



THE CHANGING ROLE OF QUEENSLAND NEWSPAPERS IN IMAGINING LEISURE AND RECREATION

by Michael Meadows

Introduction

Leisure and recreation are central features of Western lifestyle in the new millennium. They dominate popular media images, especially if we include sport, but even excluding rugby league and cricket, around half of the 10 most popular programs on Australian television are consistently the so-called 'infotainment' shows. Newspapers have followed suit and sections addressing key leisure pursuits like travelling and bushwalking have become a permanent part of the regular news menu. Clearly, the media play an important role in the process of imagining leisure and recreation in our society (Anderson 1984).

But is this a new phenomenon? If so, when did the trend emerge? And what role has the press played in the process? I want to look at these questions in relation to the role of the Queensland press in representing leisure and recreation from the earliest newspapers in the mid 19th century to the present. While the ideas of leisure and recreation remain central to my argument, I plan to look at these through the lens of rockclimbing—a leisure activity which had its genesis as mountaineering in Europe in the mid 16th century although it was not until the late 19th century that it became what might be termed a mainstream leisure activity (Conway 1902, p. 25). Importantly, the emergence of tourism and mountaineering were closely linked (Withey 1998, p. 204). But that was Europe. Across the Atlantic, the idea of mountaineering was bound up in the emergence of North American Alpine clubs around 1870 with the idea of rockclimbing in hot pursuit (Nettlefold and Stratford 1999, p. 133).

I have drawn from a broad sample of newspaper and magazine articles from 1864 to the present. The sample is drawn mostly from Queensland newspapers and national magazines. The collection of relevant articles from these publications varies from random sampling to more intensive studies of particular years, based on information from a variety of sources—interviews, clippings books, photograph albums, diaries. The collection includes around 1200 articles directly or indirectly related to scrambling, climbing, walking, and hiking in Queensland.

So how were ideas of recreation and leisure interpreted in colonial Australia?

Imagining leisure and recreation

Climbing culture emerged in Australia out of a range of often competing and contradictory discourses — from Aboriginal creation myths, a unique landscape, the influence of the European ideas of leisure, American technologies, and charismatic local individuals. As Bricknell (1994, p. 45) reminds us, ‘leisure practices are historically produced and socially constructed’ and it seems clear that the mass media, in all their forms, have played a crucial role here.

Lynch and Veal (1997, pp. 33-37) have observed that leisure and recreation, as ‘separate, pleasure-orientated categories of behaviour’, are post-1788 ideas and do not fit easily with the practices of traditional Aboriginal cultures. As such the concept of leisure is probably meaningless in the Aboriginal world (Hamilton-Smith 1998, p. 35). The concept of leisure was incorporated into Indigenous daily routines and as such could not be separated from the concept of work as we know it — yet another example of the ‘continuing misunderstanding’ that has defined relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia (Hamilton-Smith 1998, p. 35; Stanner 1977). This is reflected by the way in which the mountains of southeast Queensland are incorporated into Aboriginal creation stories — significantly, most warn of the dire consequences of climbing (Steele 1984).

The foundations for the idea of Australian leisure were laid by the second half of the 19th century—essentially they were reliant on the cultural traditions of England (Lynch and Veal 1997, p. 71; Hamilton-Smith 1998, p. 42). But Australian notions of work and leisure had emerged, influenced, in part, by introduction of the eight-hour day. The relationship between work and leisure had taken on a particularly Australian perspective. Bushwalking, rockclimbing, hiking, and cycling were leisure activities in which the idea of ‘the bush’ figured strongly in concepts of what it meant to be Australian and this was reflected in coverage of these activities in the local press. It was reflected, too, in the blurred boundary between the amateur and the professional in the natural sciences. For example, there are many examples of ‘scientific expeditions’ which required the climbing of various peaks in southeast Queensland in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Meadows, Thomson and Stewart 2000).

At the turn of the 20th century, tourism emerged as a key cultural activity in Australia and while New South Wales—specifically Katoomba—is often identified as the focus for this, Queensland had its own attractions and was part of the ‘guest house industry’ (Hamilton-Smith 1998, p. 52). At this time, tourism had emerged as an important cultural activity—100 years later, it remains a significant cultural resource — and even rockclimbing has found a niche. In the array of activities being marketed by the Australian Tourism Commission on its website, ‘mountaineering/rockclimbing’ is listed under ‘Tourism Resources’ as one of the available ‘Activities and Adventures’. For those who visit the site, it identifies the three pre-eminent rockclimbing areas in Australia—the Arapiles [Victoria], Blue Mountains [New South Wales] and Frog Buttress [Queensland] (www.australia.com). Climbing has been clearly incorporated into the idea of Australian tourism and yet remains at the periphery, conceived of as a dangerous recreational pursuit (Kiewa 2000).

Early in the 20th century, ideas of leisure were further influenced by such technological innovations as the introduction of electricity, the mass production of newspapers, and radio which, from 1923, became part of a process ‘leading to the creation of a more privatised, individualised way of life and leisure’ (Lynch and Veal 1997, p. 72). Throughout the history of the emergence of local ideas of work and leisure, there is a strong link

to the natural environment with Australia becoming the first place in the world to proclaim early wildlife reserves (Hamilton-Smith 1998, p. 45). Clearly, media such as radio played a crucial role but my purpose here is to focus on the role played by the print media.

While the idea of mountaineering certainly preceded the emergence of the idea—and the practice—of climbing in Australia, the very nature of the landscape here meant that it was bound to take on a different persona from its European antecedent. Figuring strongly in this discursive construction was the unique geographical make-up of places like southeast Queensland with its diverse collection of volcanic peaks within range of a major population centre. Another key element was a climate that encouraged the emergence of leisure activities like walking, scrambling and climbing.

