

THE WANDERINGS OF THE TREVRYLDA SNOWGUMS

Daphne Ball's Walk Journal



The Trevrylda Snowgums

Trevor Krok (Leader)

Daphne Ball

Beryl Heather

Kiandra to Kosciusko

24.12.1936 – 10.1.1937

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How often in our lives it is that the unexpected happens and what we look forward to as just a holiday away from all cares and city noises, – a few days to be spent midst the beauty and quietude of the bushlands, turns out to be a most wonderful holiday with each day revealing new beauty and pleasure. Anybody can make their vacation a pleasant one if they so wish, but certainly it is the companions and surroundings which go to make the ideal trip such as was my Kiandra/Kosciusko holiday, – a glorious seventeen days full of happy memories.

The 8.55 Cooma Express carried us away to the land of buttercups and violets, – a very excited little party, knowing but little of what was before us, but being well equipped with maps and compasses and what meagre information was available, and lastly, although most important of all, plenty of food, for our rucksacks weighed heavily as did the scales on central prove, Beryl's and my weight being practically the same, both with and without our humps, but Trevor's being considerably greater.

We had four travelling companions, not so bad, whom we soon initiated into our habits, for we felt hungry immediately Beryl produced her box of Xmas dainties and then, of course, crawled into our sleeping bags for the night was chilly.

After breakfasting in Cooma, Perry's service car, having travelled round "the block" about half a dozen times collecting various people, conveyed us to Adaminaby where we left the other passengers. From here the journey became really interesting as we climbed up higher in the world into the mountain ash, crossing creeks and rivers, passing through The Avenue (a mile or so of road lined with beautiful trees on either side which met overhead) on past the old sawmill to the "Alpine" Hotel in the little township of Kiandra (4,600 feet).

How lovely this country must be when covered with snow in Winter when the only means of communication is by snow-shoes. We learned that they have now secured a snow-plough with the object of keeping the road open throughout the Winter.

The "Alpine" people made us very welcome and we were very sorry that we were not staying longer. Here we had a wash in the coldest water I had ever felt, which we appreciated after our toilet preparations in the train. Beryl and I found a very inviting couch on the verandah so decided we were fatigued enough to have a rest till the bell rang calling us to Xmas dinner which we had in company with three Wagga men who were travelling on a holiday fishing trip. Decided the "Alpine" hotel was of very high standard as it recognised all the best such as "Shell" and of course we took a snap of their opinion on the matter.

We had arranged with Mr. Downie (the hotel proprietor) to take us out to Yarrangobilly Caves for the afternoon, so after he had satisfied his many customers and had all the bolts fitted into the right parts of his good old bus, took us for a "flying" drive to the caves. It was delicious speeding along through the icy-cold breeze, being splashed every few minutes with water from a creek crossed on the road, sending many sheep and rabbits scampering for their lives – how Trevor longed for his gun, we had arranged to take one, but was told there would be no shooting. We saw many pretty little patches, white and purple and gold, as we dashed round the curves and up the hills, hardly having time to realise that they were the little field flowers for which the

Kosciusko district is famed.

Arriving at the Yarrangobilly Caves House an hour too late for the usual inspections, Mr. Downie very kindly used his influence on our behalf and arranged for a special inspection. What a strange experience it was going down underground for my first time, that “sort of” “*Alice in Wonderland*” feeling. Down and down and down we went into the cold, cold earth, our way being dimly lit by electric lights which the guide turned on and then off as our party progressed. But the sights that met us at the bottom of the steps were very beautiful, and as the guide suggested it was only necessary to turn ever so slightly to the “world of imagination” to see all kinds of strange and wonderful things, such as fairyland with all the little fairies playing round and almost hear their music coming from their organs, the pipes of which reached from the roof to the ground of this mystic place, also all kinds of fish, animals and birds, but the scene which surpassed the lot was “Moonlight and Shadows”. We also learned how the caves were discovered – some cattle being lost the cattlemen were hunting for them and found them sheltered in a huge cave, the top of which has since fallen in leaving this great arch with a mound of earth and stones at the entrance to the caves which are now, of course, lit by electric light. We had been taken through the Jersey Cave so, of course, wished to see the Great Arch. The guide advised us to go round the track, for otherwise it was very steep, but much to his consternation we went straight down, for time was getting late and we found the going reasonably good, but judging by the expression on his face, he did not expect to see us come back whole.

Back at the Alpine Hotel about 5.40, we changed into our boots, deciding as it was very chilly and we were only intending to walk a short distance, that we would walk in our breeches. The whole township turned out to see us off, remarking about the ski-ing trip Jean Trimble did (she was the first girl to ski through from Kiandra to Kosciusko) whom they now regard as rather a “wonder girl” and appearing to be very impressed with our going off into a country we did not know and also being capable of carrying all our worldly necessities for the fortnight.

At six o’clock after receiving all the good wishes of the community, we set off on OUR TRIP, climbing a hill almost immediately, and what a hill it was, the Big Bogong Mountain which we climbed several days later was merely a slight rise in comparison (that is according to our climbing capabilities). I suppose it was because we had had no sleep the night before and had been travelling for almost twenty-four hours as well as being much higher up in the world than we had been accustomed to the air being much rarer and our breeches also not adding in any way to our comfort, for although they kept the cold out they also kept the heat in, but eventually the top was reached. We went through the gate at the top of the hill where we almost immediately left the track, going down into the gully on the left where we were told there was plenty of wood and water, to make our first camp. “Old Faithful” being duly erected and the fire lighted, we prepared our Xmas tea, including pudding which Beryl had brought along and much to my delight complete with threepences and it was my lucky day. After dining we sat round the fire smoking the pipe of peace and revelling in the glorious reflection of sunset. When the last rays of daylight faded away the moon came out, all tending to make a fitting ending to the first day of our long looked forward to holiday. We expected very hot weather and decided we would walk early in the morning and late in the afternoon, resting during the heat of the day, so after

much hard thinking choosing a suitable name for our party – *Trevrylda Snow Gums* – and having our theme song “*The Legion of the Lost*”? on the tin whistle by our leader, we retired. We were too tired to even move during the night and when we awoke at 4.10 to the Bushland Chorus it seemed as though we had but just gone to sleep.

Not realising that there would be a very heavy dew, we had not thought to collect kindling wood and so it was some time before we could get the very wet wood to burn. Although I do not like early rising, it is well worth the effort to be able to enjoy the beauty of the awakening bush at dawn. After breakfasting Trevor went back to take a snap of Kiandra from the hill while Beryl and I bathed, and packed and we set out again at 6.45. A very easy walk along the top of the ridge with a good track all the way except where it disappeared in swamps or stony patches, but very easily picked up again.

The surrounding country was very beautiful with the loveliest shade of green tufts of snow grass intermingled with the largest buttercups I have ever seen, purple violets very slightly scented, daisies cowslips and many varieties of purple flowers which brought back to me many memories of my childhood days when we used to roam through the paddocks covered with wildflowers of very similar species.

We had many rests and drinks of water for we had planned out a very easy itinerary as we wanted to be able to enjoy the place to the utmost, and also there were little creeks many of them only a few inches deep, but with icy cold water, running across our track every few yards so we were never thirsty.

About 7.30 the flies came out in their millions to welcome us and escort us on our way, so we were congratulating ourselves on having breakfasted early and also sending back waves of appreciation to the people who had recommended our including a fly-veil amongst our most necessitous articles.

Just wandering along, having become intoxicated with the glorious beauty of the place, we all exclaimed together “what a delicious perfume” and decided there must have been very sweet wild honey close by, and so there was but not in the form we expected - the snowgums were in blossom. Their flowers are much larger than our ordinary gums and this combined with their honey-like perfume makes walking through flowering snowgums a delight that will linger with me after many things have been forgotten.

The snowgums grow together in the most sheltered spots. They do not grow to a very great height and their limbs and trunks are gnarled and twisted into the most weird and wonderful shapes, mostly caused by the heavy snow during the Winter season. Their silvery-grey trunks are splashed with a darker grey and up nearer the Summit we noticed they were marked with a reddish-pink.

Our third photo was of The Big Bogong Mountain which was the most outstanding landmark of the whole of our trip. Shortly after this we met the track going out in the Westerly direction, but as we had included Table Top Mt. in our itinerary, continued on to the Nine Mile Diggings. We spent some time here exploring the gold sluicings and romancing over the good old days that must have been for a terrific lot of work was

surely put in at this spot, and wondering if we were to do any exploring what would be our fortune, but we had such a hard leader he would not allow us to stay for two or three days to do some fossicking.

There were two huts near these diggings; one which had fallen into disuse and the other which is occasionally occupied by cattlemen as did the contents of this two-roomed hut proclaim – one room containing two bunks and some harness and the other a fire place and various cooking utensils and on the railed front verandah a most comfortable seat. Some of the occupants had evidently had trouble trying to cook dried peas without success for we found this notation together with “*The Musterer’s Lament*” inscribed on a piece of cardboard hanging on the wall –

“NOTE THIS: Soaked peas for three days, boiled for three days, still not eatable. F.G. Yan, Sandy Smith, Dan Smith. Peas still boiling, been boiling from the eighteenth to the twenty second May, 1936, still not cooked.”

