

# BARRINGTON

## Beryl Heather's Walk Journal

**Barrington Tops**  
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**NB Minimal editing of original text**

*For the construction and language in the following pages I offer no apology; they have not been revised nor sorted out but are presented to you just as they were thought and written along the trails of lovely Barrington, in the hope that someday these jottings may serve to bring back to you memories of a happy Christmas spent in the great outdoors.*

*Beryl Heather.*

OFF ONCE AGAIN

Let's shout hooray! We're off again  
To spend our time a-tramping,  
For four whole days and wondrous nights  
We're going out a-camping.

To camp and tramp by bushland ways,  
By far our best loved duty,  
And so we'll go by track and trail,  
And fill our souls with beauty.

Out where the mountain ranges lie,  
And bubbling streamlet rises,  
Where wondrous valleys fall away,  
Dame Nature keeps her prizes.

For Nature's rarest scenic gems,  
That fill our hearts with pleasure,  
Lie hidden deep in mountains far,  
Befitting wondrous treasure.

And so we're wand'ring off again,  
To tramp the hills together,  
A free and healthy life we'll live,  
Through ev'ry kind of weather.

—oOo—

ABOUT OURSELVES

We haven't got a captain grand  
On this year's Christmas trip,  
Not one of us would take the job,  
Too scared that we might slip.  
But really we don't care a hang,  
For even if we had,  
We'd still do just the things we wished,  
And leave the rest, bedad!

Now first there's Daphne as you know,  
You've heard of her before,  
She's come again to walk about,  
And learn of Nature's lore.  
To shelter her from tropic suns,  
Head Hunter's come out too,  
I'm sure she'll be the sweetest pal,  
And love the things we do.

And next there's Jim who's coming too,  
To see this wonderland,  
Where tall and mighty forest trees  
By breezes soft are fann'd;  
He hopes to capture hard and fast  
Each scenic gem we find,  
To take some photographs that will  
Recall these scenes to mind.

And last of all, of course there's me,  
And now we're going out,  
To tramp again across the hills,  
And wander round about.  
Good fellowship will be with us,  
For always it is so,  
And sure I've brought m'book and pen  
To scribble as I go.

—oOo—

Friday 23rd December 1938

Well, we're off again. For over two weeks we'll be able to forget that such things as towns are on the map. We've got our rucksacks ready packed, and our 'civilized' luggage went up by yesterday's train. And it's a heavenly feeling to be free after the terrific neat and rushing of the last month, to be able to turn ones back on it for a while and say "I don't care, let it all go hang".

Jim, Daphne and I have combined this year; Jim has only four days, but Daphne and I have each a fortnight, and we just know we are going to have a marvelous time, tramping the track and absorbing all the beauty of the hills. We're travelling up with some of the "Rucksackers" who are going much the same way as us, for by doing this we travel per cream lorry at a cheaper rate because of the number, and have the additional advantage of enjoying the company of folk who "love the things we love".

We met at Central at a quarter to eight, and golly, but did I have a rush to get there, Phew! I don't think I'll ever cool down again. At eight o'clock we decided to wander round to make sure of seats on the train which was scheduled to leave at ten minutes to nine. To our surprise it was already very crowded, and although we had first class tickets it was with some difficulty that we found seats, and in the end they had to put extra carriages on. Trev came in to wave goodbye to us, he's off himself tomorrow for ten days.

The train eventually left Central at a quarter past nine, twenty five minutes late. The journey up was uneventful; slept and talked and ate intermittently; people tried to get in all the way along, there were swarms of people at every station, and they had to put on another carriage at West Maitland. We had a rather amusing woman in our carriage who had evidently travelled widely all over the world, and was quite emphatic in her denunciation of our railway systems, thought them hopelessly bungled.

Eventually we arrived at Paterson at half past one, an hour late, and tumbled out on to the vary dark platform and groped our way out on to the road to where Mr. Hancocks and his lorry were waiting for us. We set off without further delay and travelled about fifty miles per hour along a good road through Gresham and Eccleston, the road being bordered on either side by trees and fences which, when the headlights of the lorry caught them, cast elongated and attractive shadows across the road. Then the good road ended, our progress slackened perceptibly. It being piercingly cold and windy in the back, Daph and I welcomed the chance of riding in front when another passenger got out. The road got ever worse and worse, bumpier and bumpier, the country more hilly and attractive. Our driver talked to us all the way, probably to keep himself awake for, like us, he has had no sleep this night, and regaled us with local tales and pointed out to us The Leap, so named because long years ago a tiny picaninny leaped over and was never again seen when being chased by a white man on horseback.

As we went the morning star appeared big and luminous and looking for all the world like a lamp suspended in space. All at once, before we quite realized it the surrounding hills and trees took shape and the dawn came upon us with all its wonderful suddenness. The road keeps getting worse, rougher and rougher and narrower, we cross the river seven times and open and shut six gates, but our driver

knows his track and keeps us out of all the holes.

At twenty minutes past four we arrive at Hancocks, and almost without a word we tumble out of the lorry and drag out our sleeping bags and spread them on the grass and turn in, chilled to the bone, for a much needed sleep.

WE TRAVEL PER TRAIN

We met at Central long before  
The train was due to leave,  
For if we missed the only one,  
Our hearts 'twould surely grieve.

And when we'd all arrived we went  
Straight round to catch the train,  
But found that we to get aboard,  
Must fight with might and main.

For crowds and crowds of people had  
The same ideas as us,  
And when we tried to scramble in,  
It caused the biggest fuss.

They poured in through the windows,  
They fell in through the door,  
They packed the whole darn car so full  
There was no room for more.

And even when we overflowed,  
They'd walk along and say:  
"Please, is there any room for me?  
I'm travelling up your way."

We had our cases on the rack,  
Our rucksacks on the floor,  
And if they'd tried to squash more in,  
There'd sure have been a war.

We had a lady in our car,  
Who'd travelled much abroad,  
And ev'ry time folk tumbled in,  
"Get out!" at them she roared.

"I paid for seats one, two and three,  
And I want tons of room;  
There is no space to park in here"  
Indignantly she'd fume.

I felt I'd reached some foreign land,  
Bereft of rules and laws,  
Just like a Spanish refugee  
A-fleeing from the wars.

And as we journeyed through the night,  
And into stations roared,

Along the platforms crowds would stream  
To look for space aboard.

Poor folk! They had no chance at all,  
The train was far too full,  
They sadly had to stand aside,  
And watch us outward pull.

—oOo—

SATURDAY – 6 A.M.

All sound asleep upon the ground,  
Our good friend Wattie lies,  
And round his head and hands and feet,  
Are hordes of buzzing flies.  
But all unheeding, snug and still,  
He stoutly snoozes on,  
And while he snores the flies in hordes  
Have buzzed around and gone.

His pack is standing open wide,  
Beside him on the ground,  
When presently up trots a horse,  
To see what can be found.  
But weary, Wattie snoozes on,  
And doesn't see the brute  
That stands there nosing in his pack  
Among his clothes and fruit.

We cannot sit and see him robbed,  
For if his pack was bare,  
Our spuds and nuts and dates and figs,  
With him we'd have to share.  
As this is more than we could stand,  
A splitting "Hi!" we yell,  
And horsey jumps as though he's shot,  
And gallops off pell-mell.

And all this while, despite the noise,  
Still Wattie slumbers on;  
So after that I think he'd sleep  
Though him we sat upon.

—oOo—

Christmas Eve Saturday 24th December 1938

Woke at half past six to find the sun blazing down on us and the day already extremely hot, flies buzzing everywhere, and about six horses regarding us with a mixture of curiosity and amazement and one of them just about to dive into Wattie's open pack. Daph and I went down to bathe in the river, and we found the Allyn an adorable stream, soft and gentle, running over a rocky bed and murmuring incessantly. The whole valley in fact is vastly attractive.

Gosh, Sam can talk, he talks and talks and talks, I don't think his voice ever ceases. Wattie, Bob and Harry went off a mile down the valley to get milk at one of the farms and brought back three billies full of cream.

We left the campsite at twenty to eleven, and made our way through lovely rain forest country above the river; everywhere it is very dry, the driest rain forest that I have ever seen, but none the less beautiful, the ferns gloriously soft and green. We reached the first river crossing at ten past eleven, and here we paused for a rest, for it is a beautiful spot and we love the Allyn already. While I sit on a rock and scribble, Bob is suspended between three rocks trying to quench his thirst and Sambo is throwing rocks at him, Wattie is swinging Daphne backwards and forwards on a monkey vine rope which forms a natural swing, Harry is sitting with his chin cupped in his hand reflectively gazing into the river, and Jim is perched up on a fallen tree trunk trying to get a photo of the river. It is lovely and shady and soft here, we'll hate moving out into the heat again. I'm sunburned already, have been since seven o'clock this morning, for it is unbelievably hot, I feel sure we must be up round the equator somewhere. Owing to the dry season, the river is very low and the crossings quite easy.

