



**I**AN McDOUGALL is a Detective Senior Sergeant in the AFP's Central Region, based in Adelaide.

But he can tell you quite a lot about some rugged parts of South Australia's bushland.

Ian is one of two people who recently made history by completing a 1373km walk the entire length of the State's Flinders and Mount Lofty Ranges.

Ian was accompanied by fellow South Australian bushwalker Chris Whiteside, who is a secretary. A third member, Richard Roland, left the party in the Barossa Valley.

The expedition achieved the first continuous walk of the two ranges, from the semi-desert mid-north to the precipitous coast of the south. It took them 71 days.

And all to publicise bushwalking!

Ian said they both enjoyed bushwalking and considered being the first people to complete the walk as a personal challenge.

"But we'd like to see more steps taken to ensure that future generations will be more able to experience the beauty of SA as we have done," he said.

"The best way of ensuring this is by providing properly planned and declared walking trails, agreed to by property owners, walkers, and the Government.

"Many of the State's most rugged and beautiful areas are accessible only on foot."

Ian has had considerable bush experience over 20 years in SA and the Northern Territory and has led many bushwalks and camping trips. He is a competent, experienced bush navigator and knows his survival and mountaineering.

His companion, Chris has been on walks in the Swiss Alps, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and many parts of Australia.

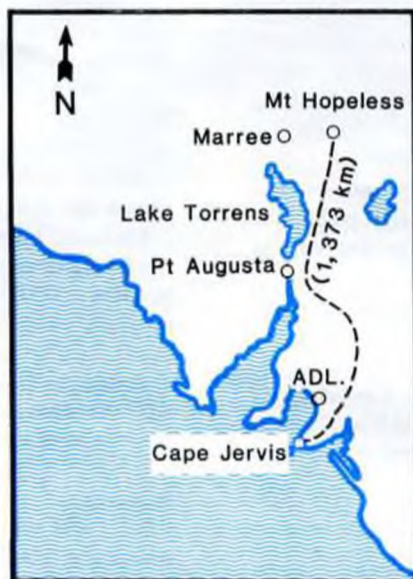
Planning for their trek took nearly nine months.

"The task of choosing the route took a lot of time, research and paperwork," Ian said.

Many hours were spent at the Lands Department checking names of landowners to seek approval to walk through their properties. More than 80 owners had to be contacted on the route from Mount

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# MARATHON TREK CREATES HISTORY



Hopeless in the north to Cape Jervis in the south.

"They were fantastic people," Ian said. "Their co-operation and interest was very much appreciated."

However, the major task was equipping the expedition for its 10 weeks of bush conditions, he said. Initially, it was intended to use all Australian-made products, but because some items were unavailable, sponsorship was sought overseas. Much of the equipment used was donated by sponsors, but apart from this the members met the cost of the expedition themselves.

The biggest headache was organising the food. Chris Whitehead said they had to devise a menu for 10 weeks that was light to carry and yet palatable and high in vitamins and calories. A very basic menu was finally worked out.

It didn't win an award for 'Gourmet chef of the year' but it was sufficient to retain health. It consisted of toasted muesli, powdered milk and drinking chocolate for breakfast, crispbread biscuits, processed cheese and peanut butter for lunch, followed by soup and a dehydrated meal supplemented with rice or noodles for dinner. Dried fruit, nuts and chocolate completed the menu.

During the trip 34kg of muesli, 23kg of cheese, 14kg of drinking chocolate, 20kg of powdered milk, 18kg of chocolate, 250 dehydrated meals, 22kg of peanut butter and 23kg each of nuts and dried fruit were consumed. Items were selected on the basis of being readily available on the supermarket shelf and therefore available to the everyday hiker.

Cartons of food, maps, clothing and spare batteries were left at 12 designated pick-up points along the route, such as police stations, hotels, stores, station homesteads and resorts.

The group was dropped off by a 4-wheel drive vehicle just north of Mount Hopeless, which was climbed around noon the same day. Mount Hopeless is the most northerly peak in the Flinders Ranges, located in desert country some 150km north of Arkaroola.

In the initial stages, the weather was very kind, with most days fine and sunny with temperatures in the low 20s. However, as they headed south, the weather deteriorated and most of the time was spent walking in wet, cold conditions and, at times, against gale-force winds.

Some very cold nights were experienced during the trip, with temperatures falling below zero. One morning they awoke to see a heavy white frost covering the ground and the tent flies frozen stiff with ice.

Mid-winter was chosen to avoid the extremely high temperatures likely at other times and because they felt that water would be more plentiful. Despite this, water became a big problem and they experienced shortages for the majority of the trip. At one time they were without water for 36 hours, and at other times had to drink very brackish water.

The distance covered each day varied considerably. In the north, while walking through the rugged mountains and steep rocky gorges, the daily average was approximately 15km but in the undulating hills and more accessible countryside further south, this average increased to about 30km.

The group's best effort was 38km, despite having just picked up 8 days' supply of food and equipment and while walking in gale-force winds the whole day.

"It was the thought of taking shelter under a dry roof that night that urged us on," Ian said.

"We were very glad to catch our first glimpse of the sea at Cape Jervis. But we were elated with our triumph."

Chris and Ian are now busy writing a book on their trek.

"Our hope is that it will encourage other hikers to venture out and explore the wilderness," Ian said.