass of champagne and cake followed and was appreciated by all.



continued next page

This wonderful group has been the bedrock of BBC and even though a few of them are no longer participating in walks anymore, they all appreciate these social events as an important opportunity to stay connected to the club and catch up with old friends.

(Many thanks to Ian Tucker for his contributions to the success of this event.)



Vale Bob Dewar



Very sadly, I would like to pass on the information to club members that Bob Dewar has passed away in Cambridge UK following a stroke. Bob was undertaking a 6-month sabbatical at the Isaac Newton Institute for Mathematical Sciences. He recently celebrated his 80th birthday.

Bob was a keen bushwalker since his time with the Melbourne University Mountaineering Club in the 1960s and he was a member of BBC and CBC over many years. He led many walks, including for the combined clubs Wednesday Walks program, and he was always excellent company. Bob was husband to club member Jule Anne Clegg who passed away in December 2020.

Bob is survived by his daughter Sophie Dewar and granddaughter Dara, his sisters, Shona and Jenny and his son-in-law Brendan, and will be deeply missed by friends and colleagues from the ANU and the international community where he had a towering reputation in theoretical plasma physics and was still active until his passing. There will be an opportunity to celebrate Bob's life at a later date. Messages of condolence could be sent to his daughter Sophie at Sophie.Dewar@gmail.com

Funeral Service:

Friday 3 May
11am Hall Cemetery
Wallaroo Rd, Hall

Wake to follow from 12.30 pm in the
Shine Dome, Jaeger Room, 15 Gordon St, Acton

Henry Gardner

Issue No. 82

Our observant readers will have noticed that this issue of the newsletter bears the number 82. The reason for this is that, in catching up with our obligation to deposit a copy of each issue with the ACT Heritage Library, we have found it convenient to number them and 81 have been issued prior to this one. Peter Dalton brought out the first newsletter in September 2015. Subsequent issues came out at no particular frequency but, in recent years, a monthly publication schedule has become established.

Ed.

FACEBOOK

Our Facebook Manager regularly posts photos, walk reports and information about upcoming activities. Please visit [here](#) and see what our members are planning or have recently been up to.

Please send your photos etc. to Heather at facebook@brindabellabushwalking.org.au



A Senior's Version of FACEBOOK

For those of my generation who do not, and cannot, comprehend why Facebook exists: I am trying to make friends outside of Facebook while applying the same principles. Therefore, every day I walk down the street and tell passers-by what I have eaten, how I feel at the moment, what I have done the night before, what I will do later and with whom. I give them pictures of my family, my dog and of me gardening, taking things apart in the garage, watering the lawn, standing in front of landmarks, driving around town, having lunch, and doing what anybody and everybody does every day. I also listen to their conversations, give them "thumbs up" and tell them I "like" them. And it works just like Facebook. I already have 4 people following me: 2 police officers, a private investigator and a psychiatrist.



Kathmandu Women's Randonnée boots, size 8.5, leather, excellent condition, free to a good home. Contact: Lyn Willson [here](#)

Recommended reading: *Platypus Matters: The extraordinary story of Australian mammals*

**by Jack Ashby, 2022
Reviewer: Ann Villiers**

‘Truly, platypuses are things of pure wonder,’ writes naturalist Jack Ashby. For enthusiasm, insight, and rich historical and scientific information about Australian mammals, this book is a joy to read.



Jack Ashby is Assistant director of the University Museum of Zoology in Cambridge, and each year undertakes ecological fieldwork for Australian charities and universities. This professional experience means he can back his statement about Australia that: ‘No other place can hold a candle to its mammalian wonders.’

Australia is the only place on Earth where you can find all three ways of being a mammal: monotremes (that lay eggs), marsupials (that give birth to tiny young with most of their growth during a long period of suckling milk, often in a pouch), and placentals, like us humans, (that give birth to young at a later stage of development).

Ashby informs us that marsupials are not uniquely Australian. Nearly a third of all marsupial species today live in the Americas, mainly called ‘something opossum’. We also learn that it is often assumed that all Australia mammals – except maybe the platypus and echidnas – are marsupials. Marsupials only make up half of the Australian mammalian land fauna. A quarter is made up of native rodents and the final quarter consists of bats, both of which are placental mammals.

Ashby writes enthusiastically about platypuses, echidnas, wombats, kangaroos, Tasmanian devils, possums, and thylacines. We read about the work of taxidermists, including their errors with echidnas (‘the single most badly stuffed species in the world’), the difficulty of loaning platypuses to other countries, the disappearance of giant creatures like the Diprotodon, and how and why museum collections are geographically biased in ways that reflect their countries’ colonial histories.

Disturbingly, Australia has the world’s worst record for recent mammal extinctions (37%). Ashby puts this record in perspective: ‘... every morning, Australia wakes up having lost 1.4 million native mammals that were alive the day before, just thanks to feral cats. If we add to that the native birds and reptiles killed by feral cats, the annual death roll reaches nearly 1.4 billion.’

An important theme throughout the book is the language used to describe Australian animals. Ashby asks the reader: How would you describe Australian animals? While we likely think they are wonderful, many descriptions tend to include words like weird, strange, bizarre, dopey or primitive. And further, he points out, these words are often followed by a phrase along the lines of ‘everything there is trying to kill you’.

Let’s take the second point first. Ashby points out that everywhere else in the world has their share of dangerous animals, like large land predators, from big cats to bears, and massive herbivores. In Australia, there is a tiny number of human deaths from snake bites each year, but tens of thousands across Asia, Africa and South America. A far more accurate description is: ‘Australia is *less* dangerous than nearly every other continent’.

Ashby explains the reason for writing this book: ‘Australian mammals are looked upon fondly, but not fairly. It is often implied that monotremes and marsupials are somehow lesser than other mammals. Worse – that they are *biologically determined* to be lesser.’

Importantly, Ashby argues, ‘words have serious consequences’. The words used to describe our animals ‘imply that they are just funny little beasties, amusing and interesting, but not important in the scheme of things. If you think about it, pretty much every animal species could be considered bizarre – elephants, rhinos, whales ... but they are more likely to be described as majestic ... and have extraordinary societal value placed on them.’ Plus, ‘why does egg-laying make platypuses primitive, whereas the term is never applied to birds?’

‘Australian mammals,’ Ashby argues, ‘are devalued by the way we talk about and represent them in everyday language, museums, popular culture and scientific research, and this is having a catastrophic impact that inevitably contributes to the extinction crisis.’ His conclusion: these animals ‘are wonderful and they deserve our respect’.

Explaining wombats’ poo cubes

Did you know that each night, one common wombat can produce as many as 100 almost perfect 2 cm cubic scats? Worked out as recently as 2018, this ability lies in the last section of wombats’ intestines. If you’re interested in giant marsupials like the Diprotodon, visit the [Naracoorte Caves National Park](#), with its five different caves and the Wonambi Fossil Centre [here](#).

