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# The Land of the Lyre Bird

A Story of Early Settlement in the  
Great Forest of South Gippsland





THE HOME OF THE LAYE BIRD

WHOLLY SET UP AND PRINTED IN AUSTRALIA

BY

J. C. STEPHENS PTY. LTD.

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MELBOURNE

.. THE ..  
Land of the Lyre Bird

A Story of Early Settlement in the  
Great Forest of South Gippsland

Being a description of the Big Scrub  
in its Virgin State with its Birds and Animals, and of  
the Adventures and Hardship of its Early Explorers and Prospectors  
Also  
Accounts by the Settlers of the Clearing,  
Settlement, and Development  
of the Country



Published for the Committee of the South Gippsland Pioneers' Association

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# PREFACE.

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This volume is the outcome of a desire on the part of the authors to place on record a description of the great scrub that at one time covered a large tract of country in south-eastern Victoria, and which was then known as "The Great Forest of South Gippsland": together with an account of the interesting varieties of bird and animal life that inhabited its wild and scrub-covered ranges before the axe of the settler had destroyed their haunts there for ever. And then, in the words of the pioneers themselves, to tell the story of the clearing and settlement of that land—once the home of the lyrebird and haunt of the dingo—right up to its present-day stage of progress and development.

The idea of writing such a book first originated at a reunion of pioneers representing Poowong, Jeetho, Jumbunna, Korumburra, Leongatha, Mirboo, and the surrounding districts, which was held at the residence of Mr. G. Matheson, of Moyarra, in March, 1913.

At this gathering memories and incidents of the scrub and of early settlement were recalled and recounted, and a suggestion was made that a work of the kind here produced should be written. Some time later it was decided to carry out that suggestion, and a committee, consisting of Messrs. G. Matheson, W. J. Williams, F. P. Elms, A. W. Elms, T. J. Coverdale, W. H. C. Holmes, A. Gillan, J. Western, R. J. Fuller, M. Halford, W. McKenzie-McHarg, H. Dowell, R. N. Scott, W. Rainbow, and A. McLean was appointed to obtain the necessary materials and carry out the work.

By this committee invitations were sent to many of the old pioneers to give their recollections and experiences of the early days; while others, considered specially fitted to do so, were asked to contribute papers of a descriptive or historical nature on particular subjects. From these and a large number of photographic views and portraits, selections for the book were made. But the outbreak of the Great European War, in 1914, has been responsible for the delay in the production of the work.

In the arrangement of the book, historical sequence has been observed as far as possible, and the papers of "experiences" have been placed in order of sequence, according to the arrival of the writers in the district. The photos of pioneers who have written "experiences" appear at the head of their papers; the photos of others who have not done so appear in the groups. But the photos of many of the old pioneers the committee was unable to obtain.

With the exception, then, of an interesting opening chapter on the early history of Westernport, whence some of the settlers came, and which for a time formed a base of operation for many of the pioneers in the hills, the

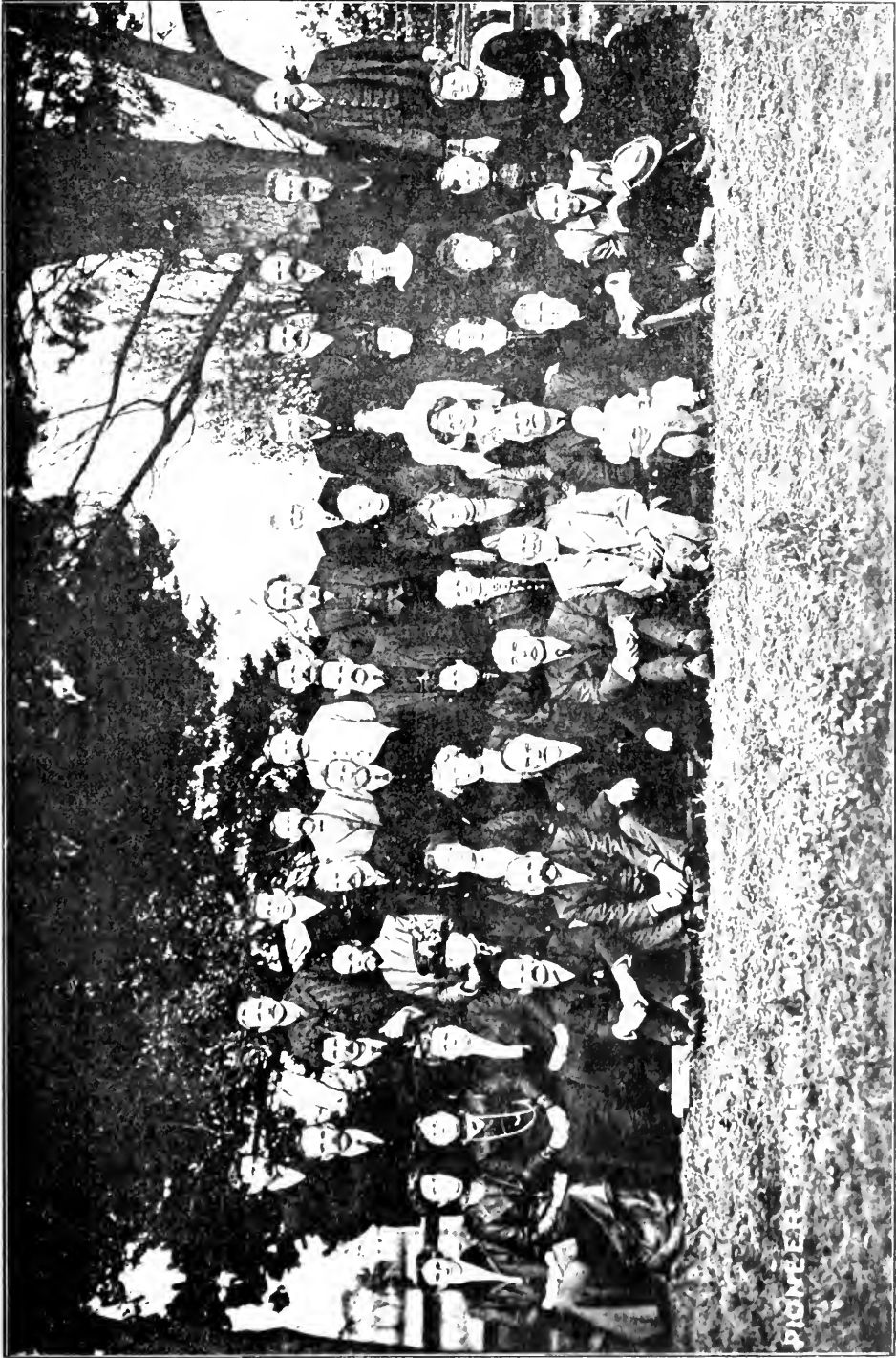
book is the story of the great scrub and its conquests: of its birds and its beasts: of its first explorers: of its track cutters and its coal seekers: and of the settlers and their work. Also of the Great Fire and its disasters, with many interesting and often amusing sidelights on the kind of life that was lived by the pioneers.

In most Australian settlements a majority of the settlers usually came from the land or had some knowledge of country life, but such was not the case here: a large number of them were from the towns—often young people from the families of professional or business men, and with the education habits and general outlook of their class, but with very little of the knowledge required for the life they had chosen. Others again—working men—came in with little or no capital, depending on the “capitalists” around them to provide them with the sinews of war in return for services rendered.

As the undertaking was in a great measure experimental—no similar class of country having been settled and proved—there was room for a great deal of misdirected energy. The land was one of great expectations from the way in which all vegetation grew, and it is probable that many of the settlers imagined at first that cutting the scrub, clearing up after the burn, and sowing the seed would be the extent of their labours: and after that they would only require to watch their stock fatten and drive them to market. But by reason of drawbacks and difficulties unforeseen these rosy anticipations were not fulfilled, and many gave up the struggle, some through ill-health or want of adaptability, and some through lack of resources to hold on through the adverse years. Those, however, who won through have reason to be proud of their work, for the general prosperity of the district and its value to the State are undoubted.

Dealing as it does with the actualities of land settlement, apart from any political or academic theories, the book may be found to throw some light on that much-debated question: showing, as it does, how men with the slenderest capital, or none at all in some cases, but with plenty of pluck and perseverance, have been able to settle successfully some of the most heavily timbered country in the State, and that without any Government assistance whatever.

In the work no pretence has been made at literary style or effect: and no thrilling tales of adventure with wild animals or wild races of men will be found in its pages. The courage born of excitement was not often called forth, but the courage of endurance and determination was required all the time. In its pages, however, will be found a true account, by those who have been in the firing line, of the stern battle waged against nature and adverse circumstances in The Great Forest of South Gippsland.



*Front Row* — Messrs. A. Nicholas, W. Holmes, McCabe, Hansen, Fuller, Dowel, Gillam, J. Rainbow  
*Second Row* — Mrs. F. Ellis, Miss Scott, Mrs. R. N. Scott, Mrs. E. Halford, Mrs. Ellms, son, Mrs. W. J. Williams, Miss K. Scott, Mrs. W. Rainbow, Mrs. Fuller, Mrs. McClurg,  
 Mrs. F. Bunn, Mrs. M. Bunn, Mrs. Canobere, Mrs. A. McLean, Mrs. C. Tulloch.  
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*Back Row* — Messrs. F. P. Ellis, A. W. Ellis, W. Williams, J. Matheson, F. Shender, W. J. Williams, R. Gillespie, A. McLean, W. Rainbow, C. Tulloch, F. Bunn,  
 M. Bunn, Win. McClurg.



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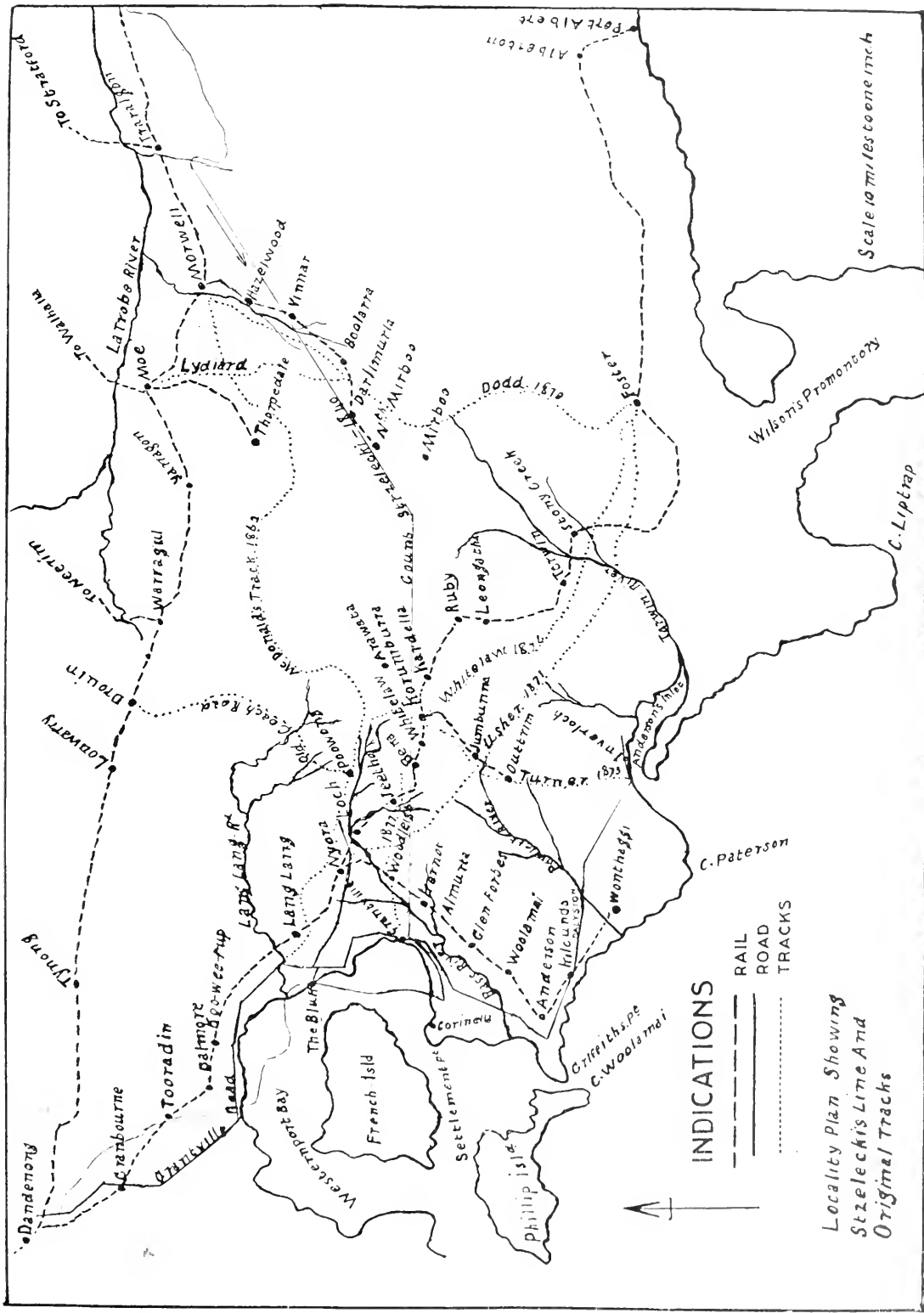
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Scale 10 Miles

**INDICATIONS**

- RAIL
- ROAD
- TRACKS

Locality Plan Showing  
Stezeck's Lime And  
Original Tracks

MAP OF LOCALITY.



# The Early History of Westernport.

MR. A. W. ELMS.

As an introduction to the main story of this volume, a chapter on the history of Westernport should be of interest, both on its own account and as conveying some idea of the surrounding country previous to the solitude of the inland scrub being invaded by the pioneers, with axe and fire, in their endeavour to make homes in the forest.

Acknowledgment has to be made to the works of H. G. Turner ("History of Victoria"), Rusden ("History of Australia"), Labillière ("Early History of Victoria"), and ("Letters from Victorian Pioneers"), collected by Governor Latrobe, and edited by Thos. F. Bride, LL.D., Librarian of the Melbourne Public Library, as the principal sources of the material in this chapter, and their accounts have been followed as closely as possible, after making the condensation necessary for the purpose of this history.

In the year 1797, ten years after the settlement of Port Jackson, as it was not known whether Tasmania was an island or connected with the mainland, Governor Hunter accepted the offer of Mr. Bass, a young surgeon, to explore the southern coastline. Provided with a whaleboat, provisioned for six weeks, and with a crew of six men, Bass sailed from Port Jackson on December 3rd, 1797, and explored the coast from Twofold Bay (which he was the first to enter), round Wilson's Promontory, and on to Westernport, which he reached on January 4th, 1798. He remained there a fortnight, carefully examining the harbour and giving his boat a thorough overhaul. Owing to his provisions being nearly exhausted, he was reluctantly compelled to return, without having discovered Port Phillip, or having definitely ascertained the existence of the strait which now bears his name, though the direction of the currents indicated that such a strait existed. On his return voyage he found on one of the islands off Wilson's Promontory, a party of seven convicts, who had escaped with others from Sydney, in a small vessel, in the previous October, and had been treacherously abandoned on the island by their comrades. Unable to spare them any provisions without risking the lives of his own party, but unwilling to leave them to starve, he transferred them to the mainland, where, finding that two of them were too weak and ill to travel, he took these into his already overcrowded boat, and continued his voyage, after directing the others how to proceed to reach Sydney. These started on their long journey, but were never heard of again. After encountering adverse winds and heavy seas, which more than once compelled him to beach his boat, and wait, sometimes for days, for the weather to moderate, he reached Port Jackson on February 24th, 1798, after an absence of 83 days.