We set out again at five minutes to twelve; ten minutes after leaving this crossing you come to the turnoff. One must be very careful here as they are likely to make a false crossing at this spot, and they would go sadly astray if they did. The main track leads down to the river to the false crossing while the narrow tops track leads off most unobtrusively about fifteen or twenty yards up from the river. The timber is getting bigger and bigger, great forest giants two hundred feet high and more. At this false crossing we stopped to take photos, and compared a photo of Stan's which we had brought with us with the place itself, and it is exactly the same now as it was when that snap was taken, even the same little twigs about.

Oh these March flies, how they sting! There are dozens of them down by the river, the biggest I have ever seen. They're brutal things, but there's one thing, once stung you can nearly always get retribution, for they are very sluggish and don't seem to realize that a heavy hand descending on them means death.

Fallen leaves are dancing everywhere. We said goodbye to the Rucksackers here, for they are staying on the river till to-morrow to meet some more of their pals, and left the False Crossing at twenty minutes to one and continued upstream beside the river a short distance. Then the track turned uphill and we climbed and climbed and it grew hotter and hotter, golly it grew hot. We stopped for a rest at five past one and could hear the wind roaring in the tree tops two hundred feet above us just like an express engine roaring along at ninety miles per hour, but it is very hot down here under the

trees, no breath of wind stirs the hot air. Stinging trees grow everywhere, trees with very large leaves. We studiously avoid every tree that has a large leaf whether we know it to be a stinging variety or not, just in case, for we have been warned that if touched whether alive or dead they sting like fury, and the sting lasts for two or three weeks. If you do get stung you want to immediately cut a piece of the bark and rub the juice on the stung part, for this acts as an antidote. There is also a small plant which they use as an antidote, always to be found growing near the stinging tree, but I am not sure which is it.

We set off again at twenty minutes past one, and walked under the trees which gave off a lovely eucalyptus smell. At twenty five to two we reached the top of a grassy slope where the track disappeared and, deciding that our direction was all wrong, we got out our map and found that we had taken the wrong ridge. This ridge would eventually lead us up to Mount Allyn, but that mountain is too far out for us to go to, besides the fact that there is no track and we would have to fight our way through the scrub. So we will have to return to the river and follow it further upstream to the crossing, and go up the track through the jungle from there. I can't imagine anyone wanting to wander about off the track up here, for it is semi tropical growth and very thick. Jim just had a tick on his neck, and we gave him a dose of metho, not Jim, the tick, and pulled it off.

So back through the ferns and the big timber we went, marveling at the girth of fallen giants, over strippings of bark and fallen leaves nearly a foot deep. Our climb of about six hundred feet up and down again had been for nothing, forty five minutes up, twenty five down. But who cares! It's all fun – we're out for adventure and we're getting it big.

Then along by the river track through the softest maidenhair fern, speeded on our way by the sweet song of birds; crows nests, tree orchids, stags and elkhorns everywhere we look, on nearly every tree and even on the ground. Wild fruit like banana passion are scattered all over the ground.

Mother Nature is soft and beautiful, but on occasions we find her hard and unyielding; venture off the track in this sub-tropical jungle and you'd find it hard work pushing through the tangled undergrowth and vines and thick scrub. It's just as though Nature had hung out a warning which read "Keep out – this is private and I don't want you here". And she defends her privacy too, trees that if touched leave a sting that hurts like fury for days and days, barbed loya [*lawyer*] vines that tear one's legs and arms till the blood oozes out, prickly bushes that stick their sharp needle points into your flesh as you brush against them. It would seem that Nature does not want us to invade all her domains.

We arrived at the second crossing at a quarter to three and were jolly glad to see it. We had parched lips and dry throats and were hot and tired.

A bathe in the river, some lunch, and a long rest, and now we're completely restored. It is delightfully cool and pleasant here, the river sings beside us, everywhere is softest green, on the opposite side of the river there are countless glorious stags and crows nests growing on about half a dozen trees. We feel so gloriously cool now that we wonder however we could have felt so hot such a short while ago.

But it must have been genuinely hot, for our butter was soft when we arrived here, and it is not often that the butter goes soft in our packs. However we put it in the creek and it was soon hard again.

Poor old Daph hasn't had her mid-day cup of tea to-day. After trying and trying to keep a fire alight with flood debris, the only wood about, she gave it up in disgust and promised herself an extra cup at tea time to-night.

At twenty five to five we left on the big climb. I was a bit frightened of what I'd heard of this climb, but it wasn't bad at all. The track climbed steadily for a while then flattened out for a bit. This is a land of all sorts of unusual things. As we went we saw a weaver's nest, a wonderful architectural structure hanging gracefully from one of the trees, several trees that were being slowly crushed to death by that bush murderer and strangler the brush fig and the loveliest of tree and rock orchids, crows nests, stags and elkhorns and black apples that looked like banana passionfruit, also cork trees with layers of cork for bark, flax plants with fibre so tough we could not break it. Then there was a palm tree that had a trunk exactly like a palm, tall and straight and notched where the leaves fell off each season, but leaves entirely different, locally known as a pencil cedar, but a dinkum palm none the less.

In places the track is very overgrown and tricky and easy to lose and we have to keep our eyes glued to it so that it can't suddenly disappear from under our feet. All round us are the most magnificent trees we have ever seen; twelve to fourteen people could stand round the base of the big ones, and it would take six people with both arms extended to circle one of them. We can still hear big winds roaring up on top now and again. The growth is so thick here that we can scarcely see the tops of the tall trees. Daph loves her new boots and says they're vastly comfortable.

We reached the main range at twenty five minutes past five, and had a rest near some new red blazes on the trees. Then along the main range till we came to the Finger Board Pinch at five to six, then on to Lagoon Pinch half a mile away. Going through the open forest we had wonderful views towards Carey's Peak and The Corker. There are wonderful trees and waving green grasses all along the track. Lagoon Pinch is 2,415 feet. There is occasional water here, and Jim went looking for it but, being a dry season, the hole was of course quite dry. The leaves on the trees as they waved in the wind and caught the late afternoon sun looked like sparkling silver.

At half past six we set out again, and from now on we know we will be climbing in earnest. We found the climb stiff, but less heavy than we had expected. Of course, travelling all last night with but two hours sleep at the end of it has made us all more tired than we would normally have been. As it was, our legs dragged and our packs felt like ton weights. But we thrilled to the wonderful views of distant ranges and peaks on the way up.

At last, at twenty past seven, after climbing an exceedingly sharp little pinch, we came to Scouts Alley, feeling unutterably thirsty and tired. Immediately we went down to the waterhole for a drink, for we had had no water since leaving the Allyn, and although that was only about three hours ago, it is the hottest and driest three hours that I ever spent in my life; I'm sure there must be a heat wave for even for these parts

I think it's unbelievably hot. And of course we've climbed pretty solidly. I don't ever remember being quite so thirsty before. You can imagine the dismay that spread rapidly over each face as we reached the spring and found it an oozy black mudhole with about three inches of jet black water in it. And we had been assured that there was always an abundant supply of fresh spring water here! It surely must be an abnormally dry season. However, necessity knows no choice. Our lips were parched and dry, so with many grimaces of distaste we scooped up and drank a little of the thick unpalatable liquid, which however did nothing to quench our thirst. Then Daph and Jim drained the spring dry and strained the water through the tea-towel into the waterbags while I lit the fire. We thought it unwise to drink any more of the black water, so we made coffee, strong coffee, out of it, and added milk. And was it awful, never have I known anything to equal it.

Daphne's steak smelt far too potent to even think of cooking it, it's a wonder it didn't run before her up the hill. So we heaved it far away, and now some poor animal will probably find it and devour it and afterwards wonder what on earth has happened to its middle.

But it is Christmas Eve and we must dine befitting the occasion, so we prepared and cooked our menu:

*Hard peas and carrots au beurre*  
*Biscuits avec passiona*  
*Nectarines and Peaches avec n'rien*  
*Café au grey*  
*L'eau noire.*

Neither Jim nor I wanted meat and Daphne had thrown hers away, hence its absence on the menu. We started off nobly, but none of us could go as far as the sweets.

We can't wash up (hpp! hpp! says Jim) and we can't have a wash (hpp! hpp! says Jim again) so there's nought to do but go to bed. After our sumptuous meal Jim put up his brand new tent, then we sat round the fire and sang Christmas carols. We have to be very careful of the fire, for if it escaped a bushfire would rage through this dry country like lightning.

