

# SYDNEY TIMES

Rowan and Margaret's News of 2004 and 2003

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## Editorial

I guess we're over the 'hump' of resettling now. Eighteen months we've been in Australia. In some respects it's been more difficult than going to California, and in others it's been easier. I won't dwell on details as it may bore you, but suffice to say we really miss all the great friends we made up north. And of course those friends and family to the west in sunny South Africa.

I know there are many people with whom our communication has been a bit lax, our excuses are many but are all truly inexcusable. I will try to rectify this omission by providing this omnibus edition of a newsletter which I've formatted like a newspaper - hence the title. In reality it's probably closer to being a blog (whatever that is?) Sometimes I've erred on the side of volume rather than quality, omitting the multiple proofreads and refinements, but I wanted to get the stories out, more than produce a manuscript. Of course the contributors (i.e. Margaret) are much better.

Remember that you're all welcome to visit and we'll attempt to show you around our part of the world.

All the best for the Christmas period and have a great 2005.

## Opinion

We joined an Orienteering club - here is the introduction Margaret prepared for inclusion in the club newsletter in May 2004.

Garingal Orienteering Club Newsletter  
Coming from an active mountainbiking scene it has come as quite a surprise that the first sports club (and only club so

far) we've joined here in Sydney is the Garingal Orienteers. We arrived in Sydney last May having heard Australia was a great country to live in, and we have to admit we're hooked! Our path to joining the Garingal club is one probably often heard from other newcomers. While packing up our home in California, a fellow ski club member urged us to make contact with a friend of hers in Sydney who she insisted had very similar outdoor interests and would just "love to welcome us to Australia". Well we did make contact and that person happened to be Sue Kurre! Not surprisingly she suggested meeting up at an orienteering event and invited us to her home afterwards for a traditional Aussie bbq. We met Ian and spent hours poring over maps and finally went home with armfuls of guide books and heads buzzing with areas to explore and the Summer Series event to mark on our calendars.

It didn't take us many Wed night runs at the Summer series to determine that we enjoyed the challenges of orienteering and that the Garingal orienteers were a great bunch!

Our first love is mountainbiking and on any given weekend you'll likely find us on the trails around Sydney or in the Blue Mtns. We have given MTBO (mtbike orienteering) a go and a couple of MTBO events are creeping into our calendar. We did participate in the 2 day Polaris event held recently which, aside from the wet and muddy conditions, was just the type of event we enjoy participating in. Combining mtbiking skills, good map reading, strategic route planning with self sufficiency and self reliance is a rewarding challenge. We'll definitely be back for more.

Now a brief history about ourselves. We were both born and educated in South Africa in the province of Natal along the east coast. After living and working in the Johannesburg metropolitan area for a couple of years, we took up an opportunity to move to California and work in the San Francisco bay area. After 5 years of working there and exploring the western states (especially the awesome

mountainbike trails in Utah) we felt it was time to move on and look for a place to "settle". An opportunity for Rowan to transfer to the company branch in Sydney was well timed, and after 10 months we feel that our first visit to Australia may just be a permanent one.

- Margaret Bouttell, April 2004

After having moved country a second time we're a bit weary, so we plan to stay here. Of course this involves a bit of paperwork.

### Permanent Residency application

Maybe some people would be interested, maybe not, but seeing as this process occupied my time for a quite a while earlier this year, I thought I'd explain it.

As with most countries Australia has fairly strict entry requirements - for tourists as well as for business and immigration. We currently have a temporary residence (long stay) visa which entitles us to reside here for 4 years provided I work for OpenTV who are my sponsor. Margaret has no restrictions on where she may work, but since her residency is linked to mine - if I stop working for OpenTV then hers will also become invalid. I would have to find another local or multinational company to sponsor me to allow us to stay should that happen. Or Margaret could do similar.

Since we have decided that we would like to stay, we have applied for permanent residency under the General Skilled Migration category. This type of application is how many other South African migrants move here as well as others from around the world. It relies on your tertiary education and work experience to 'earn' you points. If you have enough points you can apply for permanent residency.

There are many other common ways of obtaining residency; the easiest typically is if you have family in Australia who are Australian citizens. This relationship makes it much easier and is one of the reasons you find so many pommies here (people from the U.K.). The family member effectively

has to sponsor you. Using our method you are totally independent.

Both Margaret and I receive plenty of points for our qualifications, as well as being English speaking and having over one year work experience here in Australia. We also have actual jobs. To get the points you need to have your qualifications accredited by the local Institutes - of Engineering and Accounting in our cases. We are very fortunate to have these opportunities, and the institutes seemed happy and accepted our paperwork without problems.

However when tallying up our points – humilatingly - I did not have enough. Too old! (I forgot to mention that the younger you are, the more points you get). So after swallowing this I have had to apply with Margaret being the principal applicant and I'm just the 'spouse'. Margaret kindly says that we're just sharing, seeing as when we went to the USA it was the other way round. So okay.

Over and above the qualification requirements you have to prove that you have suitable 'character' to be granted residency. Naturally I panicked, since I'd always thought it a requirement to have a serious rap sheet to be allowed into Australia. It is a nation of convicts after all.

It seems that times have changed, since now they want you to have a 'clean' record. Hypocrites. Anyway, this involves getting police clearances from all countries you have lived in for more than a year. This we did after sending sets of fingerprints to South Africa and to America. Naturally there was much bureaucracy along the way, together with much frustration – especially on the South African side, but we did eventually manage to get the treasured clearances.