To which we added a little suggestion that carbonate of soda might be helpful. But how sad we each felt, for as yet we had not cooked any of our peas of which we had a goodly supply, anyhow we managed, rather successfully, I think to hide our feelings from each other, and cheered ourselves up by talking nonsense about the bad service rendered by the Postman and Milkman, etc. in these parts, and making ourselves comfortable on the verandah seat, admiring the view and reading: –

THE MUSTERER’S LAMENT.

Here we suffer grief and pain,
Over the river just the same,
The snow and cold is so intense,
The starving cattle will break the fence.
Three weary horses – near dead,
Two useless sheepdogs and one half bred.
The tucker is light, the horse feed is done,
Come on, boys, no time for fun.
Jim on the old filly said; “I’ll take the lead,
And you blokes behind be careful indeed;
Away from the Nine Mile we three must go,
J.W. Smith will expect it so.”
We’ve landed the bulls, all but one,
J.W. says: “Where’s that son of a gun?”
He was last seen on the Four Mile so stubborn and stern,
Jim tried to whistle him but the —— wouldn’t turn,
Said Dan to Jink: “Have you got any dough?
I’d like to Yen’s Picture Show to go.
Then the pictures we will see,
Sandy, Dan and Jink makes three.”

(Signed) F. G. Yan

(Jink Yan)

—oOo—

We had a little difficulty here in picking up the track again, but after Beryl and Trevor had wrinkled up their foreheads and carefully studied the map and then hunted round a bit, the track was found (an old dray track directly in front of the hut, now somewhat overgrown) which we followed for some time, and then lost again, so we followed along the top of the ridge eventually picking up the track where it was well worn through to the slip-rails. The flowers on this hill were glorious, the most beautiful of the whole trip.

It was at the sliprails that we saw our first real live cattleman in action to whom we talked for quite a while, learning that he was Frank Yan (Jink's uncle). He told us it was about two miles further to the Table Top Hut so we decided we would wait for lunch till then.

As we had seen quite a few snow poles distributed along the track, formed the habit of saying "snowpoles" every time a stick would appear on the horizon when standing apart on its own, so that we developed quite an affection for the word and I suppose in many years to come it will be able to bring back to us memories of many places.

We passed through some very interesting country after meeting Frank Yan and also saw a number of cattle that were very interested in us but did not prove troublesome in any way, the track leading through avenues of trees and then round the foot of Table Top Mountain to the hut where we were joyously welcomed by Mr. Nixon's dogs and then Mr. Nixon himself who immediately put on the billy and invited us to HAVE A CUP OF TEA.

After lunching Trevor and I decided to climb Table Top, but Beryl had somebody to talk to so did not join us which was rather fortunate for her because on reaching the top of the mountain it commenced to rain and as we were not expecting it our groundsheets were back at the hut so we spent a few minutes in the shelter of the trig waiting for it to abate and then made a dash back for the hut.

Mr. Nixon very kindly invited us to cook in his hut, and as it only consisted of one room we put up "Old Faithful" in a protected corner of one of his corals where we spent a most comfortable night.

After our dinner to which Mr. Nixon donated milk and cream, we sat round the fire listening to Mr. Nixon discoursing on his droving life and answering our many questions. He told us he came from Wagga and only brought the sheep here each year for the Summer season. He had a lad assisting him, who was at present home for Xmas, but other than this chap, saw very few people.

We awoke early to the jingling of the horsebell which I expected would keep us awake all night, but never heard from the time we closed our eyes till daylight; a sound of which we heard a good deal during the rest of our trip and naturally developed rather an affection for (how I longed to hear it after being back in Sydney a few days). It is the practice of the cattlemen to tie a bell on the leader of each mob of cattle or sheep and then they do not have so much difficulty in tracking them in the 10,000 acre paddocks.

It looked cold and foggy outside so stayed in bed till about seven o'clock. Mr. Nixon was already up and had milked the cow so we had fresh milk for breakfast.

Sunday turned out to be a beautiful day, the rain and mist of the earlier morning having cleared away and it was then that we realised in what an ideal spot the Table Top Hut was situated so Trevor and Beryl again went up the mountain to admire and capture the view as well as have a good look at the country we would be passing through.

Mr. Nixon had a deck chair of which he was very proud (his daughter had given it to him especially for these trips) so we took a picture of him sitting in the chair talking to his dogs and promised him a photo to send to his daughter.

We said goodbye to Mr. Nixon shortly after ten and set off on the track in front of the hut, taking the left-hand track at the first junction.

Coming to a fairly large creek we were discussing a subject which was not wholly of a non-intoxicating nature and much to our horrification on looking up the map found it was called Temperance Creek.

We were very much surprised to see so much wood about for we had been told that we would be lucky to find enough to cook with, yet here was acre upon acre of lovely big logs that looked so inviting we felt like staying and having a huge camp fire.

We decided not to follow down Arsenic Ridge to the river as the track was shown in our map, but to go down the side and cross the Happy Jack Plains to the Happy Jack River as there was good fishing in the river and with our expert fisherman we would have an abundant supply of fresh fish for tea.

The plains were not as one would expect to see, – flat country, – for this part of the world is full of surprises and never a day went by but it had some surprise in store for us. There were very few trees on the plains and when we had scrambled down the steep hillside almost to the creek (for such was the nature of Happy Jack Plains) our fisherman remembered it was necessary to have a rod and so had to climb up again to get back to the only clump of trees I can remember seeing on that particular hill. The stream proved to be very fast flowing with many little waterfalls, one particularly good one a little upstream of which we took a snap.

Just as we were about to lunch the rain started and as one shower followed another we very nobly decided to sacrifice our fish dinner and get to the Boobee Hut as soon as we could.

Looking upstream from the Happy Jack it was very beautiful even in the rain, so secured a souvenir of same. Following round the river we soon came to a crossing place. The river was running swiftly and was rather deep, also there were big stones strewn all over the river bed to which my boots objected so I had to sit in the river, but fortunately was close to the bank so managed to regain a perpendicular position without much damage. The climb up from the river was steep and we had to wear our groundsheets for it was still raining, but when we stopped to gain our breath were

compensated by many prettily little view of the river gorges with occasional glimpses of waterfalls.

It was becoming bitterly cold and the rain pelting down harder than ever and after crossing a few more rises and small creeks, we came to a bridle track and then how happy were we for we knew we would soon be to the Boobee Hut and a fire for by this time we were just about frozen stiff, after this day I felt I never wanted to see our beloved country in winter no matter how lovely it might look in its Winter clothes. And what a welcome sight was the Boobee nestling on the hillside. The main hut was locked so we sheltered in the other shed which contained harness and rock-salt, etc. Shortly afterwards the occupiers of the hut came along, immediately unlocking their hut, lighting the fire and inviting us to make ourselves comfortable. They were very upset that we arrived to find a locked hut, but they had six months provisions there and had been away for Xmas, so a locked home was just what we would have expected, but it seems that the law of the land out there is what is yours is also everybody else's and there is always a ready welcome and never a closed door to anybody.

After we had changed into dry clothing and had some good hot soup we felt very happy again. Trevor seeing our hosts put on their potato billy, made some remark to the effect that they must be fond of potatoes and the reply was "Well there are five of us", of course we thanked them but tried to explain that we had sufficient food and did not want to use their provisions, but they said there was plenty for everybody and they knew we would enjoy their fresh potatoes. You cannot do other than accept the hospitality of these people without hurting their feelings, but it was hard to accept it when there was so little we could do in return.

We spent an exceedingly pleasant evening with these two men (whom we all three voted as being jolly fine chaps) listening to their stories of dingoes, sheep and fogs. When bedtime came they put stretchers and good clean mattresses (an unexpected treat in the abode of men) in the living room on which we curled up in our sleeping bags and knew no more till daylight when we heard our friends moving about in the next room.

Beryl went down to superintend the milking of the cow and also found a vegetable garden and although as the proud owner explained it was as yet only a small affair with about half a dozen lettuce plants, we reminded him that "the mighty oaks from little acorns grow". After the cow had been milked they told us to help ourselves and drink as much milk as we liked for they had more than they could use.

Des Crowe appeared to be very proud of some snapshots he was showing us the night before so we thought perhaps we could add to his collection so took a photo of him and his Manager Dick Haggard with their horses and dogs in front of the hut.

We decided to climb Far Bald Mountain before leaving and our friends said they would accompany us as they were going out in that direction. It was a fairly easy climb straight up behind the hut and what a glorious view we obtained from Vale trig which is 5,733 feet – 633 feet above the hut. We could see our Table Top Mountain now in the distance, Round Mountain, Farm Ridge Huts and many other interesting landmarks which our cattlemen pointed out to us. We enjoyed very much having

them with us for they told us much interesting information about their country and also they seemed very pleased to have the opportunity to talk to us who could not hear enough about this wonderful land, whether it be fairy story or otherwise.

They told us how the hut came to be called the Boobee, – when the ballot was taking place for the different grazing areas, the owner drew the last ticket and called it the Boobee prize, but it does not live up to its name for it is one of the best of all the pasture holdings in those parts, carrying 9,000 sheep.

We took some snaps from the trig and even though it was biting cold, stayed for some time admiring the glorious view. What would I give for a camera that could show that country to be as it really is.

It was rather peculiar looking out over the hills as far as the eye could reach was a line of dead timber, our friends explained to us that it was the fire belt and that not so very long ago the country had experienced some terrific bush fires, this particular one starting in Victoria and sweeping up through the mountains.