It is a glorious night to be out, wonderfully bright stars so close, seemingly just above the lacy canopy of very tall trees. Earlier, just at dusk, we were enchanted by lovely little lights flitting hither and thither in the darkness, and discovered that they were fireflies. Little squirrels are running about and making the dickens of a noise, once we heard a distant rumbling like a baby avalanche.

At half past ten we had a final cup of strong coffee, then, deciding we had enough mud inside us, we went off to bed, still thirsty, where, as a result of the mud, we will probably have nightmares in which milkshakes and ice cream sodas figure largely.

THE DANCE OF THE LEAVES

Hear the wind calling,  
The leaves from the trees,  
See the leaves falling  
To float on the breeze.

Merrily hopping  
As gaily they prance,  
Never once stopping  
Their wonderful dance.

Gracefully drifting  
Way down to the ground,  
Dropping and lifting  
Without the least sound.

Capering madly  
And whirling with glee,  
Fluttering gladly  
And wondrous to see.

—oOo—

“CAFÉ AU GREY”

Here’s coffee, wondrous coffee, sir,  
Worth two and six a cup;  
You say you’d like to try some now?  
Well, stay with us and sup.

‘Tis sweetest nectar from the gods,  
At least that’s what they say –  
At any rate it’s sure the best  
You’ll find around this way.

I know you’re thirsty ‘cause you’ve walked  
A mighty darn long way,  
And not one tap along the road  
By which you came to-day.

‘Tis really wondrous coffee here,  
It’s ne’er been tried before;  
If folks had just one sip I know  
They’d soon be back for more.

You say you do not like it much,  
It’s such a funny shade –  
Oh, grey’s the latest fashion now,  
Yes, that’s the way it’s made.

It’s made from purest dinkum mud,  
As slimy as can be,  
From thickest oozy blackest mud,  
That ever you did see.

Now do not be so ungrateful sir,  
It’s all you’ll get up here,  
Of course it will not quench your thirst,  
But then it is not beer.

We know, we once were thirsty too,  
When up that hill we toiled,  
And when we found the spring was dry,  
We just sat down and boiled.

You’ll think when you have drained the cup,  
As you will surely see,  
‘Tis vilest brew man ever made,  
Miles worse than bitter tea.

TORCHES IN THE NIGHT

Am I dreaming? Are they real?  
Dusk has turned to night;  
Leave the tent and come out here,  
See this fairy sight.

See the line of torches small  
Coming down the hill,  
Now they're moving slowly down,  
Now they're standing still.

Who has fared so far abroad  
That they travel late,  
Walking now by torchlight's gleam?  
Shall we stand and wait.

Let us truly welcome them,  
To our fire bright,  
Friend to friend a coo-ee send,  
Hail them through the night.

"Hi!" we call, but no reply  
Comes from up the hill,  
Yet the tiny torches are  
Towards us moving still,

Suddenly they disappear,  
Then we realize  
Torches they were not, but just  
Dazzling fireflies,

—oOo—

Christmas Day Sunday 25th December 1938

Woke about fourish just as the trees were taking shape to hear the countless unseen feathered songsters usher in the dawn with their wonderful bird music. Christmas Day has dawned fair and fine, and we certainly will spend it in happy fashion, in our much loved bush. As the light increases I can see that the valley beneath us is filled with thick white cloud. Steel grey and pink clouds appear immediately above a mountain range over in the east, the heralds that announce the rising of King Sol, the colour transformation is too rapid to follow intelligently, but they change from grey and pink to rosy red and deep orange and cream and white and finally the sun appears over the crest of the range and sends shafts of yellow light across the soft green foliage everywhere around us. Now in the daylight we can see that Scouts Alley is a glorious spot, it was just too dark or perhaps we were just too tired to appreciate it fully last night, but now after six or seven hours of restful slumber our appreciative senses are once more alert and we can drink in the beauty of it all.

Dozens of tree ferns, blue gums, stringy barks, wattles, soft bracken, trees that tower straight and tall out of the ferns and grasses, a wonderful view down the valley – all these combine to make it beautiful, a place that stirs the emotions with its quiet peace and beauty. For quiet and peaceful it certainly is, despite that the air is resonant with the trilling of bird music, but such sound as that only adds to the peace. No human noise breaks the harmony that is everywhere, only the trilling of birds and the scurrying of small animals over the fallen leaves, sounds that blend in and seem part of nature's scheme of beauty. Oh beautiful peaceful bush, how you seem to cleanse and purify and sooth us, how easily out here we forget the petty irritations of town life and revel in the glorious feeling of freedom that pervades the air.

Continually we hear the rustling of leaves for not even the smallest animal can move without our hearing it, so thick and so dry is the carpet of fallen leaves on the ground. A small insect has just landed on the ground beside me, just a tiny thing but so perfect and beautiful, six long bent legs, two brown wings transparent with black spots, a green body and reddish brown triangular head – oh, it's gone again. And birds! Everywhere you look, in every tree you can see them fluttering round – whip birds I hear, a king parrot, tree runners and honey-eaters, birds that sing in the tall tree tops and birds that flutter in the brush close to the ground. And last night we heard the far away call of the Boobook owl as he 'mopoke-d' his love song to his mate.

What a multitude of tiny things there are to observe out here; in town one never has time to think of the small things of life, but out here they force themselves on one's notice. – Ah, my little friend with the brown wings is back again for a few seconds – now he's off once more on his restless flight; I wonder how long and how happy his life really is. – There are ants and spiders and beetles and all sorts of things that tramp over without noticing, but if we take the trouble to pause we find they all lead busy little lives and fulfill their destinies just in the same way as do the bigger more noticeable insects and animals. A little marsupial mouse just ran up the tree beside me and searched diligently up and down the trunk for ants,

Jim Santa Claus just emerged from his tent to wish us a merry Xmas and to bring us each a lively Xmas present, mine a copy of "*Winnie the Pooh*".

We can't have a wash again this morning (hpp! hpp! says Jim) for there is no water, and none has seeped into our water hole although we dug it deeper last night. The water we drank last night has had no ill effects on any of us so far, so despite the mud it must be still reasonably wholesome. But it looks even more unpalatable than it did in the dark, and our 'café au grey' looks just like grey kalsomine to me.

The view down the valley is simply marvelous. We've decided that "a poor thing but mine own" is Jim's pet saying, think he must have patented it, for everything – his tent, his mug, his face, everything, is "a poor thing, but his own".

We were nearly ready to leave at a quarter past nine when much to our surprise two of the Rucksackers arrived. We left with them at half past nine, and went through beautiful beech forests, climbing gradually all the way; rested at 4,300 ft. and Jim bowled boulders despite Daphne's protests. At five past ten we set out again and went on, climbing steadily up through glorious beech forests and tree ferns. The track is fairly steep and the day very hot; rested again just before the top of a slope where it was beautifully cool and peaceful, and once you've cooled down from your previous exertions it's just glorious. We heard a currawong calling out over the valley. The views we get back over distant ranges and deep valleys are wonderful and grand, awe inspiring panoramas seen through leafy laneways and windows in the tree foliage. Quentin and Austin got tired of our easy pace and have gone streaking out ahead; they can have that pace all on their own out in this hilly country and in this hot weather.

The country changes suddenly to eucalypt forest country. There are bushfires in the distance, over near Carey's Peak, and they seem to be spreading very rapidly for dense white clouds of smoke rise above the ranges and blend into the hazy skyline. Distant ranges are free from smoke but have a blue haze hanging over them. On again and in a few minutes we come to a fence across the path; we have heard that there is a good spring here so we stop to hunt for it. Daph and Jim have gone looking for it down near the hollow. Eventually Jim found it up on the side of the hill in the most unlikely spot, the most lovely clear spring of sparkling water, right in the middle of the open grass beside the track, where the sun beats down upon it, yet the water is slightly protected by a tiny bank and is cold and wonderful. So, although we're not tired we're staying here for another rest, and to have a good long drink, Oh, the ecstasy of drinking clear cold water. This is a truly lovely spot too, a nice grassy saddle, the trees not so tall because of the strong winds that blow across the saddle at times. We're not really feeling the great heat or the heavy climbing very much this morning because we're taking things so gloriously easy, having plenty of rests and not hustling overmuch while we're on the move.

Trigger plants grow here and there, also a yellow flower that I don't know.

Jim won't do a thing that Daphne and I tell him, in fact he's a most unruly leader to have about the place; he wouldn't have any breakfast this morning and he's only eaten a biscuit and a piece of chocolate now, not nearly enough for a 'fella' to walk on. And he brought his mother's best guest towel with a lovely crochet edge without asking her, and he played in the mud last night. Dear, dear.