The most painful part of all was getting birth certificates from South Africa. The government department systems there do eventually work, but they are just so slowwwwww..., and uncooperative. (Thanks dad for helping).

We finally submitted all of our paperwork on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November, with no guarantees of how long it will take. But at least it's in the pipeline and we're hoping for success.

Score:  
Margaret 130, Rowan 125.  
Pass mark = 130.  
Duration = ?????

# Domain

As most of you have never visited Sydney before I thought I'd give you an overview of my take on the areas where one can conceivably live around here. After a brief intro, you'll see where we fit in and why.

## New South Wales

We live in Sydney. Sydney is the biggest city in Australia and lies in the state of New South Wales (NSW). The population of Sydney is in the region of 4 million and that of NSW as a whole, 7 million. It may not sound much, so I need to put some things in context; the population of the entire country is only 20 million, NSW is only the 5<sup>th</sup> largest state by area, and lastly, the second largest city here (Newcastle) only has a population of 300 000. For those seppos out there – the state of New South Wales is just a bit smaller than California, Nevada and Utah combined. For the Safr's - New South Wales is roughly 2/3 the size of South Africa. More importantly, looking at population density - we have a figure of 7.7 persons per square km in NSW. This compares with South Africa's population density of 36 and the USA's density of 27 persons per sq. km. (Australia as a whole has a population density of only 2.4).

So what I'm really pointing out is the fact that around here we are in a very big city surrounded by everything else that's significantly smaller and with fewer people. There's a whole lot of empty space out there with many small towns and villages.

## Sydney

The Parramatta River effectively divides greater Sydney in half – North and South. Within each half there are many subdivisions e.g. the northern side has the Northern Beaches, the Lower North Shore, North Sydney, etc. etc., and the southern half has amongst others, the Eastern Suburbs, the 'Cross, Sydney's South West, and the Inner West – which is where we live.

## Inner West

The Inner West stretches inland from the city centre for about 10km, and lies alongside the south bank of the river. From the ocean to the city centre is also about 10km, so you can see that we're about 20km from the sea. Just next door to us is the Sydney Olympic Park which is the major landmark around here, and is also a venue for many different forms of entertainment. Margaret happens to work smack bang in the centre of the Olympic Park, which explains why we chose to live here. It is also very

convenient for me since I am able to ride to work mostly along cycle trails, lanes and quiet backroads or shortcuts. So all in all it's very convenient. Another advantage is that we are within walking distance of the ferry stop, so I'm able to catch the ferry to work when I'm feeling lazy, and visitors have access to the city by making use of something that is quintessential Sydney. I'm sold on ferry travel, it beats car, bus and train travel hands down.

## Cabarita

The name of the suburb we stay in is Cabarita, but here we don't have much. It is really just an offshoot of the small town centre of Concord which is about 8 minutes walk away. There we have the 'high street' with all the nice little coffee shops, restaurants, a bank or two, some pharmacies and a supermarket. All you really need and especially good for a Saturday morning cappuccino at the sidewalk café while you read the newspaper.

# Business

For those who don't know, the reason we came to Australia in the first place was when an opportunity for a transfer to the OpenTV office in Sydney arose. Australia is a lot closer to New Zealand, so we came .... it is now still my first visit to Australia. I have played a very very small part in what is announced below.

## OpenTV Press Releases

OpenTV Announces Definitive Agreement to Provide Full Suite Of Interactive Services To FOXTEL, Australia's Leading Subscription Television Service  
FOXTEL announces final stages of operational testing for FOXTEL Digital cable and satellite, incorporating OpenTV middleware and interactive applications. Launch expected in the first half of 2004.  
San Francisco, CA, January 22, 2004 - OpenTV (NASDAQ-NMS: OPTV), one of the world's leading interactive television companies, today announced that it had signed a definitive agreement to provide FOXTEL with key middleware technology and interactive applications that will be integrated into the FOXTEL Digital product offering. OpenTV has licensed its products and software to FOXTEL under the arrangement, and also expects to provide related support services through the life of the agreement. FOXTEL is Australia's leading subscription television service, and is a joint venture of Telstra Corporation, the largest telecommunications company in Australia, News Corporation, and Publishing and Broadcasting Limited, a media and communications company. FOXTEL has made a significant

investment (estimated to be A\$600 million) in upgrading their digital technology to enable the delivery of new channels, programming, digital picture and sound, as well as interactive and enhanced services. FOXTEL will use OpenTV's technologies and applications to provide subscribers with access to several interactive services, such as:

□ Sky News Active, an interactive service allowing viewers to control and choose the news they want to view from eight live video and five live text screens.

□ Sports Active, an interactive sports application, which enables viewers to select multiple camera angles and match replays together with game statistics, player profiles and even different audio feeds on selected sports broadcasts.

□ FOXTEL Gamesworld, a portal offering subscribers access to two games channels with ten different games with both easy to play titles and games that test the mind.

"Every FOXTEL Digital subscriber will have access to new, unique interactive functionalities that have been designed with the viewer in mind, giving them choice, convenience, and control over their television viewing experience," said Patrick Delany, FOXTEL Director of Digital. "OpenTV is a key supplier that will enable FOXTEL to show Australia what interactivity is all about. The talk is over, it's here."

"We look forward to working closely with FOXTEL over the coming years as we help develop the FOXTEL Digital service into a showcase for the future of interactive television," said James Ackerman, CEO, OpenTV. "The launch of FOXTEL Digital will revolutionize how Australians watch and experience television. Viewers will now be able to choose the news they want to watch and when they want to watch it, or select a certain camera angle from which to watch their favourite sport. OpenTV is very excited to contribute to this ambitious project to significantly enhance how viewers watch and interact with television."

