



# Explorer Journey

16 – 17 October 2009

By Lachlan Hatton

## 1 Pre-Hike Preparations

### 1.1 Training and Planning Activities

The planning for the blue level hike started on 26 June 2009 where those that were interested attended. Egil explained to us what would be required and we set up a number of objectives – we have to compile a gear list, weigh ourselves and give to Egil our bare body weight. We also needed to collect empty milk bottles. A date for the hike was set for 12 – 13 September. This ended up being postponed because Egil thought that we were not ready. I was kind of glad because my tennis team made it into the finals and that was the finals weekend.

The milk bottles were to put in our packs full of water during our practice hikes and if the weight got too much we could empty out some water.

We also had to set a series of dates for practice hikes and meetings. We were all enthusiastic but didn't do much about it as was clear at the next meeting on 31 July. It was decided to stop trying to get everyone to agree and to split into teams of 3 to match the way we would be camping. I teamed up with Daniel Murphy and Jack Heskett. As well as the formal meetings with Egil and the others Daniel, Jack and myself had meetings to determine the menu (most of these happened on the bus on the way to school) and we shopped together and organized the food into our three lots for easy carrying. The menu was done and given Egil on 4 September. We did the shopping on the Thursday before the hike. Our food cost each of us \$23.50.

There were a number of practice hikes 9 August – around the Still Creek area of Menai. After this walk Egil was concerned as a number of us had to empty out water from our packs very early in the walk. A number of people under took a practice walk as part of the Camp Coutts camp – I didn't go to that camp. I did a lot more walking generally. The main things that I did were to walk home from school (a couple of Kms and my school back pack can be pretty heavy) and I walked to my Grandma's at Loftus about 6.5 km. To assist our preparation we also entered teams into the 1<sup>st</sup> Caringbah Rogain. This was successful for one of our teams – they came third but our team got very lost (turned west instead of east and came last on -890 points). We obviously needed to work on our mapping reading and navigation. The last of our formal practice hikes was on Sunday 13 September (the original date for our walk). Most of us took Egil for a leisurely 7.5 km walk to Eagle Rock in the Royal National Park. It was a very hot day, but we made it and it gave us confidence about being able to do the blue level journey.

The last part of our planning was on the night before the hike. We all met up at the scout hall with our parent and Egil and Bilby and got our final packs weighed with ourselves and with out so that we could work out if we were all OK. Most of us were a bit over the weight but OK. Except for Jack – as he was in my team we rearranged a few things to make sure that we were all ok to go.

We also went through what was going to happen and what was expected and when and where we were to meet in the morning for the train and at the end of the walk. Bilby gave us a good hint – to wear a shirt with a collar, like our activity shirt as it protects your neck from the straps of the back pack.

## 1.2 Menu and Food Quantities

### Personal Food Quantities

- 6 vita wheat with vegemite and 4 portions of moo cheese (lunch Friday)
- trail mix – sultanas, mini marshmallows, choc chips, cheerios (250g x 2)
- apples
- continental macaroni cheese (1 1/3 packets) (4 packets between the three of us)
- sachet of tang for afternoon tea
- hot chocolate sachet and mini marshmallows for supper
- 2 litres of water at the start of hike on Friday
- On Saturday the empty drink bottles were filled with Tang prior to Camp Coutts departure.
- porridge – creamy honey baked apple berry porridge
- isnack 2.0 on 9 vita wheat and 3 moo cheese portions
- muesli bars

	Friday	Saturday
<b>Breakfast</b>		porridge, water
<b>morning tea</b>	muesli bar, water	trail mix, water
<b>Lunch</b>	vita wheat, vegemite, moo cheese, water	vita wheat, vegemite, moo cheese, water
<b>afternoon tea</b>	trail mix, water	muesli bar, water
<b>Dinner</b>	macaroni cheese, trail mix, hot chocolate	

We spent time as a team to do the shopping and to organize the food into 3 separate bundles for each of us to take. We tried to get rid of as much packaging as possible to keep the weight down.

