



The Message Stick

February 2017

Mackay Bushwalkers' Club Inc. PO Box 1313, Mackay, 4740

Web: <http://www.mackay.bwq.org.au>

Email: mackaybushwalkers@dodo.com.au

Future Events

Maud Creek – Big Bend.....	29 th January
Mt William/Pretty Creek.....	5 th February
St Helens Creek.....	12 th February
General Meeting.....	15 th February
Boulder Creek.....	19 th February
Leader's Seminar.....	25 th February
Eungella Lookouts.....	26 th February
Scawfell Island.....	4 th , 5 th & 6 th March

Please Note

February's weather can be unpredictable and walks may need to be cancelled/changed at short notice. Always check emails prior to walks. A trip to Paradise Falls is planned but will only take place if heavy rain occurs on a Saturday to make it worthwhile. If this happens, the Sunday walk will be changed at short notice but details will be emailed out.



Pristine Creeks and swimming holes will be the main feature of February's Walks

Club Officers

President	Clive Goodson	4954 9338	Contact Officer	Coral Morgan	49578474
Vice President	Vacant		Walks Coordinator	Coral Morgan	49578474
Secretary	Bryan Marshall	4954 3209	Assist Walks Coordinator	Frances Eiteneur	49576028
Treasurer	Julie Vella	4955 3093	Newsletter Editor	Jenny Wooding	49440236
Safety Officer	Vacant		Publicity Officer	Charles Hamlet	4942 7913
Equipment Officer	Garry Hendicott	49440236			

From the Editor

The first newsletter for 2017 already! Hope you have all had a great start to the New Year.

A very big thank you to Clive who has stepped up to take on the President's Role! We really appreciate it Clive.

Charles has sent in a detailed write up of his trip to Patagonia. I found it fascinating and hope you all enjoy reading it as much as I did.

Let's hope the rain doesn't interfere too much with our walks calendar and I look forward to catching up with everyone in the bush this year.

**Items for the next newsletter should
be sent to
jennywooding@dodo.com.au
prior to 23rd February**

Key to Walks Grading System

Distance

S = short – under 5km
M = medium – 5-10km
L = long – over 10km

Terrain

1-3 = Graded or open terrain, no scrub
4-7 = Bush, minor scrub, rainforest,
Rocks, creeks, rockhopping, scrambling
8-10 = Bush as above + thick scrub, major rock
Scrambling using hands, technical

Terrain

1-3 = Easy, suitable for beginners
4-7 = Medium, reasonable fitness required
8-10 = Hard, strenuous, fit walkers only

Future Events

All trip leaders please ensure you collect the club gear bag from Garry before undertaking your walk.

Please contact the leader to nominate for all walks

Maud Ck – “Big Bend” and “Tributaries” Sunday 29th January

Leader: Garry Hendicott 49440236 or Jenny
0447091532

Depart: 6am

Journey: 200km \$20

Map Ref: 662292E 7675045N GDA94

Grade: M77

Walking Time: 6 hours **Total of uphill:** 200m

Terrain: Difficult Creek Banks, Steep Slope,
Dense Jungle, lots of water. **Expect:** Bush Bashing

off track, Not being able to see your feet,
Scrambling through thick vegetation, Vines and
prickly things.

Let's go somewhere we haven't gone before.
Despite a leisurely 45 minute warm up along an
easy forest track to Maud Creek, this walk
becomes difficult immediately upon entering the
creek.

Our aim will be to follow Maud Creek downstream
to “Big Bend”. This is only about half a kilometre

but is made difficult by the very dense rainforest jungle on the creek banks and will take some time.

We will get to Big Bend well before lunch (I hope), be prepared for a lengthy and leisurely swim at Big Bend in the magnificent deep fern fringed pool.

Bring your watershoes and floaties if you wish to participate in exploring further downstream from here as it is easier to swim than walk the impenetrable banks. A lilo would be a most enviable asset.

The water is crystal clear and not too cold and I'm pretty sure there are no crocs.

A reasonably lengthy stay will be had in the environs of Big Bend to allow exploration and frolicking. Those who do not wish to explore downstream via the water have the option of relaxing here until the explorers return with tales of high adventure and bravado.

