

# Tumut and Adelong Times

AND BATLOW DISTRICT NEWS

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## Harry Hill, bush icon

1926-2016

HARRY Hill, a lifelong Tumut resident renowned far and wide for his exhaustive knowledge of our region's back-country terrain, its people and history, died Monday, aged 89.

Harry's bush wisdom will not be lost upon his death; he left behind a veritable treasure-trove of information through some 15 books he penned, which focus on everything from trout fishing in the high country to the surprising number of ways to camp-cook scones.

Some of his work, such as *Best Bushwalks In Kosciuszko National Park*, continue to sell well and remain highly regarded reference tomes for hikers heading into the hills.

Harry had the knack of being able to tell a ripping yarn.

It was his father who opened up the wonders of the great outdoors to Harry, teaching him not only to find food, water and shelter from the land, but also passing on a deep passion for the rich history of the old huts and abandoned gold mines that litter the landscape, as well as sparking an insatiable curiosity about those almost unimaginably colorful characters who were forged in the rugged terrain and harsh environment of the mountains.

Harry was raised in Tumut but at every opportunity would go out to the Brungle Creek farm where his father worked, and the two would often go exploring, as Harry soaked up the bush skills of his father.

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Bushwalker, angler, adventurer, trek guide, park promoter, author, historian and educator, he loved the outdoors.

"There must be some relationship between my surname and that physical feature called a hill, as I've always preferred country with a few bumps in it," Harry once said.

"Hills are alright, big hills are better, but mountains are best of all."

He was honoured with the Order of Australia Medal for his promotion of leisure activities in Kosciuszko National Park, and in 2004 was recognised with an environment award by the state government for his work in the rebuilding of old huts in the park.

Harry was born in 1926 at Sefton House private hospital, one of three children of Henry and Lottie.

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Harry's father died when he was 11, a loss felt heavily by Harry and indeed, the entire family.

After completing his schooling in Tumut, Harry attended Sydney Teachers College, where he trained as a primary and one-school teacher. He was posted to several small schools near and far, from Trundle to Peel's Creek (near Batlow), and it was while he was at Peel's Creek that he courted Shirley, who was working at Tumut Public. The pair's love blossomed with the relationship carried out via carrier pigeon between Tumut and Peel's Creek, and the two married in

December of 1951.

The two spent many hours hiking and exploring the natural bushland of the region and their three children inherited the keen interest in



Harry Hill, pictured with one of his books, and left, on one of his many adventures to Kosciuszko National Park.

the bush.

Harry would go on to spend 40 years as a teacher, retiring in 1986, his final posting as principal of Tumut Public School.

That gave him more time to devote to what he described as the more worthwhile things in life: bushwalking, backpacking, fishing, cross country skiing and photography.

His reputation as an unrivalled source of information for anything relating to the northern area of the Kosciuszko National Park quickly

spread.

He was one of eight people chosen – and the eldest at 63 – by federal and state governments to undertake The Great Alpine Trek from Victoria to the ACT, a 31-day, 600km journey through various parks in the 1980s.

"In the bushwalking-backpacking sphere, I have covered many thousands of kilometres and taken almost as many photographs," Harry said. "At the time the walking and photography were done for my own pleasure and to fill my memory bank for the not-capable-of-walking years."

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The Minister for Local Government has proposed a merger of Tumbarumba and Tumut Shire Councils and referred this proposal to his Delegate for reviewing and reporting.

Copies of the Minister's proposal are available online at [www.councilboundaryreview.nsw.gov.au](http://www.councilboundaryreview.nsw.gov.au) and on Council's website at [www.tumut.nsw.gov.au](http://www.tumut.nsw.gov.au).

Copies are also available at Council Offices and Libraries for review.