The next to visit Westernport was Lieut. Grant, in command of the "Lady Nelson," a vessel of 60 tons, fitted out for making surveys and discoveries on the Australian coast. Leaving the Thames on January 13th, 1800, the "Lady Nelson" reached Port Jackson on December 16th of the same year, and was the first vessel to pass through Bass Strait. On March 8th, 1800, after being refitted, she sailed, in company with a small craft of 15 tons, named "The Bee," which, however, returned to Port Jackson on



WESTERN PORT BAY.

account of the boisterous weather. The "Lady Nelson" called at Jervis Bay, passed Wilson's Promontory and Cape Patterson, and entered the western passage into Westernport on March 21st. Two small islands near the entrance were found to be covered with seals or sea elephants, some of them nearly as large as a bullock. Some time was spent in exploring, and looking for fresh water streams. Churchill Island was named after John Churchill, of Dawlish, Devonshire, who had supplied Lieut. Grant with a variety of seeds when leaving. The situation and fertility of the island pleased him so much that he conceived the idea of making a garden there. On March 28th he went on shore with a party to clear the ground, and, having burnt a space of about 20 rods, dug it with an old coal shovel, the only implement available. Then several sorts of garden seeds were sown, as well as maize, wheat, peas, rice, coffee, and potatoes. With the trunks of trees a blockhouse about 24ft. x 12ft. was built, and, around this, kernels and stones of fruit trees were planted.

On December 5th, 1801, the "Lady Nelson" again visited Westernport, this time under the command of Lieut. Murray. He proceeded to Churchill Island, and found everything about the plantation as it had been left. The wheat and corn were in full vigour, six feet high and nearly ripe. The onions had gone to seed, but the potatoes had disappeared, no doubt eaten by animals. The grain was harvested and used for feeding some young swans. Thus ended the first attempt at agriculture in Victoria. The "Lady Nelson," after being detained some time in Westernport by bad weather, sailed on January 4th, 1802, and on the following day the entrance to Port Phillip was discovered, but adverse weather conditions prevented the vessel entering the harbour until February 15th.

In the following year (1803) Lieut. Collins was instructed to form a settlement at Port Phillip, in order to anticipate any attempt on the part of the French to establish themselves in Australia. The site of the present city of Melbourne was not chosen, owing to the blacks being numerous and aggressive, and Portsea was selected instead. After existing a year the settlement was abandoned and transferred to Tasmania.

Towards the end of 1804 Lieuts. Robbins and Oxley were despatched in the Government cutter "Integrity" to report on the most suitable place—either at Port Phillip or Westernport—for a post of occupancy, without regard to the future for agricultural settlement. They devoted their time exclusively to an examination of Westernport, and they jointly condemned it. Lieut. Robbins, who had accompanied Mr. Grimes, a surveyor, at the examination of Port Phillip in 1803, considered the most suitable spot was the fresh water river (the Yarra), at the head of Port Phillip, while Lieut. Oxley stated that if Port Phillip was unsuitable, Westernport was infinitely worse, and could never, from any point of view, be considered fit for settlement. From this time, for a period of over 20 years, the whole of what is now Victoria appears to have been deserted, except by occasional visits of sealers and whalers.

Interest was again aroused in the place in consequence of glowing accounts given by Hume and Hovell of rich plains discovered by them in the neighbourhood of what was at first thought to be Westernport, but was subsequently found to be near Geelong, on Port Phillip. On receipt of their report in Sydney and Tasmania, expectations ran high as to the future of Westernport, which was described in the newspapers as the site of the coming metropolis. Added to this was the dread that the French contemplated forming settlements in the unoccupied parts of Australia, and Sir Ralph Darling was instructed



by the Colonial Office to form a post of occupation at Westernport and another at King George's Sound in order to claim the country by right of possession. In pursuit of this policy, H.M.S. "Fly," commanded by Captain Wetherall, and the brig "Dragon" sailed with 20 soldiers, 20 convicts, and a few women, mostly soldiers' wives, on November 9th, 1826. In charge of the party was Captain Wright and Lieut. Burchell, and Mr. Hovell accompanied the expedition to point out the land discovered by him and Mr. Hume. Westernport was reached on November 24th, and on working their way through the Western passage they were surprised to see a number of men clothed in sealskin garments on the beach. These were sealers, originally from Tasmania, who had lived on the island for some years and had built log huts and grown crops of wheat and maize. They stated that the French corvette "Astrolabe" had been in the harbour only a few weeks previously, and had stayed there six days. After a careful examination of the harbour Captain Wetherall decided to form a settlement close to where Corinella now stands.

On December 11th the soldiers and convicts were landed at the mouth of a small creek in the Eastern passage, two miles east of Settlement Point and six miles due north of the Bass River. Tents were pitched, huts were erected, and bricks were burnt for the erection of the more substantial houses in contemplation. Captain Wetherall at first spoke enthusiastically of the harbour, the country and climate, but later on altered his opinion. Captain Wright, who returned to Sydney, condemned the site that had been selected, stating that the very small quantity of good land in the neighbourhood of the settlement, and the sterile, swampy and impenetrable nature of the country led him to believe that it did not possess sufficient capabilities for colonisation on a large scale. Meanwhile Captain Wetherall had cleared a site on a flat topped hill, on Phillip Island, commanding the entrance, erected a flag-staff, and placed a couple of six-pounder guns from the ship in position, over which he formally hoisted the Union Jack and christened the battery Fort Dumaresq. He also cleared a track nearly three miles long across the island, and thus laid the first military road. Hovell made his first exploration eastward towards Cape Liptrap, where he found a considerable area of good land, but an insufficient supply of water, and he also found the coal deposits at Cape Patterson. On his return he made a twelve days' expedition and penetrated the open country between Cranbourne and Westernport. He made a third start, but got entangled in the thickets surrounding the Kooweerup Swamp, and then striking west made his way over the timbered rises behind Mount Eliza until he reached Port Phillip near Frankston.

In January, 1828, as the fear of French occupation no longer existed, the Governor sent the ship "Isabella" to bring the soldiers and convicts back to Sydney. The few free settlers did not care to be left without protection, and the settlement was abandoned.

The following descriptions, taken from despatches, will give an idea how the country appeared to those who visited it at that period:—

Captain Wetherall, in a despatch dated 27 12 26, writes:—"The mainland from hence (Phillip I.) to the Bass River is hilly, of moderate elevation, thinly timbered, the soil rich and well clothed with luxurious grass, but from the broken nature of the country fit only for grazing."

Captain Wright states, in a despatch to the Colonial Secretary dated 26 1 27:—"Commencing at the Eastern Passage, a chain of hills runs in a N.E. direction nearly parallel with the Bass River, and at a distance of three

miles from it. This chain, for six miles from the coast, is thinly wooded and well clothed with grass. It then assumes a rugged and broken character, with thick impenetrable scrub. The country between the foot of the ranges and the Bass River is low and marshy, with the exception of a few spots of meadow land. The north bank of the river down to within one mile of its mouth is fine open meadow land, with patches of tea-tree swamp. It bears, however, evident marks of being subject to inundation."

About this time the attention of people in Tasmania was drawn to both the Port Phillip and Westernport districts as suitable for stock raising, and applications for grants of land and offers to purchase were sent to the authorities at Sydney, but were refused, as it was, at that time, considered unwise to extend settlement. In 1826 T. Smith, of Hobart, made an application for land at Westernport, and in the following year G. T. Gellibrand and John Batman asked for a grant, and proposed to ship 1500 to 2000 sheep and 30 head of superior cattle, beside oxen, horses, etc., making altogether a value of from £4000 to £5000, but both applications were refused.

The next record we have of Westernport is by Captain Hart, master of the schooner "Elizabeth," of Launceston, owned by John Griffiths, and generally used for whaling and sealing on the coasts and islands of Victoria and Tasmania. It seems that during the slack seasons in those industries the men were employed in collecting wattlebark. Captain Hart states:—"We left Launceston in the latter part of November, 1833, having on board a team of bullocks, a dray, and some 20 men, besides the crew. We entered the heads of Westernport in the beginning of December, and anchored under Phillip Island. We saw the place where a settlement had been, ruins of houses and work-shops, with broken crockery, etc. The land was bad, and there were no wattle trees. We stood up the harbour, and were surprised to find the deep-water channel marked with beacons on each side. We anchored abreast of the ruins of another settlement, and landed the teams and men. Here were the remains of houses and gardens, grass was very abundant, and the wattle trees the largest I have ever seen. We were employed for a fortnight collecting bark, and saw traces of numerous cattle, and shot a white bull. Finding the bark so abundant, I loaded the schooner, and proceeded to Sydney, leaving the shore party behind to collect more bark. I sold my cargo to a ship bound for London, and chartered the ship "Andromeda" to load bark in Westernport for London, putting on board Mr. Thoria, my mate, as pilot and supercargo. I proceeded to Launceston to give an account of my trip to the owner and others. I spoke in high terms of the land and the grass, giving the size of the mimosa trees as proof of the one and the condition of the cattle as the result of the other. When, however, the "Andromeda" arrived to get her clearance at the Customs House at Launceston, the fame of the place was spread far and near by the returned barkcutters. Many of these were farming men, born in Tasmania, and they at once saw the advantages of this part beyond that of their own country. I brought vast quantities of black swans, which we pulled down while moulting. The waters of Westernport were covered with these birds. The "Andromeda" arrived in London in April, 1835, and the cargo sold at £13 a ton."

In the year 1835 another attempt was made from Tasmania to settle in the Westernport district. John Pascoe Fawkner arranged with others, and sailed from Georgetown in the schooner "Enterprise," of 55 tons. Bad weather was encountered, and after being buffeted about for three weeks within sight of Tasman heads, Fawkner was so prostrated that the captain returned and

put him ashore. The others reached Westernport, and spent a week of cold, rain and discomfort in exploring it. Amidst the chilly winter surroundings the place looked so discouraging that they abandoned it as unfit for settlement.

In a report on the Port Phillip Settlement dated 10<sup>th</sup> 36, the following notes appear:—"In the Spring of the year, when the whaling season is over, it is the custom of the men belonging to this establishment (Henty's at Portland) to employ themselves in collecting mimosa bark. Little appears to be known by the residents of Port Phillip relative to the country about Westernport, but the impression seems to be that there is at the latter place but a small extent of available country compared with the former. On our way to Port Phillip, being caught in the Straits by a gale of wind, which compelled us to put into Westernport to repair, I took the opportunity of visiting the country where the settlement formerly was (about eight miles from where we anchored), and walked for some miles through as rich a country as I have seen. It was thickly clothed with kangaroo grass upwards of three feet high, and on mentioning this at Port Phillip was informed that in this district there are excellent cattle stations, but the ground is considered too wet for sheep."

In the following year R. L. Murray, of Dyrrryne, Tasmania, applied to the Colonial Secretary of New South Wales on behalf of a party of gentlemen and himself, asking to be permitted to purchase from the Crown 50,000 acres of land at Westernport, to be selected fairly as regards water and every other frontage, taking good and bad together. For this they offer to pay 5/- per acre, and to pay the Government a quit rent of 10/- per 100 acres towards defraying the expense of a Government establishment for their protection.

In 1838 an application was made to the Colonial Secretary of New South Wales by a party of eight gentlemen from Hobart for permission to work the coal deposits known to exist at Westernport. They intended running a steamer between Tasmania, Port Phillip and Adelaide, and wished to establish a coaling port on the way, as they considered the vessel could not carry enough coal to last from Hobart to Adelaide and back again. This raised the question whether the monopoly of coal granted to the Australian Agricultural Co. for a period of 31 years from 1830 included the Westernport seams. Many letters and documents passed in relation to the question; but ultimately Sir George Gipps was ordered to take such measures as would ensure to the settlers of Port Phillip the benefit of the mines.

At this time considerable activity was displayed in taking sheep from Tasmania across to Port Phillip for the purpose of stocking the stations being established in the Western District. The story of one disastrous shipment will give a picture of Westernport at the time. On January 17th, 1836, the "Norval" sailed from Tasmania for Port Phillip with 1100 sheep on board. A severe gale was encountered, and the vessel was hove to for three nights and two days, during which time about 115 sheep perished, and the greater portion of their food was destroyed. The stock left had to be fed on flour and water to keep them alive. As the vessel was under demurrage at £1 per day until she anchored in Westernport to load wattlebark, and there was a great risk of the sheep dying before they could be landed at Port Phillip, it was decided to land them at Westernport and drive them across to the settlement at Port Phillip. Attempts were made both at Sandy Point and Phillip Island to find suitable spots for landing the sheep, but without success, and eventually they proceeded ten miles further up the bay and landed 1009



SETTLEMENT POINT.—Clump of Pines marking Site of First Settlement.



SETTLEMENT POINT

-sheep. When landed, the sheep endeavoured to drink salt water, and gave much trouble through breaking away. At night they were camped on a promontory of about 300 acres with a neck of land about 150 yards across. The shepherds left in charge, instead of camping on this neck of land to watch the sheep, camped on the beach, with the result that next morning the sheep were missing. Several days were spent in looking for them, and the carcasses of about 280 were found in a muddy saltwater creek. Some of the party remained to trace the missing sheep, while others walked to the settlement on the Yarra, which is described as consisting of about half a dozen huts. Eventually only about 80 sheep were recovered, the remainder falling a prey to the wild dogs or the natives. A curious point in connection with this expedition is that in one account Mr. Mudie, who had charge of the stock, is reported to have been drowned by the capsizing of a boat while landing the sheep, while another statement describes him as staying behind to look for the lost sheep after some of the party had started on their walk to Melbourne.

About July, 1839, Robert Jamieson, who had a station extending along the eastern shores of Port Phillip, carted a whaleboat to Westernport, and explored the country surrounding it. In consequence he took possession of the run at the head of the Bay, known afterwards as Yallock, and brought his stock there. He remained there until the year 1845. He states that for a considerable time after occupying Yallock, the only settlers beyond him were Messrs. Anderson and Massie, who had an agricultural settlement on the Bass River, and sent their produce to market by water, employing for that purpose small vessels of from 20 to 30 tons burden. The blacks are spoken of as being friendly, except on rare occasions, when the Gippsland natives attacked the Westernport tribes. On one of these raids they attacked the station, and did considerable damage, but no lives were lost.

The limit of settlement, in Latrobe's early days (1836-1840), had not extended much beyond Dandenong, though a few scattered settlers had taken up country for stock in the neighbourhood of Cranbourne and around the margin of Westernport Bay. Their eastern progress had been arrested by the dense and apparently interminable forests covering the country below the ranges, in attempting to avoid which they fell in with a succession of treacherous swamps heavily covered with an almost impenetrable thicket of tea-tree and rotting vegetation.

Another note states that:—"Beginning at the east entrance of Westernport Bay, the first station was Massie and Anderson's cultivation, known as the Old Settlement station, from the circumstance of there having been a settlement formed there some years previously (though not at the exact spot they occupied), and afterwards abandoned. At that period (1841-1843) a considerable number of wild cattle, supposed to have been the increase of some that were left when the original station was abandoned, were running in the neighbourhood. About two miles from them was Armstrong, who succeeded John Thom (mentioned previously as mate of the 'Elizabeth'), who succeeded Massie and Anderson. About five miles from Armstrong were Cuthbert and Gardiner (original settlers), whose cattle came from the Red Bluff, 12 miles up the bay, about 1842. Then came Fitzherbert M. Mundy (original settler) at the Red Bluff, and about seven miles from him Martin, who succeeded Robert Jamieson. About four miles from him Robert Jamieson (original settler). These were all the settlers at that time on the east side of the saltwater inlets. The natives seldom visited the country on the east side except on war excursions."

