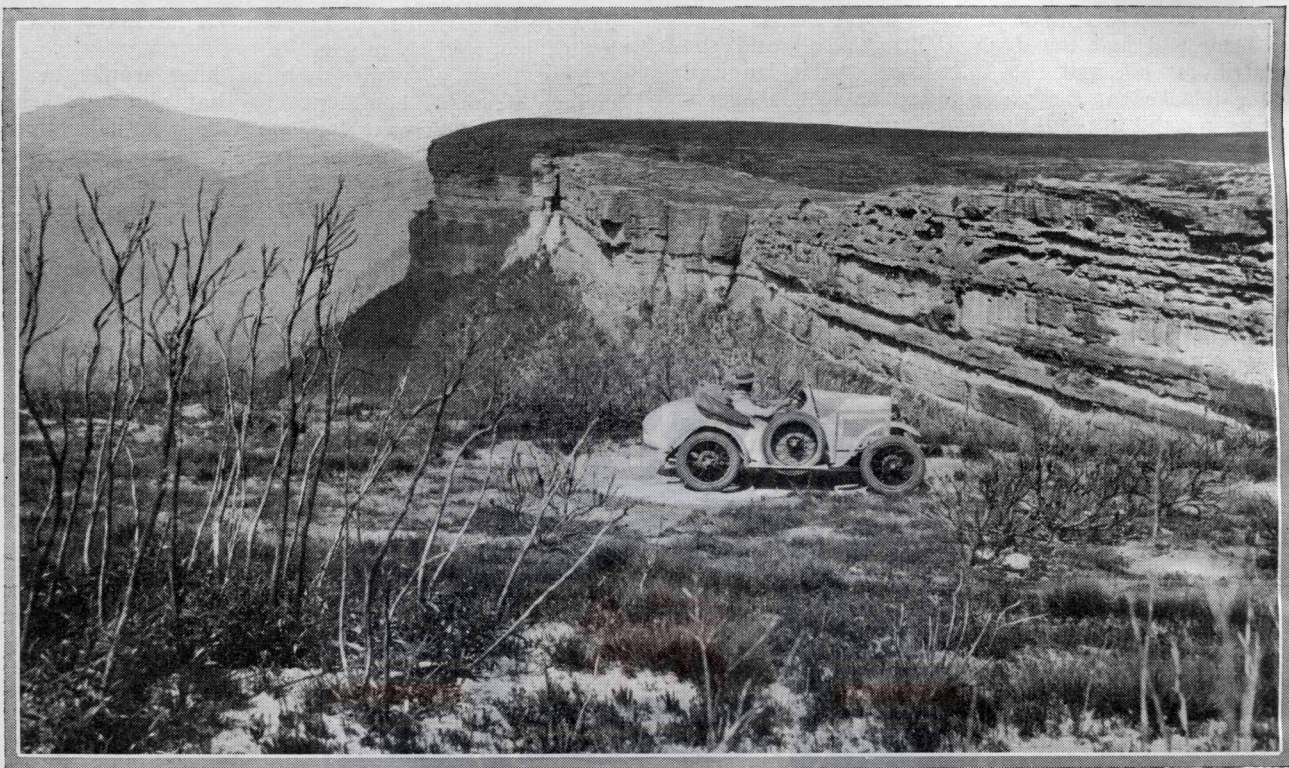


BLAZING A TRAIL *with a MINOR*



Descriptive of a journey by night through swamps and virgin forest—on a route whereon in parts no car had previously ventured—to Kanangra Walls, New South Wales.

By REGINALD G. JOHNSON

ABOUT one hundred and forty miles from Sydney, across a bush trail leading off the Oberon road, is the most picturesque sight in New South Wales—the Kanangra Walls.

Unfortunately the eighteen miles of bush track separating the Walls from the main Oberon road are in many places impassable for most cars, owing to the long and swampy stretches of marshland that have to be negotiated en route.

Years ago the track was in reasonably good condition for cart travel, but the ravages of the extensive bush fires of the previous Summer, and the following flood rains, have made this interesting and beautiful forest trail into a veritable bridle path, holding innumerable obstacles and hardships for the motorist who attempts to follow it to its end.

A Fascinating Spot

Having once visited Kanangra, one experiences the desire to see it again and again, and as we had travelled to this vast and mountainous stretch of country both by pack-horse and car—a Morris-Oxford—at various times between 1924 and 1928, we decided to give our latest acquisition—a Morris

Minor—a chance to prove its sterling qualities over the old trail.