I suggest thinking about climbing as a text—a dynamic process; a set of practices—discursively produced (Real 1989; Nettlefold and Stratford 1999, p. 131). Kiewa (2000, p. 383) takes this idea further, describing leisure as ‘an interactive process of self-construction’. The experience of climbing, like other leisure activities such as tourism—with which it has historically had a close association—takes place in different spatial, temporal and subjective contexts and this has led to the emergence of ‘different imaginings’ of rockclimbing in different sites around the world (Withey 1998, p. 205). Again, the role of media in this process is crucial.

From its earliest imaginings, rockclimbing now finds itself straddling leisure and sport in the panoply of popular cultural activities (Donnelly 1982). Alongside what has become the popular face of climbing, are diverse and parallel versions of this cultural activity, each powerfully defined by sets of ethics that militate against particular practices. The diversification of climbing has been one inevitable consequence of the complex interaction of market forces and popular demand. The ‘event’ of the first ascent has given way—in the popular imaginary at least—to events of a different sort, more likely to be featured on national television as part of the Xtreme Games. In launching its new image last year, Dreamworld on the Gold Coast featured a climbing wall as one of its key symbolic signifiers that it was trying to attract a younger clientele—and the campaign worked (*B & T Weekly* 2001, p. 19).

Rockclimbing as a cultural practice emerged in Europe as a pastime, separate from its predecessor—mountaineering—late in the 19th century. It began as a peculiarly European and masculine phenomenon with a strong British influence. Some have described the nature of its emergence as ‘vertical colonialism’ with the idea of climbing being exported by British mountaineers seeking new challenges in the Americas, Africa and the Himalayas (Nettlefold and Stratford 1999, p. 132). But alongside this notion of climbing as a global/colonial phenomenon are other, local influences.

While the emergence of rockclimbing within a masculine framework continues to influence the idea of climbing in the new millennium, there have been—and continue to be—some significant challenges to that (Withey 1998, p. 208; Nettlefold and Stratford 1999, p. 131). In Europe, prominent climbers like Elizabeth Burnaby LeBlond had emerged late in the 19th century at a time when the mountains were considered no place for women. The Ladies Alpine Club was formed in England in 1907. Three years later, Australian Freda Du

Faur became the first woman to climb Mount Cook in December 1910—and was in the party to complete the first Mt Cook-Mt Tasman traverse. De Faur followed this remarkable achievement with several first ascents in the New Zealand Alps (*Warnick Argus* 1912, p. 5). An extraordinary movement in southeast Queensland 20 years later saw female climbers playing a major role.

The 1930s, in particular, represent a defining moment in the evolution of climbing culture in Australia with significant numbers of men and women engaging in practices which, we suggest, could well have framed the development of modern rockclimbing. This climbing culture seems to have had its genesis in southeast Queensland although the Blue Mountains, west of Sydney, also appear to have been a centre of activity. Our research suggests that Queensland climbing culture placed more emphasis on the social rather than the technical side of climbing. It was this important difference that contributed to the greater popularity of climbing in southeast Queensland, particularly amongst women. This high female participation rate in what is still regarded as a high-risk sport ended with World War II and was not to re-emerge for another 60 years when gymnasium climbing emerged as a popular sport for both males and females in the early 1990s.

Climbing and the Queensland press

Between the 1850 and 1860s, most of the major European peaks had been climbed and a sense of this leisure activity filtered through to readers of the early Queensland press.



Thomas Welsby's account of a climb on Tibrogargan in 1886

The earliest relevant reference we have found, so far, is in 1864—a description of a sunrise on Mont Blanc (*Brisbane Courier* 1864). But as the great peaks of the world were climbed for the first time towards the end of the 19th century, mountaineering and climbing began to receive increased coverage in the southeast Queensland press, with many accounts of local and overseas ascents appearing in the newspapers. One of the earliest items, aptly titled 'The Mania For Alpine Climbing' (a report of a mountaineering disaster at Mont Blanc) appeared in the *Queenslander* in 1866. It was followed in 1871 by a brief account of an ascent of Mt Warning and in the following year, by an account which claimed the first ascent of Mt Lindesay (*Queenslander* 1871; *Brisbane Courier* 1872). This was published in four newspapers—the *Queenslander*, the *Brisbane Courier*, the *Queensland Times* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*. While at the time it was represented as the first ascent by a non-Aboriginal person, our research suggests that the mountain's first European climbers actually reached the summit about 30 years earlier (Murray-Prior 1902; Thomson 2001).

From about the mid 1880s, mountaineering and climbing articles started to appear in the local newspapers more regularly. A significant series appeared in 1886 by Thomas Welsby in which he described his climbs of Tibrogargan (during which he set fire to the top of the mountain), Beerwah and an unsuccessful attempt on Crookneck in The Glasshouses (*Queenslander* 1886). In 1890, Carsten Egeberg Borchgrevink's long and dramatic account of his and Mr E. Brown's Mt Lindesay ascent appeared (*Queenslander* 1890a), provoking a lively debate—10 letters to the editor over a two week period—in the pages of the *Brisbane Courier* (1890a, 1890b). The Norwegian explorer, using a 'simple manilla clothesline', believed his was the first ascent. He was mistaken as various correspondents to the newspaper later confirmed. Borchgrevink (Archer 1890) explained to readers: 'Our arms were cut by rocks and creepers, and I think the creepers must be poisonous, as my bare arms were swollen and a weakness hitherto unknown to me seemed to come over them.' It was an epic descent in darkness—great reading and some dramatic illustrations. The space made available in local newspapers for accounts of these activities is evidence of their significance.