In 1839, McMillan, the discoverer of Gippsland, reached Omeo, and formed Nublammungee station, on the Tambo river. From a favouring prominence the plain country could be seen, and in January, 1840, piloted by two natives, McMillan and several others, reached it. Following close upon them was the exploring party organised by James Macarthur, and led by Count Strzelecki. The following account, for which I am indebted to Mr. W. F. Gates, M.A., Inspector of Schools, gives a detailed account of this journey through Gippsland:—

"In 1840 Strzelecki agreed to lead a party south from the outlying settlements on the Murrumbidgee to Wilson's Promontory. His intention was (he tells us) to strike south from the crossing place on the Murrumbidgee, along the meridian of 148 degrees E., to bisect the dividing range in latitude 37 degrees S., to resume the southern direction and follow windings of the range to Wilson's Promontory, then to re-bisect it in the direction of Westernport." He did not carry out this programme as regards Wilson's Promontory.

Among his party were James Macarthur (of Camden Park), Riley, and Charley Tarra, an aboriginal of Goulburn, New South Wales, who proved a most useful member.

Leaving Macarthur's station, they followed the valley of the Upper Murray for about 70 miles to the foot of the ranges. Travelling was difficult, the ridges to be crossed were numberless and steep, and often the instruments had to be carried on the backs of the explorers for safety. "But," says Strzelecki, "on the 15th of February I found myself on an elevation of 6510 feet under a lucid sky, 7000 miles of country in view. The mountain reminded me forcibly of a tumulus erected in Krakow over the tomb of the patriot Kosciusko." He, therefore, named the roof of Australia Mount Kosciusko.

Thence, he travelled south, and came, unexpectedly, on Lake Omeo. The existence of this lake had been known before, but not its exact location. He ascended Mount Tombo (presumably Mount Tambo). Lake Omeo, he thought, might have been the laboratory for the volcanic action, evidences of which were around.

From this place he followed the course of the Tambo valley down. In this part of his journey he was but following the route of Angus McMillan, who had, a few months before, crossed Gippsland from north to south, and had just established a cattle station on the Tambo. The manager of the station gave Strzelecki full information of McMillan's route, and conducted him on the way a day's journey.

Following the Tambo, the party came to a long lagoon, which was connected with a fine lake, bordering on the sea (Lake King). Turning west, they followed the shore of the lake till the Mitchell river was met. This stream the party crossed, carrying the packs, for safety, on their shoulders, somewhere about the present site of Lindenow. They were now in totally unexplored country, and they followed a south-westerly course almost on the line of the Bairnsdale railway, to the neighbourhood of the present site of Maffra. Here they spent three days exploring the surrounding country. Lake King was so named by Strzelecki after Captain King, R.N.; the Thomson after Deas Thomson, then Colonial Secretary, and two small streams after Riley and Macarthur. The last two names have not been retained. Gippsland was so named by Strzelecki in honour of Governor Gipps.

Travelling through a comparatively easy country, they kept a south-westerly course towards Corner Inlet. The "willow" scrub that fringed the "Machonochie" river gave them a good deal of trouble; but, after two days a crossing was found; and a few miles more brought them to the La Trobe river, which they struck about the vicinity of Rosedale. This river was named after Governor La Trobe. On the Count's map it is wrongly drawn as flowing direct into the sea. On this part of the country Strzelecki notes "wide and deep valleys to the north-west, and hill and ranges to the south and south-west, innumerable creeks, and the exuberant vegetation of a moist, untouched soil." Their troubles were beginning.

From the La Trobe, the course to Corner Inlet was resumed for a little. But the horses were becoming quite exhausted, the country was getting exceedingly difficult, and the provisions were very short. The ration was but one biscuit and a slice of bacon per day. The Count was a thin wiry man, and constant travelling and scanty fare did not seem to trouble him much; but it was otherwise with the rest of the party. The travelling got worse and worse: steep hills and gullies, covered with almost impenetrable scrub, had now to be faced. At a point near Boolarra, the horses, instruments and a large collection of specimens were abandoned; the attempt to reach Corner Inlet had to be reluctantly given up. The question now was, how to save the lives of the party. It was decided to make for Westernport.

The distance from Boolarra to Westernport is about 50 miles, and it took 22 days. All the Count says of this remarkable feat he puts into a single sentence:—"The direct course which necessity obliged us to pursue led us, during 22 days of almost complete starvation, through a scrubby and, for exhausted men, a trying country, which, however, for the valuable timber of blue-gum and blackbutt, has no parallel in the colony." Those who know what a piece of Gippsland virgin scrub is like will easily realise that no more difficult task could be set an explorer than to traverse the 50 miles from Boolarra to Westernport. To make matters much worse, the Count believed in a straight course, and he would not tolerate the least deviation from it. He laid a course west by south from Boolarra to Korumburra, thence due west to Corinella, and he and his party passed over the South Gippsland hills on these straight lines. The wonder is that any of them lived to tell the tale. On some days they toiled hard to cover a mile or so. They had to force their way up and down steep hills clothed thickly with large timber and undergrowth. The Count did not spare himself; he was often in front literally throwing himself against the tangled scrub, and forcing a path through. Sometimes they actually progressed for chains on top of the scrub by felling some of the tall straight saplings in the direction they were going and scrambling along them. Riley's gun and Charley Tarra's bush lore saved them from starvation. Native bear was the principal fare; often it had to be eaten raw, for everything was too wet to burn. Probably, but for Charley, the whole party would have perished.

But the Count's straight lines, so difficult to travel, brought them at last to the Port. On the 12th of May, the torn and famished men reached a settlement on Westernport Bay, about the place now called Corinella. The settlers, who probably came from Tasmania, had occupied the dilapidated buildings of Governor Darling's abandoned settlement. They readily succoured the exhausted explorers, and took them by boat to Robert Jamieson's station at the head of the Bay. This place is now called Tooradin. Thence, via Cranbourne and Dandenong, they easily reached Melbourne.



On the journey the Count had noted the occurrence of gold, silver, iron, and, in Gippsland, coal on the Riley River and near Westernport. He bade good-bye to his "fellow monkey-eaters," and soon after left for Tasmania, where he did further exploration work. Macarthur returned to Sydney; Riley and Charley Tarra found a much easier, though more devious, way back to Gippsland. They found one horse alive, and recovered the valuable collection of specimens."

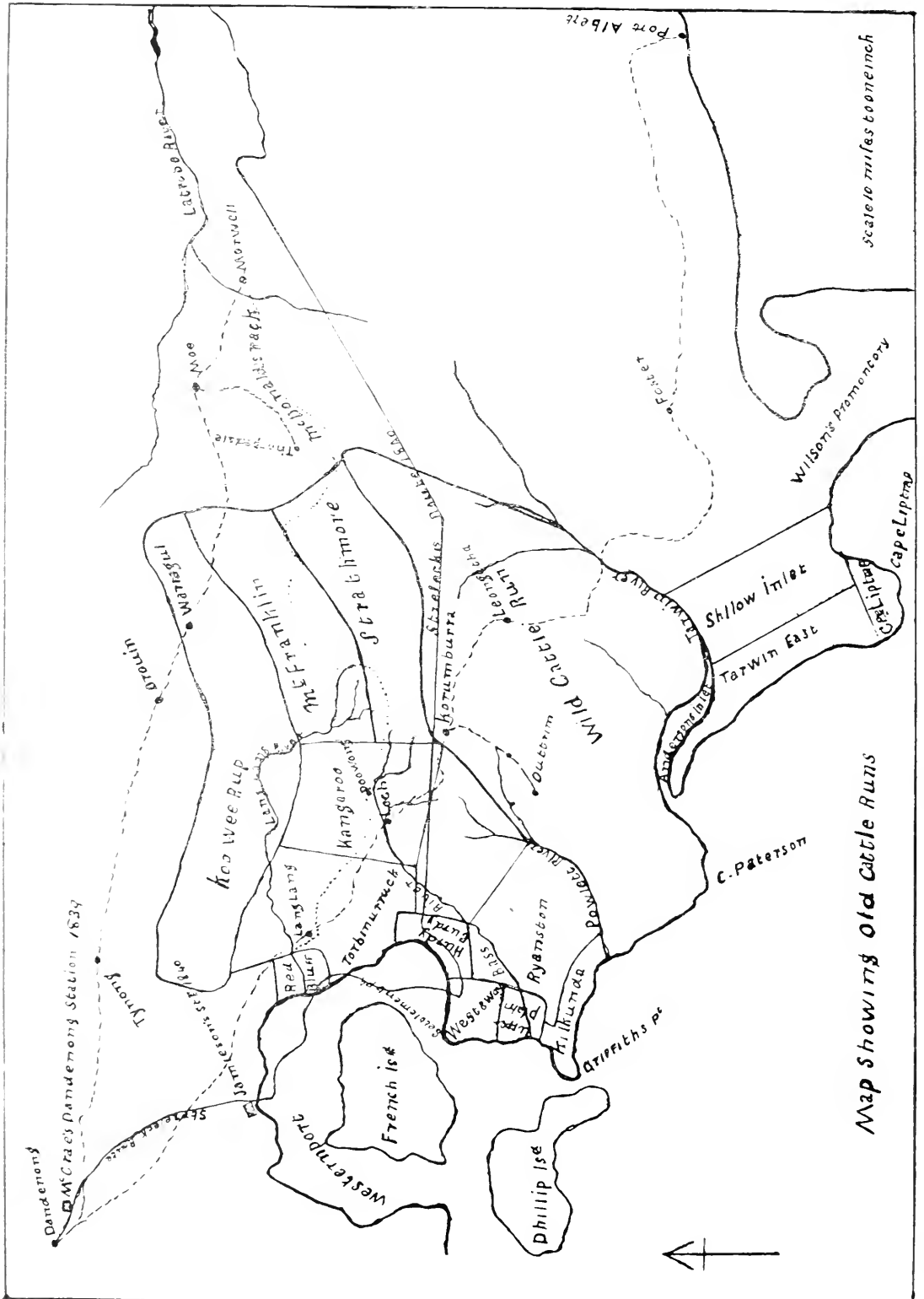
About the same time a party of settlers from Melbourne chartered a vessel, the "Singapore," and discovered and named Port Albert, and the Albert and Tarra rivers. They sent the vessel back to Melbourne, and remained behind to explore and occupy the country. They were astonished to find McMillan's tracks, which they followed to the La Trobe. They found and named Lake Wellington, and then turned their faces towards Melbourne, starting with 10 days' provisions, and with packhorses, which they had to abandon after the first day. Then they shouldered their packs, and with great difficulty travelled about four miles a day for 14 days (during 10 of which it rained without ceasing). Forcing their way through the scrub on the 15th day they reached lower and less broken country, but still scrubby, and with water sometimes up to their knees. Their provisions were exhausted, and they were forced to live on "monkey," pheasants and parrots. At length, on the 18th day, they reached Westernport, thoroughly exhausted, suffering severely from the cuts obtained while forcing their way through the scrub, and with their clothes and boots completely torn off them. They found Surveyor Smyth surveying the coast, and were conveyed by boat to Jamieson's station. Subsequently A. Brodribb (one of the party) and others discovered a more practicable road to Gippsland through the forests between the Kooweerup Swamp and the head waters of the La Trobe River, and there eventually a road was made.

In 1841 the young colony was overtaken by a commercial panic, caused principally through the flocks of sheep increasing beyond the local demand for them for stocking up new country, and as a consequence their value declined to the value of the fleece. Consequently the boiling down industry was established, and prime sheep were boiled down for tallow, and the refuse used as manure or wasted. This state of affairs gave the young settlement a great check, from which it had barely recovered, when the discovery of gold diverted all attention in an entirely new direction.

During these and the succeeding years Westernport seems to have had a quiet, uneventful existence, cattle grazing being the principal industry, and a few small settlements were formed round its shores.

In 1873 an attempt was made to develop the coal seams at Kilcunda, and a railway line was made to Grilliths Point, where a jetty was made for the purpose of loading coal into vessels, but the venture was not a success, and was soon abandoned.

This brings us to the time when the story of the pioneers of the scrub country really starts: the rich scrub country in the ranges was entered via McDonald's Track, and from the Gippsland railway line on the north, and from Lang Lang and Grantville on the west, gradually extending, until those in the advance of each wave of settlement met, with surprise, those who had come in from an entirely different direction.



# Old Pastoral Runs.

T. J. COVERDALE.

The map here given, which is taken from the original plans, shows the pastoral runs into which the scrub country dealt with in the book was nominally divided before it was taken up by the settlers who cleared it. It also shows some of the old runs round Westernport and on the south coast. The names of the lessees and the dates of the leases are taken from the "Government Gazettes" of the time, which, together with the plans, were very kindly placed at my disposal by Mr. J. G. Saxton, of the Original Plan Room, Lands Office, Melbourne.

The scrub country referred to comprised, roughly, the northern half of the Wild Cattle Run; the greater portion (western side) of the Strathmore and Mt. Franklin runs; the Kangaroo run, and the unnamed tract to the south of it; the south-eastern half of the Torbinurruck run; and the northern half of the Ryanston run.

Looking at the map, one would think that all this country had at that time been used for grazing, but such could not have been the case, as only the open country on the outer fringe of the group of runs above mentioned was sufficiently open to have been used for that purpose. It will be noticed on the map that three of them—the Strathmore, the Kangaroo, and the Mt. Franklin runs—are traversed by McDonald's Track; and McDonald, who was cutting this track in the same year as that in which these runs were taken up—1861—states in his field notes that the country was then covered with "dense scrub and fallen timber." Rather impossible cattle country! Probably these runs were taken up only on paper as a "spec." at a time when it was thought that McDonald would find a main road to Sale by way of that country, as two of them were taken up only once and soon forfeited.

The largest, and also the first, to be taken up was the Wild Cattle Run, so called from the presence of wild cattle, the progeny of some that had strayed years before from the first settlement at Corinella (afterwards abandoned); and from the "Government Gazette" of October 11th, 1818, I take the following from among the leasing notices:—"No. 89.—Matthew Gibson. Name, Wild Cattle Run. Estimated area, 256,000 acres. Estimated carrying capacity, 610 head. Bounded on the north by the Strzelecki Range; on the west by the Powlett or second river, which bounds Messrs. Thompson's run; on the east by the Tarwin, which bounds Mr. Bourne's run; on the south by the sea. N.B.—This run has been transferred to Mr. Sheridan, in whose name the lease will accordingly be made out." But, note the carrying capacity—a beast to 400 acres! Much of the same run will now not only carry, but will fatten, a beast to three acres. But, of course, the great bulk of these runs were too scrubby to be made use of at all.

In 1866 this run was divided into the North Powlett and the South Powlett runs, and held successively by Richard Felan and others till about 1886. By that time most of it had been alienated, or was in process of alienation, from the Crown, and at present—1918—all that is left of it is a

tract of poor country along the south coast, leased in large blocks to settlers in the hills for winter grazing. On the south-west corner of this old run stands the town of Wonthaggi, famous for its coal mines and its strikes. The Kangaroo and the Mt. Franklin runs were each taken up in February, 1861, by J. Conolly and J. Johnstone respectively, and the Strathmore in July, 1861, by James S. Lavender.

Of the coast runs, the Torbinurruck, the Red Bluff, the Upper Plains, and the Westaway were taken up by S. Martin, Moore and Martin, Michael Pender, and James Cuthbert respectively in December, 1850. The two former runs were transferred to Mickle Bakewell and Lyall in July, 1851. In the early sixties, Fehan and Kidd took up the Kilcunda run, and in 1869 John McCarty the Ryanston run.

In 1865 the Westaway was held by Mr. James Scott, the pioneer of the McDonald's Track country, which he had heard of while living at Westaway.

Previous to the inauguration of the leasing system in 1848, most of the Westernport country was occupied in roughly defined areas under what were called "grazing permits." Messrs. Massie and Anderson were among the first to make permanent settlement there, the family of the latter being connected with the district for nearly eighty years.



# The Scrub.

MR. T. J. COVERDALE.