## 1.3 Personal Gear List

### In backpack

socks  
underpants  
jacket  
torch  
raincoat  
sleeping bag  
sleeping bag  
liner  
pillow  
toothbrush  
toothpaste  
soap  
towel  
comb  
deodorant  
track pants  
first aid kit  
2 litres of water  
pen  
small pad of  
paper  
green book  
money for train  
tickets  
handkerchief  
hat  
sunscreen  
plastic bag  
bowl  
mug  
tea towel  
knife, fork and  
spoon



### also had

walking shoes  
camp activity  
shirt  
shorts

## 1.4 Patrol Gear List

3 man tent – tent split three ways – fly, tent, pegs and poles. We each took one part of the tent. I had the fly, Daniel had the tent and Jack had the pegs and poles  
2 billies  
tongs  
matches  
serving spoon

## 1.5 Pack Weights

The safe weight is my bare body weight + 20%. For me this meant that my loaded up weight should be no more than 63.9 kg. When we had our final weigh in the night before the walk my weight with pack was 64 kg. It would have been good to be under the weight but Egil said that the extra 100g would be OK. I was relieved!

We did have to do some rearranging of things as Jack was well over weight. Some of the group stuff was then taken by myself and Daniel – such as the 2 billies.

## 1.6 Transport Arrangements

Car from home to Sutherland Station

Train from Sutherland to Heathcote

Walk from Heathcote Station to Camp Coutts

Camped at Camp Coutts overnight – Heritage Site

Walk from Camp Coutts to Helensburgh Station

Car from Helensburgh Station to home

(We were going to catch the train from Helensburgh to Sutherland station but there was track work on Sunday 17 October 2009 and no trains so we had to make other plans). Daniel and Jack's parents both have people movers and they came and picked all of us up.

## 1.7 Patrol Members

There were two groups of scouts that went as we slept in 3 man tents.

My group was myself, Daniel Murphy and Jack Heskett. The other group was Joshua Massingham and Lachlan Dunn.

Egil and Bilby also walked with us as leaders.

## 1.8 Maps Used

We used a number of maps and also did some navigation work with Egil.

The maps we used were:

- Appin 9029-1S 1:25,000 topographical map copyright Department of Lands 2000
- Campbelltown 9020-1N 1:25,000 topographical map copyright Department of Lands 2000

I also had printed off the map and track notes from the Wild Walks website [www.wildwalks.com](http://www.wildwalks.com) I had used these maps on our practice hike on 13 September to Eagle Rock and found them helpful.

## 2. Notes Taken On Hike

We left home at 7.30 am on Friday 16 October and picked up Egil and Bilby and drove to Sutherland Station where we met up with the others. We all bought our tickets – a student single to Heathcote. The weather was cool and slightly cloudy. We caught the 08:24:56 train from Sutherland. Jack failed at simple science. Got off the train at Heathcote at 08:30:02.

We then walked north-west from the station crossing Princes Highway 500m down Oliver St and turned South into Boundary Rd and walked 200 m to the Heathcote Scout Camp. We had our photo taken at the gate. We got to the camp at 08:45:10



We continued our walk through the scout camp and onto the fire trail south. We used a bridge to cross over the Sydney Water water pipe and continued to walk on the fire trail until 09:40:27 when we stopped at Mirang Pools. The trail had the water pipe on the left and the Heathcote creek (a long way down) on the right. We rested at Mirang Pools for a 15 minute break and laughed at Sarah's knob. Egil took some photos.

After leaving Mirang Pools we continued on the fire trail until 09:59:42 when we arrived at Battery Causeway. It was getting warmer and I took off my jacket and had our morning tea – muesli bar and a drink of water. We also had a bit of an explore of the creek. We stayed here for about ½ hour. We continued south onto the Bullawarring Track. It got very hot as it was slow going over rough ground with little breeze getting through the thick bush. We passed some others walking in the opposite direction.



The walk gets harder here - up hill and overgrown



Cool water for tired feet

12:25:28 arrived at Minda Pool where we had lunch and a play in the pools. It was great to get our shoes and socks off and to soak our feet in the cool water. We also did some badge work – using the GPS with Egil. We left Minda Pool at 13:47:57 continuing to follow the track heading south. Not very far in the track veered east and continued for 1 km before we turned off that track and joined another heading south.

14:30:18 we climbed up the track to the rock platform at the top of Kingfisher Pool. There was a waterfall that went into the pool. We explored the caves around the rock platform for about 10 minutes and had some group photos taken by Egil.



