

Emu Thoughts

1997

From their residual funds Rockhopper had decided to set up a perpetual Rockhopper Trophy and a Scholarship for promising juniors. We won the inaugural Rockhopper Trophy naming us as the Champion Club of 1996. This does sound a bit overdone but that is what the trophy says. Now we have to hang onto it and try to repeat the performance. Scribe had now followed Janet J in having knee trouble – hers ‘condo malacia patella’ mine narrowing of cartilage (and persisting until this day), no more running. It was quite a problem on the 5 Days. These were in NSW. The Js, the only NEs, stayed at The Entrance after a very slow crawl on the Newcastle Freeway (10kph) and through Gosford (5kph) – to event sites however it was a very pleasant to drive along excellent roads through beautiful lush country and a seemingly endless number of modern towns or hamlets between hills or beside lakes with names like Wyoming, Toronto, Tumbi Umbi and Kangy Angy.

The first event was at Caves Beach near Swansea about 1km of sand running then a semi tropical muddy oozy hanging vine swamp. Then Moran’s Ck near Mandalong – a most nerve-wracking walk to the Start required walking across a long log over a still and dark looking billabong, really scary for older people. The map showed a great cleared transmission line swathe – yet all around was dense forest with canopy so I set off looking elsewhere – in reality the clearing didn’t exist where wires swung down over gullies – I’d been in the right place all the time. I was bad last, over 3 hours, and NEV 1 stood alone. Next was Belford State Forest, a dry area 95km from Cessnock --- a 4 strand barbed fence had to be crossed four times: a lot of limbo-ing. Lots more hamlets maybe one day Cairns to Sydney will be one long line of suburbs. Pourmalong Ck had shoulder high grevillea. The final day was at Girrakool, in the rocks at Gosford, and there was a chasing start based on the previous days. As Marion and I had been last every day it was a stupid idea (should have been reverse start) for others had finished before we’d even begun; presentations were at 9.00am but we didn’t get back until 11.30 by which time NEV 1 was again standing alone.

During the above the Adrians and Sue had been in NZ where Paul won M70A. The Jacksons and Thurlows were at the High O where Peter & Carolyn won the Mixed section. Back in Melb events were as usual – one had been 26km NW to Mill Park, the next 26km beyond Dandenong. We had had a few injuries, Arthur with a blocked leg artery, several more with wonky knees, one being Judy Frederick who was wanting to try a new drug, Cartrophen, available only to vets. A plea to one was met by refusal on ethical grounds plus the admonition” if it doesn’t work, we shoot the horse”. The Jacksons were packed ready to evacuate when a bush fire destroyed parts of Ferny Ck; embers were falling. (Janet F lost her Warrandyte home in the fires of 1962 and Carmel had lost a holiday home). Colin had a scare at Launching Place in a storm when lightning struck a tree he had been under shortly before moving to a shed.

A newcomer on the scene was Peter Herd, M45 runner, president of Camberwell Tennis Club. The Dear and Bayliss families decided not to renew, and Michael W was transferred to Sydney. Janet F reported that at renewal closing date only 24 membership units of 65 had paid (HURRY UP). Rob, as usual, reported on our NE events for the coming year. Peter Creely, event co-ordinator for Easter 98, the location still then a secret, announced that I was to be Treasurer and had opened a bank account. Yes, the name was Maldon Gold.

Suburban events continued with some big attendances when schools such as Scotch attended, one at Yarra Bend had 201. A new member was Tony Kennedy. With more wonky club knees, scribe told of a then new claim that glucosamine could assist --- it was virtually unknown in Australia, with chemists and health stores dismissing it as snake oil. Scribe obtained some from a laboratory in Sydney and also queried the writer of an article in a medical journal. He responded, by phone, saying "you may as well drink lolly-water for all the good it'll do - or wrap wet seaweed around your knee." (Years later glucosamine became all the rage!). The final of the Summer series was at Frog Hollow. Maybe we were past our peak for first as a club last year we slipped to third and our average points were fourth; the other clubs were BK, YV and DR. Individually Carolyn won A, Rachel J won B, Adrian won D, with Marion, scribe, Melinda and young Rachel H (accompanied) won E (few competitors).