We left again at twelve noon and a short climb brought us to large level tracts of open forest, and groves of tree ferns and tall eucalypts reminded us strongly of the country behind Pelion Hut in Tassie. The birds call continually, and we have just seen a couple of mountain lowries. Then on, into a beech forest again, quite a long way through this and once more out into the lovely open forest with the birds still calling, till we came to the old Surveyor's camp. Here we found a notice on a tree, evidently a sarcastic note of some borers who had been camped there for some time,

RAIN, FOG, WIND

BARRINGTON HEALTH RESORT

We don't think

Average Rainfall      – 596 points per month.

Wind                      – 400 miles per hour.

Evidently they had met with dry windy conditions up this way. There is a bushfire burning fiercely just ahead, and Jim has gone over to take photos. I hope we don't strike trouble ahead, for our track runs right through the smoky area. The Newcastle P.W.D. have been boring here for water, and a road was surveyed through in 1938.

We set out again at twenty to one from the surveyor's camp, and from now on we are in the snowgrass and snowgum country, lovely twisty snowgums, but considerably taller than our snowgum pals of yore, through one small beech forest, through stretches of burnt out country blackened and charred and still smoldering. The sun shone down mercilessly through the heat haze and smoke and glowed with a peculiar dull yellow glow on the ground. Through a still blazing part where the sun shone pitilessly down and the heat from the blazing logs and flaming grasses rose up from the ground. Gosh, we were hot! Hotter than we've been all the trip, and at length we felt as nearly exhausted that we just had to pause for a rest at ten past one at the top of a small rise where there was really no shade but where it was comparatively free of smoke. It hurt to hear the spluttering and crackling of the trees and shrubs nearby, it always hurts to hear something beautiful being destroyed and to know you can do just nothing about it. I wonder if this fire started naturally by heat of the sun, or by the careless act of some inexperienced person on top throwing down a cigarette butt or lighted match.

Sweet little blue bells and pastel coloured herb flowers that have escaped the fire grow by the way. Not very much further, and we came to the little valley of snowgums where Edward's Hut is situated, and reached the hut at a quarter to two, tired and weary and hot. It is a very high open front hut, fireplace in front, about 14 ft. x 12 ft., looking out over the valley through the trees. We got water from the creek in the valley at the back of the hut where Austin and Quentin are resting and recovering from their rushed trip up, and had lunch looking out over the valley through the wood smoke.

Three Rucksackers, Bob, Sam and Wattie, arrived just before we finished at half past two, and later Frank Millard came in on his own. We went up on to Carey's Peak to see the view and to take photos. Although there was a thick heat haze there were wonderful views of countless ranges and peaks and deep valleys. Yippee mourned the fact that there were no clouds to take in our photos. Bush fires burned on the range where we came up.

The view back over the plateau is also magnificent, thick timbered belts and open swampy plains, rolling hills as far as eye can see. On one side of us the plateau, on the other the deep valley, and lovely trees everywhere. A sundial cemented in up here on Carey's Peak marks the direction of the surrounding towns. There are no cliff faces or rock walls in this country; steep slopes going down to the valleys with trees all the way from top to bottom and no talus slopes on the hills at all.

Then back we went to the hut and picked up our packs, for we have decided that it will be nicer to camp down on the grassy flats close to the water supply. We put our tent up and then went for a walk down to the swampy plain just below us to see if we could find enough water for a bath. It turned out to be the most attractive swamp that I have ever seen, very large, and surrounded by gently sloping hills on which grow the loveliest of snowgums, the swamp itself the loveliest shades of yellow and green where the grasses catch the soft light of the late afternoon sun. Tiny pamilias and daisies grow among the grasses; three wild duck, startled from their nests by our approach, flew out of the reeds in front of us and streaked off up the swamp.

We found no pool, so we sat by the edge of the swamp and talked a while ere we made our way back up to the camp. Back in camp, we went down for a bath in the icy cold creek, than came up to cook our tea, and Daph managed to upset two billies of water on the fire at once. Jim got the threepence out of the Christmas pudding. After tea, we sat round the fire and Wattie and Bob and Frank wandered over to visit us and we sang Christmas Carols and club songs till it suddenly became very windy and icy cold and a wet mist began to fall on us.

So we abandoned our fire pretty quickly and turned in to bed half frozen, for we are up round the 5,300 feet mark now and it knows how to get cold up here. These tufts of snowgrass make a mighty uneven bed, as though you'd forgotten to turn the mattress for about a week. Still, it is possible to curl one's self in and out and round them.

TO CAREY'S PEAK

Through open forest land which made  
A fair entrancing scene,  
Past groves of beech trees damp and cool,  
And tree ferns soft and green,  
And slowly up the mountain steeps,  
Our path runs out ahead,  
A narrow, winding bridle track  
That ever upwards led.

And when we reached the plateau high,  
We found a scene most fair,  
Artistic, gnarled old snowgums bent  
And straggled ev'rywhere.  
But fires raged beside the track,  
And smoke all round us lay,  
As ever on towards the peak  
We slowly made our way.

We looked out over valleys deep,  
Upon a wooded maze,  
Where range on range merged, far away  
In distant mountain haze.  
And everywhere we looked, a scene  
Of grandeur met our eyes,  
And rugged slopes fell steep away  
To where the Allyn lies.

And when we turned from valleys deep,  
Behind more beauty lay,  
The undulating plateau stretched  
For miles and miles away.  
For swampy plains and timber'd hills,  
And clear as crystal streams,  
Lay sparkling 'neath the summer sun,  
Perfecting all my dreams.

—oOo—

THREE MEN ARRIVE

We gazed out o'er a wondrous scene,  
That seemed to us so fair,  
As, sitting in among the ferns,  
We ate our luncheon share.

And as we feasted full and well,  
On food and grand views too,  
Along the track came three bold men,  
All clad in clothes right few.

The first is Sam, the noisy one,  
He talks all ev'ry day,  
That scimitar is by his side,  
To keep his foes away.

The next is Wattie, tall and thin,  
He lives on nuts and fruit,  
Because he thinks all other food  
His tummy would not suit.

And last there's Bob, or as I say,  
The boy with dreamy eyes,  
His mind is always miles away,  
Up in the clear blue skies.

—oOo—

Boxing Day Monday 26th December 1938

I was wakened at half past five by the birds, and found it a gloriously fine morning, but did not crawl out of my sleeping bag until nearly half past six. We slept at an altitude of 5,300 feet last night which is fairly high for Australia.

Frank Millard, Bob Battye, Sam Pickard, Alan Watkins, Harry Thomas, Quinton Moloney, John Heardon, Douglas MacKellar, Muriel Hall and Gladys Collard – these are the Rucksackers who are camped up here near us. Wattie is still trying to persuade us to go on his longer trip, but we don't think we'll go with him, it would be very nice to stay out longer and we love the country up here, but it would take us too far away from our ultimate goal which is Barrington House. Wattie and his dietetics are very interesting and absorbing, but gosh they do all talk food. It fills their whole lives, this talk of what they put in their tummies.

We spent half an hour searching for Jim's glasses and at length found them in among the tufts of snow grasses in the tent where we have trodden sat and dumped our packs. I felt horribly guilty, for they had been put in the pocket of my pack, and how they got out is still a mystery.

The air is exhilarating up here evening and morning, but blazingly hot and stifly during the day. We had our morning wash in the icy creek which starts from a spring in the side of the mountain and flows down to the Allyn River. Sam has offered to bring up the things which Daphne and I left at Scouts Alley if we are going to continue on for another couple of days with them, and we appreciate this lovely offer but still don't think we'll go.

After breakfast I made a jelly and put it in the creek to set, and it was hard in less than ten minutes. Then up we went on to Carey's Peak again to take photos and admire the glorious view once more; don't know which I really like best, out over the glorious vista of hazy ranges and deep valleys or back over the undulating plateau with its swampy plains and tree clad hills. Just think of it – during this holiday season, right this very moment there are little parties of walkers scattered all over the mountains; eager eyes are scanning views from high peaks, some are doing hard grueling walks, others lazing along by rivers and creeks, cameras are clicking, pencils are scribbling, over little fires meals are cooking, some are toiling up seemingly endless slopes perspiring and hot, others are swimming, perhaps some are lying under shady gum trees and staring up at the heavens and thinking, thinking.

Wish we knew what we wanted to do, whether to go on this extra two days walking or go straight back down to the guest house, it is very hard to decide. At present I am sitting in the shade of a tree on Carey's Peak overlooking the swampy plain below me, while Jim and Daphne and the Rucksackers are taking photos and talking. The swampy plains remind us vividly of Kosci, but otherwise the plateau is quite different, undulating hills and plains certainly and vast, but somehow different. The view is still hazy, bushfires still burning but not very seriously. It gives one a feeling of insignificance to gaze out on that night. I suppose there are wonderful trees down in the valley; it is a deep valley cut by creeks. We look out on to Mount Allyn, Mount William, Mount Paterson, Cabra Bald, Mount Cockrew, the peaks and hills folding in

one behind the other.