Confusion over the naming of Mt Barney and Mt Lindesay was to become the focus of a long-running debate on several occasions in the editorial pages of the *Brisbane Courier*, over the next few years. In 1894, John Hardcastle's account of an ascent of Wilson's Peak in the Main Range was published in the *Queenslander* (1894) followed in 1895 by 'Quixote's' account of a similar climb (*Queenslander* 1895).

Throughout this period, there were reports and accounts of ascents in north Queensland—of Bellenden Ker (*Queenslander* 1887); on Hinchinbrook Island (*Queenslander* 1893); and Mt Peter Botte (*Queenslander* 1897). Archibald Meston's extensive and romantic series of *Queenslander* articles on his Bellenden Ker and Mt Alexandra expeditions appeared in 1889, 1892 and 1896, along with numerous letters disputing his claims and protesting at the Queensland Protector of Aborigines' hyperbole. In addition to these local accounts, there was a continuous stream of reports of climbing activity internationally: the first ascent of Kilimanjaro (*Queenslander* 1888), an early ascent of Mt Owen Stanley (*Queenslander* 1889), a New Zealand mountaineering expedition (*Queenslander* 1896), the first ascent of Mt Kenya (*Queenslander* 1897c), and the Duke of Abruzzi's first ascent of Mt St Elias (*Queenslander* 1897b, p. 1082) and the first ascent of Aconcagua in the Andes in the same year (*Queenslander* 1897a, p. 1289). This newspaper coverage was supplemented by articles dealing with mountaineering and rockclimbing in Europe in publications like *Pearson's Magazine* (Fryers 1899) and *Girl's Realm* (1899) which featured an article entitled 'Mountaineering for Girls'. The appearance of women in European mountaineering circles was making the news here, too (Tindal 1899; Le Blond 1901; *Young Man* 1901; *Warwick Argus* 1909, p. 5). These publications were available through local libraries.

Coverage continued in the early 20th century but with a significant increase in the number of local articles. Accounts of ascents of Mt Lindesay appeared in the *Queenslander* (1902, 1904) and *Brisbane Courier* (1910, 1913). One of the most significant of the early climbers was Boonah schoolteacher William Gaylard. From around 1910, he added numerous ascents of peaks and cliffs in southeast Queensland made the first recorded ascent of the Three Sisters in the Blue Mountains (*Blue Mountains Echo* 1919). Interspersed amongst the local stories were accounts of Himalayan attempts and mountaineering incidents in Europe

(Freshfield 1902; *Town and Country Journal* 1902, p. 21).

Editions of the *Brisbane Courier* and the *Queenslander* continued to report on climbing exploits and published photographs when they were made available. The last great challenge to climbers was Coonowrin (Crookneck) in The Glasshouses group. It was climbed in 1910 by Harry Mikalsen. Two years later—and within months of the first female ascent of Mount Cook in New Zealand by Australian Freda Du Faur—three sisters made the first female ascent of the mountain and the first ascent of the southern face of Coonowrin (also known locally as Crookneck). On 26 May 1912, Sara, Jenny and Etty Clark were accompanied by Willie Fraser, George Rowley and Jack Sairs. Jenny, Etty, Willie and George had cycled from Brisbane two days before. They climbed Tibrogargan on the 25th May and Crookneck the next day. The women wore ‘voluminous gym clothes’ for the climb and then cycled back to Brisbane afterwards. These events prompted several articles, including Welsby’s 1911 ‘Crookneck Climbed by Two Sturdy Queenslanders’ (*Queenslander* 1911) and George Rowley’s 1912 account of the Clark sisters’ Crookneck ascent (*Queenslander* 1912) that also included summit photographs of the climbers on Crookneck and Tibrogargan. The article concluded that ‘the intrepid mountaineers are sighing for fresh worlds to conquer’.



The Clark sisters on top of Crookneck in 1912

Throughout this period, accounts of the Boonah ‘Wayfarers’ ascents and rambles appeared in local newspapers like the *Fassifern Guardian*, the *Beaudesert Times*, and the *Queensland Times*, including William Gaylard’s 1912 letter to the editor of the *Brisbane Courier*, ‘Fresh Worlds to Conquer’, in which he congratulated the Clark sisters on their feat and invited them to publish an account of their climb, observing: ‘I am sure it will be enjoyed by all lovers of life in the open, and by all mountain climbers.’ It was an early instance of the evolution of a climbing culture or, at the very least, a climbing community (Gaylard 1912). Perhaps some of the most interesting of the newspaper articles are the exchanges—an 1890 Mt Lindesay 1st ascent dispute (*Brisbane Courier* 1890a, 1890b); various attempts to establish Mt Lindesay ascent chronologies (*Queenslander* 1902); advice for would be climbers (*Queenslander* 1904); a 1910 Mt Lindesay ascent dispute (*Brisbane Courier* 1910a, 1910b; 1910c); references to ascents by new routes (*Brisbane Courier* 1912); and local climbing photographs that accompanied the account of the Clark sisters’ Crookneck ascent. Publication of climbing photographs soon became a regular occurrence in

the pages of the Queensland press.

In all, the coverage given to climbing and scrambling in the earlier southeast Queensland press seems unmatched elsewhere in Australia. By the early 20th century, it is apparent that local newspapers had become an established forum where notable ascents were brought to wider attention and various climbing issues were periodically raised and debated. Clearly, the southeast Queensland newspapers had become an important site for imagining climbing, with the press playing an integral role in promoting and sustaining local climbing discourses.