Fully aware of the many difficulties that awaited us in this forest path, we packed the necessary salvage gear, along with our “tucker” and camp equipment, and left the city at 8 p.m. in order to make a week trip to the Walls for new pictures. We had chosen a moonlight night for the journey, and were able to enjoy greatly the magnificence of the Kanimbla and Jenolan Valleys that were passed on our way to the Jenolan Caves; and in the soft whiteness of the moon’s shimmering light they looked more like some vision of a dream than the mere earth’s surface. We passed through the Grand Arch of Jenolan at 1.30 a.m., and after the steeply-graded ascent of the Oberon road, the Minor was soon turned into the track leading into Kanangra Walls.

By Night

Here the forest soon hid the moon from view, and with headlights and “spot” all working well, we pushed on along this uninviting bush trail, trusting that our sturdy little bus would get us through.

Blazing a Trail with a Minor—contd.

Before going many miles the much neglected state of the track became apparent, and the huge burnt trees that had fallen across the trail every few hundred yards made the going hard, and we found it necessary to deviate constantly in order to pick our way across these branch and log strewn stretches.

These detours nearly proved our undoing many times, and the blackness of the forest made it exceptionally difficult for us, when trying to return to the original track. The long and steep ascents



At the Pinnacles, Kanangra Walls, looking towards Yerranderie. The car was driven quite close to this spot.

of the various parts of the trail gave the car a very rough handling, as the surfaces were mostly composed of loose rocks and washaway gutters, but we were greatly pleased to find the game little Minor standing up to the job in a very efficient manner.

Numerous wombats made the night travel interesting, and it was amusing to watch them scamper for their lives into the surrounding bush when we put the spotlight on their nocturnal playground.

They were exceptionally big fellows and made quite a lot of noise as they crashed into the undergrowth in an effort to avoid the light beam.

Wild Folk

Foxes and the usual scores of rabbits all contributed to the interest of the journey, and at 3 a.m. we passed the only sign of habitation on the track—a lone rabbit-trapper's hut.

His dogs broadcast our arrival long before we came to his dwelling, but we did not wake him as we reckoned it was quite enough having two crazy fellows out in this country at that unearthly hour, without adding another to the list.

After crossing the swampy stretch of open country that lay at the end of his property, we soon found ourselves back in the forest country, with the speedometer showing that we had covered seven miles in comparatively easy time.

The remaining eleven miles of the journey were of a similar nature to that which we had just come through, and we hoped to reach the Walls by day-break, thereby establishing the positively unique record of negotiating one of Australia's roughest and most deserted trails by night.

It may be interesting to note that most of this journey was done in low and second gear, and our trip so far had averaged about six miles an hour.

We kept the Minor moving as fast as the country would permit, and had hardly gone one mile from the rabbit trapper's hut when the car flopped into a big stretch of boggy swamp land that constituted the major part of a detour, into which we had been forced owing to the presence of the eternal fallen trees across the track.

Up to the Axles

Slowly but surely she sank to the axles in the soft and slimy ooze until all progress was brought to a standstill, while the back wheels were scooping up a whole lot of the country in a manner that would have done credit to a steam shovel. We sat in the car for a while, discussing our bad luck, each one waiting



Fallen trees brought down by bush fires are frequent obstructions on this part of the trail.

for the other to get out into the slush in order to ascertain what our chances of immediate extrication were worth; but an examination of the bog in front of and behind the car made us decide on the lighting of a big fire on the dry ground, and making a cup of "early morning" tea. After a satisfactory adjustment of the "billy can" we went

Blazing a Trail with a Minor—contd.

back to the scene of our misfortune, and decided it would be better to wait until dawn before any "removalist" work was attempted.

The camera gear was taken out of the Minor, and we took two flashlight photographs of the car's plight. This done, we went back to our fire, had the tea and went to sleep in the comfortable and reassuring warmth of the blazing logs.

At the first sign of dawn we were up and hard at it, and after an hour's solid work succeeded in getting the car back on to dry ground with the aid of long pieces of bark that were put under the wheels, when the car had been levered up with a stout sapling.

We were again on our way at 5.30 a.m. and avoided the many bogs that confronted us by constantly making detours over the forest slopes that were of a reasonably dry nature. These detours gave the Minor a particularly bad time, as the thick undergrowth and fern-covered country concealed many a log and tree stump.