Little lizards scamper everywhere we go, under our feet, over our shoes, everywhere. There are not so many birds right up here, but nevertheless there is quite a lot of calling going on. Later we went down the track, skirting the first beautiful swampy plain, over Saxby's Creek, across a low gap and then across a shoulder and looked down on Edward's Creek and Edward's Plain, a lovely peaceful place, a pleasant breeze playing through our hair, cattle grazing contentedly in the swamp grasses, low undulating hills all round, and oh it is just like Kosci. We wondered why the cattle suddenly started running, and when we stood up to continue our way and had taken only two or three steps we were very surprised to espy two men, Mr. Cavalier and Mr. Goeschen, who had been trout fishing immediately below where we rested. Of course we hailed them and went over for a yarn, and then walked down to the Harrington River with them. Here we had a marvelous swim in a pool about 30 x 15 yards. Mr. Cavalier told us how an offer of two thousand pounds had been made for land up here on the plateau by someone who planned to build a guest house on a large scale, but nothing ever came of it. He also told us that he had been coming up here to the plateau regularly since 1910, and that he first stocked the rivers with trout.

After our swim we made our way back along the edge of the swamps to the camp. It was blazingly hot near the tent, so we took our lunch down near the creek and sat beside a tiny fern fringed pool, in fact I sat right in the middle of the creek on a couple of rocks. Our jelly which we made this morning was colder and firmer than any refrigerator could ever make it. Afterwards we had a rest and a pow-wow and then Jim had to pack up and start on his trek back to town. He and Frank are going down together as far as Scouts Alley, then going on down to the Allyn in time to catch Hancock's lorry before lunch. The rest of the Rucksackers barring Wattie and the others who are staying with him to go to Stewart's Brook left before lunch, and are making the journey right through to-day. Sam is going all the way down to Scouts Alley with the others to meet Robbie Morrison so that he will have company for the rest of the way up, which we thought a very friendly act.

We went with Jim and Frank up as far as the hut, and there we said goodbye and off they went. We were sorry to see Yippee go, for it has broken our happy little trio, but of course he had to fit in with the trains and we're the deuce of a long way from a railway station. After they had left Wattie and Daphne and I squatted down in front of the hut and yarned about things many and varied for a couple of hours, then Daph and Wattie went off up to Carey's Peak and I wandered down into camp again so that I could sit in a quiet spot and scribble. There have been far too many people always talking somewhere nearabouts this weekend. I've never written before when there was a big crowd and I find I just can't. But now I'm sitting under a lovely streaky old snowgum leaning against my pack, and everywhere round me is a marvelous peace. It is twenty minutes to six in the evening, and the soft afternoon sun throws shafts of light among the tree tops and sends the shadows dancing hither and thither. The snowgums are wonderfully picturesque, some lean this way, some lean that, some are bent, some almost straight, they're all shapes and sizes, fire has played havoc with some of the trunks, but in the soft evening light they're lovely, all mottled and streaked and light grey and dark.

And lizards! They're everywhere, cheeky little things about five or six inches long that lie on top of the tufts of snowgrass and sunbake till, startled suddenly by the clop! clop! of our approaching footsteps, they vulcanize into life and scamper away from what sounds to them like impending danger. I'm sure you couldn't walk more than five yards without hearing the quick little scuffle and scamper and see a tiny form shoot off from almost under your feet, over the tufts of snowgrass, behind a rock, anywhere, as long as they can get to safety quickly.

And flies! I feel sure that if I'd been keeping a count of all I've seen up here on top I'd have been somewhere well up in the billions by now. Wretched tickly things they are too, only tiny but persistent and they travel in droves. Wonder what on earth they live on, there's no exposed food up here.

There are no leeches up here although we'd been warned about them, but of course it is a very dry season, it might be different in wet weather. The birds are singing beautifully just now in the approaching evening, kookaburras chuckling softly and there are more of them up here than I've heard anywhere else, parrots chattering, and all sorts of birds I don't know whistling and trilling and twittering. It is strange now that Jim has gone, as though we'd lost something important and couldn't quite realize just what.

You should just see my hat! The dirty little flies have been running all over it and left their trade marks. After tea we sat round the campfire and yarned till at half past nine Sam returned alone, Robbie having failed to turn up at Scouts Alley, for what reason we cannot say. Poor Sam! He made his noble effort all in vain. It was a grand effort at any rate. To bed and sleep about a quarter past ten.

YIPPEE AND HIS GLASSES

An awful time we had to-day.  
Poor Yippee lost his glasses,  
We turned the rucksacks inside out,  
And searched the soft snow grasses.

We stripped the tent and emptied bags,  
And peeped in tiny 'furras',  
And even climbed the trees to look  
At laughing kookaburras.

We looked along the tunnels dark  
Of ev'ry rabbit warren;  
Could anyone have harder searched,  
I'd sure give him a florin

We search all wombats, rats and flies,  
We watch each bird that passes,  
But nowhere any place at all,  
Could we find Yippee's glasses.

Then all at once Daph gave a laugh,  
"Hooray" she shouted gaily,  
"Our lucky day is here again,  
It seems to come round daily."?

"Stop looking folk, and have a rest,  
I've found our Yippee's glasses,  
They're lying here quite safe and sound  
Between two tufts of grasses."

—oOo—

Tuesday 27th December 1938

Wattie wakened us at five o'clock and we were packed and away without breakfast before six. It was very cold when we first get up but soon became hot as the sun came up over the trees and we made our way along the track, so we shed our coats as we went and continued on. The swampy plains were soft and beautiful in the morning sunlight, the birds caroled beautifully and we were perfectly happy as we swung along, now underneath the trees, now out on the open plain, on and on, over Saxby's Creek, over Edward's Creek, past the site of a burnt down hut on Edward's Selection, to an arm of the Barrington River, where we stopped for breakfast at a quarter past seven. The track was continually blocked by fallen trees, round which we had to make our way for the track runs mostly through belts of open forest country just above the swampy plains which lie over to our right. Gladys has decided to come back with us as she is still feeling far from well, so the three Rucksackers are going on without her and she is returning to Hancocks.

At twenty five minutes past eight they set out on the continuation of their trip, and Daphne and Gladys went with them as far as Mount Barrington. The turn-off for Mount Barrington is here at the Barrington Hiver crossing, the first river crossing after Edwards Creek. I didn't go, although it is only a mile or so, simply because I am incurably lazy and much prefer to sit here under a tree and gaze out over these lovely Crosby plains than trudge up there, even although the view may be wonderful. I'm afraid I don't take much pride in achievement, just the fact that I'm in the bush keeps me happy, and I don't really care how many or how few mountains I pot and put in my hunting bag, nor do I care if I pass close by famed points of interest without actually seeing them, for I see already far more of beauty and interest than I can possibly absorb in so short a time.

Two crows just alighted on a snow gum above me and as soon as they landed on the branch up popped an enquiring little black head from a nest in a fork of the tree, it looked really comical. Just at that moment I heard thud! thud! thud! thud! thud! Whatever can it be? I look up and see a mob of about sixteen horses racing towards me at full speed, coming up from the swampy plains below me. Wow! At first my heart go as pit a pat, and I wonder how hard they'll trample on me, but they must catch sight of me for suddenly they veer off in a new direction and my heart gradually resumes its normal beat, Hope they don't come back again.

The swampy plains on these uplands are used as summer grazing grounds. These horses made a jolly fine sight, and I thought of Banjo Paterson's wild horses, "at racing pace they went" heads thrust forward, mains and tails streaming in the breeze, lean bodies and glossy coats. I can see Crosby's House from here across on the plains

This certainly is Nature's garden, pink trigger plants and white pamilias peep out from among the snowgrasses, a tiny black, yellow and green butterfly hangs daintily suspended from a blade of grass, a dragon fly flits back and forth dazzlingly and tantalizingly in front of me, a king parrot is chattering on a snowgum above, a magpie is caroling its beautiful song from a shrub near the creek, one of the cricket or grasshopper tribe is chirping in the grass behind me, a kookaburra's throaty chuckle comes from behind, a hawk and two crows are soaring in the cloudless blue. Crosby's

plains are extended before me, and all around grow twisted, bent, gnarled, fantastic, lovable snowgums. Who said the bush was lonely? At present it is simply teeming with sound, all sorts of sounds, lots of tiny destinies are being worked out here in the bush, lots of hard work is being done by bird and insect and animal.