We will make our return via a small but pretty tributary entering just upstream of Big Bend. This tributary has some difficult sections eventually becoming impassable at a little gorge rising abruptly with multiple levels of small waterfalls. At that point we will go bush up a steep slope through dense vegetation making a bee line for the top of a ridge and subsequently picking up the track we came in on. A reasonable climb is involved.

It is highly recommended to wear long sleeves, gaiters, gloves etc due to the dense vegetation. You will come back with some scratches and the odd leach. You may also likely encounter other assorted jungle nasties. I think you will be amply rewarded for your effort.

This walk is not suitable for children and will be dependent on the weather.

Gamma State Forest Tracks

Sunday 29th January

Leader: Carole Weekes 49546108

This walk is an easier alternative for those not wishing to undertake the Maud Creek, Big Bend and Tributaries. It will begin in the same place but walking will be on track for the entire day. It will be suitable for everyone.

Mt William/Pretty Creek

Sunday 5th February

Leader: Jenny Wooding 49440236 0447091532

Depart: 6am

Journey: 200kms \$20

Map Ref: Mirani 657728

Grade: S74

Estimated Walking Time: 6 hours, **Total of uphill sections:** 300m **Pace:** Average **Terrain** uneven **Expect** some steep and tangly slopes, leeches. The day will begin by walking through a section of the dairy farm at the end of Dalrymple Rd before entering the bush and tackling Mt William. This section could be quite overgrown and tangly due to cyclonic activity in the area in previous years. Once over Mt William we will descend into Pretty Creek which we will follow until we meet up with the Western Trail. **Note the early 6am start.**

St Helens Creek

Sunday 12th February 2017

Leader: Clive Goodson 4954 9338

Depart: 7am

Journey: 140Km \$14

Map Ref: Calen 740806

Grade:S73

Time: 4-5 hours

Total Uphill: 20m (not counting boulders) **Terrain:** very uneven, rocky all the way. **Expect:** Mostly rock hopping (the rocks may be slippery after rain) & creek crossings, so expect to have wet boots). There is no track, we either walk in water, on rocks or scramble through tangle.

St Helens creek is a large rainforest creek which flows out of Eungella National Park in the Cameron Pocket area about 13km west of Calen. Depending on water level we might have to cross the creek a few times. There will be plenty of time to use the swimming holes along the way so don't forget to bring the swimmers.

Induction 6.45pm/ General Meeting 7.30pm

Wednesday 15th February

Downstairs room, Mackay Family Care and Community Support Association Centre 60 Wellington Street, Mackay. Newcomers and visitors welcome. Induction by Frances and Coral

Boulder Creek

Sunday 19th February

Leader: Garry Hendicott 49440236 or
Jenny 0447091532

Depart: 6am

Journey: 130Kms \$13
Grade: S86
Map Ref: Mirani

Eungella Lookouts Sunday 26th February

Estimated Walking Time: 6 to 7 hours **Total of all uphill Sections:** 200m, **Pace:** steady (as slow as the leader), **Terrain:** Rainforest with vines and moonlighter, boulder strewn creek. **Expect:** difficult creek crossings and some serious rock hopping, great opportunities for swimming, NO leeches.

Boulder Creek, noted for its water quality, is in the Mt Charlton area. We commence on private property and walk or 4WD to the edge of the scrub before making our way upstream to an impressive double waterfall with a lovely deep swimming hole between the falls. As we will probably walk some of the way beside the creek, long sleeves to protect against moonlighter stinging plants should be considered. Enormous scrub fowl mounds and strange fig tree roots have been observed in this area. We will be returning via the same route.

Leader's Seminar Saturday 25th February

Coordinator: Coral Morgan 49578474

Venue: Harrup Park

Time: 11.30am

This lunch event is for 2016 Walks Leaders and current committee members. It is a thank you for their efforts and to plan walks and events for the coming year.

Please RSVP to Coral if you are eligible to attend by February 18th.