Margaret is the one with the really worthwhile job down here. She is with the Australian Paralympic Committee, and with Australia being such a sporting country you just can't believe how good a brand recognition they have. Since the event of the year was obviously the Paralympic Games, and since this occupied most of Margaret's time, and since it is sport, and in sport the results count, I have included the results from the official website.

### APC Press Releases

How Australia fared

Australia has finished competition at the Athens Paralympics with a total of 100 medals – the second best overall effort of the 136 participating nations. Australia notched 26 gold, 38 silver and 36 bronze.

The team of 144 athletes - compared with 278 in Sydney – medalled in eight of the 12 sports competed in. There was no Australian participation in six other sports. The medal sports were basketball, athletics, swimming, cycling, powerlifting, tennis, equestrian and shooting. No medals were achieved in judo, sailing, rugby and archery. Australia topped the table in cycling, ranked second in athletics, fourth in equestrian, equal fourth in shooting and fifth in swimming. The Australian team was the seventh largest in Athens behind the USA, Great Britain, Germany, Canada, Spain and China. In Sydney, Australian athletes earned 149 medals across competition in 18 sports. They placed in the top three in 11 sports. Of those 149 medals, 25 were for performances in intellectual disability sports. Australia did not participate in these sports in Athens. "Our athletes have performed exceptionally well and the APC is very pleased with the overall result," commented APC Chief Executive Darren Peters. "We came into these Games aiming to finish in the top five on overall medals. We did better than that." "Our aim was based on the knowledge that we had a much smaller, streamlined squad and that we were entered in 12 of the 18 sports." "Our cyclists maintained their No 1 world ranking; our squad of young swimmers both shined and gave a taste of what is to come; our track and field athletes were again to the fore." "What is wonderful – but also is a wake up call for us – is how far Paralympic sport has come in the past four years." "Medals won in Athens were more widely spread, the number of world and Paralympic records broken was unprecedented; the prowess of the athletes has grown exponentially and well beyond just the traditional major nations."

## **Recreation & Lifestyle**

How long have we been in Australia?

Well, at the beginning of December '04 it will be exactly 18 months. During this time we have been fortunate enough to have had a number of visitors, and, take note - hope to have more in the future

### Renee and Andrea

In December '03 we had Renee, a friend and former colleague of mine way back in the Menlo Park and later Mountain View days of OpenTV. Renee was one of the unfortunate one's to have been a victim of the company downsizing, but being the positive optimistic person she is, she embarked on some world travel. We were fortunate to be on her list, as she had never been to Australia and was planning a Thailand, Australia and New Zealand leg after having been in

Switzerland and Europe for a few months.

She met up with one of her old school friends Andrea, in Thailand and they both came to Sydney thereafter. We really enjoyed Renee's company as well as the shorter time that Andrea was here. They're both good fun and I especially enjoyed all the teasing that went on between Andrea and I.

For me to attempt to get even - even though I probably never will - we planned a camping trip over Christmas time down to the Australian Alps - about 6 hours away by car. This memorable trip, for all the wrong reasons, became known as 'Boot Camp'. In South African or British terminology the name would be 'Basic Training' (the first three months of army).

My ute, which Margaret and I would normally take on camping trips, was unsuitable, so we had to take Margaret's Subaru with it's 4 seats.

The plan was complicated by the fact that Andrea and Renee were going to fly up to the Barrier Reef from Canberra after Christmas, and Margaret and I would stay on to do a Mountain Bike orienteering event as well as a foot orienteering event down there.

A classic example of what was to come was experienced within minutes – we were driving down the main exit freeway from Sydney, travelling slowly in the left hand lane looking for the Canberra exit, when three young twentysomething guys pulled up alongside, took on look at this scene and responded: three girls (+ me driving) surrounded by bags and bags and bags of 'stuff', tents, chairs, helmets, all stacked roof high; plus two bicycles on the roof racks, car almost dragging its tail on the bitumen, and all accompanied by huge smiles and probably Van Morrison playing on the CD.

It was too much, especially for the guy in the front seat with the super cool orange coloured reflective sunglasses which clip over the top of your head, behind the ears They slowed to match our speed, started blowing at the girls, raised a beer, and started chirping through the open window. Needless to say, Andrea and Renee chirped back, and even pulled out a camera and started snapping away. It was really funny - you had to have been there. Pity we had to take the next offramp, who knows how this would have gone on for.

Anyway we drove on into the night, and even stopped at the - what I call the 'Bowlo' - Memorial Services Club in a small village on the way. Such a part of the Aussie culture, you have to

experience it. I think we had 'Chinese', but there were no Asians within 200km.

Have you heard about the flies in Australia? We had, and thought it was all highly exaggerated. The Kosciusko national park where we went to camp in quickly realigned our views. There were flies and flies and flies.

Boot Camp had started.

To be fair, Andrea and Renee, being good SoCal/LA girls, hadn't really done much camping before, but took it all in stride. Sleeping on thin mattresses on the ground, tolerating 90 plus temperatures, doing the 'Australian wave' 14000 times per day, and skulking behind the flyscreen of our tent.

This was just one little incident from their visit – Boot Camp.

Susanne Novalis also visited us from California, please refer to the sport and travel sections.