There were a number of ways in which climbing was portrayed in the late 19th and early 20th century southeast Queensland newspapers. This included defining climbing in terms of folly, sensationalism and romance, and its relationship to European exploration discourses which, in itself, was part of a broader process of defining landscape and making it culturally intelligible. However with the exception of Meston's articles and Borchgrevink's account of an 1890 Mt Lindesay ascent, local news accounts generally approached climbing and scrambling from a different angle. So by the late 19th and early 20th century, a new idea of climbing had emerged in the southeast Queensland press with local articles portraying climbing and scrambling as something that was possible as a leisure activity. The emphasis had shifted from prevailing British and European notions of climbing as exploration, as a specialist activity, or as the domain of an Alpine Club elite.

To an extent, the newspaper coverage climbing and scrambling received was similar to that given to other adventure-leisure pursuits such as sailing and cycling. (*Queenslander* 1873). However, it is also clear that climbing emerged in its own right as an established newspaper theme, with the various reports and articles for the most part reflecting local climbing discourses. Significantly, our research suggests that the late 19th and early 20th century ideas of climbing as a cultural activity continued in the southeast Queensland press until World War II. So even through the late 1920s and early 1930s, when local climbers such as A. A. Salmon and his peers were regularly making more difficult ascents, climbing was still imagined in the press as social activity and daring achievement rather than as a sport or a specialist activity—and we see this in the numerous climbing articles and reports which appeared in the newspapers in the 1930s (*Sunday Mail* 1932; *Telegraph* 1934; *Queenslander Annual* 1935).

The golden age of climbing—the 1930s

In the first few days of 1929, the press reported the first climbing fatality in southeast Queensland. The story of the death of the 22 year old Lyle Vidler on Mount Lindesay, dominated press coverage. Significantly, Vidler, a climbing companion of Bert Salmon, had died in a solo attempt at a new route up the mountain. Vidler lies buried at the base of the cliff. Albert Armitage ('AA' or 'Bertie') Salmon began his climbing career in earnest in 1925. In 1927 he formed a mountaineering club in southeast Queensland with Vidler his protégé.

Lyle Vidler on Mt Lindesay April 1928



At least two other climbing clubs formed in Queensland around this time, possibly as early as 1926 (Lack 1938). In New South Wales, the Blue Mountaineers climbing club was formed in 1929. Salmon was a staunch Monarchist and also a keen writer and a professional photographer. He alone—along with a climber-journalist, Nora Dimes—produced many of the accounts and stunning photographs of climbing activities during the 1930s in the pages of local newspapers. It is difficult to define Salmon—was he a journalist or a contributor? The regularity of his contributions suggest that he made a significant contribution by providing information and entertainment to readers of the *Brisbane Courier* and the *Queenslander*. Although he wrote only about climbing activities—and most often those in which he was involved—it nevertheless represents a substantial contribution to the available discourses on climbing during this period. Many of his wonderful photographs fortunately survive.

Salmon's climbing ethics shunned the use of rope, except as 'moral support'. This approach was adopted by the large parties of men and women who joined him in his many adventures. They climbed in lightweight sandshoes or barefoot and there are numerous newspaper stories and photographs which bear testament to their unroped ascents of Mount Lindesay and The Glasshouses during this time. Salmon and his climbing partners left an impressive array of first ascents and new routes across the southeast. Their 1934 visit to the Blue Mountains made history—and big news—when Muriel Patten became the first woman to climb the First Sister.

Muriel Patten on the First Sister, Katoomba, 1934



Two months later, another Queensland climber, Jean Easton, made the second female ascent, a catalyst for extensive press coverage in Queensland and Katoomba (*Katoomba Daily* 1934a, 1934b; *Courier-Mail* 1934; *Brisbane Courier* 1934; *Telegraph* 1934). During the first 1934 visit to the Blue Mountains, Salmon and one of his climbing companions, George Fraser, scaled the 'Fly Wall' at Katoomba without a rope, much to the amazement of one-time NSW Government Health Officer, Dr Eric Dark, a pioneering climber himself who had insisted that they use a rope for safety. Salmon said that at the time he had 'tried my level best for the honour of Queensland and my own reputation' (Lack 1938).

It was during this period that women made the first ascents of Mount Lindesay and Leaning Peak on nearby Mount Barney. It is clear from the diaries, newspaper articles and photographs of the period that women made up a substantial proportion of climbers in this era (Brammall 1939). One of these was Lexie Wilson, sister of George Fraser who was one of

Salmon's regular climbing partners. Shortly before her death aged 91, in 2000, she described how members of her Brisbane climbing group would meet for lunch each day outside Wallace Bishop's jewellers in Queen

Street to plan their weekend's climb. The activities of this group was a forerunner of the emergence of recreation as a key cultural activity in Queensland. For almost 10 years, details of their exploits entertained readers of the *Brisbane Courier*, later *The Courier-Mail*, until the outbreak of World War II. On the eve of the War, an article in *Walkabout* (Brammall 1939, p. 40) described climbing, Queensland style:

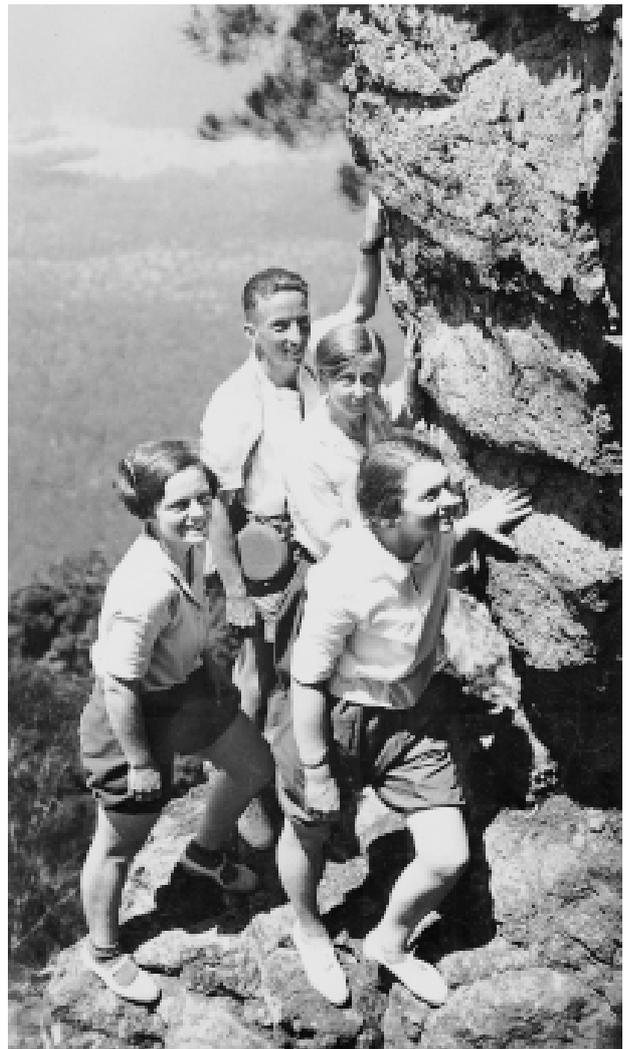
Mountain climbing in Queensland has developed on different lines from the better known orthodox methods of Europe. Here there are no heavy spiked boots, no woollen stockings, blizzard-proof 'parkas,' rucksacks and ice-picks. Queenslanders climb their rock peaks in shorts and sand shoes or bare feet!...Ice picks indeed! These mountaineers take a little satchel with some oranges and a coil of rope; and they use the rope very seldom. It is more for moral support than anything else.

Stories of climbing exploits were set in a context of an increasing awareness of the landscape. From the turn of the 20th century, the local Queensland press took up the issue of the bush and its attractiveness. This preoccupation resulted in literally hundreds of articles, photographs and illustrations featuring the wonders of places such as Lamington National Park, Mount Barney, and mountains of the Main Range like Spicer's Peak, Wilson's Peak and Mount Mitchell. From about 1929, Arthur Groom—the founder of a guesthouse at Binna Burra in Lamington National Park—began publishing articles and photographs regularly in the local press under the pseudonym 'Poppa' (*Queenslander* 1929a, pp. 4, 30; 1929b, pp. 1, 4, 31). In his writings, Groom increasingly pressed for more national park declarations in the southeast, especially locations like Mount Barney. He went on to be a founding member of the National Parks Association. At the time, his writings spurred others to support this idea through the pages of the local press (Bell 1932).

The 1930s saw an explosion in the popularity of hiking. This quickly became a major Sunday activity for literally thousands of young men and women. The railways became involved, organising 'mystery' hikes where

participants would simply turn up at Central Railway Station in Brisbane, hop on the train, and be taken to the destination. There were regular reports of around 800 joining in on such trips (*Brisbane Courier* 1932a). In Sydney, the numbers reached to 3000 at times with some clergy claiming it was taking young women and girls away from the influence of their homes and the church (*Brisbane Courier* 1932b)!

Within this context of a surge of interest in the outdoors, the 'golden age' of the 1930s marked the end of a significant era in the development of climbing in Australia. It enabled women to take on the most difficult



Jean Easton, Ken Rogers, Elinor Bythe, and Muriel Patten on Mt Lindesay, December 1932

ascents and to claim first ascents of their own. It fostered the emergence of a climbing culture which incorporated significant numbers of women and this is reflected in the numerous newspaper accounts of this era. Ironically, it would be another 60 years before women returned to climbing in the same relative numbers. The idea of rockclimbing had experienced a discursive shift from exploration to recreation—with elements of sport—demanding more of its participants than being first to the top (Bourdieu 1978; 1993). This important development in Queensland seems to be unique in terms of its extent and the way in which it attracted so many young women. Climbing was also popular at the time in the Blue Mountains, largely through the influence of Eric Dark. Available evidence suggests it was less popular and involved women to a lesser extent than in Queensland. Nevertheless, climbing in the Blue Mountains was a popular activity and was promoted as ‘a health-giving sport for women’ in one article by the *Australian Women’s Mirror* (Lowe 1931, p. 22):

At Katoomba, in the Blue Mountains of NSW, systematic rock-climbing as a pastime and exercise for women was initiated as a means of encouraging visitors to the mountains to explore their unknown beauties, but it so soon gripped attention that rock-climbing for its own sake has attracted numbers of devotees, enough to establish a rock-climbers’ club which includes both men and women members.

In both Queensland and New South Wales, the idea of rockclimbing had been enshrined in popular culture, well before the war due almost solely through the medium of the local press. Until World War II, newspaper coverage of climbing and associated leisure activities in the Queensland press was consistent and made up a significant proportion of the news agenda. But the War was destined to change all that.

Postwar imaginings

By the end of World War II, coverage of climbing had all but vanished from the news pages of Queensland’s mainstream newspapers. Ironically, this coincided with the next great expansion of outdoor leisure activity. Within a few years of the end of the War, bushwalking and climbing clubs emerged all over Australia. Perhaps it was a response by some for a need to continue with the organised military-style activity they had experienced during the war—or perhaps it was an attempt to re-capture the surge of interest in the countryside just prior to the war—yet it attracted large numbers of women. Despite this, climbing became a predominantly masculine domain. While newspapers now ignored the exploits of climbers and walkers, coverage of these increasingly diversified activities was far from neglected. It simply shifted from the mainstream newspapers into niche publications—national publications like *Walkabout*, *Outdoors and Fishing*, *Skyline*, and *Australian Outdoors*; and notable local club magazines like *Heybob*, produced by the University of Queensland Bushwalking Club, and *Rurp*, a newsletter of the Brisbane Rockclimbing Club. It typified a new era of greatly diversified leisure culture. Other bushwalking clubs such as the Brisbane Bush Walkers and the National Parks Association produced their own newsletters of events concerning members. By the mid 1980s, more specialist national magazines like *Rock* and *Wild* emerged to satisfy participants in leisure activities that continued to diversify and grow in popularity. By the late 1990s, any climbing or walking club in Australia without a website is rare indeed. And it is in cyberspace that the stories of climbing achievements,

ethics and controversies continue to be told. While it continues to happen alongside traditional media, like newspapers, coverage of the everyday activities of climbers and walkers has been banished from the news pages forever—unless current news values or marketing campaigns determine otherwise.