We said goodbye to Des Crowe here, but his mate accompanied us back to the turnoff to the hut. He had a young cattle-dog with him and although only a few months old could well understand his master's commands. It did not have the strength of an older dog to round up the sheep and when he saw they were getting away from him would start yelping furiously which, of course, would only make his wind worse, but would not give up till his master called him away.

Returning to the Boobee Hut about noon, we collected our rucksacks and after having a delicious drink of pure fresh milk, proceeded on our way once again.

We thought we would go straight across to the main track instead of following the cattlemen's track round and after crossing a swamp came to what appeared to be a well-made track and as wherever a track has been made in this land a watercourse immediately follows, we did not at first take much notice of the track being rather deep especially as it was on a hillside. Before we had gone very far we decided this must have been at one time a gold sluice so left it and turned off in the direction that according to our map was correct. When first we met this track as we then thought it, we stopped to have a rest and seeing Dick Haggart returning to the hut, shouted a farewell greeting to him and we wondered why he stopped so long looking across to us. We later assumed he was probably contemplating whether he should come over and let us know we were going towards the wrong creek, but he probably thought we were doing a bit of exploring and also knew we would eventually come out on the main track even if the way might be a bit round about.

We crossed over the usual number of little creeks that abound in our "holiday land", for a while followed rather a large creek then climbed up the hillside, crossed the swamps in Doubtful Gap through which we passed up to the main track, there partaking of morning tea consisting of dates and fruit saline and had the usual sunbake and in general fully appreciating the fact "It is grand to feel you are far away from the bustling crowded town".

Continuing along the track or road as it had now become, crossed ever so often with the usual water supply, we came to the Doubtful, the road crossed this river at a very pretty bend. The crossing was not the least doubtful as the name would seem to imply, as a matter of fact I was much happier here than in the Happy Jack.

Leaving the river we followed up a very steep road which brought us in sight of the Farm Ridge Huts where we boiled the billy and lunched.

The Farm Ridge Hut is rather a large dwelling consisting of some four or five rooms with an outer shed, but we were rather thankful we had not decided to camp there, for the two bedrooms contained old sheep skins which gave the whole hut an odour anything but pleasant, and the place was extremely dirty.

Leaving “old man” to pack Beryl and I started off up the track, but after we had gone some little distance decided we were going in the wrong direction and as there did not seem to be much likelihood of the track turning the right way, went back and met Trevor who had come to look for us. Back on the right track we went down a very steep grade, crossed over a swiftly flowing creek and straight up another steeper hill on the opposite side. A short distance up the hill we came to cross tracks and as we were going to the Bogong Hut which is not on the main road, we had to take the left which was only an old bullock-dray track, it simply went straight up for they do not consider grade at all, but by this time we were getting rather good on the hills.

It was only a few miles from the Farm Ridge to the Bogong Hut so we arrived there quite early in the afternoon. This was the best hut we visited on the whole of our trip, and it was here that we enjoyed our stay the most. The hut was beautifully clean and cosy, the walls of the living room were covered with pictures of cattle, horses, pretty girls and country scenes from various magazines, – “*Crossing the Snowy*” was one of the scenes and looking at it we thought that is what we will soon be doing.

The Bogong Hut is in the loveliest of all the lovely positions at the foot of the Big Bogong Mountain, with plenty of wood and water quite handy, the comforts even ran to a bathroom and real bath, and after our evening meal we sat on a stool in front of the fire enjoying the cosy warmth of the hut for it was very cold out of doors, and glorying in the beauty of the full moon riding proudly in the cold clear sky. Although we spent some very pleasant evenings this one, to me, represented, the star of the whole trip.

The sun had been treating Beryl and Trevor a little too well, Beryl suffering rather badly for as we had been travelling most of the time with our back to the sun, her legs had burned behind the knees, breaking out in little white blisters and as soon as they broke burning the new skin underneath, whereas Trevor’s greatest trouble was his nose, – was a beautiful turkey red. So once again I realised that beauty is not always an asset.

Our intention was to only spend one night here and have an extra day at the Grey Mare, but we thought we would prefer to take our time on the Big Bogong and so decided to spend an extra day enjoying the beauty of this place.

We did not arise till rather late and then spent the morning bathing, washing and sunbaking; the sun was gloriously warm so it was no trouble for us to just to lay there and enjoy it. Even the flies did not disturb us, though they did try so hard.

In the afternoon we climbed the mountain. How I had looked forward to being on the top of that great landmark and at last my wish was to be fulfilled. The climb was rather steep, but without our packs we did not mind it. We were very much surprised to find almost to the very top of this mountain the usual little creeks that we had become so accustomed to.

The Big Bogong is well above the tree line and the last hundred feet or so is composed entirely of stone.

The view from Jagungal Trig alone (6,755 feet) was well worth travelling all the way from Sydney for and we felt very thrilled looking back to the country we now knew and wondering what the next few days would bring to us In* the land ahead.

We were continually find our direction was very much confused in this new land of ours; the compass was continually showing East where we felt the North was, etc. At first I thought it was only me, but Trevor and Beryl began to complain of the same thing.

Trevor took some snaps from this point while Beryl continued with her story and I hunted round for the snow drift we had been looking at for many days, but as I had clambered round quite a bit and could find no sign of it, decided it must have been a patch of white stones we had seen In the distance, but both Beryl and Trevor agreed that could not be right for our cattlemen had said it was a snowdrift, so a snowdrift it must be, anyhow it was exceedingly cold in the breeze so I did not feel disposed to argue that there was no snow close by.

The Bogong swamp looked exceedingly pretty with its little patches of water glistening like silver in the sunshine, and it was through this that our way would be winding on the morrow.

I must have taken an excellent “mind picture” from this mountain for any time when my thoughts turn to the trip they always centre round this place.

We spent as long as we possibly could at the trig, but wishing to be back before dark had to eventually make an effort to move off.

Our boots received a great deal of praise on the Bogong Mountain, especially in the descent for it was somewhat steep and also well strewn with rocks of all shapes and sizes, particularly on the higher levels, where we found they gave us wonderful support.

During the afternoon we heard quite a few of ray feathered favourites and also a great many rooks which are in appearance similar to the crow, but they do not attack the sheep and in many respects are different from the old crow with which we are so familiar.

We wondered to see so many cattle on this mountain when the feed and water lower down was so good, but perhaps they also can enjoy beauty just as much as we humans.

We were back at the hut just as daylight was fading and spent another very pleasant evening at the fireside with the moon and our musicians.

Next morning we did not arise as early as we had planned, perhaps we were becoming spoiled with the cosy huts, comfortable beds and lovely big fireplaces which gave out wonderful heat, instead of a little tent and the hard ground. Anyhow we did eventually leave this “gem” behind, following the track round the foot of our mighty Big Bogong, passing over the swamps which we had admired glittering in the distance from the heights on the previous day, crossing and re-crossing many streams, resting and dreaming in the glorious sunshine, being lulled to sleep by the continual buzzing of our somewhat over-numbered escort, then suddenly being brought back to life by a voice saying it was time to move off again.

Looking down towards the head of the Tumut River it was very interesting and so added another snapshot to our collection. We had to look round for the track here and again in the Bogong Swamps, but soon picked it up following up the Strombo Range where we saw what had once been a hut.

The Snowgums were becoming fewer and fewer, but the surrounding country was still very pretty, being covered with snowgrass (this grows in tufts, but it is most unaccommodating for there is not sufficient room between two tufts to step, but yet they are not sufficiently close to step from one to the other comfortably), and also there was a good sprinkling of the many different flowers we had seen since Xmas day.

Much to our amazement we turned round a bend and found the Grey Mare Hut facing us, so we had broken all records this day and were well ahead of our itinerary, which was rather fortunate for us as there was a heavy storm about an hour after our arrival.

The Grey Mare Hut was the largest we had visited so far, in days gone by it was the residence of the Manager of the gold mine. About forty years back the mine had been working and then closed

down till a couple of years ago when £5,000 was spent on machinery, etc. making the mine workable, but as the Manager disappeared with all the funds the workmen apparently immediately left what they were doing and also “made tracks”.

The hut consisted of four rooms and a storeroom and as they were all in a very untidy and dirty state, we straightway began to make the living room habitable; Beryl busying herself with the broom (a most useful object which we found in every hut) and the rest of us moving the rubbish – half used containers of food littering the table, bench and floor (in which the rats had had many picnics) all mixed up with expensive Gloria lamps, clocks, crockery, cutlery, clothes, cooking utensils and toilet requisites, they even catered for the musical with mouthorgans.

Just as we were beginning on the cleaning-up process we saw a riding party approaching, they were travelling through from Tumbarumba and although quite nice people did not seem very approachable, even Beryl could not glean much information from them. They lit a fire outside the hut, lunched and went on their way.

We had only just finished our meal when the rain started – a real Australian thunderstorm, one minute it looked as though there would be a flood and in half an hour's time the sun was shining.

With the storm arrived another visitor, – a cattleman who said he had two more mates coming, they had just brought some cattle. On this run they do not stay with their herds as most of the cattlemen do, for they live much closer and only ride out occasionally to see that everything is alright.