Leader: Bryan Marshall 0447939968
Co-Leader: Penny McMahon 49514287
Depart: 7am
Journey: 200k \$20
Map Ref: Mirani 5915888
Grade: M57

Estimated walking time: 5 hours **Total of all uphill:** 200m **Pace:** Moderate **Vegetation:** Rainforest
Expect: Rainforest, good views down the Pioneer valley, could be some leeches.

From Broken River we will follow the National Park track, cross Broken River, and continue along the track until we meet the third small creek. Here we will leave the track and head "bush", following an old track on Bryan's GPS which was part of the old supply trail from Mackay to The Diggings. We will be looking for Catherine's Lookout and Palms Lookout. The lookouts are on the edge of the escarpment with good views overlooking Netherdale and the Pioneer Valley. As it is some time since we have visited these lookouts some areas may be overgrown, and due to the recent deluges in the area some trees may have fallen down, and some sections may be of an exploratory nature. Possibility of a swim at Broken River on return route.

Previous Activities

Patagonia

The name alone conjures images of spectacular snow and ice covered mountains; of vast areas where man still finds it difficult to overcome nature; of hardy people living far away from what we regard as civilisation.

Or so I thought, before I came, saw and re-believed.

My odyssey started back in July after reading an 'ad' in the National Geographic about a 14-day Adventure Trek in Patagonia. I duly booked a spot, and for the next four months gleefully accumulated 'useful' items that I would 'need' for my adventure. However if truth be told, I now have a vast amount of 'unneeded-and-not-all-that-useful' items in my possession – especially seeing as my hardy green duffel decided to take a different flight path to me on the way to Punta Arenas and didn't catch up until the third day. By that time, my helpful guide "Ro" and I had spent a quick-fire forty minutes outfitting me with one of everything, from toothbrush to socks (or toe-warmers if you want to get a bit of alliteration in there!), and everything in between. (He proudly told the rest of the group that it was the fastest outfitting he'd ever helped with!)

Getting a bit ahead here though, so back to the story...

I'd planned to stay in Denver for a few days with daughter Debbie and family, with the intent of using this family get-together as a chance to acclimatize to the chills of Patagonia that awaited. (As it happens, Denver was a lot colder!)

Six days of catching up later, I was on the way: Denver to LA, LA to Panama City, then to Santiago, and finally Punta Arenas - a few thousand miles of continual interruptions to my carefully laid plans (which I still try to forget about). However, I'd made it!

Twelve group members and two guides piled into a 'Sprinter' on Day 1 and headed off towards one of the three major highlights of the trip - the Torres del Paine NP. On the way, we acted as typical tourists are expected to, being amazed, awestruck and flabbergasted by the constantly changing landscapes that we passed during the 7 hour drive to our hotel overlooking 'Lago Grey'. One medium sized town (Puerto Natales) was the only population centre encountered during the drive, but the magnificent mountain views, and the stunningly vivid blue lakes (Lago's) punctuating the monotonous steppe vegetation kept everyone calling for 'photo stops'. One item of particular interest was the small brightly coloured 'Sentry box' type buildings that we passed now and then. These marked the entrance to 'Estancias'. During the 1920s, the governments of Chile and Argentina had a rare moment of unity and called for settlers to 'go down south' and occupy and settle in the vast areas of unoccupied Patagonia. The lucky ones established huge sheep stations called 'Estancias', made up of a homestead, outbuildings for the property and cottages for the workers. In some cases, a small school building and storehouse could even be found. The 50's and 60's saw these properties reap the benefit of a booming sheep industry which, since then, has declined in most areas, leaving isolated Estancias either abandoned or being turned into accommodation complexes for the latter day boom industry - Tourism.

The next three days saw the group alternately hiking, boating, and gazing in awe as they ascended and descended mountain ranges in the area surrounding The Three Towers and the accompanying 'Los Cuernos' (Horns), for which the Park is rightfully famous. The highlight came at the end of the Park visit, after quite a strenuous day as we approached the base of the Three Towers. The trek saw us crossing interminably long scree slopes, moraine and Boulder fields to a bank of rubble where the guides cautioned us against tripping... Tripping! That was the least of our concerns after crossing the rubbishy ground for the last few hours. However, as each of us reached the top of the rubble, the sight that unfolded was so spectacular that any concerns or warnings were quickly forgotten. Instead, we just stood and gaped at the truly amazing view that spread before us. Granted, it was a beautiful day, but the bright sunlight illuminating the Three Towers with the glacial blue lake in front was an image I etched into my brain. That same sight now graces Tourism Chile posters (and some Chilean banknotes) around the world. Truly amazing!!!