The first bush event was at Wattle Gully, across the road from J's cottage, so most NEs and some from other clubs called in afterwards. Ian Stirling demonstrated radio directing finding. He placed 3 transmitters in the scrub each with a different number of beeps and each sounding intermittently and in sequence. We took turns to trace them via a handheld receiver (sniffer) which looks something like a TV aerial. Then followed a weekend double near Ballarat, Snake Valley, and then Little Bendigo. Excluding the young children, we had 68 attending. As only A courses qualify for the Rockhopper Trophy (not AS) some NEs have switched to A (such as Michael H) or moved up to a less congested category (Rex). Rachel E, not yet 11, accompanied her Dad on the long course 3. Five Fells were present the second day.

The Vic Relays were at Lyell South, weather was perfect, the terrain was open, there were 60 teams in all. Rachel J and the two Helens won; Adrians and Janet F were third, as also Russell, Laurie and Rosemarie. The Easter 3 Days were at Broken Hill -- -- and our Results system was first to get there with 1000 slats of which 960 were to be used. There is nothing between Wentworth and BH - a few areas of stunted trees but chiefly salt bush that stretched to the horizon like cabbages. In case any reader objects that there is a roadhouse between the two, there is not, it was burned down, deliberately, on Easter Sunday. The Family Relays were held on Good Friday at O'Keefe's Paddock, our one official entry, the Jacksons, came third. Clear blue skies, bright orange sand/dirt/dust, moonscape country. Day 2 was "The Hills Paddock, another portion of the same Thorndale property there were a few injuries on the jagged rocks. Day 3 was at The Living Desert a series of low hills, quite low until you

had to climb over them, up and over, up and over and down and up, seemingly endlessly, all the time with loose and jagged rock. Did not even see a lizard or an ant, so much for Living. The Start was a 4km walk from assembly or an alternative drive and walk of 10km requiring car pooling.

Some NEs went on to the Menindee lakes, or to the Flinders Ranges, or down a mine, or to Silverton, the ghost town now home to offbeat artists, to museums, prison cells, old machinery, nostalgic and depressing. Erica & scribe did the railway museum which contains the intact famous Silver Comet train which ran from Parkes 1937-1970, the first air-conditioned train in the British Empire. Food-wise the Js were happy with Pizza Hut for 4 evenings – did not see any other NEs, apparently restaurants, hotels, clubs (pokies) were in vogue. Carolyn won on 2 days and overall, Sue won twice, while Joyce won once and overall, Melinda on one day. Our Results system was damaged on the last day and SA paid for replacement timbers, small fry alongside the \$36,000 cost of the maps.

Peter Fleming and Charles Parker advised they no longer had time for orienteering. 14 others have not responded at all and are regarded as being lost, stolen, or strayed. Sorry to lose them but they had scarcely been sighted in two years, two never. There was more on knees and health – there is even a new penile gel for impotence – most appropriately manufactured by Upjohn! Peter & Joyce Aslangul, who were at cottage day, are new members. Marion & Erica are roped in to be the Event Entry people for Maldon Gold and it is hoped to buy a computer program to enable compilation of entries and results. Rachel J did the Sussan women's fun run and came 36th out of several thousand.

There were several rogaines at which some NEs participated and did well, and 42 attended an event at Warragil Rocks where there were numerous DNFs. Scribe found the first 5 of 12 controls quite well, differed a bit on 6 and took an hour and a half on 7. There were good catching features and two eminent points for relocation, plus number 8 (found twice) but repeated crisscrossing of the area just did not reveal this particular low boulder. Carmel gave up on this one, so also Marion and Lewis. Scribe finally just about fell on it, continued, and finished with a time of 211 minutes for the 4km. There was a low-key event at Kurucaruc Ck an old map from 1979 beyond Napoleons --- the name is supposed to mean the croaking of a frog. 15 NEs attended including Fells, Hughes, and Shepherds. Kangaroo Gully had about 250 participants and after it 20 NEs and 5 others had a gathering at Janet & Arthur's lovely Castlemaine property. The next events were in NSW, Tabletop again and Shockaroo again. It was very wet and slippery at TT and we were warned to stay away from cliff edges, courses were easier than the previous year but the heavy rain at times saw some of us soaked. Shockaroo was not as wet. Our usual winners and placegetters did so again at the above events.