Before attempting to describe the scrub itself, it might be of interest to take a brief glance at the physical geography of the country on which it grew, together with its geological formation, rainfall, and climate.

The scrub country then—sometimes called the Great Forest of South Gippsland—started within a few miles of the east coast of Westernport, and extended eastward for some sixty or seventy miles, with a varying width of thirty to forty miles; covering an area of roughly two thousand square miles of rangy fertile country, with the exception of a few small patches of sandy messmate country in the south.

To the southward it was bounded by the bayonet grass plains and open timber country that runs along the south coast for many miles east of Griffith's Point, and which extends inland some ten or fifteen miles. To the north it was bounded generally by open messmate country. To the eastward also was open forest country, mostly blue gum, white gum, or messmate.

The ranges rise somewhat abruptly in places from the southern plains, but more gradually from the west. To the north they fall away into undulating country. The McDonald's Track Range is the backbone of the country, and runs through it on an easterly bearing, trending northerly as it gets further to the east. This range rises gradually as it makes eastward, attaining an altitude in some places of about 2000 feet. The whole country, indeed, rises towards the east, and becomes much more rangy and broken; some of the ridges run into a height of three or four hundred feet above the creeks and gullies that divide them.

From the main range of McDonald's Track, spurs are thrown off, which in turn throw off other spurs, forming the water-beds of the numerous creeks and gullies with which the country is intersected. Streams running east or west have the steep bank on the north; and streams running north or south have the steep bank on the west, so geologists tell us. And, generally speaking, you will find a flat on one side of streams of any magnitude, and a range on the other. But in some of this country nature has left out the flat and placed steep banks on both sides, rising almost from the water's edge. To the westward, however, the country is much less steep, being in some parts merely undulating.

The country is drained to the westward by the Bass and the Lang Lang rivers falling into Westernport; to the southward by numerous tributaries of the Tarwin and the Powlett rivers; while the tributaries of the Latrobe, the Morwell, and the Moe rivers drain its northern slopes.

The geological formation is carboniferous sandstone or mud rock. This rock, on exposure to the atmosphere, soon moulders down to a soft earth. On the rock lies a light clay two or three feet in thickness, on which lies a grey friable soil, six inches to a foot in depth, occasionally more. In places the soil will go down on to the rock, where the latter will be found in a decayed, broken-up condition for a foot or so in depth. On the flats the soil is much lighter than on the hills and of a closer nature. On the hills it is darker and more friable. Through want of drainage the flats grow a good deal of



HAZEL SCRUB, FERNS AND BIG TIMBER  
The Ferns in the Foreground are 16ft. in Height.

sedge-grass and rushes, but the pasture is always green on them in the Summer. On some of the larger creeks and rivers, however, the flats are almost black and the soil of a stronger nature.

Immense worms, up to six feet in length, tunnel the soil of the flats and in a lesser degree of the hills also; while yabbies (land crabs) cover the ground in wet places with mounds six inches to a foot in height, through which their shafts run down to their reservoirs two or three feet below. These mounds disappear to a great extent when the land becomes grassed and stocked.

All through the country occasional dykes of dolerite rock occur, where the soil is always richer. Near Leongatha there is a volcanic formation with some very useful basaltic stone for road-making. All through the scrub country patches of reddish brown soil occur superimposed on the ordinary sedimentary rock of a like reddish colour. Although this is not held to be so good for grass as the grey soil, especially in the Summer, it is considered better land for cultivation.

A study of the rainfall in relation to the clearing of the scrub is interesting, and shows a decline in the former, which, if not owing to the clearing of the country, was certainly co-incident therewith. At the time of making this analysis the longest complete official records for the district—and indeed for the whole of South Gippsland, with the exception of Port Albert—are those of Outtrim with 30 years, 1883 to 1912 inclusive; Poowong with 29 years, 1886 to 1914 inclusive; and Kardella with 28 years, 1887 to 1914 also inclusive. Their average annual rainfall records for those periods are respectively: Outtrim, 42.75in.; Poowong, 45.57in.; and Kardella, 46.40in. Their elevations above sea level at recording stations are approximately: Outtrim (earlier records), 800ft.; Poowong, 630ft.; and Kardella, 520ft. The Outtrim records, however, cannot be used for comparative purposes, as the gauge was removed from the location where the earlier records were taken to one some distance away and of much lower elevation; the later records showing an extreme decline from those of the earlier years. The Poowong and Kardella records, however, have no such disturbing influences, and these alone are used in the following analysis showing the decline in the rainfall since the clearing of the scrub.

As the year 1914 was exceptionally dry, being the year of the great drought elsewhere, and when only 30.77 and 30.63in. fell at Kardella and Poowong respectively—about 16.00in. below their average annual rainfall—it has been left out in this analysis, as its inclusion might be considered as unduly or unfairly affecting the result in a comparison showing the decline of the rainfall since the clearing of the scrub. The mode of analysis adopted is to take the average annual rainfall for the first five years of the record at each place and compare it with the last five years; also in the same way to compare the first ten years with the last ten years. The Poowong record dealt with is from 1886 to 1913, and that of Kardella from 1887 to 1913, both inclusive. No comparison is intended between the two places, which are about 12 miles apart; simply the records of both are used for the same purpose, and the result is as follows:—

Poowong.		Kardella.	
First 5 years . . . . .	53.81 inches	First 5 years . . . . .	52.99 inches
Last 5 years . . . . .	41.21 ..	Last 5 years . . . . .	43.73 ..
First 10 years . . . . .	49.41 ..	First 10 years . . . . .	49.86 ..
Last 10 years . . . . .	44.63 ..	Last 10 years . . . . .	44.80 ..

It will thus be seen that there is a big difference between the annual rainfall of the first five years and that of the last five, and a lesser difference between that of the first and the last ten years. This is no doubt owing to the fact that there was a much larger proportion relatively of uncleared country in the first five years compared with the last five than in the first ten years compared with the last ten. This seems to indicate that the decline in the rainfall followed the clearing of the scrub; but curiously the decline has been greater both absolutely and relatively in the Winter months than in those of the Summer. This was probably owing to the fact that the lighter and less frequent rains of the Summer left a smaller surplus of moisture to be conserved by the scrub for later evaporation: so the removal of the scrub would make less difference to the Summer than to the Winter fall.

The following monthly averages are given to show the distribution of the rainfall over the year, both in the scrub period and in the cleared period, the latter in this case including the latest available records at the time of making this analysis, viz., to 1914 inclusive, and are as follow:—

	Poowong, 1886 to 1914.		Kardella, 1887 to 1914.	
	First 10 years.	Last 10 years.	First 10 years.	Last 10 years.
Jan. . .	2.33 inches	1.40 inches	2.34 inches	1.43 inches
Feb. . .	4.79 ..	1.24 ..	1.65 ..	1.66 ..
Mar. . .	2.69 ..	3.22 ..	2.70 ..	3.34 ..
April . .	3.54 ..	3.41 ..	3.97 ..	3.66 ..
May . . .	4.32 ..	4.29 ..	4.31 ..	4.02 ..
June . . .	5.99 ..	4.31 ..	6.10 ..	4.31 ..
July . . .	5.22 ..	4.72 ..	5.89 ..	4.65 ..
Aug. . . .	4.97 ..	4.10 ..	5.20 ..	4.40 ..
Sept. . .	4.93 ..	4.63 ..	5.22 ..	4.85 ..
Oct. . . .	5.29 ..	3.69 ..	4.67 ..	3.60 ..
Nov. . . .	3.83 ..	3.16 ..	3.73 ..	3.36 ..
Dec. . . .	4.45 ..	3.75 ..	4.03 ..	3.70 ..

From this it will be seen there is a good Summer rainfall, and although the Winter fall may appear excessive, the formation of the country prevents it becoming injurious to the pastures. In all the monthly records covering 32 years, if we include Outtrim, there was only one month, and at only one of the stations, where no rain was recorded. That was in February, 1898, the month and year of the Great Fire, when the Poowong gauge scored a "duck." Poowong also holds the record for the heaviest fall of rain in one month with 11.01in. in June, 1889.

While the decline in the rainfall is remarkable, and was coincident with the clearing of the country, we still have a heavy fall, evidently attributable to other influences than that of the forest. These are probably air currents, the elevation of the country, and its hydrographical position. With the ocean a few miles to the southwards, and Port Phillip and Westernport to the westward, and no high land intervening, our elevated country is the first to intercept the moisture-laden breezes from these waters, and cause precipitation. The forest being encouraged to grow by the generous rainfall merely increased it by adding some two hundred feet or more to the height of the moisture-arresting ranges; while the mass of scrub and shaded soil beneath acted as reservoirs for the moisture, which being given off gradually under the influence of evaporation, kept the atmosphere in a condition favourable to precipitation. That this condition existed and was caused by the presence of



the scrub is indicated by the large amount of misty weather and drizzling rain that prevailed before the country was cleared, but which do not occur now to nearly the same extent. As showing the humidity of the atmosphere in the scrub, leather articles, if not in constant use, would quickly become green mouldy, and matches soon became useless if not kept near the fire; while clothing taken from boxes would steam visibly when placed before a fire.

The climate is not very cold in the Winter, though sharp frosts often occur. In Summer the temperature seldom reaches 100 degrees in the shade. At intervals of years light falls of snow occur, and in 1895 a very heavy fall was experienced, when upwards of 12 inches of snow fell. Nothing like it has been known since, and it must have been very exceptional, as, lodging in the foliage of the scrub, it smashed a lot of it down or tore it up by the roots, a circumstance of which there was no evidence in the scrub of its having occurred for a very long time previously.

With this short account of its environment, I will endeavour to give the reader some idea of what the scrub and the big timber growing in it were like. Briefly, the scrub itself was, generally speaking, a dense growth of many kinds of trees—hazel, musk, blackwood, wattle, gum, saplings, etc., etc.—growing so thickly together as to present the appearance of a forest of bare poles, with foliage at the top and a rack of undergrowth and rubbish in the bottom; while all through it grew a forest of very large eucalyptus trees. But in some places it would be nearly all blue gum or blackbutt saplings with little or no big timber; in others nearly all hazel with big blue gum timber; or again it would be principally musk with blackbutt and blue gum timber. Through most of the country the scrub was a mixture of all kinds, with hazel predominating. Taking the big timber first, it consisted of blue gum (*E. globulus*), White gum (*E. rubida*), Blackbutt (*E. regnans*), Messmate (*E. obliqua*), Swamp gum (*E. Gunnii* var. *acervula*).

The blue gum, whose commercial value is well known, grew principally on the hills, but more or less all over in the big timber country. The white gum, which was often piped and eaten with white ants, grew mostly on the flats and slopes, but often on the hills as well. The blue gum and white gum attained a height of 150 up to 200 feet, with a diameter of three to six feet.

The blackbutts were usually found on the flats and creeks in the West, and were not very large there; but in the East they grew all over the country, and in places were very thick on the ground. They sometimes attained a height of nearly 300 feet, with a diameter of 8 to 10 feet; exceptional specimens would measure a chain round at the butt. They often threw out enormous buttresses, running into the tree at twenty feet up the trunk; and their red-brown butts shading into a smooth, green trunk running up perhaps 150 feet without a branch, formed a distinctive feature in much of the big scrub country. They were largely used for palings, rails and pickets, also for sawn stuff; but the wood was no good in the ground. The swamp gum also grew on the flats, and was a worthless timber. In the heart of the scrub there was very little messmate—sometimes not a tree to 100 acres—but towards the fringe there was a good deal. It was very good for posts and rails, lasting well in the ground, but not much good for milling purposes. The white gum is a useful timber for sawing or splitting, but useless in the ground.

In some places there were also very fine old blackwoods, two or three feet in diameter. These were usually found in gullies or in other places that had been missed by Black Thursday's fire, but through much of the scrub the



BLANKET LEAF, HAZEL AND MUSK,

big blackwoods were all dead and fallen down, and the species represented only by tall thin saplings. In the early days a certain amount of matured blackwood was exported, but there was never a large amount available; some of it called "fiddleback" blackwood was beautifully marked, the grain being wavy in appearance with longitudinal ripples of alternately dark and light shades, and of great commercial value.

A casual glance at our big timber would have given the impression that it was very valuable, and there were really some very fine belts of timber through it; but the greater part of it was entirely useless for milling purposes. This was the verdict of two experts—the late Mr. Quiggin, sawmiller, and his viewer, with whom I went through a great deal of the forest in the early days in search of milling timber. They said the timber was nearly all too old and too much eaten by white ants; though further towards Westernport he found enough to keep a mill going for a few years.

None of the big timber had any taproot, but a great spread of laterals below the surface, and when a tree uprooted it tore up a mass of earth like the side of a house. The blackwoods and lightwoods, however, had very pronounced taproots. The quantity of big trees to an acre varied from practically none in the sapling country to a hundred or more in some of the musk and the hazel country to the eastward. But a large proportion of the country would average from ten to twenty trees to an acre. Strange to say, in the big timber country there was no eucalyptus growth between the very old trees and comparatively young saplings.

Coming now to the scrub itself, that tremendous jungle forty to sixty feet in height that filled in the spaces between the great trees, a wonderful variety of flora was to be found in it; and often all the species many times repeated could be found on a square chain.

As it will no doubt be interesting to know in years to come, when it has all vanished, what were the different kinds of timber and plants the scrub was



WITH SWORD-GRASS BOTTOM.

composed of, I have compiled a list of the principal species, for the botanical names of which I am indebted to Mr. Baker, classifier at the Botanical Gardens, Melbourne, and which are as follow:—

Hazel . . . . .	Pomaderris apetala	
Musk . . . . .	Olearia argophylla	
Lightwood . . . . .	Acacia implexa	
Blackwood . . . . .	Acacia melanoxylon	
Dogwood . . . . .	Cassinia aculeata	
Silver Wattle . . . . .	Acacia dealbata	
Gum Saplings of all Eucalypti	(previously mentioned).	
Blanketwood . . . . .	Bedfordia salicina	
Sassafras . . . . .	Atherosperma moschatum	
Mountain Ash . . . . .	Panax sambucifolius	
Orangewood or Victorian Laurel . . . . .	Pittosporum undulatum	
Lemonwood . . . . .	" "	variegatum
Bonewood . . . . .	" bicolor	
Supplejack (purple-and-white bell-shaped flower) . . . . .	Tecoma Australis	
Supplejack (White star-shaped flower and fluff)	Clematis glycinoides	
Supplejack (white-tinted Star-shaped flower) . .	Clematis aristata	
Clover shrub . . . . .	Goodia lotifolia	
Tea-tree . . . . .	Melaleuca oricifolia	
Christmas Tree . . . . .	Prostanthera lasianthos	
Kangaroo Apple . . . . .	Solanum aviculare	
Woolly Victorian Hemp (sometimes called Currant-bush) . . . . .	Plagianthus pulchellus var. tomentosus	

Australian Mulberry ..	<i>Hedycarya angustifolia</i>
Native Holly .. . . . .	<i>Lomatia Fraserii</i>
Prickly Currant bush ..	<i>Coprosma Billardieri</i>
Wild Hop .. . . . .	<i>Goodenia ovata</i>
Prickly Mimosa .. . . . .	<i>Acacia verticillata</i>
Swordgrass .. . . . .	<i>Lepidosperma elatius</i>
Wiregrass .. . . . .	<i>Tetarrhena juncea</i>
King fern .. . . . .	<i>Alsophila Australis</i>
Creek fern .. . . . .	<i>Dicksonia Antarctica</i>

Of the smaller ferns there were the bracken, harefoot, cat-head, coral, maiden-hair, and staghorn, with innumerable varieties of other ferns, lichens and mosses. Although the bracken became such a nuisance on the clearings, it was never much in evidence in the scrub, the latter being too dense for it to thrive in. There was also a species of convolvulus, known as wild ivy, which, though seldom seen in the scrub, came up in thick patches on the burn, dying out when the grass came.