We had still more entertaining to do this day for another party of riders was approaching and entered our little home to be out of the rain – a Doctor and his wife and family from Melbourne, These people were staying at the Log Cabin in Pretty Plains and were riding through the country fishing and enjoying life generally. They were very interested in our walking equipment so Beryl spent a very happy hour learning things about their trip and telling them all about us.

Trevor and I, having had afternoon tea, decided we would have a look at the mine. It made us feel quite miserable to see all the expensive machinery that was laying round just simply rusting away and the skeleton of what was probably meant to have been a very comfortable home. We did not investigate the mine very far as there was a good deal of water in the mouth of it. There were picks just laying in and round the mine and other tools strewn about everywhere as if they had all been dropped at a moment's notice. Then we followed round to the race – this is seven miles long and at one time carried a good supply of water down to the mine.

Back at the hut Beryl was entertaining our guests with a stock-whip and much to the delight of the stockmen she was winding it round herself in her efforts to make it crack which they could do so easily.

I think it must be many a day since the Grey Mare has seen such a large crowd at the one time (thirteen) so Dr. Hurley decided he would take a snap of all the visitors. Evidently he is not very interested in ladies for he cut the three of us out of the picture (a copy of which we received later).

After farewelling the riding party and receiving all their good wishes for our trip, we set about preparations for our evening meal and also acquainted ourselves with the other cattlemen Angus and Max McPhie and Des Delaney. Having dined and being duly intrigued with the cattlemen's quart pot (combination billy and mug) by the manner in which they fit together making a very compact little parcel to fasten to their saddle and we explaining all our gear and food, we all made ourselves comfortable round the fire entertaining our guests with our usual concert and also recounting our experiences of the past few days and they in turn telling us something about their lives and then providing amusement by means of a Gloria lamp which they tried to put into operation. They spent about an hour playing round with this and it was just as well

we did not suffer with nerves for several times it looked as though there would be an explosion and then retiring outside where we were provided with all kinds of fireworks, but their patience was rewarded in the end, and so the early hours of the morning arrived much to our amazement for we were not nearly ready for “Slumber Bay”.

Once again we had comfortable mattresses in a cosy room with a lovely big open fire.

I had been looking forward to a ride in the morning as the previous night the cattlemen had promised me this treat, but as the horses were not brought in until we were about to leave, had to forego this pleasure.

The men tried our packs on, but they were without a doubt that they would prefer their own means of travel, so after saying goodbye we were off about 9 o'clock.

This day I appreciated my boots more than words can express for with a strained sinew in my heel it was only by tightly lacing the boot that I could put the least pressure on my foot and even then it felt like a piece of elastic being stretched every time my foot touched the ground and so I agree entirely with Beryl in saying : –

TO MY BOOTS

When first they saw you all my friends
The village ploughboy called me,
Predicted ruin to my feet,
Till their dismay quite galled me.

Although you may look rather huge,
And tho' you're big and ugly,
You give more comfort than my shoes,
And fit my feet quite snugly.

And though you've rubbed my heels a bit,
And raised a monstrous blister,
I'll never part with you again,
Not even to my sister.

With you upon my feet I'll tramp
Through swamps and creeks and rivers,
And feel quite safe from every harm,
And never get the shivers.

For you are strong and in my eyes,
Have shown you're toughest leather,
I'll take you on my every tramp,
In fair or stormy weather.

—oOo—

We looked longingly at the Valentine Falls, but they were not in the direction we were travelling for our programme included the Mawson Hut, and with my slow rate of progress were out of the question, but we had rather a good view of them as we climbed the hill.

Max McPhie caught up to us before we had gone very far and offered to take my pack to the Mawson Hut for which I was more than thankful. He said he had to go to the Mawson on business, but I wonder . . . These men are so marvellous they would go to no end of trouble to help anybody, but do it all so unostentatiously that one is apt to accept it as the ordinary course of events.

It was a glorious day and the clouds more beautiful than any I had ever seen, in fact every day they seemed to becoming more and more lovely. Looking out to Kosciusko it was a very beautiful sight with the snow clad peaks in the distance, the great fleecy clouds over head and the blue sky as beautiful as blue can be.

The country was changing more to the type we had expected to find, more stony and rough with very few trees, but still very appealing although in an entirely different way to the Kiandra district. Laying in the sunshine, gazing out to the ridges in the distance, which seemed to be surrounded by some mystic power one could weave all kinds of wonderful dreams into those hills. Then again it is entirely different from our own Blue Mountain Country, its colourings at times seeming unreal in their beauty. Nothing has been as I expected for this land has a charm of its own which has to be appreciated.

At all of these huts you just simply walk in and make yourself at home. If anybody happens to be in they immediately PUT ON THE BILLY, if not you are expected to do so yourself.

Angus McPhee was drinking tea with a man from Dicky Cooper's when we arrived at the Mawson where we lunched. The bullocky came while we were there and it was very interesting watching his manouevring the bullocks round to get the dray into position. He was carting some fencing wire to men a few miles away in the Kerries Gap, but stopped at the hut for lunch and a chat (the bullock dray being a day or two overdue is just as things should be).

The sky became overcast (afternoon in Kosciusko – so rain was due.) There was a splendid view of the Big Bogong from the Mawson Hut, and with a big black cloud hanging over it a very unusual picture.

Just as the rain commenced the Managers rode up and invited us to stay at the hut for the night, saying it was much more comfortable than Dicky Cooper's which was only a one-roomed hut with an over amount of ventilation, whereas the Mawson consisted of a well built and lined two-roomed place with a lobby attached in which they stored wood, supplies, harness, etc., but we decided to keep to our programme so took to the trail about o'clock. Beryl and Trevor were rather heavily laden as they had taken practically everything from me which made me feel very unhappy.

We followed the track up the hill behind the hut for quite a while then it disappeared so hunted round for a while but could see no sign of it. There was a snowdrift on the side of a hill about a mile south of us and I did so much want to go across and see it but found it difficult enough to walk where it was necessary, – had I only known we would spend two or days amongst the snowdrifts I could have passed it by quite cheerfully.

We scrambled round for some time looking for the track and while resting on one of the rises (sheltering amongst the trees from the rain) I saw smoke coming from what appeared to be a hut in the distance (the party came into use after all). We did not think it could possibly be Dicky Coopers but went down to investigate. Two men were camped there, they had a tent erected and were building a shelter (to act as a living room in which they had built a fireplace) and it was to these people that the bullocky was bringing the wire, also the roof and walls of their house. We stayed and talked to them for a while and they pointed out to us where we had gone astray. Although Beryl enjoyed talking to these men I do not think she ever really forgave them for disillusioning her, coming down the hill to their camp she had been singing and as she thought one of their horses commenced to dance to her music, but as the men explained it was hobbled and was only trying to get away from her.

At Dicky Cooper's we were welcomed by the usual chorus of dogs and the nicest old gentleman I have ever met, with the loveliest blue eyes and the gentlest manner. Billy Primmer (our hosts name as we found later) invited us in and insisted on giving us afternoon tea including damper (a great huge one he had just recently baked in a camp oven, so shedding our wet clothes we were soon very comfortable round the fire.

This was the poorest of all the huts we had visited, for besides being very draughty the men had very few comforts, their blankets were laid out on the floor, there were a couple of shelves on which they kept their food, a table and four boxes which acted as chairs; two of these boxes had been left by a party from the Melbourne Walking Club that had camped here the previous night (14 men and 7 pack-horses), they were going in the opposite direction to us and we missed them as they took the Valentine Falls route, for which we were rather sorry for it would have been most interesting to have met them.

Andrew Adams arrived back from the Mawson Hut just at dusk – what a contrast he was to our kindly Billy Primmer and always gave me the impression of an Insurance Agent instead of one of our adorable cattlemen. He was not over fond of work and I have often thought that his mate did more than his own share.

The moon rose late lighting up the Ghost, – if only we could find the origin of the name of such places, but on the whole we did rather well for we gathered quite a bit of information during our wanderings.

This was New Year's Eve, but we were too tired to stay up and see the Old Year out so after admiring the moon on the Ghost, retired to "Old Faithful" which Trevor had pitched in a sheltered spot just below the hut.

The 1st January, 1937 were up before six o'clock – what a good start for the New Year.

Trevor besides being an excellent is rather a decent doctor, always making sure our blisters were quite comfortable before setting out on the day's walk, whereas if we did it ourselves the plaster was sure to come off or the lint to slip.

Once again we were farewelled and given advice as to the track, etc., – then away for Dicky Cooper's Bogong. We passed by a snowdrift on the side of the ridge so went across to inspect. To the touch it was just like ice and was scrunchy underfoot and as it was almost melted was a dirty greyish white.

Continuing along the ridge it was becoming colder every step, but when we arrived at the gap below Dicky Cooper's well it was just as I should imagine the South Pole would be, although we quickly put on all the clothes we had, were still cold. There were two huge snowdrifts here a couple of feet thick in places, but they were gradually melting and there were little trickles of water all along the edge and below them were patches of very pale green grass from where the rest of the drift had apparently just recently melted.

Trevor went up alone to the top of Dicky Cooper's Bogong (6,600 ft.), Beryl's sprained ankle of twelve months ago troubling her and my sinew still not so good, we hated the thought of missing the view from the top, but as it looked somewhat rough and stony decided it was better not to chance it. On telling Trevor we were only a party of crocks, he begged to remind us his name was spelt with a k minus all c's.