There was a Blodslitet at Wattle Gully near the dingo park we were warned not to eat any sand – concentrations of arsenic in local sand have been killing the dingoes --- scribe gave up half way not wanting to sight the winding channel six more times, OK to stand in it, to walk along it, but not to see it from afar – that childhood phobia again. Marion and I were on our own for like the end of an era Erica & Rachel had called it quits – when we got home there was an enormous “Ken Orchard” trophy on the table that Rachel had won for winning a 10km handicap. Rachel’s lasted longer and had more success than the very many youngsters over the years. She has now lost her appetite for the bush, finding the continual decision making a strain, there’s now more satisfaction for her in straight running. Erica likewise decided to stop, partly augmented by a drenching at Tabletop and falling into a mud pool! Scribe was not too happy about all this for the Rockhopper trophy retention could thus be at stake. We were substantially head on club points but with injuries and absences we are now dipping out, unless more NEs come and do “A” courses our lead will dissipate.

A double event at Kooyoora. Kevin & Paul won their categories both days. Helen S, Lewis, Gill & Janet the first day, Arthur & Adrian the second day. On the second day scribe still hadn’t found number 1 even after 140 minutes and 3 relocations – by this time just about every boulder, rock and tree had become familiar, and from whatever direction pace-counting led back to the same spot. Scribe DNFd having found nothing. Next event was Belltopper Hill it was wet, slippery, and foggy. Scribe was reconciled by being lost by number 1, could not make anything of the terrain, but had the happy fortune of stumbling on number 7 and was right thereafter. NE category winners were the Helens, Colin, Kevin, Paul, with Adrian and Rachel E being the best on their courses.

Rex was in sunny Cairns supervising a high-tech gizmo to successfully detect hot axles on cane bins --- Tullamarine was foggy on his return so he ended up in Adelaide! Peter Creely gave us an update on Maldon Gold, Rex to be course setter on Day 2, myself co-treasurer (receipts and payments), Janet F community liaison, Erica receipt of entries. Other office bearers were from Bendigo. NE was also to be responsible for the Entry booklet (this could run to 80 pages). Xmas in June was at Adrians. Dorothy & Paul had the kitchen extensively remodelled and enlarged about a year ago and it’s like a marble palace opening directly to the living area. As well as NEs there was Gordon Clarke (YV) and from BK the Sheehans, Hannas and Jill Miller. It was midnight when people began leaving with Joyce still handing out little chocolate puddings and barber pole walking sticks. A very pleasant evening: thank you to those who made it a success.

NE’s first bush event for the year was at Crocodile Reservoir – Paul who at the time was relieving in a medical practice in Castlemaine was course setter. Scribe had packed the trailer as usual and it had been collected by Janet & Arthur who with the Adrians, Lincoln and Don were to erect the infrastructure, dig the toilet holes, and put out 58 controls. The Js were still at home when Janet F phoned from Castlemaine to

say that something had been forgotten – the MAPS! Disaster averted! There were special warnings about mineshafts in the area some of which were capped in an unsafe manner. Packing up took until 6.30 pm. It proved an expensive event for the Js since NEV 1 scraped a rock on a narrow track on leaving and dented the sump to the extent of \$600 repair. A fortnight after this event we had another, at Wurdi Youang, with Helen S the course setter, and a good number of helpers for the various tasks. We had to buy a linear adaptor for the trailer. With the pencil thin saplings and thorns WY was formidable and it took scribe 219 minutes. Rex won that same course in 58, and young Stuart Fell took 66.