While it is difficult to quantify the extent to which the press influenced and shaped the development of a climbing and scrambling culture in southeast Queensland in the early 20th century, clearly it played a significant role alongside the other influences—determined individuals, the rise of leisure and prevailing leisure discourses, the proximity of the various peaks to centres of population, improvements in transport, and various clubs and associations. Newspaper coverage was a significant and at times a leading influence—and the fact that the coverage continued for more than 50 years from the mid 1880s, that reports and accounts of nearly every notable ascent made in southeast Queensland until the late 1920s seem to have been published in local newspapers, and that some of the climbers themselves kept albums of the various newspaper climbing articles, all point to a substantial press influence. In all, it would be difficult to explain the appearance of the typically southeast Queensland climbing culture which emerged in the early 20th century without the influence of the local press in promoting local climbing and scrambling discourses which influenced local climbers in imagining themselves and their activities.

Conclusion

Aboriginal interest in the mountains of the southeast for millennia is undeniable—all of the peaks in southeast Queensland are incorporated in Aboriginal creation stories—but it is their interest in climbing them that is problematic (Steele 1984). Cook's sighting and naming of The Glasshouses, north of Brisbane, and Matthew Flinders's subsequent recorded first ascent of one of the group, Beerburrum, in 1799, marked a new age of exploration in southeast Queensland. It played a significant role in the process of 'imagining' the new colony—and climbing (Whitehouse 1966, p. 74). Climbing activity increased in southeast Queensland as settlers moved into the area. By the early 20th century, it is apparent that local Queensland newspapers had become an established forum where notable ascents were brought to wider attention and various climbing issues were periodically raised and debated. Climbing had become a significant leisure activity for men and women. The emphasis had shifted from prevailing British and European notions of climbing as exploration, as a specialist activity, or as the domain of an Alpine Club elite (Meadows, Thomson and Stewart 2000).

This new notion of climbing as recreation is most evident in the 1930s, which might well be called Queensland's (and Australia's) 'golden age'. Our research suggests that it represents a significant moment in the invention of Australian climbing. While a dominant figure during that era was the enigmatic Queenslander Bert Salmon, several female climbers emerged at that time claiming first ascents of local and interstate summits. Women took on the most difficult ascents and claimed first ascents of their own. The era fostered the emergence of a climbing culture that incorporated significant numbers of women. Ironically, it would be another 60 years before women returned to climbing in the same relative numbers when gymnasium climbing as a sport and fitness activity began in Australia in the early 1990s. The idea of

rockclimbing had experienced a discursive shift from exploration to recreation—with elements of sport and entertainment—demanding more of its participants than being first to the top (Bourdieu 1978; 1993).

However, in southeast Queensland in the 1930s, this important development seems to be unique in terms of its extent and the way in which it attracted so many young women.

By the late 1940s in post-war Queensland, there were few unclimbed peaks or large rock outcrops left. This period was marked by the emergence of clubs centred around recreation, particularly climbing and bushwalking. The first named climbs and climbing guidebooks appeared at this time, coinciding with the banishment of climbing articles from the popular press. The naming of climbs, introduced to Queensland and New South Wales by British immigrant climbers like Bill Peascod in the mid-1950s, signalled a significant discursive shift in ways of constituting the climbing landscape (Nettlefold and Stratford 1999, p. 137). As theorists like Demeritt (1994, pp. 163-185) argue, it represents a way of conceiving of nature as ‘both a real material actor and a socially constructed object’. So control of the process of representation of post-war climbing shifted from the pages of Queensland’s popular press to club newsletters and magazines. Mainstream newspapers were now interested in climbing only when it complied with post-war news values—accidents, deaths and sensationalism.

A new wave of climbing technologies, mostly from the United States, accompanied an explosion of new routes from the mid-late 1960s in southeast Queensland. Ironically, while the most difficult ascents ever were being pioneered during that period, press coverage was virtually non-existent. This continued through the 1970s and 1980s as climbers continued to push the limits of physical possibility. The emergence of climbing gyms and so-called ‘sport’ climbing in the early 1990s saw climbing—in new and diversified forms—re-appearing in newspapers as spectacle and linked closely with other entertainment media like movies. Films such as *Cliffhanger*, *Mission Impossible II*, and *Vertical Limit* have played an important role in featuring climbing as a mainstream cultural activity. Newspapers and even marketing newsletters have followed suit (*Qantas Frequent Flyer Newsletter* 2001; *Courier-Mail* 2000, p. 2). This period signifies yet another discursive shift—from climbing as recreation to a cultural activity which has diversified and which has been commodified. A post-war focus on consumerism and nation-building by the popular press meant that climbing activity was featured in the daily press only in sensational circumstances—post-war news values saw to that. So as climbing had become more technical and bold, popular media interest focussed on the failures rather than the successes. First ascents of new routes were significant only if it meant that new summits were reached—or old summits in a new way, for example, Australian achievements (and tragedies) on Everest (Hammond 1993; Clarke 1996; Aldred 1996; Lovell 1996, pp. 1, 6 & 7).