Trevor managed to secure one snap looking out over Pretty Plains before the mist covered everything up, but was not able to see a great deal. Whilst he was away I sheltered behind a big rock out of the bitterly cold wind, rolled up in everything I possessed as well as my groundsheet, but Beryl was sitting right out in the open alongside a snowdrift with only a coat over her shoulders, I was worried she would contract pneumonia, but evidently the workings of her brain are sufficient to keep her warm for she was as usual busy with her book and pencil.

All this while we were having a little variety in the way of sunshine and black clouds, but the latter seemed to be winning the battle. By the time we took up our packs again, everything was looking very black.

We saw many drifts of snow as we progressed. It was a pretty sight to see those great white patches on the hillside, but they most inconveniently placed themselves right across our path for the track was more on the Eastern side of the ridge for the same reason, I suppose, as the drifts – out of the way of the Westerlies.

Our next rest was behind a rock (alongside a fence) just large enough to shelter the three of us. Little did we know then we would, shelter behind that same rock twice more this year.

Coming to another fence we saw three beautiful horses standing with their heads thrown up and tails streaming in the breeze (just like pictures are often shown of wild horses – perhaps they did have some ancestors who once roamed these hills) gazing at us in strange wonderment.

By this time we were wearing our groundsheets, as well as all the extra clothing we had put on at the Bogong, for it was sleeting as nastily as it could which was very painful on our bare legs and the dense fog seemed to be enclosing us in a little world all of our own, until we could not see more than a few front of us, everything else was absolutely black.

There were many evidences along our way of where the pack-horse party had travelled a few days previously and at times this was most helpful in keeping us to our right course for in places there were tracks which gradually led down the hillside or on coming to a swamp or extra large drift there would be no evidence of our track other than these hoof-prints and it was very nice to have this assurance we were going in the right direction when we could see nothing of what was ahead.

Mt. Tait was our objective on the Main Range, for there we branched off down to the Snowy and then across to Pounds Creek Hut. We felt we must be very close to Mt. Tait, and then at the most it would only be a few hours walk to the hut where there would be warmth and comfort for us, but every cattleman we had met had impressed on us very definitely to camp immediately if we met a black fog (they all make a practice of carrying charcoal soaked in kerosene so that it is possible to start a fire anywhere if fog overtakes them), so we agreed it was better to camp and know where we were then to keep on going with the possible chance of getting off our route (having no landmarks to guide us) and then wasting valuable time next day finding ourselves again and Beryl describes very well what happened for the next hour or so in –

THE BLIZZARD ALONG MAIN RANGE

The howling wind grew more than strong,
And o'er the whole wide land
A rolling fog so black and thick
Spread out its dark'ning hand.

The sleet beat hard against our legs,
Till we cried out in pain,
And never ceasing howled the wind,
And fell the driving rain.

The fog was thick as thick could be,
And from the path we'd stray,
We could not pick our landmarks out
To guide us on our way.

At last we thought we'd had enough,
We'd stop and make our camp,
For though 'twas only one o'clock,
We felt extremely damp.

Along Main Range we'd made our way,
Well up above the trees,
When first the fog and wind and rain

Beat round about our knees.

So down into a nearby vale,
We slowly made our way,
Across the drifts of hard-packed snow,
That showed up dull and grey.

And as we went we saw a bird
Fast flying to and fro,
It looked in vain for landing ground,
Above a drift of snow.

We pitched our tent beneath the trees,
And what a job we had
To beat the wind and get it up,
But Trev's a brainy lad.

But when at last our home was built,
And we were snug inside,
We felt quite happy once again,
And on its strength relied.

—oOo—

It certainly was a fight to get the tent erected even in the most sheltered spot that could be found, but Beryl and Trevor managed somehow whilst I started a fire then after having something hot to eat we made ourselves comfortable in the tent. Inside it was beautifully warm, but on putting a hand outside it would immediately ache with the cold.

I soon discovered Mt. Tait – having the middle position in the tent – a little mound of earth was just in a most inconvenient position so Beryl being just our little “saw'd off” nobly exchanged places with me and found it was quite a comfortable pillow for her.

Although we had heard once or twice before these words “keep your head down” they were something we heard so often during the next forty-eight hours that we actually did learn to move all round the tent without even so much as touching it.

Trevor's toys were his pipe and tin whistle, Beryl had her book and pencil, but I not being gifted in any way, not even to the extent of being able to enjoy the cigarette I had promised Trevor to accompany him with, and after spending about three hours talking and sleeping, thought I could see a glimmer of sunshine through the tent door so went out to investigate. The sun was making a valiant effort to get through the fog and also our blizzard had calmed down to a mere heavy mist, but it was still perishingly cold, so I spent about an hour carting logs and drying them out and so coaxing the fire until it was one of my own liking.

It was a wonderful sensation watching the mist moving round, getting glimpses occasionally of sunlit hills in the distance, making up a picture of what the country would look like all round and then as the mist moved and allowed that portion to come into view, fitting it in with the other parts – it was more interesting than trying to work out a Chinese puzzle.

What a contrast to the usual way of spending New Year's Day instead of roasting at some seaside resort with thousands of others, here we were blizzarding in the mountains and just we three, but we were as happy as ever and were unanimous in our desire to be just where we were.

The bread supply was getting rather low and also was now eight days old so I decided to make our first damper.

The weather was sufficiently kind to allow of our having a comfortable meal at the fireside. Most unfortunately it was not until everything was cooked did we remember Trevor's promise to make us a New Year's pudding, but he consoled us with the promise of one in the very near future.

This was our second campfire and we did really enjoy it. The snowgums throw out wonderful heat, although they quickly burn away, but we were not able to enjoy it for long as the rain came on again, so after Trevor had made sure our little home was still safe and sound, completed our night's programme in bed, for we could not go to sleep without our theme song even though we were not yet lost.

Next morning we awoke with daylight, but could still hear the elements waging war outside so remained snug and warm until one o'clock when we breakfasted and lunched.

It was a couple of hundred yards to the water supply, right out in the open and once out of the shelter of the trees it was certainly cold and the water, of course, being melted snow was just on the verge of turning to ice. I am quite sure it would have frozen over had it not been rushing down the hillside at such a pace.

We begged of Trevor to be a nice clean boy and go down to the creek for a bath, but without any success, so Beryl wrote –

OUR TREV

Our Trevor is a dirty boy,
He hates to wash his face,
And leaves his smoking gear around
To clutter up the place.
When first we started on this trek,
He'd have a sort of wash,
But now it's wet and very cold,
He says it's silly tosh.
He says the dirt doth keep him warm,
And makes him feel less cold,

He says he likes to feel the grime,
He'll not do as he's told.
So Daph and I have given up,
And think we've done our best,
We've tried but cannot make him clean,
We'll have to let him rest.

—oOo—

This night we had to dine in the tent and what a job it was, but “Old Faithful” stood the strain. We had now spent 1½ days in the tent and did not feel disposed to remain any longer here, especially as it had been raining practically all the time and we could not help rubbing the tent a bit, the rain was likely to come through at any moment, but still we did NOT WANT TO GO BACK. The thought of having to retrace our steps hurt quite a bit, but as far as we could see there was nothing else for it, so decided if the bad weather continued it would be back to the Mawson and then on to the Tin Hut and so across the Snowy that way. There was one other possible alternative – following up our present creek to the Snowy, but we knew nothing of what it would be like.

We were awake very early next morning, and the weather did not sound very promising outside which meant following out our new programme. By the time we had breakfasted in the tent (we thought it would save so much time not lighting a fire) and packed up, the wind and rain had calmed down considerably with occasional glimmers of sunshine, but still looking very black on the higher levels.

Our final decision was to have a try at reaching the Snowy via our present creek. Once out of the tent we were glad to start walking for it was perishingly cold. We crossed the creek below us and worked our way up on to the ridge on the opposite side. I could just see the top of Trev's hat the scrub was so high and thick, and where there was waving scrub knew that would be Beryl. The further we went the worse it became. Eventually we got down to White's Creek into which our little one flowed, where it was much easier walking for a while until we came into the real Snowy Mountains country; the river banks became very steep till they formed a definite gorge, we followed along the top for some time and then thought it best to get down to the creek level, so went down just one of the many little creeks feeding the mighty one below us. Each step was like a lucky dip for you never could tell where or how it would finish up, – there were great trees strewn across our way, soaking wet and extremely slippery, huge holes covered with such reliable looking grass and dense scrub such as hundreds of young saplings all growing from the one base almost impossible to penetrate. We thought the scrub we encountered earlier in the morning was the worst ever, but it was only googoo feathers compared with this. Some of the undergrowth was so thick it was possible to walk across the top and absolutely impossible to get through, so our life for the next couple of hours consisted of nothing but ups and downs and it was no easy matter getting from one to the other.

Trevor managed to get right down to the creek and it was nearly a case of “The poor babes in the woods” for the water was rushing at such a terrific speed he could not keep his footing and it was only by clutching a sapling that enabled him to come back to us and so up to the top of the ridge again we went. Coming down was terrific, but going back no word can describe, for whereas before the scrub would more or less give way to our downward flight, going up it was just one long fight. Reaching the top we rested under cover of our groundsheets – more rain – deciding to continue round the ridge to the Snowy, but soon abandoned that idea when we saw that the scrub ahead was the same as we had been struggling through for the last two hours, so our route via the Mawson and Tin Huts was the only thing left for us.

