

# Melbourne Walking Club



*STALWART WALKERS*  
*of*  
*OUR EARLIER DAYS*

## ROBERT HENDERSON CROLL

Born in Stawell in 1869, Bob Croll joined the Melbourne Walking Club in 1897, was elected to the Club Committee an hour later and remained in office until his death one month short of fifty years later. He was elected a Life Member in 1934.

Croll's contribution to pioneer bushwalking was outstanding. He was a regular participant on Club outings, including most Christmas tours during the first thirty years of his membership. In 1928 he published two books which expressed his delight in walking. The first was "The Open Road", subtitled "The Ways of Many Walkers". It was descriptive of his walking tours told in narrative fashion. The second "Along the Track" was a collection of musing essays, always with walking as the theme. As well as these books and his extensive writings for 'The Melbourne Walker' there is a topographical memorial to Robert Henderson Croll. An old time mountain cattleman, who was amongst his many friends, named a deep narrow gorge on a tributary of the Wellington River "Croll's Gorge". It is a fitting memorial to the man.

## JOSEPH MATTHEWS

Joseph Matthews joined the Club in 1924 after having walked with a small group of friends from 1918. With them and during his more than sixty years of Club membership Joe walked extensively in Victoria and New South Wales. He wrote sparingly of his achievements, but notes refer briefly to the Baw Baws (1918), Bright, Feathertop and the Razorback to Bruthen (1919), Tallangatta, Tom Groggin, Kosciusko (1920), Cudgewa, Tintalra, Yarrangobilly, Kiandra, Kosciusko (1921), in 1924 he was with Bill Waters, Clyde Grant, Charlie Bryant and Alec Trahair on the memorable 24 day trip from Mansfield, Buller, Cobbler, Howitt, Wellington and Glencairn to Heyfield. 1925 saw him skiing on Hotham and St Bernard with Bram Gurdon and then skiing alone across the Dargo High Plains to Dargo.

In 1927 his party visited Mt Howitt, The Bluff, Eagle Peaks and Mitchell's Creek on the way to Jamieson and in the same year Joe mentions briefly Mt Clear, McDonald, Connor's Plain and Licola. 1928 saw Joe and Clyde Grant crossing the Barry Mountains only two days behind Bill Waters and Alec Trahair, the first bushwalkers crossings ever made. Joe was undoubtedly one of the Club's best bushmen but regrettably he wrote little of his achievements. The one exception may have been his account of an extensive trip in 1935 to the Southern Highlands of N.S.W. This appeared in The Melbourne Walker, the Club magazine that Joe named at its inception.

Joe served the Club in several administrative capacities. He was the first Chairman of Tours Information Committee in 1931 and was Tours Officer 1934-1938. He was the first Secretary of the Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs. He may well have been the most deserving Club member never to have been honoured with a Life Membership.

## KEMBLE GIBSON

'Kem' joined the Club in 1924 and within a year also became a foundation member of the Ski Club of Victoria. His first recorded visit to the mountains was with the S.C.V's. inaugural visit to Mt St Bernard, when Kemble is reported as having carried all his gear in a suitcase while he struggled to ski up the road from Harrietville to the Hospice. He was a quick learner, however and soon took his place amongst the pioneer skiers. He joined Eddie Robinson and four others in 1926 in the first E.-W. winter crossing of the Bogong High Plains and in 1927 he joined E.Robinson, E.Stewart and W.Waters in the first W.-E. crossing. With the same companions in 1928 he made the first winter ascent of Mt Bogong. His winters were regularly spent at Mt Hotham and for four years (1931-1934) he was editor of the Victorian Ski Year Book, and in 1933 became the editor of the Victorian section of the Australian and New Zealand Ski Year Book. Kemble had become one of the states most experienced and respected skiers.

However, although no records exist of his summer wanderings, Kemble claimed to have climbed every worthwhile Victorian mountain and he is known to have spent a considerable amount of time in the Sheeppyard Flat-Howqua River area. He is remembered for his naming of the top of the McLaughlin's Spur climb from the Delatite River to the final approach to Mt Buller - "Thank Christ Corner", a name which persisted on bushwalker's maps until the Buller Ski Village Development made the route redundant.

'Kem' was a member of the Melbourne Walking Club for sixty years.

## TREVOR DAVEY

Trevor joined the Club in 1923 and until his tragic death whilst on active service in 1943 became one of the Club's most popular and active members. A Club trip without Trevor was an unusual occurrence, but he wrote little of his experiences. What is known is that he led the Christmas trip with pack-horses to the Cobberas and Pilot in 1938. He was a member of the pioneering party who walked from Buffalo to Mt Selwyn, Barry Mountains, Speculation and Howitt in 1934-5, spent a fortnight on a winter trip to Cradle Mountain area, probably in 1936, which included a 5-day trip to the centre of the reserve, an area dominated by Mts Pelion East and West, Oakleigh and Ossa. Christmas 1940 saw Trevor and a small group of fine walkers, Alan Budge, Clyde Grant, Harry Wright, and Peter Allnut in the Castle Hill and Wonnangatta region. With a companion, he visited Mt Cook in New Zealand in the mid-1930s but he left no record of the trip. Somewhat frustrating for the researcher, Trevor's photographs include the Ada River area, Mt Cobbler, Lake Mountain, Mts Selma and Useful, the Murrindindi and Wellington River country, but no written accounts of his visits there survive.