Of the different scrub timbers above mentioned the hazel was the most largely represented. It grew to a height of twenty to thirty feet, with a straight brown stem, bare to within a few feet of the top, when it developed a rather bushy head. The leaves were like those of the English Hazel, with clusters of small brown sweet smelling flowers. The diameter of the stem might be from one to six inches, occasionally reaching nine. The wood was tough and good to burn.

The blackwoods and lightwoods, although beautiful umbrageous trees naturally, were here mere saplings fifty feet or more in height, with no more top on them very often than you could carry under your arm. Their small sweet scented yellow blossoms resemble the wattle, to which family they belong. The wood of the blackwood is dark, heavy and very hard, with a thin sapwood. That of the lightwood is lighter in colour and in weight; also the foliage is lighter in colour, and the sapwood thicker than that of the blackwood. The diameter of each was from two to twelve inches. Only silver wattles grew in the scrub, and the circumstances of their surroundings impelled them also to shoot upwards, in bare unpicturesque poles, to secure "a place in the sun." On the flats, however, and by the creeks where they mostly grew and had more room, they sometimes developed quite a respectable head. Their sweet smelling blossom made the scrub fragrant in the early Spring. There were patches, however, in the scrub that had evidently escaped fire for many years, where there were very large blackwood, wattle, and musk trees, also hazels.

The sassafras was a very handsome tree, resembling the blackwood at a distance, but never growing so large. This pretty tree declined to be forced into the shape of an unpicturesque sapling by self-assertive neighbours, and was usually found in the more open scrub where it could show itself to advantage. Bushmen used to flavour their tea with its bark, and smoke the dry leaves with their tobacco. It was not plentiful in the scrub, and very little of it grew west of Whitelaw's Track.

The musk was universal. In its favourite habitat it was of branching habit of growth, reaching a height of twenty feet with a stem twelve inches in diameter, growing out of a large knob the size of a ten gallon pot very often. In thick hazel country the main stem was generally dead, with a lot of crooked shoots growing out of the knob. Its light green pointed oval

shaped leaf about three inches long, with its flat clusters of greyish white flowers, gave out its distinctive perfume very strongly on a wet day.

The pittosporums resembled certain varieties growing in our parks and gardens. The large leaved one (*undulatum*), commonly known to bushmen as orangewood, often grew into a very ornamental tree, about twenty feet high, with a stem of very tough wood, but soft to cut when green, six to twelve inches in diameter.

The blanketwood was a crooked ugly stick about three or four inches in diameter, brittle in character, with no grain, and remarkably heavy. It threw out short branches, very little more than twigs, on which grew in tufts its peculiar leaves about eight inches long and two broad, smooth and dark green above, and soft and white and woolly underneath, hence the name. In gardens it often grew to a very pretty shrub.

The dogwood was another unsightly stick that sprawled about aimlessly to a height of ten or twelve feet, with very small pale green leaves and a small pinkish coloured flower. Though not much in evidence in the virgin scrub, it came up sometimes after a burn almost like a crop of wheat. Falling on the bare necks of the men who were cutting it, the leaves often caused a painful itch.

The mountain ash was little more than a shrub, and attained a height of ten or fifteen feet. It had large dark green leaves deeply scalloped, and the bark was of a yellowish green colour: it looked very pretty in the open scrub, where it had room to develop. It is difficult to know how it came to be called "mountain ash": it is not a eucalyptus, and therefore no relation to the useful gum tree of that name, of which none grew in this forest.

The black hazel, variously called mintwood, pencilwood, and Christmas tree, when it came up as second growth, grew to a height of fifteen to twenty feet in the scrub, with a rough dark stem, and pointed dark green leaves on a few scraggy branches near the top. It had a small white flower, and often came up very thickly after a fire.

The clover shrub was a small insignificant shrub with a clover shaped leaf, and grew eight or ten feet high. It favoured the open messmate country most.

Gum saplings grew more or less all over the country, and the red brown stems of the blackbutts made the only note of colour in the generally sombre tones of the scrub in which they grew.

Prickly mimosa and tea-tree were also found on the flats along the big creeks, but not to any extent in the big scrub country.

Tree ferns grew everywhere, and in great profusion in the gullies and along the creeks and rivers, frequently attaining a height of twenty to forty feet, with a magnificent spread of fronds. In some of the gullies they grew in thick groves with little else besides, and it was a very pretty sight to look down on one of these from an elevation. It was like looking down on a green sea, out of which rose a few shapely blackwoods or wattles, with room here to spread: while a dark leaved pittosporum contrasted well with the paler green of the fern fronds. And shooting up above everything else, for forty or fifty feet without a branch, the pillar-like trunks of the great gums supported their dark mass of foliage like a canopy over all.

The supplejack, though found all through the scrub, flourished best in hazel country on the ridges. It attached itself to the young scrub in early life and by it and with it rose in the world. Sometimes it would twist itself round a branch of its host so tightly as to cause it to adopt a spiral form of growth. (These distortions were much valued by bush "Johnnies" for walking sticks—the more spirals the higher the value.) The scrub foliage being all intermingled at the top, "jack" wandered about through it at will, binding half an acre of it together sometimes, and covering the tops in the spring time with patches of sweet smelling flowers or tufts of white fluff; a long cable-like stem dangling from the top and lying in coils on the ground. The unfaithful scrubcutter coming on one of these "combines," and thinking more of pay day and the nearest pub, than of his obligations as defined by his agreement, will not wait to "completely sever each piece of scrub from its respective stump," but going through it will nick a few of the biggest and then send a blackwood or gum sapling into the bunch, trusting to "jack" to drag the lot down. If most of it, being uncut, remains green and blocks the fire—well, he won't be there to hear about it.

The swordgrass constituted a large proportion of the undergrowth throughout the whole of the Gippsland scrub, and often came up afterwards on the clearings, costing a lot to grub it out. It grew from three to eight feet in height, with dark green leaves about an inch broad, having cutting edges. It had a flag-like habit of growth, and its long leaves rose from the ground in bunches, a long flat stem in the centre carrying a brown tuft of seeds. A cut from one of the leaves was severe, but on pulling up a leaf a brown sticky substance was found adhering to it at the bottom, which if rubbed into the wound soon healed it.

The wiregrass was a peculiar growth, having a hard wiry stem no thicker than a piece of packing twine, with lanceolated leaves a quarter of an inch in width and six inches long growing out of the joints along the stem; the latter was very rough, and made a nasty bleeding scratch if drawn roughly across the skin. It grew many yards in length, and the annual growths accumulated in great bunches round the butts of the scrub on the flats or in other damp places where it grew, until it formed mounds six or seven feet high and as many in width. Where the scrub was a bit open on a flat it often covered the ground a foot or so deep and formed good feed for the cattle in the Winter.

Space would not permit to describe all the different varieties of ferns, lichens, mosses and parasitic growths that flourished on the trees, on rotten logs, on the tree ferns, and on one another. Imagine all these trees and plants growing thickly together in rank profusion and you will have some idea of what the Gippsland scrub was like. A vertical section of it seen where scrub cutting was going on would reveal, in most of it, a face of some two hundred feet in height showing several "strata." In the bottom was a substratum of swordgrass half concealing a network of fallen saplings and logs; then a stratum of bare stems, with another above it of thick scrub tops, out of which shot up the trunks of the great trees bearing aloft their masses of dark foliage as a final layer.

Entering the scrub for the first time, what impressed one most was the wilderness of thin saplings all around—

"Stems planted close by stems defy  
The adventurous foot—the curious eye,  
For access seeks in vain."

Then the size of the big timber would strike you. It looked larger in the scrub, where it compared only with saplings, than on the clearings where the trees compared with one another. Often you could only see one or two of their immense trunks at a time looming up through the scrub, as any object was hidden from view at a chain or less away. The next thing that struck you especially when you attempted to move was the terrible tangle of logs, fallen saplings, swordgrass and rubbish of all kinds that impeded your progress and covered the ground entirely from sight. With arms crossed in front of you, to save your face from the swordgrass, you bored through the ruck till you struck a log or a fallen sapling, and, mounting it, you might not touch ground again for a hundred yards or so, stepping from one fallen sapling to another three or four feet off the ground. It was a "chuck in" to strike a big fallen tree lying in the right direction, as you would get easy walking on top of it. A friend of mine enjoying this luxury one day "fell in" very literally. He had walked along from the head to the butt on an old "downer," and was looking for a place to get down, when a piece of the rotten old shell gave way, and in he went. It was a big tree, and he was a small man, and he was up to his neck in it, nor could he get out without assistance. Further on you would enter perhaps a piece of more open scrub with cathead bottom where cathead ferns covered the ground: here it is better going, but if it has been raining you will soon be wet over the knees with their water-laden fronds. Or again you might strike a patch of hazel country which was the easiest going of all, with nothing in the bottom but leaves and small rotten sticks and a few logs. You can see better where you are going here, and if you like can have an "alpenstock," and a fresh one too, at every stride, for the hazels stand thickly enough for that, and are just the right size to grasp with the hand: but every time you touched one on a wet day a shower bath followed. Often as you paused in a gully, a mysterious sound of running water would be heard where no water was to be seen: this was the billabongs—underground watercourses—whose rushing waters "murmured far below."

In Winter the scrub was dark and gloomy and generally dripping with moisture from frequent rains and mists, while the atmosphere was heavy with a dank earthy smell peculiar to the scrub. In Spring-time and early Summer the scene was changed. All the scrub flowered and gave out a beautiful perfume, and a very sweet scent arose from it also when it was cut in the Spring-time. In the deep gullies, the sun penetrated through breaks in the scrub and woke to life shades and colourings that had died during the long Winter. The old tree ferns covered with mosses and stag-horn had then donned their Summer suits: and after battling through a piece of rough scrub it was pleasant to "have a spell" beneath their shade in some thick grove beside a creek and listen to the incessant hum of insect life that was always heard in the scrub on a Summer's day. Although fairly numerous, the birds were mostly a silent throng in the winter: but you would not be sitting long before an inquisitive hen lyre-bird would come hopping and fluttering round in the scrub at a safe distance, uttering a sharp shrill enquiring note and peering at you from first one point of vantage and then another. Like the same sex in a higher organisation they are exceedingly curious, and will often run great risks just to find out things. The male bird is very shy, and disappears at the crack of a twig: he seems to know the danger his much-coveted tail exposes him to. All through the scrub you will notice where they have been scratching for food in the bare spots, and also the mounds on which the old fellow dances. What his idea is in this performance, no one seems to know: some

say it has an amatory significance, others that it is merely a piece of vanity to show off his tail; but it is quite likely he is just indulging in a bit of a "tango" on his own for the love of it. You will also notice a few woodpeckers running up the bare stems of the saplings and dabbling here and there at invisible insects, while the little scrub wrens (fussy birds) are for ever hopping about and running under and over things. Occasionally you will hear a whip bird cracking a joke with his mate, who never fails to appreciate it. The whistling jackass also contributes a few liquid notes, while his big brother laughs at everything. High over head an old bear growls out a few inconsequent remarks and gurgles down into silence; keeping very quiet you will probably notice a peaceful porcupine walking thoughtfully along a log in search of a precarious dinner, thrusting an enquiring nose into the cracks after unwary insects. But there is one sound you will not often hear, and that is the cry of a dingo; these vocalists, like other musical artists, usually reserve their orchestral performances for the night season. By this time if the ants, mosquitoes and leeches have not suggested it sooner, you are ready for another start; and looking about for an opening you plunge once more into the scrub on a two hour's scramble to the camp only a couple of miles away, scaring the wallabies as you go.

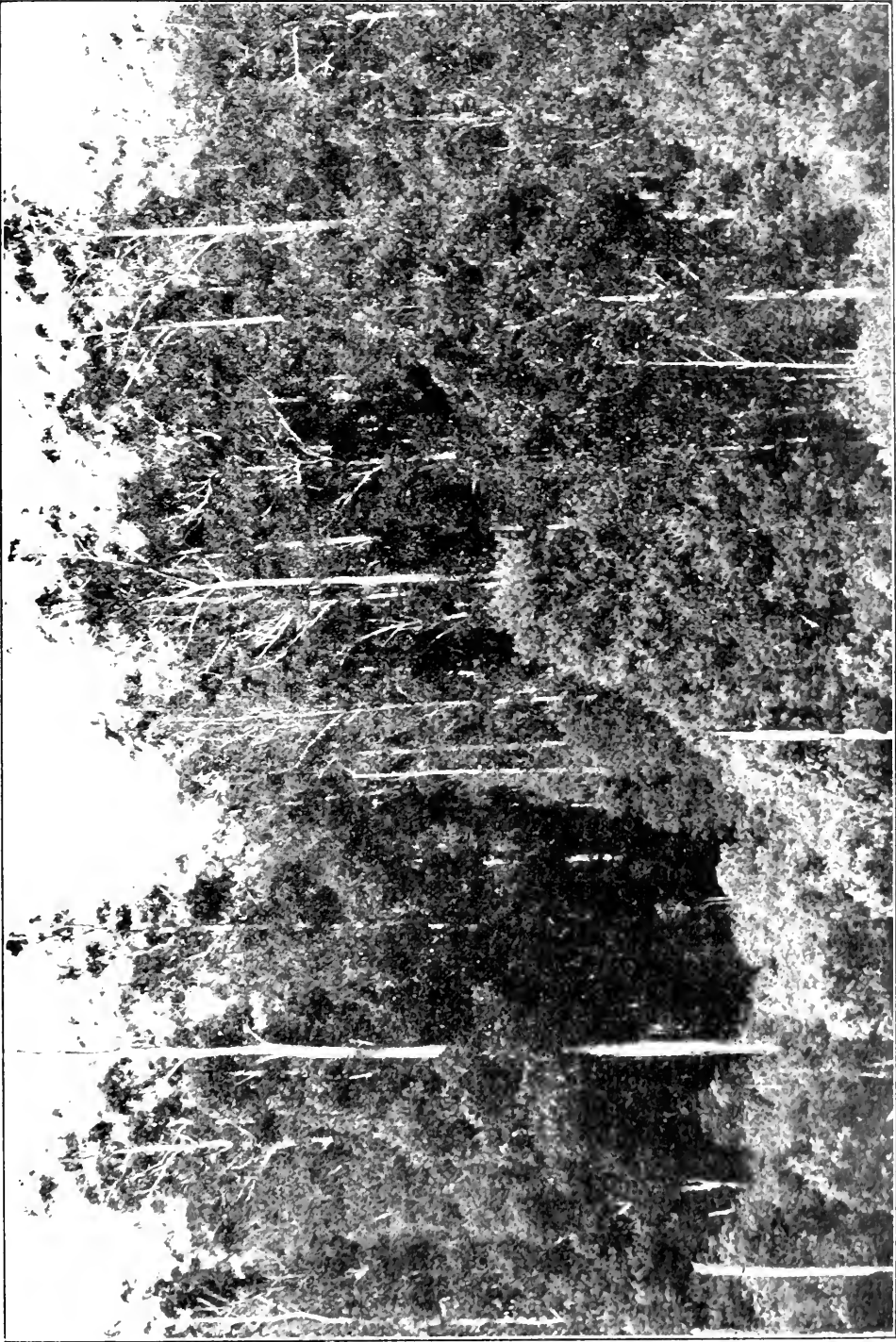
I have spoken of three different kinds of scrub that distinguished certain tracts of country, viz., the hazel, the musk, and the sapling scrub. The hazel scrub on the ridges consisted almost entirely of hazels with a few blackwoods, lightwoods, wattles and gum saplings, also king ferns amongst it; the big timber was chiefly blue gum with a little white gum, or in the East blackbutt. On the flats along the big creeks and in the gullies there was less hazel, and a bigger proportion of wattles, blackwoods and gum saplings, with creek ferns; and white gum, blackbutt and swamp gum in the big timber. The bottom, on the ridges in this scrub, was either clear with patches of cathead ferns in places, or it would have a bit of swordgrass in it; on the flats there was wiregrass. This country was more easily cleared than any, as the cutting was light and the stuff burned well, costing altogether about 25/- to 30/- an acre to clear. But a lot of litter fell afterwards from the big timber. The hazel scrub usually, but not always, grew in the lighter soils.