### Geoff & Daph

It was a pleasant surprise when Geoffrey (my brother) and Daphne (sister-in-law) came to visit in July. Of course we generally don't recommend to people to visit in the middle of winter, but in all reality the weather here isn't too bad any time of year (our house gets really cold though). The thing I find frustrating is just that the days are shorter and you can't seem to pack as much into a day as the during the rest of the year. But it was great to have them here nonetheless.

They ended up effectively visiting all the big cities – Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne and Perth which although good, it is a pity that they didn't manage to see more of the rest. We wanted to show them some of the magnificent beaches and the forests and wildlife, possibly some outback, but time is always short. I'm sure that when they planned their 3 weeks here they couldn't believe how what seems a long enough time just disappeared. And of course they also missed the opportunity to go up to the Barrier Reef, but as usual – time ran out.

While here in Sydney we did do some of the classic tourist things together, such as eating at Doyle's restaurant and catching the ferry into town. The ferry which takes you under the harbour bridge, past the Opera House and lands at Circular Quay. Even though I disembark at the stop just before to get to work, I believe that it's the absolute best way to first arrive in Sydney. From there Geoff and Daph went off and visited all of the many Sydney attractions while Margaret and I unfortunately had to work.

A few things we managed to do were to visit the Blue Mountains when I took some time off, and to visit Anthony Hughes and Jan who live a bit north of Sydney on the Hawkesbury River. We were fortunate to even get a ride around the river in Ant's 'tinny' (aluminium boat with outboard motor). Aside from getting incredibly wet on the way home it was a highlight.

The last weekend we arranged an overnight trip to a town further north up the coast to a town called Forster. It's a beach resort town which also has a lot of lakes in the surrounds. Here we had the opportunity to experience one of the classic Australian institutions – the RSL (or 'club', or 'bowlo'). There's one in every community, be it a Returned Servicemen's League, Golf club, Bowling Club, or many other themed club. They are non-profit organisations that basically provide cheap meals, cheap beer, varying sports facilities, gambling machines, and generally a meeting place for the locals. We went along so that we could watch the Wallabies rugby team playing against someone – I forget who. Visits to clubs can generally be regarded as 'interesting'!

The next day up the coast we had planned to show Geoff and Daph some of the inland areas that we really like. The mountains, forest, rivers and small towns and villages. Alas, it was not to be. Heavy rains and severe winds descended and we were forced to head home taking a shorter route. On the positive side though, at least we had had good weather the day before and we all will have wonderful memories of the fantastic dunes we discovered the day before next to Myall Lakes. They were truly amazing!

### Greg & Francie

While I was away on walkabout in Lightning Ridge Margaret received some confusing emails from a very good friend of ours from South Africa by the name of Greg. He asked if could come and stay with us for a while in Sydney as he needed to get some visa stuff done at the US consulate in Sydney.

Of course we said he could come and stay – no worries, but what's the story? I will not tell the story since that will steal the opportunity for Greg to regale the details to you over the pub while you buy him drinks. Suffice to say that he has been living in Colorado on and off for quite a while now, 'on the quiet', or should I say, on a tourist visa. We subsequently found out the he had met someone – Francie – and they had married. Lucky guy!, but now he

needed to go through the process of getting his tourist visa converted to a Green Card so that he could stay with Francie in the US.

As with most visa issues there is a lot of bureaucracy involved and it takes a lot of patience. Greg had to get police clearances, birth certificates and all the usual, plus Francie and him needed to be interviewed by the US immigration officials here in Sydney. If you've ever seen the movie with Gerard Depardieu called 'Green Card' then you'll know what's involved. ("Francie – which sock does Greg put on first – right or left?"). It was most pleasant to have Greg and Francie stay with us, especially since Francie is such a good cook and taught us many new recipes. She also lives in western Colorado very near to Utah where we have been mountain biking a few times. We know exactly what the area where they live is like. It also happens to be a favourite holiday destination of ours – near Moab. Despite all our concerns the visa process was reasonably smooth and Greg was issued a temporary visa. We have also just heard that Greg successfully received his Green Card with an accompanying letter saying "Welcome to the USA". (although disappointingly not personally signed by W)

Where does the time go? Well in my case read on....

### Rowan's hobbies

I guess its that engineer in me that always leads to a few hobbies that involve tinkering in the garage. Thanks Daad. Anyway aside from my ongoing hobby of bicycle maintenance I have recently started a new hobby of motorcycle restoration.

I don't know if everyone remembers, but back in California I seemed to develop a hankering to do some more motorcycling. I was looking for more than just buying a modern bike and riding it. Most of my riding thrills these days are provided by mountain bike riding, and besides, I couldn't really see myself ever doing the currently unpopular thing of making a lot of noise and ripping through the forests like I did in my misspent youth (which I've never left BTW).

Anyway, my decision was to get a hold of an old bike and restore it to original condition and so I bought a small 125cc 1977 model bike that was in near original condition. The model I chose was a dual purpose bike that you can ride on dirt roads and such, but so small that it doesn't really have much top speed. Safer you see.

That machine was almost in completely original condition, just 25 years old. I had fun stripping it down, cleaning everything up and reassembling it. I have now imported it into Australia and registered it and am riding it around in some of the national parks and state forests here on the fire trails and 'light' offroad trails. Great fun, and one of the reasons I bought a ute here - so I don't have to ride the bike on the road to get there. I operate similar to that with a mountain bike. I take the bike to the country, unload it and ride. Then load up and come home.

Anyway, with the sampling of bike restoration with the first bike I found that it wasn't enough. It was largely just cleaning and reassembling and a bit of polishing. So I wanted more.

