

THE FIRST GANGERANG WALK.

By Maxwell Gentle.

After visiting Kanangra Walls, via Gingra, in August, 1928, my next ambition was to walk over the Gangerang Range. On joining the Sydney Bush Walkers in 1929, I learnt that this range was unknown to club members, and the data given on available maps was very limited.

While fellow member, Myles Dunphy, tempted me with descriptions of the Upper Kowmung gorge, somehow the rugged heights of Gangerang proved the greater attraction.

A Burragorang cattleman, Michael Maxwell, had been on part of Gangerang, and information given by him indicated the best places to climb the range, and its low cliffs, also where water might be found.

While I was on a Friday evening train journey on Eight Hour weekend, 1929, a chance meeting with Gordon Smith, at Valley Heights, resulted in having company on my Gangerang walk, instead of going alone.

I knew that Gordon would see the distance because he was 50 miles champion road walker of Australia. Needless to say we made good progress on the walk out from Wentworth Falls that night, to our camp site at the Sunset Rock. No tent, blankets or sleeping bags were carried and we slept on a bed of leaves by a log fire. Fortunately the weather was fine and clear, and we made good time with our light packs, walking down Kedumba Pass next morning.

We reached our breakfast site on Cox's River at 8.30 a.m., and the Cox-Kowmung junction at 12 noon.

At 2.30 p.m. on Saturday afternoon we commenced to climb the Gangerang Range, from a point one mile further up the Cox. The ridge was at first a lightly timbered grassy slope, and rose very steeply for about 1,400 feet, then becoming boulder strewn, with thicker undergrowth. A low cliff with a cave was skirted here, being similar to the rocks on the adjacent Mt. Kookem. A fine view opened out up the Cox gorge, as far as the "Konangaroo Creek" area, mentioned in Surveyor Govett's writings, and its western tributary, rising near the "highest land", called by the Blacks of his time (if the word can be written as they pronounced it) "Kuo-uogang".

About four miles from our viewpoint could be seen the low cliffs of Gangerang plateau, and so we continued to ascend the ridge we were on, which was seen swinging more to the southwest, in that direction.

Our route lay through a thick forest of Turpentine and Eucalyptus saplings, but we sometimes enjoyed a glimpse of the mountain country northward to Mt. Mouin and Clear Hill. One of the best views was looking down Little Ti-willa Creek and across the Kowmung River to Byrnes Gap, and Tonalli Range.

Nightfall found us camped on a bed of leaves by a log fire, and we each had a two quart billy of water, which we had carried up from the river.

At daybreak next morning we continued walking along the thickly timbered flat topped ridge, which soon commenced to rise steeply, and eventually reached the foot of the low cliffs of sandstone and conglomerate.

A way up was found through a break in these cliffs (Gentle's Pass) on the Ti-willa Creek side, and then, after walking a mile on a lightly timbered, stony ridge on the plateau, a stop was made for breakfast by a running stream, in a swampy upland gully.

Later we walked southward over a slight rise, and then across the main marsh of the plateau, in the direction of a high hill, which we then thought to be the Gangerang peak. On reaching its crest we could see higher land ahead, and further progress was temporarily halted by a precipitous canyon, which a creek from the marsh had cut right through the ridge we were on (a geographical rarity).

This creek was later to be named "Dex Creek", and the high hill "Mt. Bolwarra". The view west extended across the Kanangra gorge, while eastward could be seen the grassy flats of the Lower Cox Valley.

After crossing Dex Creek, a well defined quartzite ridge led us along to the highest point of the range (Mt. Cloudmaker) at 12 noon, where marvellous views opened out over Kanangra gorge, and the famous walls, glowing in the sunlight.

The ridge then became very spectacular, and ran westward, resembling a great heap of boulders, coming to a point on top. It dipped and rose again about three times, and then swung southward. After a series of dips and knobs, the rock hopping over the very hard type of quartzite became easier, and the now grassy ridge descended steeply to Gabes Gap, the lowest saddle on the range in this section. From this gap it was possible to look west down a dry creek bed to Kanangra Creek, while a gully with tree ferns dropped down on the east side to Gingra Creek.

A very steep climb followed and presently we came to the foot of Craft's Wall, which we avoided, by keeping on its east side. After passing a number of caves, formed by the overhanging walls, we found ourselves on the main ridge again, which, after less than a mile, ended under the walls of Kanangra Tops. A break in the walls, 100 yards to the south, provided a way up. This was later to be named "Smith's Pass". From there it was easy going west past Mt. Maxwell and over a narrow neck to the iron ladder.

Our campsite for the night, in the cave with the dance platform, was reached at 4 p.m., a little over a day's walk from the Cox-Kowmung junction.

On Monday morning Gordon was more at ease, walking along the old cart track to Jenolan Caves. We passed through the Grand Arch there at 1.30 p.m., and continued walking along the road for another 11 miles before being given a ride in a service car to Mt. Victoria, in time to catch the 7.15 p.m. train to Sydney.

Thus ended a good three days walk, but the next few months saw the first ascent of Mt. Paralyser and Thurat, the first visit to Mt. Guouogang, and the first walk along Yellow Dog.

I remember standing on Mt. Moorilla, after a spell of torrential rain, in June 1930, when the view from there was really a picture, as it included five big waterfalls on the side of Thurat, which are not usually running. Next day, the first descent of Ti-willa Buttress was made.

It was good to walk along the well defined ridges of this predominantly quartzite country. The experience gained in bushwalking there was essential to us in 1931, when we ventured into a relatively dry Capertee-Colo area, which is only partly surveyed, but otherwise of rugged sandstone country, deeply intersected by precipitous ravines.

WHAT PLACE-NAMES MEAN TO US.

By Myles J. Dunphy.

The writer has been asked to throw some light on the subject of named features in the Greater Blue Mountains, particularly as they affect bushwalkers. The subject is too wide and involved to be covered in this article, which only scratches its surface, so to speak.

When the bushwalkers of this generation have passed on to Elysium, the ten million or so people who will be living in the population centres surrounding the Greater Blue Mountains will realize that the bushwalkers of the past were constructive in their time and had some vision for the future. They not only made persistent efforts to save their bushland wilderness for its environmental value and biologic content, but also invested it with the aura of romantic interest. It will be recognized, thankfully, we hope, that they played a prominent part in the creation of national parklands of great intrinsic value, in the face of insidious destruction caused by commercial interests of one kind and another. The necessarily slow and cautious progress of Governmental action towards measures of preservation will be acknowledged. The story will go down the years in maps and books, and in official files. There will be a vast regret for action taken too late, for mistakes made, for the fact that the people's parliamentary representatives adhered to party lines and rarely acted as individual statesmen. The State budgets of the times, because of the recurrence of national crises, did not include items for the creation and maintenance of action for the preservation of Australian scenery, wild-life, and bushland for outdoor living, particularly in the face of the concerted opposition of bodies interested in primary production.

Many years have passed since bushwalkers opened up this matter, that is, their angle of conservation, and too little of the general plan has been accomplished; but we have made the machinery by which we work and we intend to keep it working. One never knows! We might be surprised in pleasant fashion: our ideas are constructive, our positive use of the outlands remains a consistent fact, we are sane and live actively in health in the best bushland environment we can reach,