Trevor was a competent skier and he spent several winters exploring the Bogong High Plains from a base camp at Cope Hut.

The "Walkers' Rag" was a single copy typed magazine illustrated with little sketches. It was humourous, gently satirical and sometimes ironic. Each issue had a profile of a "Famous Walker". The magazine made its appearance at irregular intervals commencing in 1930, with the editor's identity unknown to most Club members. This was not disclosed until after his death that Trevor Davey was responsible. The final issue, prepared by his friends fittingly featured Trevor as a 'Famous Walker'.

## WILLIAM FRANCIS WATERS

"Bill" as he was known to everybody, was born at Traralgon in 1897, within sight of the Baw Baws, significantly the scene of his first bushwalk in 1917. Bill walked extensively in the years that followed and joined the Melbourne Walking Club in 1923 to quickly become a member of an elite group whose influence on bushwalking in Victoria was to become tremendous.

Regrettably, no complete record of Bill's extensive bushwalking exists, but his score of articles in *The Melbourne Walker* records some of his extended trips and articles relate to the history of the Baw Baws, Mt Buller and Buffalo. Missing is his account of the first Barry Mountains crossing, by Bill and Alec Trahair in 1928 and many other extended walks which could well be termed 'explorations'.

Bill was among the State's early skiers and in a party of four made the first west-east ski crossing of the Bogong High Plains in 1927 and in the following winter made the first ski ascent of Mt Bogong. He remained a cross-country ski enthusiast for the rest of his life, spending forty winter vacations on the High Plains.

Bill served the Club as Secretary, Chief Leader and President (twice) and his contemporaries regarded him as the Doyen of Bushwalking. His Record of Service as Senior Administrator with the Customs Department lists three short leaves of absence, one to join the search for Cleve Cole (an old Club member) in 1936, one in 1943 to search for and bring down from Mt Bogong the bodies of Georgina Gadsden and her two companions and a third at Police Department request for Bill to lead the longest search in Victorian mountain history for the missing Mirhan Haig.

Bill died suddenly in 1968 at the age of 72 without fulfilling his intention to write a book of his experiences.

## EDDIE ROBINSON

Eddie joined the Club in 1925 and was appointed Assistant Secretary in 1929 to temporarily fill Secretary Bill Waters' position during the latter's absence overseas. Eddie was appointed Secretary for the years 1934-1936.

Although a regular and enthusiastic week-end and Easter walker, Eddie's passion was for cross-country skiing, to which he devoted all his long vacations. In 1926 Eddie was a member of the first party to ski the Bogong High Plains from east to west and in 1927, with three Club members he crossed the Plains in the reverse direction. In 1928 the same party of four made the first winter ascent of Mt Bogong (from the Big River side) and in 1929 he skied snowfields in the Mt Kosciusko area.

In 1930 he was a member of the Club's first winter ski tour across the Plains from Fitzgerald's Hut to St Bernard Hospice. This tour was led by Bill Bertram. In 1932 with Jack Tulloh and Bill Bertram, he made the first winter traverse of Mt Bogong, skiing across the Plains to the Big River and then climbing Mt Bogong and descending to Tawonga. In 1935 with Jack Tulloh, Eddie skied on to Mt Clear from the Jamieson valley, visited Howitt Plains Hut and Mt Howitt (the first winter visit to this area) and then from Mt Magdala, went down to 16-mile on the Howqua before climbing from there to Mt Stirling and completing an adventurous trip at Mt Buller.

Business commitments took Eddie to King Island to live in 1936 and later to Queensland. After retirement Eddie returned to Melbourne. He visited New Zealand and walked the Milford Sound track in his 79th year and as the guest of the Rover Scouts he celebrated his 80th birthday on the Bogong High Plains, where he skied after an absence of forty-nine years from the snow.

During his eight years of cross-country skiing, Eddie was acknowledged as the state's premier ski-explorer.

## RAY WHITFORD

Ray joined the Club in 1932 and during his more than fifty years of membership, he is remembered as a quietly spoken, highly competent and well liked gentleman.

He was appointed Secretary, 1954-59, Tours Officer, 1959-61, served on the Magazine Committee, was elected President for 1961-64 and was honoured with Life Membership in 1965.