Completing our journey logs



rock platform above Kingfisher pool



During the rest of the walk we saw a number of other pools first the Yellow Pool and then the much larger Lake Toolooma which is just north of Camp Coutts are final destination for Day 1 and our camp site for the night.

We arrived at Camp Coutts at 17:35:05. We camped at the Heritage Site at Camp Coutts which is the first camp site in the main gate. We had walked 9.6 km on day 1. After setting up camp we cooked dinner on the fire. My group had macaroni cheese for dinner and hot chocolate and mini mashmallows for dessert. After dinner we cleaned up.



Quite Time



Our tent

At 20:15;45 Daniel, Jack and I went and had a shower and went to bed.

A bit hard to get out of bed and start the day. I slept very well even though cold night.

At 9:15:09 on Saturday 17 October we had breakfast of Uncle Toby's porridge. Daniel and I had a mix of creamy honey baked apple flavour and berry flavour as Jack only liked plain porridge. We had to relight the fire from the night before to boil the water to make the porridge. After breakfast at 09:45:50 we put out the fire properly, washed out dishes and packed up our gear and the tent. We also refilled our empty water bottles with Tang. There were some spotty clouds but basically sunny and it was starting to get hot.



Breakfast Saturday



Freeway overpass

10:45:40 started to leave Camp Coutts in a southerly direction with blue sky and sun.

At 11:20:55 we reached the Princes Highway. The weather was still sunny but there were some clouds on the horizon and there was a slight breeze. Crossed the highway and joined another fire trail going south.

We crossed the freeway on the walkway at 11.42.09. Stopped to have a look at the traffic going underneath. We continued on the track which is now a tarred road – much easier walking than the thick bush of yesterday. Waved to a couple of trucks from the railroad. They are working on the rail tracks and there are no trains running. This is why we are getting picked up rather than going by train.

Just after midday, about 12.10 stopped for lunch in the shade by the side of the road. Despite having walked so far we all found sticks and started Yoda staff wars. Lunch and Yoda took almost an hour.



Yoda Staff Wars

Leaving at 13.06.28 we crossed the railway and entered civilization – there were houses for the first time since Heathcote Scout Camp. The last interesting thing that we saw was at Wilson's Creek. There was a pool and waterfall which would have been good to swim in. There was also a long tunnel that we explored while we had afternoon tea. The climb from the creek to Helensburgh station was long and very tiring. Legs and Shoulders were sore by this time.

I was very pleased to see Helensburgh Station at 2 pm we reached our goal. We walked 5.7 km on day 2 making it 15.3 km for the two days. The blue level journey had been completed – except for the paper work!



**We made it!**



### 3. Assessment

The hike was a long time in the planning and it was at times hard to keep up the enthusiasm. The group at the start was 10 people 7 boys and 3 girls and it was hard to get agreement. It was much better when we split into groups and organized menus and things on a group level. I learnt that it is much easier to get fewer people to agree on something.

When we started planning the hike I don't think that any of us, except maybe Hannah, really understood how physically demanding that the walk would be. The second day was much harder than the first. It also took a lot more time to plan and organize than I thought it would.

The only gear that I took but didn't use luckily was both my raincoat and my first aid kit. Even though I didn't use either I would still take them next time.

With the food I didn't eat either of my apples, only 1 bag of my trail mix and only one of my hot chocolate sachets. However, I would rather have too much food than not enough and the extra food did not weigh much. As a team we also did not use the tongs. If we had similar food next time I would leave the tongs behind.

It was a great benefit to go to Camp Coutts for the night as we were able to have a shower and replenish our water bottles. This meant that we did not have to take all the water that we wanted to use for the weekend with us while we walked. The other good thing was the timing of the walk, because it was cooler we were able to cook on a camp fire which meant that we did not have to carry a camp stove.

I came home tired and the smell of my back and shoulders hurt. I feel proud of myself for being able to achieve what I set out to do. It was also good to be able to achieve the blue level journey with friends. My team was awesome. We worked together well and had a lot of fun.

I learnt lots about myself, working with a group and what it takes to organize and go on a hike. I am now thinking about my green level journey. I would like to thank Egil and Bilby for their help and walking with us and Daniel's Dad and Jack's Dad for picking us up.



**My Awesome Team!**