Chiles 3 Towers (Torres del Paine)



Cerro Torro (Argentina)



Cerro Torro & Mt Fitz Roy

Once we managed to peel ourselves away from the view, we piled back into the trusty van to cross the border into Argentina at the town/city of El Calafate - a tourist hub of 20,000 people serving the Glaciares National Park, highlighted by Perito Moreno, a monstrous glacier that has to be seen to be believed. Imagine a glacier 74m high at the mouth and nearly 5km wide, advancing into Lake Argentine at a rate of a metre per day. That virtually guarantees that avid onlookers can see the glacier calving throughout the day. We were lucky enough to witness a gigantic slab fall away, crashing into the water already littered with icebergs, floes and more. The sound as it broke away was thunderous, but when the slab hit the water, the concussion effect on the nearby floes and bergs was like a dozen shotgun blasts going off in succession.

A phenomenon unique to this glacier is a periodic 'Rupture' which Wikipedia describes as "pressures from the weight of the ice slowly pushing the glacier over the southern arm ("Brazo Rico") of Argentino Lake, damming the section and separating it from the rest of the lake. With no outlet, the water level on the "Brazo Rico" side of the lake can rise by as much as 30 meters above the level of the main body of Argentino Lake. Intermittently, the pressure produced by the height of the dammed water breaks through the ice barrier causing a spectacular rupture, sending a massive outpouring of water from the Brazo Rico section to the main body of Lake Argentino." As the water exits Brazo Rico, thrill seekers try to 'ride the 40m wave' for kilometres down the length of the lake. This dam-ice-bridge-rupture cycle recurs naturally between once a year to less than once a decade, and causes journalists across the continent to lie in wait for weeks leading up to the event.

The next day we once again hopped into the van to travel towards the northern section of the park to our lodging in El Chalten, a town of 2000 specifically set up in the National Park for visitors to Mt Fitz Roy and Cerro Torre (the Argentine equivalent to Chile's Three Towers).

About three hours in we were halfway there, and stopped for fuel at a place called La Leona, (Argentine equivalent to one of our big servos). Why does this rate a mention? Only because of a curious fact - there were "Wanted" posters on the wall dating back to the 1800s, one of them denoting Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid. They were active (robbing stores) in the area back then (even that far south in South America), and were eventually nabbed in Bolivia!

El Chalten served us well for three days, allowing the group to trek around all sides of the famous Cerro Torre, as well as its higher neighbour Mt Fitz Roy. We were incredibly lucky with the weather whilst there. Come to think of it, the whole trip was relatively clear of rain and the infamous winds that we'd prepared so well for.

The peaks that we now saw were part of an ice field that stretched for 550 km. Being higher than the surroundings, they created their own weather patterns. The peak of Cerro Torre, for instance, was clear of cloud an average of 5 days per month. It and Mt Fitz Roy were the jewel in the crown for tourists and climbers alike, who are said to regard the ascent of Cerro Torre as a greater achievement than Everest due to the degree of difficulty as well as the unpredictable weather patterns.

We were lucky to have Cecilia, Felipe and Ro as our guides. They all climbed, and their pride in Patagonia was unmistakable as they passed on their knowledge about our surroundings with such clarity and depth that we actually listened spellbound. Most of the time, anyway, when the van driving time didn't make us doze off...!

The history of climbers in this area of Patagonia had more than its share of tragedy, and brought home to us how the weather can change within an hour from bright sunlight to bitter cold and gale force winds. Luckily, we didn't have to experience that first hand.