The musk scrub was found in the red or chocolate soil mostly, and consisted of big musk trees with pittosporum of the varieties mentioned and big blackwoods, with a few wattles and hazels scattered through it. It cost rather more to clear than the hazel, as you seldom got as good a burn, and it cost more to pick up. The big timber was generally blackbutt and blue gum. The bottom was usually open and good to get about in — generally cathead ferns—but in places there was a good deal of swordgrass, with wiregrass in the flats.

The sapling scrub was the most imposing of all and by far the most costly to clear, costing from one to two pounds to cut, and up to four pounds an acre to pick up and burn off. It grew on stronger land than the other scrub, and consisted very largely of gum saplings running up from sixty to a hundred and twenty feet in height, and up to three feet in diameter. There was also a good deal of blackwood, lightwood and wattle, with a little hazel and musk. There was practically no big timber standing, but a great deal lying down, and the bottom was very rough, with fallen spars and swordgrass or wiregrass.

In the messmate country bordering the big scrub there was usually a growth more properly deserving the name of scrub, and consisting of prickly





SPRUCE FOREST

mimosa, clover-scrub, tea-tree, grass-tree, gum-saplings and ferns. Along the creeks and rivers rising in the big scrub country, similar scrub to that on the hills grew for some distance along their courses, and also a good deal of tea-tree.

The whole of the foliage of the big scrub, except the gums, of course, was edible to stock, and was sometimes felled for them; but they often made a good living in the scrub on their own account during the Winter where there were good wiregrass flats.

The life history of this great scrub has a certain fascination for many who take an interest in the mysterious operations of nature in the floral world. Why parts of the scrub should be almost exclusively hazel, others musk, and others saplings, while in others they all grew together, was accounted for by some in the quality of the land. But then we know that nature so often changed her floral decorations after a fire that one never could tell whether the scrub you found growing in a particular locality was there by accident or by primeval choice. Burn off one kind of scrub, and frequently another variety came up. After a burn in sapling country I have seen a dense crop of hazel and blackwood come; after hazel, gum saplings often came, or sometimes a thick growth of blanket-wood; while dogwoods come up everywhere. But nothing ever came again after a good burn from the roots or butts of the original scrub: it was always from seed in the ground, except in the case of musk. I have never known that kind of scrub to come again from the seed, but a little of it would often shoot again from the old butt. I have known sapling scrub reach a height of seventy feet in fifteen years and hazel scrub over twenty feet in little more than half that time. Wattles often came very thickly on the flats after the fire, and sometimes the black hazel, often called pencilwood. The scrub seed will live in the ground for many years: a good deal of it is of the acacia species, which germinates quickly after fire.

Practically no young scrub was to be seen in the virgin scrub. This was accounted for by the fact that very little sunshine ever reached the ground, and that the vegetation was already too thick to allow any young plants to grow, which to my mind indicates a simultaneous growth after fire. All the scrub plants starting at scratch, so to speak, then, covered the ground so thickly that by the time they began to cast seed it had no chance either to germinate or to grow, till the next clearance by fire came along, when another crop would come up.

Many have queried as to whether Black Thursday's fire passed through the country. I think there is no doubt it did, and that it was only one of a succession of similar fires that occurred periodically, every forty to sixty years, according as conditions were favourable. And those conditions were, the accumulation of sufficient debris to carry a fire, an exceptionally hot Summer, and a blackfellow's fire. Long before the scrub arrived at maturity, the law of the survival of the fittest would begin to operate, and a large quantity of the scrub would die, causing an accumulation of dead stuff in the bottom. Then, in a long dry Summer a large proportion of scrub leaves fell, and this, together with the leaves and accumulations of dry bark of the big timber, prepared such conditions as only wanted a match or a blackfellow's fire to start a conflagration such as swept through the standing scrub in 1898. There is abundant evidence in the charred trees and stumps of fire having passed over the country at remote and also at comparatively recent dates. At varying distances underground I have come on charred wood, charcoal and burnt earth, indicating a succession of fires extending over a

long period. Also I have found remains of charred blackwood saplings about six inches in diameter in the midst of the virgin scrub, where no fire could have been since the scrub grew. These must have been charred in some fire of comparatively recent date—probably that of Black Thursday—or they would have rotted away and disappeared.

The late Mr. E. C. Holmes once told me that he saw these ranges burning on Black Thursday, and one who was over them soon after said he had then found them recently burnt, except for a few patches, as far as he could see. These patches were probably the places where we found the big green blackwood trees and large scrub of other varieties when we came, which even a light fire would have killed. In other places the blackwoods were all saplings. From the presence of so much big green timber in the scrub, some people argue that there could have been no fire there during its lifetime. But a fire through standing scrub, unless very fierce, as occasionally on ridges, kills very little of the big timber, especially of the blue gum, which has a very thick bark, and often escapes largely even in a burn where the cut scrub makes a much stronger fire. The white gum and blackbutt would suffer most on the ridges; and McDonald, who passed through here on the ridge ten or eleven years after Black Thursday, mentions "large white gum timber nearly all dead" with dense scrub, from where Poowong now stands, for thirty miles eastward along the track which bears his name. After that, he says, the big timber was all green, and the scrub larger and more open. Probably this is the point where Black Thursday's fire stopped in that particular locality.

In the big sapling country the big timber was all down, and had been so for many years when the settlers first came—less than twenty-five years after Black Thursday. Therefore it could not have been killed on that day, but must have suffered in some fire long anterior to it. And although gum saplings run up to a great height very rapidly, it takes years for them to thin out so as to allow the survivors to develop in girth. When they grow very thickly together, it will often take them thirty years to attain a diameter of eighteen inches. So that any country having saplings of a diameter of two to three feet when the settlers came must have been burnt long before Black Thursday. Probably the scrub was never all burnt at one time, but some portions in one fire, and others in another many years later.

The blacks were no doubt the originators of the fires, whether accidentally or otherwise. Perhaps the strategy of some sable Napoleon during the operations of a Summer campaign may have demanded the burning of portions of the scrub to embarrass the enemy, or to cover a masterly retreat; and so a conflagration would be started. That blacks were numerous here at one time is pretty conclusively proved by the number of their stone tomahawks that were found in the scrub. I found one in particular which was beautifully made; it was about eight inches in length with a cutting edge of nearly three inches perfectly shaped. For two inches back from the edge the face was polished and smooth as glass. Hollow mounds of clay about two feet in height, open at one side and plastered smooth within and burnt red were also found, and were supposed to be blacks' ovens.

In "Letters from Victorian Pioneers" also it is mentioned that the Westernport blacks were sometimes harried by certain fierce hill tribes, and it is very probable that these latter were some of our beggars. On one occasion some of the Westernport blacks, bent on revenge, obtained gums and ammunition from a settler there on the pretence of getting lyrebirds for him



HEAVY BLANKET LEAF SCRIBE.

("blackbirds" really they were after), and then, together with others of the tribe, went on a campaign against their ancient foes. The campaign, it appeared, was eminently successful, and returning a few days later with many succulent joints off the enemy they celebrated a good old-fashioned cannibal banquet. It was said to have been quite a "gorge us" affair, at which with the fine taste and appreciation of the noble savage they did not omit to toast their late enemies, who though absent maybe in spirit were more or less present in the flesh.

Given the presence of blacks, the periodical burning of the scrub is accounted for. Some people, however, maintain that the natives would not live in the scrub, but I fail to see why they should not: it was warm in the Winter and cool and shady in Summer, and there was always plenty of good water to be obtained, while wallabies, bears, opossums, wombats and fish provided abundance of food. It is also held by some that the evidences discovered were only evidences of their presence there at a time when the country was all open forest, or of the natives merely passing through the country while the scrub was there. As to the first contention, the tomahawks found were all on the surface, showing they could not have been there any length of time or they would have been buried. And as to the latter, the articles found were far too numerous to have been dropped by occasional visitors.

There is a legend of some stockmen riding into these ranges from the Southern plains some sixty years ago and finding them open timbered country. But there is no evidence to show how far north these men went. On the fringe of the scrub when we came first there were patches of open country on the points of some of the ridges running down to the plains, and at other places also where occasionally they cut deeply into the scrub from the south, and the riders may never have been beyond these. Count Strzelecki found no open country when he passed through here some seventy six years ago, nor did any subsequent explorers.

On the tops of the ridges in the scrub very rare patches, to the extent of perhaps an acre, have been found quite free from scrub, and grassed with silver tussocks. These are regarded by some to be what evolutionists would call "vestigial relics" of a once open forest. Certainly they are remarkable, as no grass ever grew in the scrub. But we know that in all forests these bare places occur, and may be accounted for by the absence from the soil of some element necessary to forest growth. In another part of the State I know of a belt of golden wattle in the midst of which there is a bare spot: all around it the wattles have grown and died and grown again many times for the last fifty years, but never one grows on that spot—only grass.

Certainly Dame Nature, with apparent whimsicality, will sometimes remove a forest that has existed for ages, and leave a bare plain where once it stood, as in New Zealand; or cover with scrub country that was open within the memory of man, as in Queensland. And so in ages past, grown tired of the landscape here, she may have covered once naked ranges with the vast mantle of a Gippsland forest. But man has rudely torn it off, never more to be replaced; and the gaunt skeleton of its once mighty bulk alone remains in the forest of dead trees that stands bleached and white, a monument alike of the great scrub and of the industry that cleared it.

# Animal, Bird, and Insect Life in the Scrub.

MR. F. P. ELMS.



A NATIVE AUSTRALIAN.

It may be said that animal life was not very numerous in the original scrub in this district, probably on account of the density of the timber causing a scarcity of edible herbs. Comparing it with other parts of the bush, such as messmate range country with fern gullies, it had less life than is to be found in the more open country.

The wallaby tribe was the most numerous among the animals. Black wallabies, standing, say, 3 feet 6 inches, were the largest specimens, and the scale descended down through various grades of kangaroo rats and paddy-melons to mice, which had the hind legs longer than the fore ones, and which jumped instead of running as domestic mice do. These wallabies were a great pest to the settler. In a small clearing they would eat the grass out. At dusk they would emerge from the scrub on all sides and feed there till daylight, then disappear into the bush; and it was with pleasure that the settler noticed, after a few years of settlement, that a disease set in among them, which killed immense numbers. They were

never so plentiful afterwards. Kangaroos lived out on the plains, but never ventured up in the scrub.

Opossums were, perhaps, the next in number, and then bears. The opossums were the mountain breed, which possess the most valuable skin of their species. A great deal of money was derived from the sale of them. These marsupials carry their young in the pouch. In the scrub they fed on the leaves of trees, but evidently took to eating grass when the clearings were formed, for they remained numerous even when the scrub was being cleared away.

The native bears were numerous, inhabiting the saplings and gum-trees only, on the leaves of which they fed. On one of the latter as many as half a dozen might have been seen at one time. They remained up the large trees for a considerable time, even as long as a month or six weeks, before descending to change their tree. Their limbs, especially the fore-arms, were extremely powerful. These, with the assistance of their formidable claws, were necessary to enable them to climb the long straight barrels of the saplings, 100 feet up, without a branch to rest on. The young ones, after leaving the pouch,

clung to the back of the mother for a long period before leaving the parent, and presented an interesting sight when she was climbing a tree. At a later stage, when almost as large as the parent, and when able to feed itself on an adjoining branch, the young ones would rush to the mother and cling to her for protection on the sound of danger.

Dingoes, the native dogs of Australia, were the only ferocious animals, and they caused a great deal of trouble to the sheep-owner, necessitating folding the sheep every night. In the Winter they got especially daring, even attacking big calves. They also struck terror into settlers travelling alone up the tracks in night time, but apparently would never attack them.

Wombats lived in burrows like wild pigs. They were marsupials, and lived on roots, vegetables and grass. They resembled the native bear, being very strongly built and provided with strong claws, with which they tore up the ground in search of roots.

The platypus, or duck-mole, is found in the creeks. It is in size from a foot to eighteen inches long, covered with a soft, thick fur of a dark brown colour above and rusty yellow below. It is very shy, and dives when alarmed, remaining several minutes under water. It constructs burrows in the banks from under the water, sometimes extending 20 feet. Its food consists of worms and water insects, for which it grubs in the mud banks.

Lizards, bandicoots and bush rats were numerous, while an occasional iguana might be found in districts bordering on the open forest country. Flying squirrels were perhaps the most peculiar animals, and are now all gone. They came out of their holes in the large trees at night time only. Possessing a web of skin between their fore and hind legs, also a very long and spreading tail, they had the power of swooping or flying from the top of one tree to the bottom of another, and then with their claws would climb up again, tearing off the bark on the way in search of food. After the large trees had been rung for some time, the bark hung loose from them, and the squirrels could be heard a great distance, making a hollow thud, as they alighted from a flight from a neighbouring tree. One of the fiercest animals of the scrub when cornered was the tiger cat. About three times the size of the ordinary native cat, it opened an enormous mouth, showing an array of fangs few dogs would face.

The porcupine was not common, but might occasionally be seen seeking food among the litter of fallen leaves and bark on the ground, or among the moss growing on a fallen and rotting forest giant. When disturbed, it started burrowing and was soon out of sight.

The most numerous of the inhabitants of the scrub were the birds. Some were shy, and retreated as clearings were opened up; others seemed to welcome the selector and thoroughly enjoyed themselves at the hut doors on the scraps thrown out.

Lyrebirds were, of course, the royalties of their species. They existed in large numbers, the females predominating. Being extremely shy, they were rarely seen, except when come upon unawares. The cock bird, probably realising the value of the tail he carried, was, if anything, more timid than his consorts. His accomplishment was the wonderful power of mimicry. On a mound scratched up by himself, 4 feet or 6 feet in diameter and about nine

inches high, he would dance, sing, and imitate in quick succession, for an hour at a time, all the notes of the birds of the forest, from the almost inaudible twitter of a tomtit to the loudest guffaw of a jackass.

The black cockatoos lived a transitory life in the bush. A flock of perhaps twenty would remain in a certain spot for a day and be off on the next, and thus travel through the bush. Their food consisted of grubs, which they found under the loose bark, also the borers in the hazel trees. To get these, after having first located them by listening to them boring inside the wood, the cockatoos would gnaw the wood away with their immensely strong beaks. Pieces 5 inches long, and as thick as one's finger, would be ripped off, till at last they get the grub out. One could hear a colony of cockatoos a long way off uttering a grating sound, whilst busily engaged ripping at the bark and wood. They had a large expanse of wing, and were black except for yellow ear lobes and underneath the wings.

Occasionally a few of the beautiful sulphur-crested white cockatoos would be seen, but they were merely birds of passage, and never made their homes in the scrub. A few "galahs," grey with red crests, and midway in size between cockatoos and parrots, also passed over.

Small cockatoos, or cockatoo parrots, of a mottled grey colour, the males having red topknots, lived in the treetops on gum and other seeds.

Of the parrots, the lowry was most plentiful. The younger birds were green, and changed to a beautiful red with blue wing and tail feathers on reaching adult age.

Parroquets now and again darted through the trees at lightning speed in flocks of perhaps a score, uttering meanwhile shrill bell-like notes. How they avoided collision with limbs and branches in their terrific pace through the forest mystified the onlooker.

King parrots, the most beautiful birds of the bush, lived high up in the tree tops, but were very shy and not very numerous.