Garnet Edwards has been living in France for a while. Hazel joined him after a book launching in Paris and they embarked on a slow barge trip of the Burgundy Canal, walking 55km along the tow path. Hazel's next trek is to the Himalayas; her latest book is selling well and has occasioned 30 radio interviews. The Winter Classic was at Jim Crow and Charlesford Diggings, a mass start at the first and a chasing start at the second. Our regulars scored 3 firsts and 8 placings; the Jacksons had a good day with 4 badges while very young Tim (2 yrs & 2 months) stole the show with 2 circuits of the string course. Paul & Dorothy were the only Vics to go a badge event in SA (they won their categories) and are now off to USA for the World Vet Champs in Minnesota. Janet and Arthur instead are doing a garden tour of NZ's South Island. Meanwhile Russell & Marion Y are somewhere in the outback doing a 4WD 6 week tour. Our Maxi Score, our 7th, was at Creswick; numbers were lower than usual (100) but it was a good day (though windy and wet at times). The Aslanguls and David Baker (an earlier NK member returned after a long and serious illness) added to our usual workforce. The two Helens won Women's Vet for the 5th time, Warren and Rachel J won Mixed senior, Laurie and Rosemarie won Senior women, while Joyce with Gordon Clarke won Mixed Senior. The Fell family was well represented with 3 teams.

Boundary Creek South was the event for our inaugural Vin Maloney day (later) – Lewis & Helen S who came from Geelong reported snow near Anakie. The assembly area was in a most picturesque area beside a creek – then the land rose steeply, very steeply as runners were to comment and bemoan. Next event was ours at Little hard Hills – the bushfire blackened trees were decked out in their pantaloons type fresh underwear while there was lush growth of heaths, coffee bush and the like, very attractive. Rob got the trailer home at 8.30 pm – it will take days to dry everything. Then Kangaroo Crossing, the first OY in years that Js had not attended. There were many Maldon Gold half way meetings at Mandy Hennessy's in Woodend with our Bendigo compatriots at this period, as there was a huge amount to arrange. Lesser events were at Graytown – lovely weather, lovely country, bright and green, lots of kangaroos and Strath Ck with a small attendance of 50 as most orienteers were in ACT. Mary O was present with son Rod, she and Jim plan on cycling to Canberra for Christmas. NEV 1 returned home via Flowerdale and Kinglake rather than the Hume, a pleasant change.

The Aust Champs were in ACT. Marion & scribe went the long way via Gippsland staying overnight in Cann River, thence via Bombala and Cooma; 750km to Canberra (660km per Hume) Rachel temporarily out of retirement flew up. Some NEs had been there for almost a week with various low key and schools' events (Warren again managing the Vic teams). The Champs were South of Canberra via Burra (and near little Burra and Narraburra!), obviously different to the Burra in SA. As usual in ACT the Starts were a long way and Marion wished to allow 2 hours to get there which meant rising at 5.30am and being almost the first car – Rachel with a late start had almost a 5 hour wait. It WAS a long walk to the start, 2km fairly undulating and then quite a climb for another km. Carolyn in W35A was our only winner. Seconds went to Rachel J, the Helens, Melinda, Sue & Joyce, Warren was third. As there had been 5 Vic girls available for the Relays next day, Rachel was asked to stay on rather than fly home but she was unable to convert her single ticket to a return and had to buy another single so it was an expensive relay. But a good run in heavy conditions, she was best of the Vics and 3rd from the overall 21. Home via Holbrook the submarine town and an earlier tea in a railway carriage (built 1910, retired 1984) where the D-S-O-T-TB.

While the above was happening there was an event, course set by Ron F, at Conical Hill, the first use since 1991 but this time on its easier slopes. The Vic Chaps were on Tuckonie's new map, Two Kangaroo Creeks adjoining Belltopper. All 4 Jacksons came first. Rachel who will be 21 next year finished off her juniorate well with her 4th Vic Champs win (5 times Resident Champ) – she also beat those on W21. Other firsts were Helen S, Dorothy, Paul, Adrian, Rob Fell & Melinda. Seconds were Rex, Sue, Lewis & Rachel E; thirds to Gill, Janet F, and the Fell boys Stuart and James. The Adrians were back from America where dozens and dozens of small lakes replete with mosquitoes, midges and all manner of biting bugs that made victims look syphilitic and even the best orienteers struggled. Paul usually near the top in his class was 52nd.