What we did experience in this area was trekking through the soft pine-needled forest abutting the rivers, climbing out of the forest into a bare type of vegetation similar in aspect to the saltbush country around Hay Plains in NSW, then leaving that for stunted brigalow-type country undulating through the hills (mountains really, although not all were named - but you can't call a thousand-metre feature a hill). Occasionally we

would sight some guanaco's (poor mans alpaca) grazing wild. Sometimes red or grey foxes, a Rhea or two (small emu), Condors expertly maneuvering the thermals so cleverly. Unfortunately, we didn't manage to sight the elusive Puma, or the even shyer Deer, even though we continually asked Ro to find some for us.

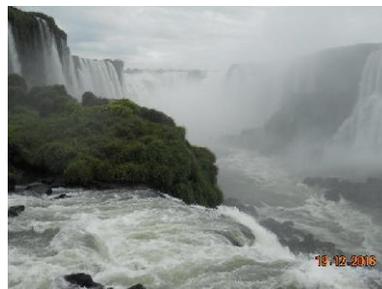
All too soon the trip came to an end, with the group driving back to El Calafate for the flight to Buenos Aires. This is where we all went our separate ways - Iguazu Falls being the next destination for me.

Distances in South America are vast, even more so than Australia, perhaps because towns and cities are so far apart. As an example, I reached Santiago in Chile, and thought "Great, I'm almost there". Not so! There was another 4 and ½ hours flight to Punta Arenas. And when a flight from Iguazu back to Buenos Aires was cancelled on me, I found that an alternative road trip would take a "fast" 15 hours. Needless to say, I didn't take that option.

Anyway... Iguazu. The town was quaint and the Falls were magnificent (2.1 km of falls on the Argentine side and 600m on the Brazilian side which I went to the next day). There were thousands of people, all intent on getting thoroughly soaked on the viewing platforms closest to the 'Devils Throat' and the rest of the magnificent spectacle. I opted for a pleasantly quiet boat ride to see the Falls up close and personal... Or not so quiet as it happens! I found myself in a vastly overpowered RIB whose driver couldn't (or wouldn't) understand the loud protests when, after soaking one side of the boats passengers, 'accidentally' reversed the other side back under one of the Falls. Let me tell you, water falling from a great height actually hurts when you're bareheaded. Perhaps the lack of natural head covering put me at a disadvantage. Suffice to say that the carefully arranged Gortex waterproofs didn't stand a chance.



Iguazu Falls (Argentine side)



Iguazu Falls (Brazil side)



The mighty Perito Moreno Glacier

Anyone who has travelled by air in South America would know this already, but I found out the hard way that getting to the airport to claim your booking a mere 90' prior to the flight is foolhardy. In most cases your seat would have been claimed by someone else who arrived before you. "No worries", they'd say (in Spanish). "Just catch the next one!" Thankfully, I did manage to get back to Santiago via Iguazu and Buenos Aires to find the very welcome sight of one only 747-B with "Longreach" in big letters under the Qantas livery. The 14 and ½ hours back to Sydney was easy to take after the previous air adventures.

I'm looking forward to getting back and swapping stories with some of the other travellers, Kate, Alyth, Julie, Garry and Jenny, Tim - should make for a few hours of storytelling.

Cheers. Charles. Jan 2017

Alpine Antics Dec 2016 – Jan 2017

Our Christmas holiday jaunt this year was inspired by Tim. He tells tales of the awesomeness of the High Country in Victoria and so inspired we set off for some exploring.

Our first stop along the way was Echuca. Garry had never seen the Murray River so we chose this spot for a visit to the large brown river. Having seen it we were keen to leave it behind and head to the High Country.



Our first destination was to be Falls Creek where Ken, from our bushwalking club was staying for a few months. Along the way we stopped in at the tourist information place at Bright and told the lady behind the desk we were planning on backpacking up the Razorback to Mt Feathertop. She took one look at us and decided we were too old for such a challenge and said everything possible to deter us from what she saw as a foolish undertaking. (Fortunately we did not heed her advice).

On arriving at Ken's we were warmly greeted and made to feel at home. The next day we sought out some local info and Garry and I spent some time exploring the area on foot and walking to some of the local lookouts. Christmas morning dawned and the 3 of us set off for Mt Hotham so we could walk back to Falls Creek. Garry and I planned to take 3 days along the Great Alpine Way but Ken who was tougher than us was going to take the shorter route and do it in just one day.