Ray was a prolific and very capable bushwalker and his writings and tape recordings that survive covering more than twenty extended trips were a feature of many issues of "The Melbourne Walker". He walked in good company, accompanying Harry Wright and Alan Budge when their duties took them to survey routes for walks that were to be led by others. His other regular companions included Bill Waters, Clyde Grant, Joe Matthews, Don Smart and others in the top echelon of the Club's walkers.

Ray could truly be referred to as an explorer-bushwalker, venturing into some of the state's more inaccessible regions of his time. He visited New Zealand and wrote of his experiences on the Routeburn Track and other areas in the 'Land of the Long White Cloud'. Ray was a cross-country skier in the early thirties and accompanied Bill Waters and Rover Scouts on their forays across the Bogong High Plains. An innovator, Ray made much of his gear, saying "I knew what I wanted and found the best way was to make it myself".

The victim of a fatal car accident in 1986, the Club lost one of its finest members.



## RICHARD G. HEMMY

'Dick' Hemmy joined the Club in 1927 and in his twenty-five years of active membership proved to be a valuable member. A surveyor with the Lands Department, he used his talents to draw about a dozen maps of sections of the north-eastern Victorian mountains. These maps were made available to walkers in the form of blue prints, through the Club's Tours Committee. His finest achievement in this work was his map of North Eastern Victoria which covered an area of approximately 7,200 square miles of the most mountainous section of the State.

An active bushwalker and attendant at all Club activities, Dick was appointed Tours Officer in 1950-51, elected a Life Member in 1954 and became President in 1955-58. He was entrusted by the Lands Department to survey the Mt William track in the Grampians and also the snow pole line and its erection across Mt Bogong in 1938. Had this latter work been commissioned a little earlier, it would have saved the life of former Club member Cleve Cole.

Dick was a regular leader of Club walks, including the Christmas trip of 1937. He was a regular contributor to the "Melbourne Walker", his subjects usually being of an informative nature - 'Snow poles', 'Maps', 'Forest Roads' and historical themes - 'Mt Donna Buang', 'Yarra River' and 'Dandenong Ranges' etc.

Dick wrote an essay "Unto the Hills" which he dedicated to the Melbourne Walking Club to commemorate their Diamond Jubilee year. The 24 page essay was awarded an Honourable Mention by the State Government in conjunction with the State's Centenary in 1951. The introduction to the essay could well be applied to Dick Hemmy, who is remembered as a modest, unassuming and very likeable man.

"I will lift up mine eyes to the hills, from whence cometh my help". Psalm cxxi.

## CLYDE GRANT

Clyde joined the Club in 1922 and no finer tribute can be paid to him than Alan Budge's reference in "No End to Walking". Alan calls Clyde "A Prolific Walker-Writer - he was a pioneer walker in every sense. He preferred to walk with two or three companions. He was a prolific writer between 1948 and 1969 and contributed seventeen articles to The Melbourne Walker, each a narrative of a long mountain walk. He indulged in great detail, delved into historical aspects of the country he walked over and dug out stories about the old mountain characters who were part of folklore and unknown, or perhaps derided by today's bushwalkers. He made fulsome use of similes, metaphors and other figures of speech as he wrote in an old fashioned style. Perhaps in the future students will turn to Clyde Grant when engaged in research of life in the high mountains during the mid-20th century."

For those who walked in Clyde's footsteps, by his writings they could relive their experiences, and for those who never followed Clyde, they must regret that they never did.

Clyde sub-titled one of his articles "Seeking our most inaccessible mountains" and this line could well apply to almost all of his trips.

In addition to the seventeen articles mentioned by Budge, most of which were accompanied by his hand drawn maps, Clyde was with Bill Waters on Mt Bogong-Big River-Bogong High Plains in 1924 and was also a member of the famous 24-day trip in the same year. In 1926 he accompanied Bill Waters and three others in a marathon trip from Glencairn to Mt Skene, finishing at Mt Bogong and Tawonga. Sadly no account of this trip nor the route taken survives. In 1928 Clyde was Joe Matthews' companion of the second known crossing of the Barry Mountains. In 1940 he made the first known ascent of Snowy Bluff and repeated the climb a dozen years later.

The name Clyde Grant must surely deserve a place amongst the Club's finest explorer-bushwalkers.

## ERIC STEWART

Eric joined the Club in 1925, but he had been an experienced bushwalker for some years before this date. The only known surviving record of his experiences are contained in a 16 page typed letter he wrote only a few days before he died in 1982, much of which was printed in "Skiing the High Plains".

In 1922 Eric joined a party organised by Benambra schoolteacher Mr West and led by cattleman 'Big Jack' Pendergast. The trip was from Benambra over high country between the Upper Murray and Snowy rivers to Kosciusko and returning via Tom Groggin. Along the way Eric met Bill Waters, Charlie Bryant, Charlie Green and Arthur Schlippe, all who were destined to join the Melbourne Walking Club a few years later. Eric succeeded K. Gibson as the Club Librarian and he enthusiastically expanded this to a sizeable collection. Where is it now?