58 of the 1000 cloth chest numbers we'd so laboriously stencilled over a number of cold Saturdays back in 1990 had never been returned some people, such as elites, seem to regard them as souvenirs, so though we'd planned computer produced (and sponsored ones) for Maldon Gold, Marion, for the sake of it, stencilled the missing numbers. Sue, as Chair of the Older Persons Action Centre, was commissioned to write an article on ageing for the Sunday Age. She said grey hair contains a magic potion that renders the owner invisible. We had our second Night O at the You Yangs --- a great deal of work for only 25 persons though all enjoyed it. Rex and Derek erected fluorescent lights powered by car batteries, we also had a fire, a good one which we sat around waiting for the lights of returning runners bobbing up and down in the distance. Gill and Dorothy provided soup. The same controls were used next morning for about 50 runners plus a passing group of 12 men!

Arthur wrote a page report on the Mountain Bike championships at Lal Lal, the first such event. There were 45 competitors the NEs being the 4 Jacksons (all placed), Kevin, Arthur and Bernie & Dylan Shuttleworth. Arthur's course was 17km over rough tracks, took him 167 minutes. Laurie also wrote an article re orienteering in Sweden with 18,000 other people. She and Rex were there in 1986, 1990 -91. They may make you walk 6km to the Start but sometimes run a fleet of buses --- fireworks at night (10.00pm and a disco, and a daily newspaper. Laurie has been asked or invited to stand for the VOA Presidency. NE and BG had each contributed \$20,000 to Maldon Gold (me!) and \$17000 had been spent on maps, printing, and badges. As usual the year closed with schools and street events. After one at Studley Park (where some NEs had hired canoes or kayaks) it was a delight to drive home in the first batch of cars to use the extended Eastern Freeway for which we had waited 41 years. A schools' event in Jells Park saw 400 attend; Erica was starter, Marion & scribe finishers, Janet F the calculator, Results were hung on our display unit. Two controls were removed and thrown into bushes.

Yes, NE retained the Rockhopper trophy with 2550 points to YV 2194. With Erica, Rachel and Doreen (injured) largely out of it and as we only had 26 members who did the required 6 events (36 the previous year) scribe was amazed. Thanks to the Fells. There weren't many at the VOA final day, mostly NEs, 11 of whom received the usual attractive plaque – Rob, Rachel E, James, Adrian, Carolyn, Helen E, Helen S, Colin, Dorothy, Joyce, Paul. Our AGM was held at Tourourrong. Dorothy gave her presidential report and said I remind you that I am now retiring as present. I look forward confidently to Ron Frederick steering us in interesting new directions in the future. Erica, Rex & Janet also retired as ctte members. Ron Frederick was winner of the first real orienteering event in Victoria in 1970, and Sue Healy, now VP set up the first club in NSW about that time, Arthur Thurlow's 4 year role has been taken by Carmel as secretary (husband Ian has composed and marketed an O board game), Erica has passed Treasury back to her mother who was Emu treasurer before the amalgamation. Michael Horn is to pursue the technical side of things in lieu of Rex who is busy with Maldon Gold. He and Rosemarie and toddlers Rachel & Freya have just returned from England and France (where they attended an O event). He is younger than then rest of us; hopefully, a precursor of things to come. Rob continues in the role of coordinator, planning events seeking course setters and controllers, and doing a lot himself. Thanks to Janet F who after 15 years NK/NE service is enjoy a well earned break; some newsletter improvements are due to her persuasion too. It was not stated but thanks should also have gone to Erica who for years and years copied the newsletter on her employer's high speed machines (using her own paper) and carried all the copies home on the train.