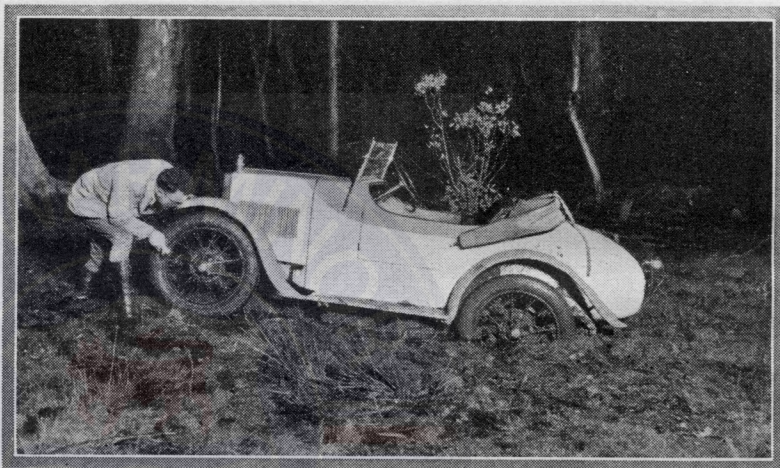
Crossing a River

The Boyd River was crossed easily, and we made good progress over the slippery country that precedes that portion of the trail.

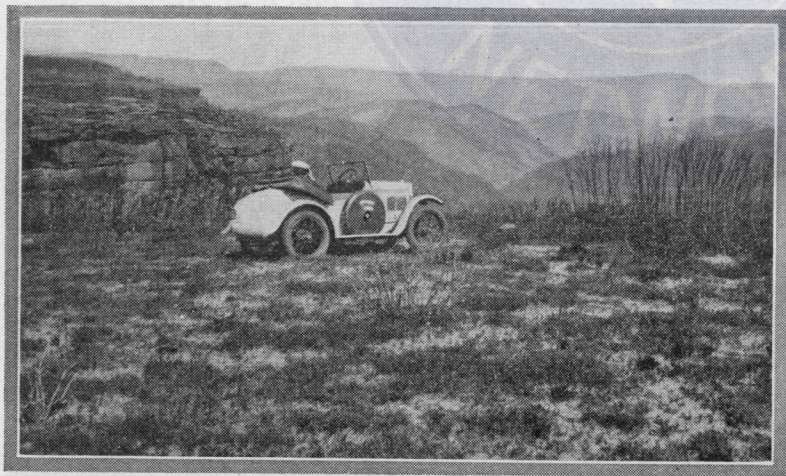
The last few miles of the journey form the most gruelling part of the trip,

we left the car on top of the plateau overlooking Kanangra, and made our way to a cave that is conveniently situated near to the huge Thurat plateau, around which the magnificent Walls drop sheer, many hundreds of feet into precipitous and sharp-edged ravines.

We spent the whole day taking pictures of all the points of interest that lay all around us, and after spending the evening in the cave, left the Walls on the afternoon of the next day, owing to the presence of rain and mist that precluded all possibility of any further picture-taking.



Bogged up to the axles at three in the morning in one of the slimy morasses found on this backwoods route.



The plateau overlooking the Kowmung and Burragorang ranges. The Minor was the first car to travel over this part of the run.

The trip back to the main road was as interesting as the outward journey, and at one time we were lost for some little while, owing to the ill-defined nature of the track and an exceptionally long detour.

We repeated the trip the following week-end, and had the good fortune to establish the record of the night trip to the Walls, and reached Kanangra after nine hours' hard travel, during which time the Morris performed in a most amazing manner.

Praise for the Minor

Our second trip was remarkably successful from the photographic standpoint, and perfect weather gave us a splendid opportunity to make beautiful records of Kanangra and the surrounding country, which embraces the majestic

Kanangra Falls and the "Pinnacle" country, where no other car or motorcycle had ever been.

On each occasion the Minor had served us most efficiently, and we came to the conclusion that it would be no longer necessary to worry about travel on beaten paths when we were in possession of such a capable and sturdy little car.

and the rough and rocky steep grades tested the stamina of the car to its utmost. In fact, it was with some apprehension that we inspected the undercarriage of the Minor when we came to the end of the trail, but an examination soon showed us that we had come through in perfect condition.

At half-past eight, after unshipping all our gear,