On arriving at the carpark and in the process of donning our backpacks, Santa came through riding on a mountain bike. Now we were impressed and he obliged us by stopping for photos. We set off in the direction we wanted when we saw snow on an adjacent mountain. This could not be passed up so we dropped our packs and headed off to Mt Loch to play in the snow. We made snow balls and thought it was shaping up to be a perfect Christmas Day. After that we climbed Mt Loch before returning to our packs and the intended route.



The rest of the day was enjoyable passing a skiers hut before arriving at Dibbens Hut where we were to camp for the evening. It was a stunning campsite complete with running stream in front of our tent so water was not a problem.

A steady up was the challenge for the next morning but for me one of the highlights of the trip was again throwing our packs down to scale

Basalt Temple. It felt like we were on top of the world with vast 360 degree views and best of all no one else there. We could see the high plains where we were headed.



The high Bogong Plain was amazing and I really enjoyed walking across it. Once we reached ski pole 333 we needed to change direction and head for Cope Saddle. Wherever we walked on this day and indeed for the entire trip, wild flowers were abundant and I felt we were privileged to see it this way. Again we had a camp site with stunning views.



It seemed to rain for most of the night and the next morning we packed up a wet tent and we walked in light rain for most of the morning. It continued until we reached Heaphy Spur which would take us down to Rocky Dam and Falls Creek. Here we met up with Ken who had survived his long day walk.

The next day Ken drove us back to Mt Hotham to collect the car. We had planned to tackle Razor back straight away but the forecast was not good so we headed down to near Bright until the weather cleared. A fortunate decision as Mt Hotham had 150ml of rain in the next 24 hours. We stayed at the bottom for 3 nights but we got some (albeit wet) walking in around this area.

Saturday's forecast looked good so early in the morning we headed up to tackle the Razorback. It proved to be a sensational walk with plenty of ups and downs to wear us out but magnificent scenery for the entire day. We saw the turn off to Federation Hut less than 2km from the top so we detoured and set up camp before heading off to scale Mt Feathertop. Yes it was steep and had a few false tops but well worth the effort. As we were working our way up the final sections we were awed by the sight of 3 gliders playing in the thermal currents around our heads. Once on top we could actually look down on the gliders. Amazing!



Back at camp we had dinner and in bed well before the clock struck midnight – it was New Year's Eve!



Sunday we returned to the car and were truly exhausted when we got there but we agreed it was well worth the effort. We went on to JB Plains where we camped for 2 nights. Here we set off on a day walk and managed to keep extending it but we did have lunch at Dinner Plains Village where we captured a wild brumby to ride before heading back to our campsite, again very weary. That night was extremely cold and we zipped up in our sleeping bags very early in an effort to keep warm. The next morning the thermometer showed 3 degrees but as the sun was already up

when we checked it had probably been even colder.

Having been inspired by the multitudes of cyclists we were seeing every day, Garry thought we should return to Bright and hire bikes.



The man at the bike shop gave us a map of easy rides which we gleefully ignored and off we went to Myrtleford some 32kms away. It was a pleasant ride along the Murray to Mountains rail trail and we enjoyed a hearty lunch in the town. Then we needed to return to Bright. The day was warming up, it was a gentle uphill all the way and our legs were already tired. Still we made it back in good time and the bike shop owner thought we were insane.



Our plan for the next day was to climb Mt Bogong, Victoria's highest mountain but our legs had other ideas. Instead we drove to take a closer look and spent some time exploring "Mountain Creek" at its base.

Our next adventure was to explore Mt Buffalo and it was amazing. Huge boulders, deep gorges – only problem not enough time but we loved the walks and climbs we undertook there. It is definitely on the "to Return to" List.

We reluctantly left the high country and headed back to Ballarat. Here we were able to watch a leg of the National Road Cycling championships. It was very impressive how fast those guys were able to race the 185km course in extremely hot conditions.



A few days in Melbourne for some retail therapy and some more cycling rounded our trip off nicely. Thanks Tim for inspiring us to go to the High Country.

Jenny