So far I've eaten only two slices off my bread and two biscuits out of my two packets, haven't touched my potato or cheese or rice, but have been living on dried fruits. We have eaten really amazingly little on account of the very hot weather. At a quarter past ten a coo-ee sounded from quite close at hand; must be the others returning, but it was a man's voice and that is funny, for only the two girls are coming back. I answer with my own particular call and a moment or so later three figures emerge from the trees and I find that Sam has decided to return too for the blisters on his heels have turned to blood blisters and are as large as tomatoes. So they'll come back down to Scouts Alley with us tonight, and tomorrow go down to the Allyn while we go down the opposite side of the range to the Williams.

We left the Mount Barrington turnoff to return to our packs at twenty five minutes to eleven, and instead of returning exactly the same way we took the track that led over near Crosby's homestead and near the swamps, and we met Mr. Edwards in the gap below the hut and yarned to him for a while. He is on his way up to get our two trout fishermen and their luggage, to pack them down the mountain. Then on we went again, back towards lunch, rested a few minutes under a lovely shady snowgum. There are the queerest wogs and bugs and creeping and flying things here that I have ever seen.

And so on and further on till we arrived back at our own dear little creek; this tiny fern fringed mountain stream flowing steeply round the side of Carey's Peak is the coldest, most refreshing water up here. Sitting here with my lunch strewn round me I look up a leafy laneway through the beech trees and tree ferns. It is somehow much nicer again now that there are only four of us left. I like small crowds best when you're way out, it's not that I have the slightest antipathy against any of those that have gone, it's just that you can't capture the same atmosphere with a crowd about.

At three o'clock we left to go down the mountain. Once up out of our cool creek bed and we find it is stiflingly hot again, oppressively so, cloudless sky, no breeze and a heavy heat haze. We rested for a while at half past three in a lovely green snowgum glade while Sam doctored his feet and put his boots on, he has been walking barefoot all day as his heels are really very badly blistered. But now it is getting a bit rocky and making his poor old tootsies a bit tender.

The country is much more burnt and charred than when we came up here, and there are isolated fires still shouldering. Beside me on a little shrub is the funniest thing; on a leaf there are six grubs arranged in a circle, heads (or tails I don't know which) into the middle, and with both their heads and tails turned up in the air, resembling for all the world a grevillia flower, you know, one of those spidery things.

We left again at a quarter to four, then on and on through desolate fire swept country, always down, which we found much easier than Sunday's up. Fire has swept right through where all was green on the way up on Sunday and left behind a sorrowful

blackened waste that saddened us as we walked, for fire is a ruthless destroyer of beauty, and it hurt us to see the charred remains of soft ferns and trees that we had so admired on the way up. It is all very well to say that fire does a lot of good, that the great heat germinates seeds that would never otherwise be any use, that it clears out the choking undergrowth and gives the ferns a better chance for life; it still hurts to see the blackened waste. The old surveyor's hut was missed by the fire and still stands.

Down we went, off the plateau, fallen trees everywhere still shouldering, right across the track, huge trees that took years and years to grow. Even the myrtle forests have suffered, everything was so dry that even the tree ferns are burnt and shriveled. One particular spot where we had taken photos of lovely soft ferns on the way up was now blazing fiercely. Down to the saddle to where the spring was we hurried, for we were by this time quite thirsty. Alas! The saddle was burnt and black and the spring quite dry. So we had to go on to Scouts Alley. As we went we saw a friendly little mouse on the track, quite tame, ran over our feet and played about quite fearlessly.

Soon after leaving the saddle we ran into thick smoke, smothering, suffocating clouds of hot smoke blowing up from the steep hillside below us. At a bend in the track a blazing tree had crashed and fallen right across the track and we had to jump across the red hot that were scattered across the track. On through thicker and thicker smoke till we came to the front of the fire where the flames were burning fiercely on both sides of the track. We made a dash through the smoke and flames and golly, was it hot! It was only a matter of seconds but it was certainly hot.

Then on through the green country again, and down, steeply down the mountain to Scouts Alley. The water is even muddier than on Saturday night. I drank a little, but wasn't game to have too much. You should see the potato that Daphne has just cooked, it is filthy colour, and the rice, gosh, just as well it is getting dark. And the tea, Daph has just complained that her tongue got stuck in the mud while drinking it. Sam went down and dug the waterhole a bit deeper to see if clearer water would seep through.

It is a very warm night. Dietetic talk has got hold of the camp this weekend and here we are still on it. Fireflies, fascinating tiny floating lamps flit past in the darkness like phosphorous lights. We have decided to call the spring our sinister pool, for we think it hides some dark gruesome deed.

We went to bed at a quarter to nine, but slept only fitfully till about midnight, for I had slightly nightmarish ideas that the fire was racing down on our camp. And the ground seemed abnormally hard, and it was so jolly hot. But eventually I dropped off into a sound sleep.

YIPPEE

The air's been filled with merry sound,  
Yippee!  
We've heard it now for days,  
Yippee! Yippee! Yippee!  
Just one expressive tiny word,  
Yippee!  
Expansive little phrase.  
Yippee! Yippee! Yippee!

We heard it in the early morn,  
Yippee!  
We heard it late at night,  
Yippee! Yippee! Yippee!  
We heard it in the noontide when  
Yippee!  
The sun was shining bright.  
Yippee! Yippee! Yippee!

But now it's gone, we don't know where,  
Yippee!  
We're lost without it too,  
Yippee! Yippee! Yippee!  
We cannot hear it any more,  
Yippee!  
No matter what we do.  
Yippee! Yippee! Yippee!

SACRIFICE

I reckon now I'm worried big,  
And here's the reason why,  
Our Daphne's gone right off her food,  
I'm scared that she might die,  
She used to own, long years ago,  
A great big appetite,  
But now she's been and gone and changed,  
And scarcely eats a bite.  
She'll never have sufficient strength  
To walk all ev'ry day,  
For if you do not eat a lot,  
Your strength just fades away.  
Oh me, oh my, what shall I do  
To make her eat up big;  
I know! I'll go and tempt her with  
My one and only fig.

—oOo—

Wednesday 28th December 1938

I was awake at half past four, at which time the birds twittered and chirped so loudly and the blowies buzzed so incessantly that I thought it time to get up. The sun rose without colour, and hardly shed any light over the earth, and although it doesn't look cloudy there must be clouds across the sun, it looks so pale and sickly, though it might be an early heat haze. I wouldn't mind if the weather was to change to-day, for this country up here could do with a week's soaking rain, it is just parched and calling out for a drink. There is hardly any view this morning for the valley is now filled with thick haze; but it's clearing a lot while we have our breakfast. It really is a glorious sight from here down the valley; you just sit down and breakfast in comfort and look out through a natural opening in the trees right down the valley to where seemingly endless sloping hills fold in.

Gladys has a lovely sweet voice, and she loves singing. She sings the sweetest little songs most attractively and Sam joins in in quite a good voice too.

We left at a quarter to eight, and made our way down through the glorious forest, the sun getting hotter as we went. We remembered as we swung easily down the hill how hardly and hotly we had toiled up these same little pinches last Saturday. We reached the Finger Board at a quarter past eight and sat down to rest and have a final talk for this is where Sam and Gladys leave us and go down to the Allyn while we make our way to the Williams. About five past nine four horsemen came up the hill, Mr. Edwards and three others going up to the tops. Of course they stopped and yarned for a while and I found that one of them was a girl from Carlton, the world's but a tiny place isn't it. At half past nine they went on up the hill towards the tops and we said goodbye to Gladys and Sam and they went off down through the jungle to the Allyn, and we started down the hill to the Williams. Before we had gone many yards we passed the surveyor's camp and just beyond it the turnoff to Rocky Crossing on the Williams River.

Down this we went, and in a few minutes we were there. In fact, we were amazed that we had got there so quickly for it's only a quarter of an hour since we left the Finger Board, and here we are at the foot of the range on the Williams River. And such a heavenly spot it is too. The track led down through a beech forest right to the water's edge, the whole of the floor of this very narrow valley is solid granite and the river has worn its way down through the rock and gushes in volume down through rocky chimneys and flows ripplingly through narrow canals; the leaves fallen into the stream from the beech trees which grow right to the water's edge show colourfully and clearly where the sunlight plays on the lovely little stream.

First, we had a long drink, and oh the sweetness of it as though 'twas nectar straight from the gods; and then a long bath, and oh the heavenly sensation of feeling really clean; and then we had a washing day and washed out all our spare clothing and draped it on the hot rocks to dry. About half past eleven we were quite surprised to see a man's face appear above the rocks and almost immediately followed by two girls; they have come down from the boarding house for a swim.

We haven't heard one bird since we came down here which is strange considering the large numbers we heard everywhere going up and down and on top. Perhaps it is because it is so blazingly hot today. We had lunch on a shady rock looking down on the water, and then packed up ready to leave. To-day has been just a glorious loaf, but it is so lovely down here, the tall beeches grow right down to the rocky floor of the little valley and cast their shade over the granite and the water.