By lunch time it looked as though the rain had definitely set in again, but we managed to light a fire and get some hot soup and tea which brightened our outlook considerably. Just before getting back on to the Main Range we looked back to our BELOVED Whites Creek. What interesting country it appeared to be with such a lovely gentle air about it, but it could not have been beautiful for Keats is never wrong and although its memory will live long with all of us we cannot say “It will be a joy forever”, although we did enjoy it in that way peculiar to bush-walkers of having done our best and even though beaten it feels well worth the effort. But nevertheless it helped to add variety to our trip. We took a snap from this point, but without the glorious colourings of this land the mere views are barely interesting.

On the tops the fog was still very thick, but we soon found our footprints of two days ago and rested once more behind the little rock by the fence. At times we thought we saw what appeared to be fresh horse tracks, and wondered if the cattlemen had come out after us in case we needed help, when they saw how New Year’s Day had turned out, for knowing them as we did it was just the kind of thing we would have expected of them.

Passing Dicky Cooper’s Bogong it was almost as cold as on the previous occasion, but despite this there were a lot of cattle round the heights, very much amazed to see us there.

We did not call in at the hut as it was then about six 0’clock and we wanted to be at the Mawson that night, for we were feeling very tired and the thought of the warmth and comfort to be had at the Mawson, lured us on.

By the time we met the fencers who were now comfortably ensconced in their temporary home, I felt it was just impossible to go any further, but they in their usual kindly fashion invited us in to have a cup of tea which we accepted without a murmur. I sank down on a seat in front of the fire in their cosy little shelter and drank a whole pint of the most delicious tea ever made WITH PLENTY OF REAL SUGAR. (Our sugar supply was running rather low so had been trying to accustom myself to doing without it). After a short rest we set off again feeling very much refreshed, and these two kind men walked to the top of the hill with us, carrying Beryl’s and my pack. They also insisted on giving us a loaf of their freshly baked bread – they probably guessed our supplies would now be running very low.

It was not very long before darkness overtook us and I have no idea of how it happened, but we eventually found ourselves back at the Mawson Hut. There is no doubt about Trevor he seems to have an uncanny instinct for finding his way about and there certainly would never be any need to be afraid to go into any type of country if he were in the party.

Everything was in darkness when we arrived at the Mawson at 9.30 (fourteen hours since we started out) so we sneaked in quietly to avoid disturbing the men who were sleeping in the next room. The fire still burned and as usual the billy boiled so we had a real feast with our loaf of bread and some boiling hot tea. Then after unrolling our beds in front of the fire we tumbled in and knew no more till daylight when somebody tramping about in the next room awoke us. When he opened the door into the living room I wonder what his thoughts were for although he said nothing more than good morning, he certainly looked astonished – who would not at their first unexpected sight of sleeping bags in use, apart from the fact of finding three strangers who were not there the night before.

This man was employed by the Government to hunt dingoes. He had his own little outfit and travelled from one hut to another trapping these pests. He spent the morning shoeing his horse before leaving for his next trip and we did some washing and then sun-baked outside enjoying a rest as only the truly weary can.

About lunchtime Dave Williamson, the Manager, and Lindsay Willis, the Assistant Manager and general rouseabout of this place, returned, but Dave only stayed for lunch and then returned to meet the sheep that were on their way to this run for their summer vacation, and weren't we glad when we were informed that he was the man who spat.

Lindsay even seemed pleased to see us and said he was wondering how we had fared. After the seemingly very stern unapproachable man we had spoken with on our previous visit, we realised it is necessary to know these men to understand them.

When we explained our future plans to cross the Snowy via the Tin Hut, he said that would be impossible for at present the river was not crossable there – that was a nasty jolt, for we would not be seeing Kosciusko after all, so on talking the matter over he advised us of a good route to follow out to Adaminaby, saying we were very welcome to stay at the hut for the remainder of the time.

We were quite happy to accept this new plan, but were rather seriously concerned about our food as the greater part of the second week's supply was at the Chalet. On explaining our predicament we were informed not to go short of anything as there was plenty of everything at the hut, and to just help ourselves.

Attached to the chimney outside the hut was a huge dog's paw which we were told was the biggest dingo that had ever been trapped round those parts.

Beryl had a lovely time during the afternoon sweeping and dusting much to the delight of Lindsay who said the place had never been so clean since his sister had been there. While I went over the hills to a creek out of the strong cold wind that was blowing and had a delicious bath, – the first for nearly a week, and it was good despite the fact that the water was icy.

For the rest of the evening we sat round the fire, Lindsay telling us how the Valentine and Grey Mare were called after wild horses which were very much sought after, but had never been captured. Seeing the Mawson Hut was in Snow country we naturally concluded it had been called after the explorer (Sir Douglas Mawson) but much to our disappointment found it was only the name of the man who had built the hut. In return we allowed him to listen to our concert.

Monday night Lindsay had killed a sheep so on Tuesday morning we had for breakfast some of the most tender and tasty chops I have ever eaten.

During the course of the morning our two fencer friends came to stay for a couple of days, and I received a mild reproof from Lindsay for not putting on the billy immediately they arrived. They had to fence in some pens before the sheep reached their destination.

These men confirmed the opinion that we would not cross the Snowy via the Tin Hut and then told us how we could, have followed off Main Range a fence which would have taken us down to Guthega Creek which we could have followed up to the Snowy without any difficulty – they knew for they had erected the fence some time ago.

Beryl became very domesticated this day for as well as continuing with her cleaning-up campaign she wondered what it would be like cooking in a camp oven and, of course, had to try. Her scones turned out to be very nice though somewhat burned at the bottom for she did not understand just how the oven was supposed to be used, so Lindsay in the afternoon gave a practical demonstration and his baking was certainly good.

Trevor and I decided to climb the Cup and Saucer, two rather unique rocks on the top of a hill, representing a huge inverted cup and saucer, and Trev also wished to have a look at the country for we had decided to return to Adaminaby via Bulls Peaks. We have a most extensive view from this point – The Grey Mare Ranges, Big Bogong, Dicky Coopers, the Rolling Ground, Mt. Kosciusko etc., and I really think it was here that Trev, got the idea whereby we were going to see the Snowy once again, the distant hills did beckon.

Our friends were greatly amused with Beryl's little mug especially as they had such huge ones, so they measured theirs to see how many "saw'd offa" they would have to drink to have one cup of tea and I think they found it was eight.

No sooner had we settled round the fire this night than the fencers asked for a repeat of our programme of the previous night, – Lindsay had evidently been telling them about it, and they enjoyed immensely "*The Legion of the Lost*" and "*The Man from Snowy River*" etc., saying it was not very often they had such a treat.

Our only objection to these huts was the fact that all their seats were backless, nearly always stools, the legs of which consisted of three of the twisted limbs of the snowgums, certainly very quaint, but not greatly comfortable to sit on when tired. They offered me their best model if I cared to take it with me, of course I would have liked it, but Trevor was already carrying a cowbell for Beryl so thought he might object to carrying a stool for me, even though it were made out of the snowgums, for packhorses do raise objections occasionally.

Just before going to sleep Trevor said he **WOULD** like to have another try at getting across Main Range, especially as he now knew about the fence (should another fog overtake us) and the last two days had been so glorious, but I think it was only the distant hills he saw earlier in the day that lured him on. So we talked it over for a while and as the three of us felt we would like to be on the move again, decided if it were fine in the morning we would be passing Dicky Cooper's once again.

Daylight next morning we were awake, and had breakfasted and were packing when the next room awoke to life. On informing them of our plans they told us of a route which would take us straight on to the track on Main Range near the Sentinel Box, cutting out Dicky Coopers and so, of course, was much shorter. Lindsay impressed on us again not to go short of anything, but to take just whatever we needed and presented us with some more chops, but when we wanted to pay for the food was very hurt and said he would not hear of such a thing which made us feel rather unhappy because we had accepted everything with the intention of settling up before we left, but these people have their own ideals to live up to, especially generosity which is after all of much more account than the independence of the city person.

We took a snap of the men and their hut and at 7.30 were on our way for we thought it best to make tracks while the sun shone in view of the usual bad weather of the afternoons.

Instead of crossing the creek and going round via Dicky Coopers, we followed up the Kerries to the Main Range. Rounding a hill we were very surprised to see smoke from a fire, then a man and horse, of course our first thoughts were of tourists, but it was our old friend Billy Primmer evidently having had a very early lunch or late breakfast. We stopped talking to him for a while then he rode up to the top of the next rise with us and pointed out our direction. Our track took us down into the valley and then up to our old hunting ground amongst the snowdrifts of Main Range, and so for the third time we rested by the rock near the fence, not that we had need of its shelter this time, for although very fresh it was a gloriously warm day compared with our previous experience here.

How glad we were that we had decided to come back, for walking along Main Range this time we experienced something we had never before. The whitest of great fleecy clouds seemed so close we felt we had only to put out our hand to touch them, the sky the bluest of blue, the exquisite colouring of the surrounding country, the mountains spotted with great snowdrifts glistening in the sun and the still far more distant ranges sending back such wonderful beauty, all helped to make me feel as though I was in some very sacred place – this is certainly one of nature's cathedrals.