Other varieties of bird life in lesser numbers were blue kingfishers, jackasses, whip-birds, woodpeckers, butcher birds, blue or harmonious thrush, fantails, tomtits, wrens, wattlebirds, and robins.

High above the big trees soared the sparrow hawks and eagle hawks, and in Summer time the swifts circled round in the upper air.

Night time brought forth the bats and mopokes to add to the weirdness of the silent forest.

The most numerous of the birds were the jays, satin birds, and grey magpies. They were the scavengers of the camps. What they found to satisfy their voracious appetites before the advent of the settlers was a question. Jays were dark brown, almost black in colour, about the size of a large pigeon, and very active. They would congregate about a hut in flocks of up to 100 and literally clean up all refuse. Meat was their favourite dainty, and when a beast was killed, it had to be well protected from their depredations before being cut down. When the pioneer left his hut for any length of time, he had to securely tie up his meat bag, and see that the hut door and window were shut, or he might have to go hungry after these scavengers had had their fill.





Satin birds, comely-shaped birds, the females a pretty mottled green with yellow under the wings, and the older males a glossy purple black, were also numerous. Being shyer by nature than the jays, they were not quite so mischievous in their behaviour, but when accompanied by a number of grey magpies, they gave the householder quite enough to worry about in looking after his food, when quitting the camp. Often at mealtimes these three kinds of birds would become so familiar and daring as to get inside the hut door, as if urging the cook to hurry up with the scraps.

Three kinds of snakes inhabited the scrub. They were the tiger, the copper, and the black. Lizards were numerous and occasional iguanas were seen.

The fish in the creeks were eels, blackfish, and small mountain trout.

One curiosity of the soft, deep soil were the gigantic earthworms. Stretched out, they measured fully six feet and as thick as one's thumb. A person walking over their holes would cause them to recede rapidly deeper down, making a queer, subterranean noise or gurgle sufficient to scare anyone. Often, being flooded out, they would lie stretched out on the mud in the tracks and prove an easy prey to the jackass or the naturalist.

Among the insects, small leeches an inch long were most uncomfortable and very numerous. If one sat still for a time, perhaps half a dozen would climb up one's legs, and start sucking the blood, swelling to a great size if allowed to have their fill. They would then drop off of their own accord, but would leave their memory behind in an itchy sore, sometimes resulting in a swollen limb if the blood were out of order.

Scorpions were plentiful in some localities. They lived under bark and small timber, and required watching, when picking up the burnt scrub. Fortunately, they have almost entirely disappeared.

Blowflies, a few house flies, gnats and mosquitoes abounded in the air, and gave a hearty welcome to man in their solitudes.

This is a rough list of the life of the scrub. As the clearings extended and drew nearer to one another, the scrub was destroyed, and most of the above went back. Some of the animals remained, such as odd representatives of the bears, opossums and wombats. Foxes made their appearance, and hares also on the grass lands. A great many of the birds followed the forest and disappeared. In Summer, when the large fires took place, the heat and smoke drove them off.

Now that the country has settled down to quietude, some have returned, and in a number of instances new kinds have put in an appearance.

The magpie did not appear till there was some kind of settlement, and still later on appeared the dainty mudlark. The lowry parrot is rarely seen now, but the rosella has taken its place. Black cockatoos, satin birds, jays, parakeets, king parrots, woodpeckers, and the whip-birds are very rarely seen.

Lyre birds may still be found in quiet gullies. New arrivals are swallows, ke-trels, finches and starlings. The advent of the latter was the death knell of the grasshopper, that regularly every Autumn devoured and laid bare the grass paddocks. This was a great loss to the early settler. The starling remedied that for him, but what he is to prove, a friend or foe in the future, is a question that remains to be solved.

# The Lyre Bird.

MISS GILLAN.

The average Britisher, as a rule, knows very little about Australia, but he is always quite sure on one point, and that is that there are no song birds in that country. This misconception has arisen partly through the publication of those unfortunate lines of Gordon's when he sung of Australia as a land

"Where bright blossoms are scentless,  
And songless bright birds."

No description could have been more incorrect, and we who live in Gippsland can hardly believe it possible that such a statement was ever taken seriously. Our bush is full of songbirds; we have the thrush, magpie, fantail, and many others, but the king of them all is the lyre bird. As well as possessing a liquid note of its own, the lyre bird has the faculty of being able to mimic not only every bird it hears, but also every other sound, such as the bark of a dog, the clucking of a hen, the sawing of wood, the sound of the axe, and the sharp crack of a whip.



As children we were taught of the wonders of the American Mocking-Bird, but here in our own bush was a bird that far exceeded the American bird in powers of mimicry, and our school books never mentioned it. Besides being famed for its glorious notes, our lyre bird is even better known for its tail. It has sixteen long distinct feathers, twelve of them having fine and widely separated barbs; then two long middle feathers, each of which has a vane on one side only, and two exterior feathers curved like the sides of an ancient lyre, or shaped like the letter S very much elongated. This wonderful tail is not attained till the bird is four years old. It is about two feet or more in length, and the bird has the power of extending and contracting it laterally, spreading it widely when dancing. In colour the whole bird is brown, but the tail is of a lighter shade than the body, and the two lyre shaped feathers are striped bright brown and almost a lavender shade alternately. All this gorgeousness both in note and colour belongs to the male, who is about the size of an English pheasant, and is easily the largest song-bird in the world. The female is a quiet, little drab bird with a plain little tail hardly worth mentioning. She also has a note of her own, but it is merely an echo of that of her brilliant mate. In habit they are very shy, and if you go to look for one you rarely see it. If you do, it is only for an instant, the bird, either male or female, being in sight one moment and away the next. It is useless to try and follow it, as they run through the scrub with incredible swiftness. The best way to see them is to go and sit quietly in the bush in the early morning near their haunts. By and bye, if you sit long enough, you may be rewarded by hearing a rustle among the ferns and out will come the bird carrying his tail straight behind him. Perhaps he is going to make one of those peculiar mounds of leaves and rubbish that you have noticed in the bush, and if so, you are indeed fortunate. Watch now,

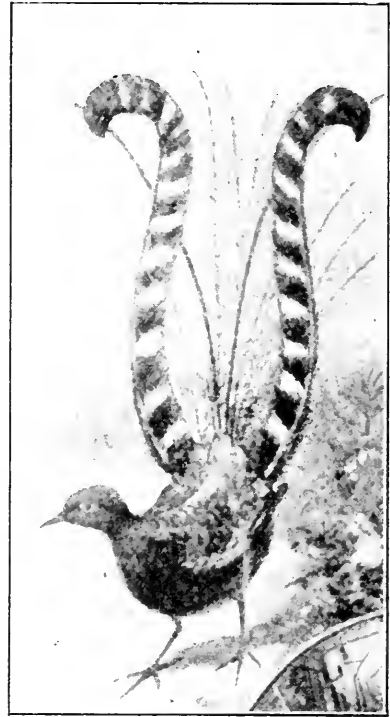
and do not even breathe, because at the least sound he will be off. See, he is starting to scratch: and listen to his notes! His tail is now thrown right over his back, almost touching his head, the pale shades of the under side making it appear nearly white. He is going round and round, singing most gloriously, and at the same time making the mound larger and larger. He is not looking for worms, but just scratching, and is throwing all the leaves and soil behind him. In a short time he has quite a decent-sized mound, perhaps two or three feet in diameter, and about three inches high in the centre: then something startles him, and off he goes.

Opinions differ as to the reason of this mound: some think it is made as a trap for worms and insects on which he feeds: others think it is part of the courting programme. The hen bird may have been near the day I saw the mound being made, but I caught no glimpse of her.

For a long time I wished to find a lyre bird's nest, and at last I discovered one, quite accidentally. One afternoon as I was coming from school I noticed a drop of water in among some undergrowth near the path,

and I thought I would see where the water was coming from. I went towards the spot, and there I discovered that what I had taken to be a drop of water was really the glint of the sun on the beautiful, big, bright eye of a lyre bird sitting on her nest. As I approached she flew away, and I peeped into the nest hoping to find a fine lot of eggs, but there was only one. I learnt since that the hen never lays more than one in the season. It was shaped like a magpie's egg, only much larger, and was dark grey in colour mottled with a darker shade of grey. The nest itself was fine and roomy: it was built in among the roots of a fallen tree and was covered completely over, the opening being at the side. It consisted of small sticks, bark, dried grass and the soft, brown, mossy substance taken from the tree ferns. I visited the nest twice a day, and the mother bird got so tame that she just popped off the nest on to a neighbouring twig and was on again as soon as my back was turned. In due time the egg was hatched, and what a curiosity the young bird was! There seemed to be nothing visible but one huge mouth which opened and closed automatically. The little bird was covered with a light grey down and its bones seemed far too big and strong for its skin. In a few days it got more interesting and found its feet as it were, for every time it was disturbed it would stand up in the nest and stretch itself again and again, till it seemed to be growing bigger and bigger before my very eyes. I used to pop worms and grubs in its mouth, but it never swallowed anything I brought, so I suppose the mother bird had a special way of preparing the delicacies for her baby.

A favourite place for the lyre bird's nest is among the roots of a fallen tree, but they also build in broken tree stumps and among tree ferns, never



MALE LYREBIRD.

very far from the ground. This habit of building near the ground is proving disastrous to the lyre birds since the fox has made its appearance in Gippsland, as from the position both the bird and her egg fall an easy prey to the remorseless Reynard.

The lyre bird usually lives on insects, worms and such like, but if very hungry is not above taking grain. After the 1898 bush fires, I knew of a lyre bird coming regularly to a farm house and helping itself to the food thrown out for the fowls. It scratches for its food in the same manner as the domestic fowl, but having a much larger and stronger thigh bone and leg, it scratches much more vigorously. I knew of one getting into a flower garden and doing more harm in a few hours than a dozen hens would do in a week.

The lyre birds are becoming very scarce in this part of Gippsland, but they are still plentiful away back in the ranges, and an attempt is being made to establish them in the National Park at Wilson's Promontory. It is to be hoped that this attempt will be successful, as besides being a valuable insect destroyer, the lyre bird is one of the most beautiful and interesting song-birds in the world.



HEN LYREBIRD.

# Pack-tracks and Packing.

MR. W. H. C. HOLMES.

Perhaps the most difficult of the many problems that confronted the early settlers of South Gippsland were those of transport and communication with the outside world. My personal experience of these questions dates from the year 1878, when Poowong, on McDonald's track, about 16 miles from Tobin Yallock, was the only settled centre in this district, with a few small clearings around it, and only one place of business, this being the public-house, store, and butebery of Mr. James Scott, whose name and that of his family will ever be inseparably associated with the pioneering history of South Gippsland. Dandenong was the nearest railway station, with a coach service to Tobin Yallock, now called Lang Lang. The portion of this road extending from Cranbourne to Tobin Yallock contained many stretches of swampy ti-tree country, portion of the Koo-wee-rup swamp, which got into a deplorable state during Winter, but was not much used for the carriage of goods, the greater proportion of which were shipped to the Bluff at Westernport, near Tobin Yallock, and carted by dray or waggon to the ranges.

It was not until the settler left the older civilisation with the Grantville road at the Lang Lang river and struck the dray track through the Cherrytree rises and over the sand hummocks, that he fairly got into grips with the difficulties of transport. From Tobin Yallock to Poowong, a distance of about 16 miles, a track—I was about to say dray road, but such a description would be an exaggeration—had been cleared. About a mile out there lived an old identity, old even at that time, Mr. James Baker, better known as "Jimmy Baker," and his wattle and daub house and small orchard were well known to the incoming settlers. The next four or five miles through the Cherrytree Rises was rough enough, but a fairly solid road with good grades until the sand hummocks were reached. These were then much the same as they are to-day, covered with loose sand, heath, brushwood, etc., and, like in most barren country, the physical features have not undergone much change, even in 40 years, being in this respect in striking contrast to the heavy forest immediately alongside, which has been completely transformed and become utterly unrecognisable after that space of time. Vehicular traffic across the sand hummocks was extremely difficult, more on account of the loose sand than the steep grades, though some of the pinches were steep enough and often necessitated jettisoning at least half of the load until Tinpot Hill was reached, and a return trip made for the other half.

Tinpot Hill was the summit of the messmate covered ranges that fringed the forest country, and from there a last extended view was obtainable, which from a scenic point of view was a very fine one, notwithstanding the barren nature of the foreground. Stretches of heavy messmate, open timber country extending in a Northerly and Southerly direction, the white sand hummocks with patches of stunted scrubby growths and an endless variety of shades of pink and white heaths, with the placid waters of Westernport, and its surrounding country, made a most charming landscape. To the earliest settlers the memories of that prosaically named spot "Tinpot Hill" will be always pleasant, as after twelve months' solid toil in the circumscribed area

of a few acres of clearing, the first glimpse of the sea and a landscape extending over 50 miles had a charm which had to be experienced to be appreciated. Many of these settlers have now the glorious privilege of seeing both Westernport and Anderson's Inlet as well as the mighty "Baw Baw" from their elevated residences, with the additional advantage of owning a portion of and living amongst range after range of the most fertile grass covered country in all Australia; but many of them have toiled anything from 20 to 40 years before the glory was realised.

After turning our backs on the outer world at Timpot Hill, the next sign of civilisation was the isolated homestead of Mr. Justin, about a mile further on, and from his house eastward one got a first taste of the hill country. The tops of the hills, known then as the Mt. Lyell ranges, were fairly thickly covered with timber, mostly messmate, gum and smaller growths, the gullies having a denser growth similar to the forest country. The road over the ranges was known as McDonald's track, and ran almost straight in an easterly direction. The first earthworks in the South Gippsland hill country were put in on this road between Baker's and Dunlop's properties, just where the road rises into the hill country. At Mr. Dunlop's the dray track entered the lordly forest, and after penetrating the scrub country for about nine miles became a mere pack-track still trending eastward. It was the only means of communication for the whole district eastward of Poowong, and the only other line of communication branched off from it at Ferrier's camp in the shape of another pack track known as the "South track," or "Down South," running through Molloy's, Cook Bros., Holmes', Ireland's, Hosking's, and Fuller's holdings, and thence southward and eastward as the country was opened up, which served as an outlet for the Jumbunna East and Korumburra districts. From this, another very long stretch of track diverged at Mr. R. J. Fuller's property through Messrs. Buchanan and Brind's, Fribb's, and Horner's properties, and thence on to Grantville.