We listen to the distant roar of rapids and waterfalls coming from both up and down the river, and gaze fascinated at the leaves that fall from the trees and float gracefully down to the river and then float along on the water like fairy barques. Beech trees, flax plants, vines, orchids and mosses grow precariously out of the clefts in the rocks and hang gracefully down over the stream. There are three or four dragon flies hovering over the pool, their wings scintillating in the white sunlight and numerous other insects float on the surface of the water, a daddy Xmas you know a piece of thistledown comes floating by at great pace, and it makes the prettiest picture skimming along on the surface of the water.

I just saw the funniest thing, a long thing like a bit of very fine grass, no thicker than a thread of cotton, came squirming and wriggling its way through the water, must be some sort of worm, quite a contortionist the way it ties itself in knots; it looks rather weird to see a bit of cotton wriggling along of its own free will. I can't see any difference in either end so don't know which is its head and which its tail, but it seems to know well enough, it has disappeared now, under a rock or somewhere, and I can no longer see it. There is a praying mantis beside me now and no matter how much I move it still seems to stay there not the least bit afraid of me.

At five past one we were packed up and ready to start off on the last four and a half miles of our journey. Up the hill to the track, and along through the jungle, descending slightly all the while, though almost imperceptibly. It is a semi-tropical jungle all the way, beautiful stags and elkhorns, crows nests, tangled vines, softest ferns, magnificent trees towering straight and tall, each one evidently reaching up to the light and warmth and fresh air from the strangling mass of vines and ferns that surround its base. Mile after mile through this jungle, up and down over the tiny dry creek beds.

Now and then we heard a scurrying in the dense undergrowth beside us, as some bird or animal, startled by our approach, scampered away over the fallen leaves to the denser parts of the jungle where it would be safer from prying eyes; every now and then I heard the shrieking of black cockatoos from the trees overhead, the hearty chuckle of a kookaburra floating down from the hill through the tree tops, the shrill pipe of the peewee high overhead, and the twitterings of a thousand small birds in the shrubs, the buzzing and zooming of countless insects, the rustling and scurrying of wallabies and bower birds and pheasants, the slithering and scampering of tiny lizards, and here and there quite possibly an unseen snake.

On we went, along the carpeted track that winds its attractive way through the jungle, beneath the towering blue gums majestic and straight and tall and the slender beech trees lacy and green, past the softest of tree ferns and small bracken and maidenhair fern, lithe lianas strung from tree to tree, crows nests and stags and elkhorns high in the

branches overhead, tree orchids and climbing ferns that hang gracefully down from the trees, and sweet scented lilies that grow beside the track.

An hour's walking and we stop to rest, spread out our ground sheets and lie flat on the track for a whole twenty-five minutes, and although we are in a shady spot it is blazingly hot, and the perspiration rolls off our faces, and not the slightest whisper of a breeze stirs to lessen this terrible heat. I feel quite sure that I have never known such a hot day in my life. After our twenty five minutes of resting we felt scarcely cooler than we had when walking, so off we went again, on, on through the parched jungle, till quite suddenly and almost unexpectedly we emerged from the twilight of the jungle and there right in front of us in a large clearing was the house.

And we slowly made our way across the clearing to the front steps and go up in to the house to the next stage of our holiday, that of clean clothes and soft beds and prepared meals. In which shall we find the most happiness? In wandering khaki-clad along the winding tracks, plunging deep into dark forests, climbing up on to high mountain peaks, bathing in icy creeks, cooking over open fires and squatting on the ground to eat, sleeping in tiny tents beneath the tall gum trees, our only music the birds and the bubbling brooks and the wind in the trees, hob-nobbing with Nature in all her moods be they caressing or harsh? Or shall we find it in this latter stage of our holiday, sleeping in feather beds with a solid roof over our heads, eating sumptuous meals at properly appointed tables prepared for us by capable hands, dressing in our best clothes at will, playing games, going riding, discoursing with interesting people on subjects many and varied.

In which does happiness lie – in the wilds or in civilization? – I wonder!

THE JUNGLE

By day 'tis fair and winsome in  
The jungle cool and deep,  
Where shadows dance on falling leaves,  
And shafts of sunlight peep.  
Where giant trees are straight and tall,  
And decked with orchids gay,  
And tree ferns tall and maidenhair  
'Neath gentle zephyrs sway.  
Lianas coil their lithe long stems  
Around the trees so tall,  
And from the branches gracefully  
Green mosses softly fall.  
Sweet trilling music filters down  
From birds up in the trees,  
And mingles with the song of creeks,  
And gentle murm'ring breeze.

When daylight fades and darkness falls,  
It's quite a diff'rent tale,  
A transformation scene takes place,  
Spreads right across the vale.  
Pitch blackness ev'rywhere you look,  
For not a speck of light  
Relieves the sombre eerie gloom  
In this dark place at night.  
Weird noises, cries and slithers soft,  
And rustlings all around,  
Odd creaks and groans that fill the air  
With strange and ghostly sound.  
Things hopping on the fallen leaves,  
As past my legs they sail,  
Send shivers up and down my spine,  
And make my courage quail.

—oOo—

OUR WALKING TRIP

By open forest track we've gone,  
Through jungles dark and deep,  
'Cross rolling upland plateaux high,  
Down rocky mountain steep.  
By rippling rills and mountain streams,  
And rivers deep and wide,  
And stony path and leaf-strewn track  
We've taken in our stride.

We've wandered far from city haunts,  
Where man is prone to dwell,  
And lived in Nature's fairyland,  
And loved it full and well.  
We've had our rucksacks on our backs,  
Our tent and tucker too,  
We've worn our khaki shorts and shirts,  
As we all love to do.

We've watched the sun rise o'er the hills,  
And set again at night,  
And heard the birds from morn till eve,  
Trill songs of sheer delight.  
We've heard the music in the breeze,  
The lilting laughing streams,  
And seen the mighty forest trees  
You only see in dreams.

We've lived a happy life and free,  
In this great wonderland,  
Where Nature's wondrous scenic gems  
Lie close on ev'ry hand.  
We've wandered here and there at will,  
Just how and when we'd please,  
Beside the foaming waterfalls,  
Or underneath the trees.

—oOo—

## THE CATTLE DUFFERS

It is now over seventy five years since the first men crossed Barrington Tops.

One of the pioneering settlers in the district was a Mr. Edwards who lived down in the Williams Valley at the foot of the great range of mountains. He was a timber and cattle man, and used to take loads of cedar into Maitland to the sales and bring back cattle.

After one of these trips he found that he was twenty five head short, and knew immediately that they must have been stolen by cattle duffers at night somewhere along the trail, so he set out to trail them, and after tracking some distance found that they had headed towards the tops. Now Mr. Edwards, although he had pioneered and explored all the land surrounding his home, had never been far up into the ranges at the back, but he had heard that it was possible to cross these mountain ranges into Scone and Walcha. The hardened experienced old bushman had never credited these tales with any degree of truth, had never bothered about them, but now when he saw quite distinctly his cattle tracks leading up into the mountains he thought there might perhaps be some truth in it, and rather than lose his cattle without a fight, decided to investigate.

He had heard vaguely that two men, the Eckford brothers, and a half-cast named Yellow Harry had taken up a selection of forty acres somewhere up on the mountain way out in the back hills, but he had never heard how the venture had fared, had indeed never heard anything concrete about it at all, and had put it down as idle rumour. Little did he know that these men really had found their way up the mountain and established their selection known as Eckford's Downs near the place where Crosby's Hut now stands. Nor did he know that they gained their wealth at other people's expense, that they rustled cows from the Walcha side of the range and branded the calves and kept them for rearing, and then drove the cows down the mountain to Maitland to sell them. Staying down there three or four weeks to allay suspicion, they then rustled a mob from this side and later sold them over in Walcha. As there was nobody else on the range they could carry on their illicit cattle dealings with a feeling of perfect security.

No, Mr. Edwards certainly did not know of the doings of the Eckford brothers, nor did anyone else for that matter.

Deciding to follow the cattle up the mountain, Mr. Edwards went back into Dungog and got the trooper to come out with him, and together they fought their way through the scrub up the mountain right to the top. Once up on the swampy plains, they soon found Eckford's camp, and eventually they found the missing cattle grazing among the sweet snowgrasses on a small plain.

Of course, the Eckfords were immediately suspect, but nothing definite could be proved against them for there was no real evidence to say that they had actually done the duffing. However, they were fined and cautioned. This made them rather nervous of continuing their practice of duffing in this district for they knew that they would be watched, so they sold their cattle and went away to Queensland.