My heart lies with observed trials riding and with four strokes so I chose to look for a trials bike to restore.

The only bike around that seemed to fit the bill was a 'vintage' - in fact almost the same as my current bike, so I decided to stick with the theme, get a 'matched' trials bike to restore, but this time it would really really need a 'restoration'. By matched I mean same size and almost the same design.

The bike I eventually obtained was found through a magazine 'JustBikes', but was located in Melbourne. So I just took a chance and bought it unseen, despite the fact that it wasn't running and had parts missing.

Once I had taken delivery and got over the shock of "oh hell, what have I let myself in for?", I started evaluating the whole thing as I pulled it apart.

Predictably

I ended up with a whole lot of boxes on the floor and no more bike, but hell - this is the challenge right?

At the moment I have the goal of getting it running followed by improving the aesthetics and lastly to actually ride in the Post Classic, or vintage trials competitions as the final goal.

Ask me for details if you're interested.

Here is an article I wrote for another club we belong to. Refer to the sports section if you've never heard of rogaining.

### "Hooked"

Rogaining is such a sport - you try it once and it hooks and reels you in. You need to go back for more and more.

The Socialgaine in Terrigal may be an event with the emphasis on the social side, and an introductory event, but I saw many many people who needed no introduction. These were die-hard rogain addicts who probably attend all rogain events on offer. I'm becoming

one of them. I'm hooked - but more of that later.

Congratulations to the organisers of this event - it is a fun, challenging and enjoyable one. The concept of multiple choice answers at the checkpoints does work, even though some may argue that it's a bit strange when there's no real confirmation that you've actually found 'it'. Oftentimes you leave the control wondering and worrying that maybe, just maybe, you got it wrong.

Ah well - just another of the many challenges of rogain. Spare a thought for John and Mardi who set the course. How many of those controls did they define, only to be left wondering - "do you think they'll get this one?" Ok, there were one or two questionable ones, but in general - a very good job! Thanks.

How did I and my team fare? Well that's one of the beauties of any rogain event - the post-mortem. We chose to go north, do the 'mountain' bits first when we were fresh, then drop down to the beach for the sand experience, and then finish with the 'inner-city' experience surrounding the hash house. Pretty sensible choice, and it worked well for us. It being the first experience of a rogain for one of our team members - Gary, and about the fourth for myself and my usual partner (in all respects), Margaret.

We really enjoyed the bush part up in the mountains above the gallery, and seemed to accumulate quite a few above-60 pointers there. We then had hoped to drop down to the northern beaches part of the course and head southwards. Part of the plan was to swim/ford/walk-on-water across the river after the silver car, but we took a look at the water and balked. "What if there're saltwater crocodiles in there?" No really, we just wimped out and went around on the road.

Our worst decision of the whole event, probably, was to walk the long trek on the beach sand south. It was tough and unpleasant. We took our shoes off and tried to walk close to the water, but the tide was high and the sand still soft. Maybe walking barefoot is harder without the angle the shoe heel normally provides to the foot. There were no controls along this part of the beach either. Bad decision.

With about an hour and a quarter left, the last part of our plan was set to come together. We were doing the final sandy bit before crossing the beach towards the hash house for our last points

accumulating binge, and our final rush to the finish. That is, providing our legs and tiring bodies could handle it. Mine especially!

The moment of failure was when we went up the beach to look for control 5B - you had to answer "Which of the following are not found: a) gnome, b) bore sign, c) bell?"

Margaret and Gary were walking ahead peering into the garden at the assorted gnomes and such things trying to figure out what wasn't there. I was walking behind and as I walked onto the grassy patch between the seashore sand and the houses I felt a tug at my calf and a sharp spiking pain. I thought it was a burr or spiky piece of grass, an everyday rogain experience. Normal for me during these events. In fact, after the Watagan's rogain, I'd purchased shin protectors, but didn't feel they were necessary for the Socialgaine.

Well, about 20 steps after feeling the pricking pain, the piece of grass was still stuck to the hair on the back of my leg so I decided to reach down and brush it off.

Shock and horror! The reason it was still tenaciously hanging onto the back of my leg was that it wasn't a grass spike at all - it was a rusty fish hook! I'd been hooked. Literally.

Anyway as with all fish hooks - it was doing exactly what it was designed to do - staying hooked. Despite being rusty and old, the barb seemed to be in good working order and with my first attempts to rip it free, it didn't budge. I did flinch a little I must confess.

We decided that maybe the best course of action was to be a little bit careful, leave it in, and head back to the hash house where they'd have a more substantial medical kit than the one in our Camelbak. Of course we just happened to pass and collect two controls on the way home, with me insisting we should continue, and Margaret and Gary insisting that we'd better get the thing pulled out. And besides, I'd probably need an anti-tetanus injection with all the rust and stuff in my leg.

Later on, that's what actually happened at the medical centre not far down the road in Terrigal. Local anaesthetic, small scalpel, two stitches, a plaster, and an anti-tet in the shoulder. But our event was over after 5 hours. And despite cutting short we were reasonably happy with how it all went overall.

Lastly, in the hash house prior, thanks to Andrew for trying. For bringing me the pliers, hacksaw and axe, (only joking -

but he did bring pliers!), and to all the others at the hash house who were sympathetic to my plight. Also thanks to Mardi for pointing us in the direction of the very nice medical centre. One criticism I do have for the event organisers: please make information about places like hospitals, medical centres and fire stations available at the event headquarters. Mine was a minor problem, but you never know....  
-Rowan Bouttell.