Public Inquiries will be held:

TUMUT GOLF CLUB  
Thursday, 11 February 2016  
9.00am – 12 noon

TUMBARUMBA BOWLING CLUB  
Thursday, 11 February 2016  
2.00pm – 5.00pm

The public may make submissions to the Inquiry, see [www.councilboundaryreview.nsw.gov.au](http://www.councilboundaryreview.nsw.gov.au) for details on requirements.

Written submissions on the proposal can also be made online at [www.councilboundaryreview.nsw.gov.au](http://www.councilboundaryreview.nsw.gov.au) or by mail to Council Boundary Review Submissions, GPO Box 5341, Sydney NSW 2001. Written submissions close at 5pm Sunday, 28 February 2016.

**Tumut Shire Council will hold a Shire wide information evening on the 1st February commencing at 7pm at the Tumut RSL Club.**

Matters to be discussed include:

- What reasons the Minister has given for the merger
- What must the Delegates consider in preparing a report and recommendations on the merger
- Tumut Shire Council's response
- How can people have a say
- The likely process if mergers are recommended

Council strongly urges all residents to take the time to consider the future of Local Government and make a submission either at the Inquiry or in writing.

For further information please contact Tumut Shire Council offices on (02) 6941 2555.

# Harry Hill, bush icon, dies

## From front page

Harry chose to share what he had seen with others, going on to write 15 books, including several that were self-published.

He was commissioned by the Lands Department to investigate and write about the Hume and Hovell Track, which stretches from Yass to Ablury.

"There is little doubt in my mind that few men know, understand or appreciate the Hume and Hovell Walking Track better than Harry Hill," Garry West, at the time the NSW Minister for Land Management, said.

"He followed the construction of the Hume and Hovell Walking track from the earliest days, photographing and recording progress work, and often "swinging a pick" when the occasion arose."

The track, and the history of the Hume and Hovell expedition, became a passion of Harry's – he walked the track's 400-plus kilometre length several times, and in both directions.

There were books about the people and history of Goobarragandra, fishing, dingos and camp cooking.

Others gave full rein to Harry's impish humour: *The Principal Toilettician*, a book chronicling his time as a teacher, and *It's True, Believe Me It's True*, in which he docu-

ments some of his more amusing adventures in Kosciuszko National Park (KNP), come to mind.

He dedicated a book to the characters of Rules Point, a location near Yarrangobilly Caves, where a small community sprang up in the early 20th century, before petering out.

Then there were the huts, their history and restoration.

Mark Cleghorn, then president of the Kosciuszko Huts Association (of which Harry was a life member) successfully nominated Harry for a state environment award for Harry's work conserving the high country huts.

"Harry did more than anyone to save and conserve two of the most historically significant huts: Old Currango and Cooimbil," Mr Cleghorn said.

"For more than two decades he organised and was involved in over 50 work parties. He also acquired much of the materials required for the work, including rough-cut floor slabs, round timber, structural timber and window frames. As well as his involvement in the physical conservation work, Harry also researched the history of both buildings, recording their conservation in text and pictures, and collecting oral histo-

ries from people associated with the huts.

Books followed on Cooimbil and Old Currango, as well as another on Broken Dam Hut.

His writings featured in this publication, the *Tumut and Adelong Times*, regularly over the past two decades. Many were humorous pieces, others brought to light little known bush characters, and in 2009, he wrote a series of articles on the Tumut River; detailing what the river was like before the Snowy Scheme, and its current state.

In doing so, his writings set down for posterity details about a past age and heritage, which would otherwise have been lost forever.

Harry had walked in New Zealand, the Alps in Switzerland, the Rocky Mountains in Canada and the USA, but for the man born and bred in Tumut, nothing surpassed the bushland of this region, and particularly the Kosciuszko National Park.

Harry passed away at Tumut Hospital on Monday. He is survived by his loving family.

A service of thanksgiving will be held at Wagga Crematorium Chapel next Tuesday, February 2, beginning at 11.30am, followed by cremation. Relatives and friends are respectfully invited to attend.