Eric accompanied Bill Waters' small Easter 1932 party to the Moroka headwaters, Mt Kent, Snowy Bluff and the Wonnangatta, and Eric was in a small group on a trip to Buller, Stirling, King River, Cobbler, Speculation, Howitt and the Howqua River at Christmas 1935. Although it is known that Eric walked extensively, no other records of his walks survive. However, like a number of other Club members, Eric had become 'hooked' on cross-country skiing and was amongst the earliest of the pioneers. He was a member of the four man party which made the first W - E winter crossing of the Bogong High Plains in 1927 and with the same group made the first winter ascent of Mt Bogong, in 1928.

Eric was appointed Snowline Representative for the Victorian Tourist Bureau and for the five winters, 1935 - 1939 up to his enlistment in World War II, he supplied riding ponies and pack-horses and guided parties of skiers to and from Harrietville to the Feathertop Bungalow and also up the Bon Accord Spur to Hotham Heights. His writing details some of the trials and tribulations of this period when he employed cattleman Cliff Lawlor and Carl Wraith as his assistants.

Cliff Lawlor carried on the service until the end of season 1942 when Eric Johnston took over for two seasons using a horse drawn sledge. The novelty of the sledge obviously impressed the skiing fraternity, as they erected a memorial to Johnston after his death.

Eric Stewart, who had become almost a legendary figure in the Harrietville - Hotham area during his years of service was completely forgotten. He died in 1982 and left his own library of mountain books to the Latrobe Library.

## ALAN D. BUDGE

Alan joined the Club in 1935, after having bushwalked from 1930. He quickly became involved in Club activities and wrote his first article for 'The Melbourne Walker' in 1937. Over the next fifty years his regular walking provided the material for more than twenty articles penned above his own name, in addition to others he wrote over a pseudonym. A number of his walks were also recorded by companions with whom he walked. There was scarcely a forest or mountain area in the state where Alan failed to leave his footprints.

Alan served as Assistant during Rege Mann's period of editorship of "The Melbourne Walker" and then succeeded to editorship for the fifteen years 1968-1983. During this period, Alan built the readership of what was the leading bushwalking magazine, to in excess of 3,000 copies, which represented a readership of more than ten times the Club's membership. Alan's literary ability was acknowledged by Laurie Bell in a tribute he paid to Alan in the 1992 issue of the magazine - "A. D. Budge's Writings of Walkers, Gipsies of the Road and of Letters".

However, Alan's finest literary achievement was his research and writing of "No End to Walking", subtitled 'One Hundred Years of Walking by the Walking Club'. This, Alan wrote for the Club's Centenary Year. Sadly, Alan died in 1983, a short time before his work was published by a small group of his friends and walking companions. The total proceeds from this venture were donated to the Anti-Cancer Council of Victoria, who acknowledged the gift by devoting it to form the 'Alan D. Budge Trust Fund' to be devoted to Cancer Research.

During his distinguished membership of almost sixty years Alan served as Tours Officer, 1954-58, President, 1958-61, was elected a Life Member in 1965 and was Magazine Editor 1968 to 1983.

## HAROLD WALTER WRIGHT

Harry Wright joined the Club in 1924 and in his years of membership he undoubtedly walked more frequently and further than any other member. Only scattered references to Harry's trips have survived as his forte was walking and not writing. We know, however, that he was Tours Officer for a record eleven years (1938-1949) and was elected a Life Member in 1959. Ray Whitford wrote of Harry, "The Melbourne Walking Club has had some very good Tours Officers, but none perhaps as meticulous as was Harry Wright. No walk appeared on the program that Harry had not personally covered and many times in my association with him did I experience various and often lengthy trips to gain the knowledge necessary (for the leader) for these Club walks."

We do know that Harry led the Christmas Trip to Mt Wellington in 1932, accompanied Bill Waters and a small party to Bentley's Plain and the Cobberas in 1933, was with the Club party which walked from Buffalo to Mts Selwyn, Speculation and Howitt in 1934 and led the successful Barry Mountains, Wonnangatta, Howitt Christmas trip in 1935. In 1940 he planned the Mt Wellington trip, led by Geo. Travers and then made the first ascent of Snowy Bluff. In 1946 he led the first Club trip towards Mt Pinnibar (unsuccessful) and returned the following year to make the first Club ascent.

Although records have not survived it is certain that Harry played a prominent part in almost all the lengthy Club trips during his long association with the Club. Members planning their own trips invariably sought Harry's assistance for maps and track notes, which were always meticulously prepared and cheerfully given.

It has been said that every club needs one member of the calibre of a Harry Wright and his service in 70 years of loyal membership may never be equalled.