This process has culminated in a contradictory place for climbing as a leisure activity, reflected in present media coverage. Climbing and climbers are viewed with suspicion, as violators of the contemporary emphasis on security and personal safety (Kiewa 2000, p. 21). Yet at the same time, official agencies of outdoor recreation like the Australian Tourist Commission engage in the promotion of climbing, as part of a general policy to increase the participation of Australians in an active lifestyle. These contradictions are indicative of the ongoing cultural production of climbing with the contradictions being played out in the

press. The Queensland press has continued to play a central role in the process of creating the idea of leisure—and climbing—from its very beginnings. World War II represented a significant shift with postwar news values finding no place for climbing and recreation amongst the more important issues of the day—unless, of course, death, or serious injury were involved. But the stories have continued in an increasingly diversifying niche press, identifying and creating their own audiences. And although the idea of leisure, recreation and climbing in Australia emerged from colonial histories, it continues to be socially constructed—imagined in a specific spatial, temporal and subjective context with the press, along with other media, continuing to play a significant role.

Note: Special thanks to Robert Thomson and Jackie Kiewa for their contributions to, and comments on, the ideas in this article.

References

- Aldred, Debra, 1996, 'I'll climb again: Groom', *Courier-Mail*, 17 May, p. 1.
- Anderson, Benedict, 1984, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London.
- Archer, A. 1890, 'The ascent of Mount Lindsay [sic]', *Queenslander*, 26 July, p. 154.
- B & T Weekly*, 2001, 'Dreamworld gets extreme for holidays', 14 May, p. 19.
- Bell, Joshua Peter, 1932, *Brisbane Courier*, 29 June, p. 9.
- Blue Mountain Echo*, 1919, 'Alpine Climbers', 17 January.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, 1978, 'Sport and Social Class', *Social Science Information*, vol. 17, part. 6.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, 1993, 'How can one be a sports fan?', in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. S. Dunning, Routledge, London.
- Brammall, C. C. D. 1939, 'Australia's strangest mountains: The Glass House Mountains of Queensland', *Walkabout*, 1 February, pp. 38-41.
- Bricknell, Louise, 1994, 'Leisure? According to who?' in *Leisure: Modernity, Postmodernity, and Lifestyles*, Publication No. 48, ed Ian Henry, Leisure Studies Association, Brighton.
- Brisbane Courier*, 1864, 'Early morning on Mont Blanc', 14 January, p. 3.
- Brisbane Courier*, 1872, 'Ascent of Mount Lindsay', 18 May, p. 6.
- Brisbane Courier*, 1890a, 'Ascent of Mount Lindesay', 19 July, p. 6.
- Brisbane Courier*, 1890b, 'Ascent of Mount Lindsay', 15 July, p. 6.
- Brisbane Courier*, 1910a, 'The Ascent of Mt Lindsay', 4 June, p. 4.
- Brisbane Courier*, 1910b, 'Ascent of Mount Lindsay', 1 June, p. 8.
- Brisbane Courier*, 1910c, 'Successful Ascent of Mt Lindsay', 19 May, p. 4.

- Brisbane Courier*, 1912, 'A Week-end at Glass-House mountains', 1 June, p. 13.
- Brisbane Courier*, 1913, 'Mount Lindsay—Story of a Successful Climb', 2 August, p. 12.
- Brisbane Courier*, 1932a, '“Mystery” hike: successful outing: Day at Cedar Creek', 18 July, p. 13.
- Brisbane Courier*, 1932b, 'Sunday hiking: Council of churches moves: Consider protest', 14 July, p. 12.
- Brisbane Courier*, 1934, 'Brisbane girl mountaineer: fine feat at Katoomba', 28 March, p. 13.
- Clarke, Barry, 1996, 'Mountain of death', *Courier-Mail*, 15 May, Features, p. 13.
- Conway, Martin W, 1902, 'Mountaineering: history and development of mountain exploration', in *The Encyclopaedia of Sport*, eds. H. Peek and F. G. Aflalo, Brisbane Newspaper Company, Brisbane.
- Courier-Mail*, 1934, 'Scaled one of the “Three Sisters”: Miss Muriel Patten's feat', 6 February, p. 12.
- Courier-Mail*, 2000, 'Outdoors', Advertisement, 19 May, p. 2.
- Daily Telegraph*, 1932, 'How to hike without tears', 12 July, p. 5.
- Demeritt, D. 1994, 'The nature of metaphors in cultural geography and environmental history', *Progress in Human Geography*, vol. 18, issue 2, pp. 163-185.
- Dimes, Nora M, 1935, 'Let's Go Mountaineering', *Queenslander Annual*, 4 November, pp. 18-19.
- Donnelly, Peter, 1982, 'Social climbing: a case study of the changing class structure of rock climbing and mountaineering in Britain', in *Studies in the sociology of Sport*, eds. A. O Dunleavy, AW Miracle, & CR Rees, Texas Christian University Press, Fort Worth.
- Freshfield, Douglas, 1902, 'The Himalayas: a tour of Kangchenjunga', *Queenslander*, 8 May, pp. 968-970.
- Fryers, Austin,, 1899, 'Mountaineering in England', *Pearson's Magazine*, March, pp. 241-246
- Gaylard, William, 1912, 'Fresh Worlds to conquer', *Brisbane Courier*, 5 June, p. 7.
- Girl's Realm*, 1899, 'Mountaineering for girls'.
- Hamilton-Smith, Elery, 1998, 'From cultural awakening to post-industrialism: The history of leisure, recreation and tourism in Australia', in *Time out?*, eds. H. Perkins & G. Cushman, Addison Wesley Longman, Auckland.
- Hammond, Philip, 1993, 'Born to climb: how a Brisbane plumber finally beat Everest', *Courier-Mail*, 12 May, p. 9.
- Katoomba Daily*, 1934a, 'Brisbane Girl climbs the Sisters! Is it a record?', 28 January.
- Katoomba Daily*, 1934b, 'Thrilling climbs: lady visitor conquers mountain peaks', 13 March.
- Kiewa, Jackie, 2000, *Climbing to Enchantment: A study of the community of traditional climbers in southeast Queensland*, PhD thesis, Griffith University.
- Lack, Clem, 1938, 'Mountain Climbers of Queensland', *Sunday Mail Magazine Section*, 10 July, p. 1.
- Le Blond, Elizabeth, 1901, 'A lady's mountaineering recollections', *The Lady's Realm*, November, pp. 71-75.
- Lovell, Darren, 1996, 'White hell on top of the world', *Sunday Mail*, 19 May, pp. 1, 6, 7.