# Travel

Our longest trip here has been to Tasmania when Susanne visited us in March. She came down from California to join us on a cycle tour, as well as partnering Margaret in a mountain bike event called 'the Polaris'. Here is a great little report put together by Margaret.

## Tasmania

During our farewell dinner with Susann in Pacific in May of 2003, she mentioned having always wanted to bike tour Tasmania. It so happened she had cycling guide to Australia close at hand and we established that March was the best time of the year to travel down under. Tentative plans became reality in March 2004 and the 3 of us embarked on a 9 day tour of the east coast of Tasmania.

I had booked cabins and motels along the route which was rather luxurious for Rowan and I who are using to bikepacking (ie, camping biketouring). I loved being able to check into our cabin, turn on the kettle and have a lovely cup of tea within minutes of arriving!

The east coast of Tasmania has beautiful beaches and an undulating coastline. For the first few days we were spoilt with amazing views over the turquoise water alongside lush green farms. We did not venture into the water as it was way too cold and it was a lot more enjoyable to walk on the beach admiring the scenery.

We had to cross a large pass to take us inland and decided to "kick it up a notch" and take a 4wd dirt road up and over the 800m+ (2400 feet) summit. This was the only day that Susann was taking up the rear and we weren't holding her back! It was a challenging day having started at sea level but well worth the extra adventure, especially after the stunning rain forest walk to one of Tasmania's many waterfalls. We bedded down that night in a small logging village at an old traditional

hotel that was would certainly be classified as vintage!

We enjoyed a few days winding through country towns, staying on an organic farm on the way and then headed north back to the ocean till we reached the oldest town in Australia – George Town established as a penal colony in 1804. Not too much evidence remained of its origins or any historical buildings but fortunately the night tour to see the fairy penguins made it well worth it. We got within a foot of these 30cm penguins and it was truly a special experience.

Our tour ended with an overnight ferry cruise back to Sydney, a very comfortable and relaxing way to head home.  
-Margaret.

Last year I had a 'significant' birthday, and Margaret wanted to know what I wanted to do. Since having a huge party of 50 friends over isn't really an option, I chose to do something I've always dreamed of doing. I feel it was fairly appropriate, but that's my opinion.

## Harley Davidson

There is a motorcycling club here in Australia called the Ulysses club, something of an institution I believe. Been around a long time. It's not a Hells Angels - much more tame than that, but most of the members seem to have big road bikes, tourer's, and such. Something I'm unlikely to ever join, but I always tease Margaret about it – it's very much a certain 'lifestyle' club – easy rider (wannabes) perhaps? Anyway, why I tease Margaret about it is that the minimum age of membership is 45, and with a great deal of condescension they do allow 'junior' members on probation when they're 40.

I had always dreamed of cruisin' on a Harley across the Arizona desert. Hot sun on the back, roads as far as the eye can see, and the Harley - thumper thumper....

Arnie the Governor would say "Cooooool!"

Since I never had that opportunity over there, I was thinking that Australia is just as good as Arizona, so I researched the Harley scene over here. Harley's are very popular. In fact ground zero of Harley dealerships is about 4 k's from where we now live. They have a huge showroom full of gleaming chrome and every accessory you can imagine. Not cheap. I had found out where I could hire one, but didn't know what the

model was or what it looked like. All I knew from speaking to Al over the phone was this: "Do you want the loud one or the quiet one?". Margaret said "You chose the quiet one right?". ".....Right...". Full volume for me please.

We went to the dealership to check these things out so I could get back to Al and confirm the reservation. Talk about big boys toys. We settled on one known as a Heritage Softtail. It has panniers and a beautiful pillion seat with a backrest and all. When Margaret sat on the back I didn't even notice she was there. Bike = 350 kg. Margaret = 60 kg. Doing the math – Bike:Margaret ratio nearly 6:1. Amazing. But of course the machine, which I subsequently named "Hog-eroo", is designed exactly for what we were to use it for, i.e. Cruisin'. Oh, and did I forget to mention the 1360 cc engine? Awesome!

When we did pick it up at the start of our trip and packed our overnight bags in, it was a bit daunting. I'm not exactly the 120 kg beer-swilling strongman bikie, so I did a few loops round the block to get used to it. After a short while I had learned the balance and brakes and things, but the overriding memory is that of the HUGE smile I had. What fun! This was going to be a good ride. Compared with my 125 cc bike at home this was phenomenal.

Our trip started out along one of the most popular bike routes near Sydney, the Putty Road. Everyone knows that road. It is long, twisty and a very interesting ride, but before we tackled that we stopped at the café at the Windsor Hotel. The place where on any Sunday you'll see dozen's of bikes parked outside and all the bikies on the verandah quaffing beers and eating fries and talking bikes. Significant beards in evidence. We were there on a weekday, so it wasn't busy, but we still spent a good hour having a good yarn with a few others about their centenary edition Harleys, where we were travelling and such matters. Of course we didn't have all the leathers, boots and tattoo's, but it was nice to sample a bit of the fraternity. And the people were very welcoming and friendly. I can see the attraction of owning a Harley.

Our route was a three day trip north through the Hunter Valley wine area, which is one of the major wine regions of Australia and also a huge tourist drawcard. Similar to the Napa Valley in many ways, but not nearly as nice as South Africa's Cape wine region in our

opinion. We had chosen to stick to the upper Hunter Valley which is not so commercialised and has nice backroads to putter around on Hogeroo. We also wanted to take a look at the Barrington Tops National Park.