Mount Tait stood up in her very queenly manner to bid us welcome, making a picture that would gladden the heart of the most unappreciative. We were now glad that we had not seen it before for it would have been impossible to have enjoyed the Thredbo more than we had our experiences of the previous five days. Shortly after saying goodbye to Mt. Tait, we lunched enjoying the sunshine so much it was only with the greatest effort were we able to move off again.

We followed down the Eastern side of Guthega Creek as per our instructions for this was the way the cattle used to be taken across the Snowy. For a while it was quite comfortable walking, but gradually became steeper and steeper with thick scrub, almost a good step-sister to White's Creek. At last we had a glimpse of the Snowy and that spurred us on and so after a lot of slipping and sliding, using our hands more than our feet, we reached the river. We said never again would we believe anything the cattlemen told us and as for Banjo Patterson, we would never again honour him by having "*The Man from Snowy River*" at our campfires. For about an hour Trevor waded round the Snowy which is the coldest of all cold waters, but without any success. It seemed as though we were doomed never to reach the other side of it, so up we had to go again for the scrub growing to the very edge of the water was so dense as to make impossible our following along the river bank.

We tried going back on the other side of the creek, but it was, if anything, worse than what we had come down. We had climbed up a good distance when we came to a fairly flat spot and as it was then getting late, decided we would make this our camp site for the night, so after clearing a spot for the tent and fire we set about making ourselves comfortable. How we enjoyed those delicious chops Lindsay had given us.

We were still very puzzled as to how cattle could ever be taken down the ridge we had followed, for we had gone down one side of the creek and up the other finding both extremely steep, and on consulting the map found that there was another creek flowing into the Snowy from the opposite side to Guthega so decided we must have only been following down a creek, although of a fair size, not marked on our map. In making our plans for the morrow it seemed as though we might again be visiting the Mawson for our time was getting short now and if we could not cross the Snowy and the weather was not sufficiently good for us to follow Main Range round via Mount Tait, it would be the only thing left for us, but we thought fate would surely not be unkind for the fourth time. After having cooked a huge damper we lay back glorying in the beauty of "those silver lamps on high" (I have never anywhere seen them so big and white), and listening to "*The Man from Snowy River*" for being so close to the river this was most necessary to give us the right atmosphere – at least I listened for evidently Trevor could not bear to be reminded of any further action in these hills after his delicious little paddle of a few hours previous, as he went sound asleep.

Next morning we were up very early for we did not know where we might finish up that day. When the sunlight came filtering through the trees it made our little camp site look very pretty indeed and as we had not yet taken a photo of "Old Faithful", decided to add this little scene to our collection. How lucky we were to find this spot for it seemed to be the only place on the ridge that was anyways level at all.

It took us about an hour to reach the crown of the ridge but the going was not nearly so difficult as the night before and becoming easier as we neared the top, the scrub getting less thick and not being nearly as steep.

On looking round we discovered, without any difficulty the ridge with practically no undergrowth and very few trees gently sloping down to the Snowy and a little later on Pounds Creek Hut came into view – so it seemed as though we might reach the other side of the Snowy after all. Where we met the river this time, it was much more open, for where we had been the previous night there was a definite gorge with thickly clad banks of undergrowth on either side, and although much more beautiful than this spot, we appreciated very much being here in the more open part.

Reaching the river Trevor immediately tried it out and was soon waving to us from the other side, after crossing back to us he was nearly frozen so cold was the water. While he was assisting Beryl over I managed to secure a snap of them, and then after that he came back to help me across – the water was only a little over my knees but was running very swiftly and was so cold that I was very thankful for the towel Beryl had ready on the other side, but Trevor must have been frozen right through for that was his fifth crossing. Actually at last on the OTHER SIDE of the Snowy – what a hard fought battle we had won.

We did not waste any time in getting round to Pounds Creek Hut where we shed our wet boots and sox, for although the sun was shining quite brightly there was a very cold wind blowing.

This hut consisted of two large rooms, about six beds, a few tables and chairs and instead of the lovely fire places of the past we now only had a little stove but which, of course, would be more economical with the wood. Much to our horrification we found the remains of an old mattress outside alongside what had been a huge camp fire, – some undeserving person had evidently made themselves comfortable and had then been too lazy to put the mattress back in the hut.

Our plan had been first of all to leave the Pounds Creek Hut so as to get to the Chalet before lunch – Trevor was so very anxious to know the cricket scores and while there, of course we could lunch, but after the icy moments spent between the banks of the Snowy Trevor was glad of a short rest, so we decided to lunch and then on to the Chalet later on.

Although I had hated billy hooks and always managed to get tangled up in them, I would prefer them a thousand-fold to those silly little stoves for both cooking and warmth.

After lunch we had a hot bath in a dish we found and then dressing up in our best which consisted of our clean change of clothes, – Trevor, of course, had to shave for such an important event, we set off, for we had a reputation to keep up and although we might only be dressed in khaki shorts and shirts with big boots and old straw hats, we could at least be as neat as those daintily clad people we would meet at the Chalet.

We followed along the Snowy till Spencers Creek which we crossed and found a track on the opposite side which took us up to the road. Just before leaving the last vestige of our “wild” country behind and stepping on to the man-made roads of civilisation, we met a very old man riding a beautiful horse and followed by a lovely dog – these men certainly have good taste where animals are concerned. We talked with him, telling him where we came from and what we intended doing. He said we would find wood in the Seamans Hut and that would be about the best place for us to stay. He told us he had been fifty-six years in this district, returning every year with his sheep.

Only a short distance along the road the Chalet came into view – a pretty building with a red and white striped roof nestling down below the hills. It must look good in the Winter with its gay roof when it is surrounded by snow. Their dining room is the brightest room I have ever seen, with its dark floors and gaily-coloured carpets, curtains, tables and chairs – this room should make anybody feel bright even on the dullest day. Our refreshments consisted of lemonade and chocolate as this was all they had to offer, having no guests at this time. We arranged to cancel the food we had ordered only taking a loaf of bread which the Manageress kindly gave us in place of our two stale loaves which they had used.

Continuing along the road up to the Seamans Hut, it was such a good grade that we hardly noticed we were getting up much higher – Trevor’s nose began to bleed rather badly and being unable to stop it our nurse had to render some first aid.

This is a glorious road winding up and up to the very top of Australia, but even as beautiful as it is, to me there was something missing, in some way it did not possess the appeal of the country we had been passing through for the past fortnight. About two miles past the Chalet we were above the timber line, and as we came to the higher levels we met the snowdrifts again.

At last we saw the Seamans Hut – a little spec away in the distance. This is a well built, comfortable and attractive hut and was erected by the parents of Seaman who lost his life in the snow some years ago. It consists of two bedrooms and a front porch where the wood was stored.

What a strange feeling it was being higher than any other living thing, with the exception of occasional clumps of snowgrass. We certainly would not have any birds to welcome the dawn in the morning for we were miles away from the nearest tree.

There was a great snowdrift opposite the hut and down to the bottom of this Trevor had to go for the water. It was by now bitterly cold outside and although there was a stove in the hut we decided we would not light the fire till it was necessary to start cooking and so save the wood, for it was a very warm hut and there was an ample supply of blankets available, so with our sleeping bags and blankets kept warm till hungry, or perhaps to be more correct, the time of eating for we were always hungry at least Trevor and I were.

Suddenly Beryl remembered something **TREVOR HAD FORGOTTEN ALL ABOUT THE CRICKET SCORES** when at the Chalet, there was a telephone connecting all the main snow huts with the hotel and we offered to ring through for

him, but having waited so long he thought he could exist a little while longer.

The programme for our last day was a trip round the lakes, but it turned out to be wet, windy and foggy, so decided me would only walk up to the Summit.

We had a very late breakfast and then Trevor went off to fill the water bags, also took his soap and towel, etc., anyhow he came back with a “bright shining intelligent face” and hair neatly combed – I think he just did it to prove that he was not such “a dirty boy” after all, but both Beryl and I had “gone off” the breezy iced water standard and also as it was such a long cold trek to the water supply, we decided to complete our toilet with the nice warm soapy wash-up water, but it is just as well Trevor is not poetically inclined as he, being such a nice “old man”, may have told the world some very complimentary things about us in his usual flattering manner.

We had about two miles to walk to the Summit and it was so cold we were not feeling particularly warm when we reached the roof of our land.

I took a photo of Beryl and Trevor as high up in Australia as ever they will climb, and as the mist was enclosing us very quickly, only managed to get one more snap and then all we could see round us was fog, but nevertheless it was a thrill to be at last here, so we sat for some time in the shelter of the trig, enjoying being at our goal at last. Then after having had afternoon tea (the remainder of our dried fruit) and taking the temperature (42) – it certainly seemed much colder than that – returned.

Back at the hut about 4 0'clock It was too early to light the stove so made ourselves comfortable with our sleeping bags and the huts blankets, shortly afterwards we heard a car pull up outside, but did not take much notice for several cars had stopped during the day, but their occupants had not investigated further than the first room, there was a notice on the door saying “*Trespassers will be prosecuted*” and when they saw our gear in the outer room they naturally thought it would be wiser not to penetrate any further, but this party came straight in and when the lady put out her hand to open the door, Trevor opened it from the opposite side – poor woman she nearly fell over and was terribly embarrassed and apologising explained she had met Seaman at the hotel on a previous visit and therefore explained her interest in the hut.