Lowe, Nina, 1931, 'Rock-climbing: A health-giving sport for Women', *The Australian Woman's Mirror*, December 22, p. 22.

Lynch, Rob and Veal, A. J. 1997, 'History I—before 1788', in *Australian Leisure*, eds. R. Lynch and A. J. Veal, (pp. 33-47), Addison, Wesley and Longman Australia, Melbourne.

Meadows, Michael; Thomson, Robert; and Stewart, Wendy, 2000, 'Close to the edge: imagining climbing in southeast Queensland', *Queensland Review*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 67-84.

Murray-Prior, Mary E, 1902, 'An ascent of Mount Lindsay', *Queenslander*, 1 November, p. 974.

Nettlefold, Peter and Stratford, Elaine, 1999, 'The production of Climbing Landscapes-as-texts', *Australian Geographical Studies*, vol. 37, no. 2, pp. 130-137.

Qantas Frequent Flyer Newsletter, 'The adrenalin rush', front cover photograph, May/June.

Queenslander, 1866, 'The Mania For Alpine Climbing', 29 December, p. 2.

Queenslander, 1871, 'The Southern Border', 1 April, p. 11.

Queenslander, 1873, 'A Cruise Round Moreton Bay', 29 March, p. 6.

Queenslander, 1888, 'Kilima-Njaro Conquered at Last', 14 January, p. 52.

Queenslander, 1889, 'Ascent of Mount Owen Stanley', 20 July, p. 124.

Queenslander, 1890, 'Ascent of Mount Lindsay', 26 July, p. 154.

Queenslander, 1893, 'A Climb on Hinchinbrook', 30 December, p. 127.

Queenslander, 1894, 'A Day Amongst the Clouds', 12 May, p. 886.

Queenslander, 1895, 'Where Three Rivers Rise', 28 February, p. 860.

Queenslander, 1896, 'Climbing in the New Zealand Alps', 31 October, p. 839.

Queenslander, 1897a, 'Ascent of Aconcagua', 5 June, p. 1289.

Queenslander, 1897b, 'Ascent of Mt Elias', 4 December, p. 1082

Queenslander, 1897c, 'Mountaineering in Africa', 3 April, p. 742.

Queenslander, 1897d, 'The Ascent of Peter Botte', 1, 8, 15, 22 May, pp. 966, 1022, 1078, 1125.

Queenslander, 1903, 'Mountaineering', 17 January, p. 135.

Queenslander, 1904, 'Climbing Mount Lindsay', 23 January, p. 26.

Queenslander, 1911, 'Glasshouse Mountains: Crookneck Climbed By Two Sturdy Queenslanders', 18 March, p. 18.

Queenslander, 1912, 'A Week-end at Glass-House Mountains', 8 June, pp. 27, 29.

Queenslander, 1929a, 'The Upper Coomera Gorge', 27 June, pp. 4, 30.

Queenslander, 1929b, 'The Western Cliffs: National Park feature', 8 August, pp. 1, 4, 31.

Real, Michael, 1989; *Supermedia*, Sage, Newbury Park..

- Stanner, W. E. H., 1977, 'The History of Indifference Thus Begins', *Aboriginal History*, vol. 1, nos. 1-2, pp. 3-26.
- Steele, John G., 1984, *Aboriginal Pathways in Southeast Queensland and the Richmond River*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane.
- Sunday Mail*, 1932, 'Mountain Climbing is Great Fun', 29 May, Magazine Section, p. 1.
- Telegraph*, 1934, 'Up amongst the peaks: joys of mountaineering: Miss Jean Easton interviewed', 29 March, p. 7.
- Thomson, Robert, 2001, 'The first ascent of Mt Lindesay—a climbing "Whodunit"', *Queensland Review*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 1-20.
- Tindal, Marcus, 1899, 'The champion lady mountaineer', *Pearson's Magazine*, April, pp. 354-364.
- Town and Country Journal*, 1902, 'The dangers of Alpine climbing', 6 September, p. 21.
- Warwick Argus*, 1909, 'Women as mountain climbers', 23 January, p. 5.
- Warwick Argus*, 1912, News brief, 9 January, p. 5.
- Welsby, Thomas, 1886, 'To the top of the Glasshouses No. 1, 2 & 3', *Queenslander*, 12 June, p. 933; 19 June, pp. 973-974; 26 June, p. 1014.
- Whitehouse, Fred W. 1966, 'Early ascents of the Glasshouses', *Heybob*, vol. 8, p. 74.
- Withey, Lynne, 1998, *Grand Tours and Cook's Tours: A history of leisure travel, 1750-1915*, Aurum Press, London.
- Young Man*, 1901, 'Mrs Workman and her record climb in the Himalayas'.