Thus it was that it became known that there was a wonderful grazing plateau on top of the mountain range, and from then on men took their cattle up to feed on the wonderful snow grasses when they had drought conditions in the valleys.

I JOURNEY ALONE

The green grass on the hills was still wet with the dew,  
As I stepped from my nightly abode,  
And I called a farewell to mine hosts of the night,  
As I wandered out on to the road.

Then I wandered alone down the long country road,  
With the clouds hanging low on the range,  
Till the sun with a smile came and chased them away,  
And the whole of the land seemed to change.

As I wandered along with my thoughts in the hills,  
I soon found that my progress was barred,  
When a herd of big bulls straggling over the road,  
Stopped to give me their earnest regard.

Now I'm not so afraid of the cows and the calves,  
Though I hate them the way that they stare,  
But it's when just ahead I see big beefy bulls,  
That I get a most horrible scare.

And they looked at me hard with a curious stare,  
Did those gentlemen of the herd,  
With a horrible stare that they all seem to have,  
And I froze ere I uttered one word.

And then one of them started a-prancing around,  
Though perhaps he just did it for fun,  
With his heels in the air and his horns on the ground,  
As first backwards then forwards he'd run.

Sure I thought it was time I got out of the way,  
As I scrambled right fast through the fence,  
And my hair stood up straitly all over my head,  
And the strain in the air was intense.

With the fence in between I felt safer at once,  
And I chuckled ha ha in my glee;  
"You here got to stay out on your side of the fence,  
And you won't 'cause you can't touch me!"

As I chuckled aloud in my glee, ha ha ha,  
And so bravely strode on o'er the lea,  
The big brutes turned their backs and continued to feed,  
And they took no more notice of me.

CHRISTOPHER ROBIN

Now I know you've all heard of those wonderful tales,  
In which Christopher Robin takes part,  
You have read them and chuckled, then read them again,  
For young Christopher's dear to your heart.

On this holiday season where ev'rything's grand,  
And we all are as gay as can be,  
Tales of Christopher Robin I ev'rywhere meet,  
And he ev'rywhere seems to bump me.

For when Santa came out to the bush Christmas Day,  
When the light of the dawn was still pale,  
Sure he brought me a book that I know I will love,  
'Twas a Christopher Robin tale.

When we went to Chichester to visit the dam,  
Of our ear we enquired the name,  
And discovered 'twas always as 'Christopher' known,  
A grand title and well known to fame.

When I flew through the air and bumped hard on the ground,  
Well now really I felt rather queer,  
For the name of the gee-gee that pitched me right off,  
It was 'Robin' as sure as I'm here.

—oOo—

## THUNDERBOLT

Everything was still, not the slightest breeze stirred the trees or rustled through the ferns. Two magpies caroled gaily as they flew from tree to tree in the little forest glade, a couple of tiny blue wrens hopped about on the ground underneath the spreading fronds of a young tree fern, a tree-runner circled the trunk of a tall stringybark, blue gums tall and straight rose proudly from among the soft green ferns, and contrasted strangely with the rough bark of the turpentines.

Slowly and quietly, as though he knew the place and loved its peaceful serenity, a man on a roan horse came riding down through the glade, a tall man tanned by exposure to sun and wind, yet full of quiet dignity and gentleness of character, who sat his horse like one accustomed to long hours in the saddle. He rode into the centre of the tiny glade and, dismounting, sat down and leaned against a shady tree and lit his pipe.

To look at him, one would never think that there was a price on his head, that he went in daily fear of his life. Yet it was so, for the man was an outlaw, and had been hunted by the police for years. In the eyes of the law Fred Ward the bushranger, or as he was more popularly known, Thunderbolt, was a desperate character, and many were the tales that were told of his daring raids. Yet he was respected, for he was not a killer, and it was well known that under his hard exterior he was a kind and gentle man, and would never molest nor frighten women.

As a young man he used to go up the coast and round up large mobs of brumbies which he brought down and sold in the cattle yards. After one such sale two mares bearing a private brand were found among his horses, and he was convicted of stealing, whether rightfully or wrongly I do not know. He was sentenced to imprisonment on Cockatoo Island, but the man who had always led the free life of the wide open spaces could not adapt himself to the close confinement or the stern discipline of the harsh prison regime. So he watched for an opportunity to escape, and eventually did so, swimming to the shore and getting safely away up into the rugged hilly country of Barrington. From henceforth, he knew he must be ever on the alert, for his would he a hunted, outlawed life back in the hills.

As he sat there smoking, his horse, which was grazing beside him, suddenly pricked up his ears. Thunderbolt, who had been watching him, was instantly on the alert, for he relied solely on his horse to warn him when danger drew near for he was himself very deaf; for years he had adopted this habit of watching his horse's ears for signs of strangers about, and never once had it failed him.

He decided to take no risks, for one never knew who might be roaming round these lower hills, he would ride further up into the mountains, beyond where men penetrated, where he had his own secret hide-outs, and then he could have a good long rest for he was tired. Knocking his pipe out he became aware of a tenseness about his horse and, springing into the saddle, galloped hard out one end of the glade just as Laurie Gregory came in the other. Of course Gregory had stumbled upon the bushranger quite by chance, but he knew who and what he was, and immediately set out to give chase.

Hard and long the two horses galloped, and Thunderbolt, proud of his wonderful thoroughbred and thinking there was no horse to equal it, was hard put to keep the slight advantage he had. On the other hand, Gregory knew how popular it would make him if he could capture the outlaw, and pressed his horse hard in an endeavour to overtake Thunderbolt and his thoroughbred. However, after a long hard ride, Thunderbolt eluded him by wheeling sharply and hiding in the scrub while the pursuer thundered on.

Thunderbolt must have had a rare sense of humour, for when Gregory, unsuccessful in the chase, turned back, Thunderbolt trailed him home, a case of the hunted hunting the hunter, and when he had unsaddled and gone inside Thunderbolt crept quietly up and stole his horse, leaving no clue for the bewildered Gregory as to where the animal could have gone. Three or four days later, he sent a note to Gregory thanking him for the loan of his horse, which, he said he had now left on a property a few miles away, and adding that he was disappointed for it was not as good a horse as he had thought. I can just imagine the humourist in the gentle Thunderbolt laughing at the expense of the outraged Gregory.

No longer does Thunderbolt ride the steep hills of Barrington, no longer are those ranges with their rolling upland plateaux of swampy plains and mountain crags the hide-out of desperate men outlawed from the towns by their misdeeds. Yet, when one hears the old pioneers at the foot of the range spinning yarns of cattle duffings that their fathers have told them, it is easy to look round and people those hills with characters who have now become almost legendary.

### BARRINGTON

O land of rolling plateaux high,  
Of rugged mountain peaks,  
Of swampy plains and valleys fair,  
And laughing, rippling creeks;  
O home of orchids, trees and ferns,  
Of jungles damp and deep,  
Where moss like softest carpet grows,  
And lithe lianas creep;  
Somewhere upon your craggy peaks,  
Or in your valleys fair,  
I left a portion of my heart,  
And gained of richness there.  
And now I own such memories,  
That will through life prevail,  
The rarest visions caught when I  
Roamed far o'er hill and dale.

—oOo—

POST SCRIPT

YIPPEE'S CACHE

Good gracious me, what shall I do:  
Our Yippee's sad as sad,  
And all because I didn't write  
About his latest fad.

When we went walking o'er the hills,  
Upon our holiday,  
I scribbled bits about us all,  
To pass the time away.

But oh dear me, alack a day,  
Somehow I must have missed  
The most important thing of all  
That should have topped the list.

What can I do to make amends?  
Whatever shall I say?  
To show I didn't mean to slight  
Poor Yippee's little play.

I know! – an idea's come at last:  
I'll sit right now down here,  
And scribble hard and fast the facts  
That make the story clear.

I'll write an epic loud and long,  
At least I'll have a try,  
That memories of Yippee's craze  
May never ever die.

Well, Yippee had a bright idea,  
To lighten ev'ry load,  
And so he made a cache where  
Spare clothes and food we stowed.

He thought that we'd make better pace,  
As we the mountain climb'd,  
If all spare food and clothing we  
Cached and left behind.

And gosh, I think that Yippee had  
It planned out weeks before,  
For ev'rything to make it stout  
He'd brought with him for sure.

We wrapt our cache firm and strong,  
And left it 'mong the flow'rs,  
A secret hiding place that was  
Our own and only ours.

But what I think's the funny part  
Of this our cached haul,  
We left it in the open glade,  
And not disguised at all.

But Yippee was quite cache proud,  
His latest pet idea,  
And ere he left to journey home,  
He wept o'er it a tear.

There y'are Yippee – satisfied?  
Your cache's scribbled down;  
And now it's here in black and white,  
There's no more need to frown.

—oOo—

— END —