

when and I didn't know under what circumstances. However, it wasn't as if I wasn't geared for it, it wasn't as if I hadn't tried to maintain the treatment to get my leg under control, for as many years as I could. Thank God for private health insurance, that's all I can say.

When it came off I then had to deal with the issue of the type of prosthetic leg, what I was going to wear and who was going to provide it. The government prosthetic legs we had back then were basically one where straps went over your knee. It wasn't long after that I decided I wasn't going to live with the 'reject technology' as I call it, and again, because of the fact that we had private health insurance I decided I would buy a high-tech leg.

That's what I did. Some of them were good, but never really good. As an amputee you suffer from skin issues which are always there. You can never get away from them. They are with you till the day you die. You are a work in progress as an amputee, and you have to be aware of the fact that these things do happen to you, and that, if you do happen to have some of the downsides, well you either live with it or you get it fixed.

The current prosthetic limb that I am wearing is a thing called a 'unity system' from a company called Össur and this time round I am waiting for something to go wrong — because nothing has gone wrong. It is really working wonderfully.

The 'unity system' has a vacuum pump under the ball of the foot and it works very very well. I suppose, the other thing is that I have settled down a little bit and I don't give it as much of heavy work as what I would have five or six years ago. I take things a little more easily and am much more calm in what I do.

I am not going to climb any more mountains and I am not



BEFORE AND AFTER.



going to do the things the same way as I did them five or six years ago. So from that point of view it is probably a combination of a very good system and a bit more realism from my point of view.

It is worth mentioning that from 1992 through to 2007, I spent those years on the NSW executive committee for the NSW Lymphoedema Association, which is mainly for ladies who have breast cancer.

When I lost my leg I couldn't belong to that association because I didn't have lymphoedema any more as I didn't have my leg. So I joined the NSW Amputee Executive Association, and I now work as a mentor, as a hospital visitation mentor for people who are about to lose their legs or leg or limb, or have just lost a limb.

I get requests from the vascular surgeon who operated on me to go and visit people. He then rings the person and says, "look I know somebody and if you would like to have some mentoring or some advice you can ring Tom". If they ring me then I go and visit them anywhere in the south-eastern part of NSW. I talk to them about their leg, what they can get, who they can see, what the options are, what they could look forward to, how they can deal with it, how they can get their headspace together. As often as not you are better off without the gammy leg that you have got, and if it has to come off, to reassure people that technology today is so far advanced to what it was 15 years ago. It is just chalk and cheese.

I believe if you can get people's headspace a little bit more clear in the line of what they can do instead of just sitting there on the bed, then it's all good.

You are never going to solve the problems but you can allay a lot of their fears, let them realise that you are an amputee, that you live with it and talk to them about the issues and where they can go and what sort of legs they can do either on private health, what the government will pay for, what options they have. Most of the questions I can answer before they even start to think about them, [namely] where to go when. So that's what I do, and I feel it's just a little thing, it's nothing much. I just do it.

# What is it about a bush track?

Sue Doran walks us through



WALKERS RESTING ON PEBBLY SHORE OF BUCKENBOWRA.

Sometimes it seems that a lifetime of bushwalking only amplifies the urge to get back on the track. Starting out along a new trail endorphins step up their dervish dance at the first hint of birdsong and breeze, the subtle play of light, and the sweet aroma of life's renewal happening at your feet. Forest dimensions feed the mood, recalibrating our perception of our place in this world. It's easy to become addicted.

In our local area I'm exploring new ground while my companion leads along familiar trails. Such an abundance of options: the Budawangs, the Deua, the Monga and the Morton. Now's the perfect time of year.

Here are three tasters — walks I've done recently for the first time. Many locals would know these like an old friend. But for those who don't regularly walk, maybe you'd consider trying one that suits your interest/fitness level during the Spring?

## Mt Budawang (Budawang NP)

On the way up, my companion recognised a flash of life darting across the path ahead as a spotted-tailed quoll — the animal itself clinging to the hope that speed would blur the evidence. Trudging ever upwards on this wide firetrail with its easy and consistent gradient, the pace allowed time to also notice the miniscule; universes of multicoloured lichen and fungi. Tiny red trumpets of the native fuschia (*Epacris*) were bursting to show off too. Then once the Silvertop Ash forests gave way to lower wind-bitten heath (Red Fruit Saw Edge) and Herringbone fern the northern expanse of blue on bluer on bluest of the Morton appeared — the nipple known as Pigeon House, the iconic Castle and Currockbilly Mountain — laid out in their perpetual majesty. From the summit, through the Ti-Tree, we could glimpse the Mongarlowe

Valley meandering below and, further to the west, Gillamatong, with Braidwood nestled cosily beneath. To the south, the Clyde Mountain, and looking to the east, Batemans Bay basked in tranquility on a clear eucalyptus-blue-infused day. The best views are from the Fire Tower of course. A lyrebird held us in its thrall as we dropped back amongst the *Dicksonia* treeferns on our descent. No stage diva comes near its repertoire. It stopped us in our tracks, searching the bush for movement, then we crept along following the sound, totally tuned to its exquisite playlist of decoys. Too many superlatives? Try it and see.

A half-day stroll up to the summit (1138m altitude) and back to the car — including time to stop for lunch and to admire views — in total 7 km. The turn off to the entrance is just four kilometres from Mongarlowe along Budawang Rd. Look for the bushwalker icon on a post on your left. The

**CARALUEN SPORTS DAY**  
SATURDAY 1ST OCTOBER 2016  
Araluen Rec Ground  
Gates open 9.30am - 4pm

**NSW Axemen Association WOODCHOP**  
The traditional demonstration & display  
Jungling skills  
Musical performance  
Historical photographs on display at Araluen Public Hall

**Community vs Community TUG-OF-WAR**

**IRISH MAN & WOMAN AMATEUR CROSS CUT SAW NAIL DRIVE HORIZONTAL BUNNIE PIE EATING COMPETITION DOG HIGH JUMP CHOCOLATE WHEEL CHILDREN GAMES AND ACTIVITIES LOCAL FRESH PRODUCE STALLS SPECIALITY FOODS**

**ADMISSION \$12 FAMILY children up to 12 years \$5 SINGLE**

**MUSIC BY SARAH COWAN**

PROUDLY SPONSORED BY BROADBENT COMMUNITY BANK THE CARALUEN HOTEL JOHN WHITE & SONS