This was the very last night of our holiday so we lit all our candles and made merry till what hour I do not know. I was upbraided next morning for being so unappreciative as to go to sleep in the midst of such a brilliant performance as that rendered by our leader and his deputy.

Saturday morning it was just a little better than usual in bed, but at length Trevor began to worry we would miss the car which we were to pick up at 11 a.m. at the Red Hut in front of the Chalet, or perhaps it was his desire to show us that he actually could cook, even though he had so far failed to keep his “pudding” promise, or most likely of all perhaps he was only feeling the pangs of hunger a little more acutely than usual, for he cooked breakfast and he did not burn the porridge and the bacon was just done to the right turn. So our last meal was a good one, finishing off with our last crust of bread the last of our delicious loganberry jam with its memories of the Mawson Hut.

This morning Beryl was awake very early, that is if she went to asleep at all, – and finished off her tribute to the cattlemen we had met during our trip –

THE RIDERS OF THE RANGE

A long, long way from Sydney town,
The Snowy Mountains rise,
Beside the Great Dividing Range
Their rugged beauty lies.
In winter time these hills are clad
With mantle white of snow,
And only folk on snowshoes then
Can wander to and fro.

But when the summer comes again,
And clears the snow away,
It leaves a land of verdant green,
And tiny flowers gay.
And where the hills are sheltered most
From sun and wind and rain,
Great snowdrifts last the summer thru,
Till winter comes again.

And everywhere flow tiny creeks,
Down hills and through the grass,
Pure crystal streams of melted snow,
As cold and clear as glass.
They shine like silver in the sun,
And slowly wend their way
To where the rushing river foams
In torrents day by day.

The summer days are long and hot,
The nights are icy cold,
The sky above is deepest blue,
The stars shine white and bold.
And to this land the drovers come,
With cattle and with sheep,
Across the undulating plains,
'Cross marsh where waters seep.

We wandered over hill and dale,
Where'er our fancies led,
And there we met these cattlemen,
Of whom we've often read.
And oh what wondrous men they are,
At first quite shy and strange,
With kindly words they welcomed us,
These riders of the range.

They showed us hospitality,
In truest country style,
And gave us shelter from the cold,
And bade us stay awhile.
They live in comfy two-roomed huts,
Right in between the hills,
Where neither road nor mailman comes,
Where flow the sparkling rills.

And now our journey's nearly done,
We've left them far behind,
We feel as though we've left good friends,
The best pals one could find.
And so that we'll remember them
When we are back in town,
We write this verse about them all,
The riders lean and brown.

They know these hills and valleys well,
Such fearless riders they,
They roam the mountains day by day,
Though skies be blue or grey.
They love their horses and their dogs
And make them earn their keep,
By rounding up the cattle herds,
And mustering mobs of sheep.

The first we met was named Frank Yan,
His eyes were darkest brown,
He comes from out Kiandra way,
That tiny sleepy town.
And at the hut at Tabletop,
Where Mr. Nixon dwelt,
We felt as though it was our home,
So happy there we felt.

Dick Haggard and Des Crowe we met,
At Boobee Hut they live,
These boundary riders did to us
Much entertainment give.
They sheltered us one cold wet night,
And shared with us their home,
You'll never meet two finer chaps,
No matter where you roam.

And then we met the two McPhies,
At Greymare Hut one day,
They'd brought their cattle from the plains,
So many miles away.

And with them Des Delaney came,
To help them drive the herd,
His horse's name was Vanity,
'Twas swift as any bird.

And Trigger Angus calls his horse,
While Chidley's owned by Max
At first they three looked rather quiet,
But soon they did relax.
So Des and Max and Angus sat,
And we three wanderers too,
Around the hearth till late at night.
And sang of songs a few.
And while we stayed at Greymare Hut,
Two drovers came our way,
Big William Pendergast was one,
So hearty, bluff and gay.
Don Whitehead was the other chap.
An expert with the whip,
He tried to teach me how t'was done.
And laughed when I did slip.

While staying at the Mawson Hut,
We made a lot of friends,
Tall Lindsay Willis is the one
Who butchers, bakes and mends.
As Jack-of-all-trades Lindsay's known,
He bakes the scones and bread,
And packs the salt out to the lick,
With which the sheep are fed.

Dave Williamson lives there as well,
As Scotty is he known,
He's boss of twenty thousand sheep,
And has some of his own.
A five mile fence two men will build,
Without the aid of map.
Dick Harvey, Ulric Weston, they
Live in the Kerries Gap.

The man that traps the dingo dogs
Came to the kitchen door,
He got an awful shock when first
He saw us on the floor.
He's also quite a patient man,
And shoes his horses well,
Jack Bolton is this trapper's name,
And he good tales can tell.

Now Laurie Adams is the man,
Who drives the bullock dray,
With many shouts and cracks of whip
He gets them on their way.
He has the nicest shyest smile,
And speaks with richest drawl,
Each day he's moving further on,
And welcomed is by all.

Across at Dicky Coopers Hut,
Two more men earn their pay,
They both are boundary riding men,
And ride the run each day.
They meet the sheep and turn them back,
And will not let them stray,
Our gentle Billy Primmer and
Our Andrew Adams gay.

On Spencers Creek just near the road,
We met an old, old man,
He'd lived among these hills he said
For quite a lengthy span.
He talked of back in eighty-eight,
Of how he lived here then,
Although we did not learn his name,
Of him we'll think again.

Though lonely lives they lead out there,
Among the creeks and hills,
They seem to love it just the same,
And have their share of thrills.
Whatever comes is just their work,
They do not think it strange,
To them I give unstinting praise,
The riders of the range.

—oOo—

We were very loath to leave our pretty little home for once we took up our packs it would be “goodbye” in the sense that is understood only by those people who have spent a holiday with one or two friends in a land of “Come Back Soon”.

The sun smiled cheerfully down on us as we took a photo of our last camp site and then wandered off down the road. So much did we enjoy the walk, even road that it was, that we were sorry to see the Chalet come into view. No longer would we need to rely solely upon our own means of travelling – trains and cars would do the rest for us, so changing to our “going home” clothes we waited for our chauffeur to arrive. Although he was an hour late we did not mind for the sun was warm, the view was

good and altogether life was very pleasant, whereas the arrival of the car meant transportation from life to mere existence.

We enjoyed greatly our ride back to the hotel – the scenery was good and once, thanks to our driver, we narrowly missed an accident, some other careless motorist being on the wrong side of the road going round a sharp bend.

We lunched at the hotel, being made very welcome by Mr. Speet who showed us round, and although we enjoyed our short visit there had no desire to stay any longer – how uninteresting hotel life is compared with our own.

Immediately after lunch the car left taking us back to Cooma. At the Creel we caught a glimpse of the Thredbo River and at Jindabyne said goodbye to the Snowy which smiled so sweetly as it meandered on its way, twere hard to believe it could frown and be so harshly forbidding.

On our way home in the train we were informed that the Hotel Kiandra had been burned down and as our informants also knew many of our cattlemen we had very interesting conversation with them, and so our holidays ended with a glorious sunset which we watched from the train window till every colour had faded away.

OUR HOLIDAY

We've seen a land of splendour,
Of ever changing scenes,
A land of many colours,
Of blues and greys and greens.
Of wild, and rugged mountains,
Of undulating plains,
A land of glorious sunshine,
Of winds and teeming rains.
Of swiftly rushing torrents,
Of gentle flowing streams,
A land of fogs and blizzards,
Of softest white moonbeams.

We've drifted among the cattlemen,
And made a lot of friends,
We've talked of sheep and horses,
And lots of odds and ends.
We've sat around the campfires,
And smoked and yarned and sang,
Each time we've thought of leaving here,
It's caused us quite a pang.
We've seen into the hearts of men
And know they're true as steel,
Though rough and ready in their ways,
Their hearts give honest deal.

We haven't dressed in stylish clothes,
Nor gone upon the spree,
We've lived a simple healthy life,
And felt that we were free.
In drab old khaki shorts and shirt,
And battered old straw hats,
In great big clumsy hob-nailed boots,
We've crossed the hills and flats.
We've had our troubles and our trials,
But had our good times too,
Though fog and rain have beat us back
From what we meant to do.

But oh we've seen the splendour of
The mountains and the plains,
The glory of the sunrise and
The beauty of the rains.
And oh the wonder of the sunsets,
The twinkling of the stars,
And the magic of the moonlight,
That soothes and never jars.
In days to come this holiday
We'll hold forever dear,
Such cherished memories we'll have,
And visions bright and clear.

—oOo—

EXPENSES

| | £ | s | d |
|-----------------------------|-----|----|----|
| Train Fare to Cooma | 2 | 1 | 11 |
| Breakfast – Cooma | | 2 | 0 |
| Car – Cooma to Kiandra | 1 | 4 | 8 |
| Yarrangobilly Caves | | | |
| Caves 4/- | | | |
| Car 5/- | | 9 | 0 |
| Xmas Dinner – Hotel Kiandra | | 2 | 6 |
| Car – Chalet to Hotel | | 7 | 4 |
| Lunch – Hotel | | 3 | 0 |
| Car – Hotel to Cooma | | 10 | 0 |
| Tea – Cooma | | 2 | 6 |
| | £ 5 | 12 | 11 |
| FOOD | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| SNAPS – 2/ld., 10/ld. | | 12 | 2 |
| | £ 7 | 6 | 4 |

— END —