Suffice to say that we had a great time, and that I had a small love affair on the side (with the Harley of course), but Margaret has since forgiven me. After I promised repeatedly that I didn't want my own Harley.

:  
Yet.

Walkabout. Most of you will know the term, which seems to be when aboriginal Australians disappear on their own for an indeterminate period, and travel around doing 'something', or ?

My interpretation has been when I head out on my own with one of my toys (mountain bike, motorcycle, trout rod, ...) and just camp out and explore for a couple of days - somewhere I've never been. (So far I've managed a walkabout twice - when Margaret was in South Africa, and when the Paralympics were on)

#### Lightning Ridge

If I say the words "Trailer park trash", what image does that conjure up? If I describe a dwelling as a "squatter hut", what image does that paint?

You just don't see bad trailer parks and squatter houses here, but there are always exceptions, and I was determined that I wanted a look-see at one of the more interesting examples. For starters, if you're interested in precious stones you will have heard of Opals, and you may even know that most of the world supply comes from Australia. Of these, the most precious ones are Black Opals and they are mined at a place called Lightning Ridge. This town is located in the far north of NSW, and not far from the outback. From what I'd read it seemed ideal for a walkabout with my motorcycle. It's a hot and dusty spot - but what makes it so attractive is that the mining there is all small scale. This means that virtually anyone can go along with \$150 dollars, take a half day safety course and register a claim 25m by 25m square. So what seems to happen, and I'm generalizing here, is that you attract hundreds of chancers, gamblers, and oddballs, - all attracted by the dream of striking it big. Fueled by the stories of "this guy, right next to my claim - he made 10 million in a strike a few months ago!" "Living on is own island, he is".

Along with the collection of disreputable mining equipment, go the squatter huts, trailers, and a huge network of haphazard roads. Just like a "township". Plus some dodgy looking mining operations too.

It's all rather interesting, and I really enjoyed riding my machine along all the roads and out into the surrounding countryside to look at the wildlife and to try to find outlying claim sites.

A superb sense of freedom when you have full tank of gas, wide open countryside, riding with just a t-shirt on, and trying to navigate using some rough hand drawn maps called mudmaps.

## Sport

One thing that has significantly changed for us down here is that our sports have diversified. When living in California we did mostly mountain bike riding, with the odd other event thrown in more or less as once-offs.

Down here we've taken up a few new ones and done less biking. These are adventure racing, orienteering and rogaining. If you regard yoga as a sport we both do that about once a week - but it's mostly used to loosen up the tired joints from the other sports and to try and stay flexible. I'll explain our sports.

#### Mountain Biking

Starting with my true love - mountain biking, or as I would like to refine that - technical mountain biking. The terrain where we usually ride here in Sydney is just superb for my taste. It is largely scrubby type bushland with sandstone based trails. Some areas of sandstone is reminiscent of Utah and the scrubby type vegetation is similar to what you'd find in Grant Ranch (Santa Cruz) or on the south western Cape province of South Africa (maybe Hermanus). A sort of scratchy type tree and shrubland about once or twice head height.

Through this there are narrow single track trails, rock surfaces and lots of ledges, dropoffs and logs from time to time. It is not easy riding and that is the beauty of it. You always need to return to see if you can improve. You also tend to get a complete all over body workout with the strain of wrenching your bike up, over and around obstacles. We carry our bikes quite a lot, or so it feels like it to Margaret.

There have been many a Saturday 'wasted' when we've been riding early in the morning and ended up so tired that the rest of the day all we've been able to do is 'veg' behind the TV watching golf.

So much for shopping and mowing the lawn.

There are other areas we ride other than my favourite described above (incidentally known as Oxford Falls and Redhill). Usually they are about 45 minutes up to about 90 minutes to get to so they are not 'just around the corner', but I guess that is the price you pay for residing in a big city. The most well known area which we're just starting to explore is the Blue Mountains, about 45min away with an easy drive straight up the highway. There is much more 'open' riding there with fire roads/trails and we can cover more distance.

Margaret enjoys that better since you can ride the bike more and carry less. On the mountain biking scene here - it is much less organised than in South Africa and vastly less so than California. There are only a few clubs and they seem to be much more about racing and less about the social aspect. We're still looking for the right 'group' to hook up with regularly, much like we had in Johannesburg and also in the San Francisco bay area.

I have done one mountain bike event here (Margaret had to miss due to injury), and that is the Sydney 24 hour relay. It was very great fun and was a first for all the four guys in my team. Our results were average, but we all hope to improve next year.

#### Orienteering

Orienteering is a new sport for us over here, although I did do a few events back in Johannesburg many years ago. For Margaret it is new though. We have joined a local club name Garingal Orienteering Club and have done a few orienteering events. The main sport of orienteering involves using a very detailed map with a number of markers or 'controls' placed throughout the area. The goal is to run in the set order to find the controls and reach the finish in the shortest time. The courses are usually about 7 or 8 km and involve about 15 or so controls. There are varying levels though, from beginners to experts. Margaret and I do the courses somewhere in the middle as we are still learning the skills. The key to success is good navigation and map reading, together with reasonable running fitness and efficiency. We need to improve on all aspects, but that is the challenge.

