

Fascinating take on the Great North Walk

The Great North Walk, a 250-kilometre bushwalking track linking Sydney and Newcastle, via the Hunter Valley, is a national icon for scenery and history.

It passes through a diverse range of natural habitats and bushland as well as rural and urban settings, including Sydney Harbour, Berowra Valley, the Hawkesbury River, Watagan Mountains, Lake Macquarie and the Newcastle coastline.

The Great North Walk is a must-see for bushwalkers and nature lovers alike. With camping grounds, water stations and other facilities scattered throughout, the walk boasts lookouts, rainforest, a plethora of diverse native flora and fauna, sandstone ridges, coastal terrain and well-maintained boardwalks.

It was initially constructed as a celebration of Australia's Bicentenary in 1988 and is a responsibility of the NSW Department of Lands, hosting an estimated 40,000 local, interstate and international visitors who use the walk annually, either taking the challenge of the full 12 to 16 day hike, or enjoying shorter sections of the walk.

And now there's a fascinating book for walkers and students of the history of

the area – *The Great North Walk Companion* (376 pages, paperback, available from www.digitalprintaustralia.com/bookstore/non-fiction/travel/the-great-north-walk-companion.html for \$27.50).

The authors – A Henderson-Sellers, K McGuffie and B Henderson-Sellers – don't give away too much about themselves, but we know one to be Professor Ann Henderson-Sellers FTSE, former head (2006–07) of the World Climate Research Program, based in Geneva; Director of the Environment Division at ANSTO from 1998 to 2005; Deputy Vice-Chancellor RMIT from 1996–98; and founding Director of the Climatic Impacts Centre at Macquarie University, where she continues to hold a Professorship in Physical Geography.

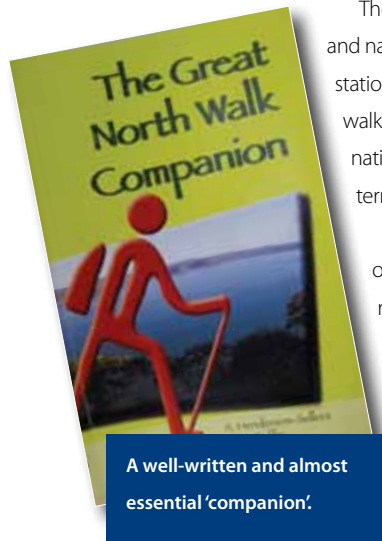
Describing itself as "fiction not fact", the book traces the history and elements of the walk through the amalgam of curiosity, observations, commentary and "discussions with passersby" forged by the authors during their traverse of the track over the 12 months to September 2009. It also raises some mystery about the identity of the "fourth" member of the team, to whom the book is dedicated.

The book is a treasure hunt or 'geo-quest' against a majestic scenic background, with three components – rock art and engravings, obelisks and memorials, and the unfolding of the life tale of the "mystery" companion.

It contains notes of interest about flora and fauna, architecture, sites of interest (Aboriginal and post white settlement) and an excellent index.

For those interested in the Great North Walk or the history in which it rests, *The Great North Walk Companion* is a well-written and almost essential 'companion'.

Editor



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