#### Rogaining

A closely allied sport is called rogaining - from the acronym R.O.G.A.I.N.E. or 'Rugged outdoor group activity involving navigation and endurance'. It sounds big, and to a large extent it is. A standard event involves a team of two and lasts for 24 hours. The aim is to collect controls marked on a large scale

map and accumulate as many points in the 24 hours. To make it more interesting the controls have different value points attached, with the difficult ones earning more points. By difficult they usually mean far away, at the top of a mountain or at the base of a valley. So far we have not done a 24 hour event yet. We have done 'mini-rogaines' which are only 6 hours, and we then did a 15 hours out of 24 event - which is a cut down version of the full event. This last one was our first attempt at night navigation with our headlamps and torches (flashlights, ok?). For this event Margaret and I were a two person team. Largely I'd say a successful team, but with a few hiccups at the start and a few little 'domestics' en route. (Margaret claims I'm stubborn - but I refuse to accept that).

We have also done a 6 hour rogainé on the beach on the NSW central coast. This we did as a team of three together with Gary, our team mate with whom we do a lot of mountain biking and other events. Please refer to the article "Hooked".

#### Summer Series

There are other similar events we are doing too. During summer there is a series of urban events held in parks and suburbs around Sydney called the Sydney Summer Series. It is actually a very short rogainé event - designed just to keep you fit and fast. You are given a map and 45 minutes to get as many points as possible. The start is any time between 4.30pm and 6.45pm, and you start when you're ready. Summer daylight savings time allows this. It is also an individual event, but you can do it as a team if you wish, it is very casual.

This event happens every Wednesday evening and we manage to get to about half of them depending on work and also where they are.

#### Mountain Bike Orienteering, or MTBO

One other flavour of a similar sport we've done a few of is MTBO. This is mountainbike orienteering, which is fairly self explanatory. The major difference though, is that the area used for this has to have many trails in for riding and planning your route. It is not quite as flexible as foot orienteering where you are not limited at all in where you can go. Except for cliffs, rivers and things. Of course. In fact - after a foot orienteering event I have ended up with shins so scratched up, bloody and raw, that I have now purchased shin guards for it.

Back to the mountain bike orienteering though. For this you have to mount your map on the bike handlebars so you can navigate efficiently. I gave Margaret a

special rotating map holder for her bike, but she hasn't actually used it yet. There was a little accident she had during the last MTBO event she entered and we haven't made it to the next events yet. (see next article )

#### Adventure Racing

We have also started doing Adventure Racing. So far I've done three and Margaret one. For me it is a new sport, but Margaret did do one back in Sacramento with 'the girls'. The first two I did in all male teams - 3 per team, and the last one Gary, Margaret and I teamed up. You could say we were successful as a team, had a lot of fun and are looking for more to do as a team now. We made a few blunders, like losing our map in the first 10 minutes, but recovered well to overtake many many teams. Especially in the mountain bike sections where we did quite well. Margaret still maintains that there is a different dynamic in a mixed team compared to her girls team, but we're working to improve that. We have big plans for bigger, longer events.

#### 'The Polaris'

One event we did last year was the Polaris. This is essentially a 2 day mountain bike rogainé, but you have to stop overnight and camp out. This event format seems to have been around for many years, first in the UK, and here in Australia for a few years now. It is an event that is almost perfectly suited to Margaret and I.

Prepared by Margaret for inclusion in the Garingal orienteering Club newsletter. November 2004.

Rescued by the Dawson family  
By Margaret Bouttell

It was during an MTBO event in Bogadilla that I underestimated the height of the 'cliff' marked on the map and performed a rather unceremonious face plant at the base. A 'stack'. It was my good fortune that Barbara Dawson happened across me not long afterwards. She took one look and concluded that I'd need to get to a hospital. Michele & Aidan were quickly instructed to ride on and find Graeme.

Walking past the start area Barbara insisted I cover my bleeding face as it was scaring the kids! This wasn't a Halloween party. Graeme arrived on the scene and promptly raced home a couple of kms on his bicycle to bring the car over. Barbara sat me down on the kerbside and made sure I was comfortable. She made no mention at all about sacrificing her MTBO event to help me out. While we waited, Michele and Aidan quickly

rode back to the course and finished the event.

Minutes later Graeme pulled up (with a couple of spare towels on hand) and handed over to Barbara to drive me to the hospital. With the kids in the back and lots of words of support we headed off to the emergency rooms while Graeme lined up for his MTBO start, muscles warmed from his sprint.

Fortunately Barbara knows the Bankstown area very well and before long I was being seen to by emergency personnel. The suturing took over an hour during which time the Dawsons patiently stayed in the waiting area, hungry and thirsty from their earlier ride. Then it was off to the next emergency ward to wait for a plastic surgeon to finish the job. The Dawson's once again patiently waited by my side making sure I was comfortable. Poor Aidan's hunger pains were getting worse and worse. I heard a McDonalds lunch being offered and this seemed to make his tummy grumbles more bearable.

Even when we knew Rowan was on his way and I insisted I was fine, Barbara refused to leave me on my own. She steadfastly committed to staying at the hospital. It must have been around 3 hours after the accident that she handed over to Rowan and finally took Michele and Aidan for their well-deserved McDonalds lunch.

I remarked how bad I felt that Michele and Aidan had to waste so much of their Sunday hanging around a hospital emergency ward. I was very impressed when Barbara commented that they had to learn the sacrifices that people make when they help fellow athletes as one day they could likely be in the position where they themselves would need help. What a sensible and caring family! I was very fortunate that they came to my rescue. I think we are even more fortunate to have them as fellow Garingalites!!

## Stop Press

Margaret has just purchased a road bike. LeMond Tourmalet size 58cm, colour brushed aluminium, name "Bonnie". She can't wait to ride it now!