It can well be imagined how Ferrier's junction on McDonald's track became a depot for all sorts of merchandise. All around was bush; Scott's clearing was fairly close, but the track itself was in the bush; and here most of the incoming selectors would first make the acquaintance of one of the earliest and hardest pioneers of South Gippsland, Mr. David Ferrier, who owned, and still owns, a selection close to Nyora on the very fringe of the scrub country. In the Poowong, Korumburra, Jumbunna, and Jectho districts, there was no man better known or respected, or had such a wealth of experience of pack tracks and packing and carting with horse teams than this sturdy, genial, tough Scot, who for many years was constantly employed carting with horses and drays from Westernport to the bush junction, and packing from there to anywhere. He usually contrived to arrive at the junction about dark, but the exigencies of the track and the climate had to be reckoned with, and his arrival might be at any hour of the day or night, and night travelling in the bush as it was nearly 40 years ago, with somewhere about 50 inches of rain per annum, was a serious proposition. Many a time I have passed the depot some time after dark—and dark does not quite describe the colour of a pack track—with a bottle and candle for a lantern, and the first intimation of the carrier's presence would be the sound of the horses munching their feed, and our good friend David snoring out a sonorous bass. Hail, rain or sunshine was all the same to him; he was always happy. A couple of bags of grass seed, flour bags, or better still, a bag or two of horse-feed, with an old tarpaulin rigged as a fly to keep off the ever-drizzling rain, and he would sleep more soundly than most of his city kinsmen would upon

their well-upholstered beds. He had a capacity for adapting himself to circumstances that fitted him admirably for the occupation he followed, and his inherent "bonhomie" made him immensely popular with the people amongst whom he travelled periodically. The pack track "down South" left McDonald's track at Ferrier's camp and was merely cleared of undergrowth, overhanging timber and branches for a width of 6 or 7 feet, so narrow, in fact, that with a bulky pack load the horses had a struggle to pass between the trees, and as most, if not all, of these pack tracks were made by the settlers, they naturally were made with the least possible expenditure of time and labour. The numerous large logs, many of them as solid as the day they had fallen, though sodden and waterlogged and overgrown for a great number of years, would have a gap cut out of the top sufficiently wide and deep to allow the horses to step over the uncut portion. These gapped logs were a continual source of trouble to the packer, owing to the fact that during the Winter months the constant stepping over them wore deep holes on either side, which were full of water for six or eight months of the year, and the depth could not be gauged until the unfortunate animal touched bottom. The peculiar network of underground watercourses and crabholes also added a very serious difficulty when travelling, particularly at these logs, and were so numerous that many of these partially cut logs might have an underground watercourse on one side or the other. An ordinary hole, the result of wear and tear on each side of a log, is bad enough for a heavily laden pack-horse to negotiate, but when these open out into still lower depths, including the stiff clayey sub-soil, the log then becomes a serious obstacle. There is only one passage through it, so the horse probably makes a supreme effort to jump over, and if successful will be very fortunate if his pack is not sadly damaged or disarranged through striking the cut ends of the logs as he passes through. Experienced bushmen, on breaking into a bad crabhole when riding along, invariably dismount and ram a long pole into the trap as a guide to the unwary, and, should one of them be seen at the side of a gapped log, it was usually considered advisable to dismount, and thereby lessen the risk of a fall for both horse and rider.

Another difficulty common to pack tracks was falling timber. A large tree newly fallen would, if in a rough spot, completely block the track and necessitate the traveller unprovided with an axe returning to the nearest settler to get one; the professional packers and old hands, however, invariably carried one in case of a block. In some cases a detour might be made without much difficulty, but in others it would be impossible to do so without an axe. I have often, in rough scrub, had to carry logs, limbs of trees, etc., to stack on either side of a newly fallen tree to enable the pack horse to scramble over it. Sometimes a spar would fall across the track and hang up in the scrub at a distance from the ground that might allow a horse to pass underneath bareback, but the rider or pack would have to come off to allow a passage. Instead of cutting the larger trees a detour might be made round the head or the upturned roots. These roots were responsible for much trouble to the pack loads, as the dry sprags that protruded so plentifully out of the upturned clay were so tough that if the side of the pack got caught there would be trouble.

The saddle generally used for packing consisted of a pair of well-stuffed leather covered flaps, extending from immediately behind the horse's shoulders to the flanks. On each flap near the top was rivetted a stout wooden batten to give stability to the saddle, and the whole was joined across the horse's back by two iron arches, standing well up over the horse's backbone.





PACKING.

On these arches were iron hooks on which to hang the side packs. The saddle had two girths, breastplate and crupper to keep it in position. It had four packstraps fitted with rings to hang on the saddle hooks, and a surcingle about 15 feet long to go round the complete pack and hold everything in position. All these fittings were necessarily made of stout leather to withstand the rough usage they received. As a pack always had a tendency to work loose on the journey, the surcingle before starting was fastened as tightly as possible in spite of the protest the horse usually showed by fidgetting about and laying its ears back.

The arrangement of a pack load at starting was always an important consideration, and as stores were the chief portion of most loads for the first few years of settlement, it required considerable care in arrangement to ensure the goods arriving at their destination without foreign flavours. For instance, a pack might consist of flour, sugar, salt beef, kerosene, etc. A careless loader might place either the sodden salt beef or the kerosene on top of the load, with dire results to the flour or sugar, and many a pioneer has had to endure the flavour of kerosene in his bread or tea, for months perhaps, while "wading" through a bag of flour or sugar upon which a leaking tin of kerosene has been packed.

The life of a pack horse was a most unenviable one. The pack saddle itself, owing to the nature of its construction, was liable, in the hands of a careless person, to cause the horse a great deal of unnecessary pain. Sometimes the arch of the iron trees was made too low or too narrow, and if the

stuffing of the saddle was not constantly attended to, the continual lurching to and fro as the horse struggled along the rough uneven tracks, would, sooner or later, cause the forward one of these trees to come down on the withers, pinching and galling them badly, especially when going down hill. Sometimes the downhill strain on the crupper and breeching would be so intense that the skin would be chafed until almost raw. Two of the commonest troubles with pack horses were girth galls and mud fever. The strain and struggle of the unfortunate horses when climbing the steep hills and descending them made it absolutely necessary to have the girths and surcingles so tightly fastened that it almost amounted to cruelty, hence the inevitable girth galls, largely due also to the use of leather strand-girths; the Queensland girths in use nowadays would have minimised the evil. Mud fever was caused by the continual adhesion of mud to the horses' legs and ribs, resulting in the matted hair and mud peeling off in flakes in the Spring time. It must be remembered that the pack tracks were continuously muddy for six or eight months in the year, and with the Gippsland drizzle for as many months, there was no chance of grooming. Hard feed was as scarce as sunshine, a bit of grass hay being the only luxury in this direction, and very rare at that. Rugs there were none, the bush was the only protection from wind and storm, and there is no doubt that this protection was of much greater value than has been estimated. The settler's clearings were but small pot-holes in the gigantic forest, and the settler's horses and cattle had at least the splendid shelter which a forest like this affords.

If a man had to load a pack horse with a heavy load by himself, it was by no means an easy matter. A three-hundred weight load would probably be divided as nearly as possible into 130 lbs. on each side and the balance on top. If the horse is fairly quiet, the first side is not hard to put on, and when hooked on must be propped underneath with a stick to keep it from slipping round. Then the difficult part begins; while struggling to get the other side of the pack up and fixed, the horse may give a lurch over, and away will drop the propstick and around goes the pack saddle, and the whole performance has to be done again. It takes a considerable amount of experience in strapping to ensure safe transit, especially as every now and then the pack will be bumped against a tree or dragged on the side of a cut log, or forced under an overhanging limb or spar. The most careful strapping and tying will not always meet these contingencies. As a rule pack horses became so used to their work that it was not necessary to lead them—just load them up, fasten the reins, and drive them ahead. Occasionally, through not having control, the unforeseen would happen. Where packmen had a team of several horses to load, the packs would be suited to the vagaries of the horses' dispositions and their ability to carry weight. In arranging the loads, the heavier goods were usually put on the sides and the bulkier goods on top. A medium draught horse would be expected to carry from 250 to 300 lbs. Mr. Ferrier used heavy draughts, and has at times packed as much as two 200lb. bags of flour on one horse. I remember his packing a chaffcutter from Poowong to Mr. Salmon's selection. The chaffcutter was a fair load for one horse, so he got two short lengths of light treefern stem and strapped them on either side of the pack saddle, and laid the chaffcutter across these on top of the saddle and fastened it securely.

The unspeakable roughness of the pack tracks was responsible for the pack saddle and its equipment being in a constant state of disrepair. The nearest saddler was at Cranbourne or Dandenong, so home repairs had to

suffice. Packstraps, girths, breeching, breastplates and surcingle were liable to accident at any minute, and as the outfit did not comprise facilities for riveting or sewing, a pocket knife and a piece of string usually had to fit the emergency.

If a bag of flour or potatoes comprised the load and the sacks were strong, one could dispense with pack straps and surcingle by dividing the load, and hooking the double of the sack on the saddle hooks, or lashing the mouths of the two sacks together and slinging them across the saddle. I have struggled and strained many a time to reload a pack of this kind after a mishap, and have had finally to untie the sacks, place them on top of a high log, stump or fence, then re-tie them, and from this more elevated position endeavour to sling them over the horse.

Outfits for contractors for cutting scrub or picking-up were frequently packed, and if the horses were of a flighty disposition considerable diversion might result. Generally, blankets, tents and groceries would be placed on the side packs, with probably a frying pan sticking through the outside straps. On top, a kerosene case, to do duty later as a table, a kerosene tin, billies, pannikins, etc. All might go well until, in passing along the track, the horse lurched against a tree which the handle of the frying pan gripped, and the horse, being hauled up at an unaccustomed point, sets up an active resistance. It then became a question whether the packstrap or the frying pan handle would hold out the longest. Then something more unexpected still might astonish the already much affrighted "Dobbin." The kerosene tin, with the billies and pannikins, set up such a din with the unusual bumping that the unfortunate animal thinks he has got a cargo of tin kettles aboard, and that it is time for him to get away from the trouble. A big heave, and snap goes the pack-trap, down drops the swag and frying pan, and away gallops "Dobbin" as hard as the nature of the track and the dangling balance of the load will let him. With one side of the pack gone, he does not go far before the saddle begins to slip round, and then the fun begins. The better and stronger the harness, the worse the trouble, as it will take him so much longer to get free of the kerosene tins, billies, etc., with the groceries and pack saddle between his legs. If he has a kick left in him, short work will be made of what is left, and it may require a basin and spoon to recover the remains of the kitchen utensils and stores, and probably the services of two men and a boy will be required to induce "Dobbin" to become robed in a pack saddle on any future occasion. This is not mere fancy, but an actual experience, and is typical of what has occurred over and over again in the early experiences of Gippsland settlers, and what must occur to most pioneers under similar circumstances. One has but to consider an instance such as the above and remember that for eight months of the year there was from 6 to 18 inches of mud on the Gippsland tracks, to form some idea of the disadvantages of packing as a means of transport. Articles of furniture, on account of their bulk, were particularly liable to mishap: in fact, anything breakable ran big risks.

Perhaps the most dangerous parts of these pack tracks were the bridges which spanned the creeks and gullies, and which were made in a very primitive style. The decking was usually split out of small blackwood spars or gum saplings, and consequently one edge was very thin, and soon wear and tear made dangerous openings between the slab, and while it was recognised as everybody's business to help make the pack tracks, it was nobody's business to keep a bridge in repair: so, if there was a hole, the man whose horse first

broke through it might plug a stick upright in it to warn the next traveller; or, if he had an axe, might cut a fern wedge to stop it up; but as soon as dry weather came it would drop out and the hole reappear. Occasionally bridges had handrails made of saplings dropped into forked sticks, but more often there were none. A bridge I have often crossed, which spanned the Tarwin River at Mirboo South, near Mr. Dodd's selection, is worth describing. It was about a chain in length, and was made by using one log which was dressed on top, with split saplings laid across and spiked to it for decking. For many years it was used for horse traffic only, but when Mr. Goad, a district carrier, bought a property across the river, he used to drive his waggon across it at all hours of the day and night. On one occasion, while shutting a gate close to the bridge, his horses moved on, and before he could reach them, they were on the bridge, and with the vehicle capsized into the river.

Another remarkable bridge was built in later years also in Mirboo South across the Tarwin River as a short cut from the township to the recreation ground, the Shire bridge on the main road necessitating a long detour. The method of construction was the same as a wire and picket fence. Two sets of wires spanned the river, and the pickets were interlaced horizontally into the wires and driven up as close as possible to another. There were no handrails, and no central supports. It was only used as a footbridge, and it can well be imagined that the first time of crossing this structure, which had all the motion of a suspension bridge greatly exaggerated, produced many varied and queer sensations. Quite a number of ladies and children enjoyed the switchback motion, but there are others who maintain that the longer way round by the road bridge is the safest way to the recreation ground.

One of the most picturesque stretches of pack track I have seen was in the Mirboo South district about the year 1886. On the road from Mirboo South to Foster, just beyond Berriman's selection, was a long stretch of boggy scrub track, and as the tree ferns were very numerous, the whole of this strip had been corduroyed five or six feet wide with tree ferns, which had shot out a new growth of fronds, and made quite a charming avenue. Mr. Berriman's neat little bush home was only a short distance away, and his selection, like much of the Mirboo country, was very heavily studded with tree ferns. His garden, which abutted on the track, was fenced with green tree ferns, and the path leading from the gate to his house was also corduroyed with tree ferns, which had sent up a luxuriant growth of fronds, the whole giving the little homestead a most unique appearance.

My first experience of packing was in 1879, when taking with my father the first consignment of goods from Scott's store at Poowong to the contractors cutting scrub on Mr. Gwyther's property south of Leongatha. We followed McDonald's Track to Murdoch's store, then went through Messrs. Nicholas' and Watt's selections to Mr. W. Langham's original homestead, where we were very hospitably entertained at dinner. From there the only other sign of civilisation was Mr. Eccles' camp. On leaving this we entered the large coal reserves, which included Korumburra, at that time dense bush, and arrived at Coal Creek (Silkstone) bridge, two logs with tree ferns for decking, and it being dark we camped there for the night. There were a couple of forked sticks on each side of the bridge, and by placing a couple of hazel poles across them the horses were prevented from getting back. Their food consisted of blanketwood and hazel leaves, and wiregrass, of which there was abundance. This spot had evidently been used before for camping, as close to the bridge there were four large forked sticks stuck in the ground with cross pieces laid on them, and fern fronds on the



A PIONEER'S BRIDGE.

top for a roof, and under this we camped for the night. Next morning we resumed our journey along the original track cleared by Surveyor Whitelaw many years previously, and which we had followed after leaving Mr. Eccles' selection. The track was much overgrown, and in many places we had to cut our way through. After a time we emerged upon a plain known then as Whitelaw's plain, close to Messrs. McNaughton and Langham's present holdings at Kerumburra South, and made across it for two trees which constituted an arch on the opposite side. From there on there was only a blazed track through the open messmate timber, which we had considerable difficulty in following. Then we got into heavy ti-tree scrub denser than any hazel or other scrub country I have seen. Through this Whitelaw had cleared a good pack track, which later passed through some very swampy and boggy lighter ti-tree country. Eventually we got to Gwyther's property, where we left our packs, had dinner with the contractors, and returned to Coal Creek for the night, and reached Poowong next day. Not long after leaving the camp at Coal Creek my father put me on one of the pack horses, and while passing under an overhanging tree that had fallen across the track, and was too low for me to get under, I had to choose between hanging on to the tree or being swept off the horse's back. I chose the tree, and was left, like Mahomet's coffin, suspended between Heaven and earth, until my father came to my assistance.

While camped at Silkstone bridge, my father cut his initials with an axe on a green wattle, and 15 years later, while passing the same spot, the tree was still green and the initials still plainly visible, though merely showing as a scar on the bark.

On one occasion I had to pack a large sea-chest, weighing about 150 pounds, from Poowong for Dr. Hine, near Jimbunna. I had strapped a light tree fern on either side of the pack saddle, and the chest was firmly

secured across the top. With the exception of difficulty in keeping such a top-heavy load balanced, all went well until I got to the creek in Mr. Blake's property. There was no bridge, and between two and three feet of water in the creek, and while struggling to climb up the bank the horse got a hind foot into a crabhole, and fell backward into the creek with the chest underneath. The horse was in imminent danger of drowning, but by cutting the straps while he was struggling I managed to free him, and got him out. I had a bad time getting that chest out of the water on to the bank, and a worse one getting it on the horse's back again; but by standing the horse along the bed of the creek, and placing two small skids from the bank to the pack saddle, I managed to fix it on again, and reached my destination. It had been raining during the day, but this fact only partially helped to explain the sodden contents of the box, which had come all the way from England.

I and my brothers did the packing for my father while he had the Poowong store, our only other means of delivery being a sledge. One of our most exciting experiences was the sledging of a bag of flour to Mr. Reeve's place at North Poowong. We had the use of a Hereford bull called Fagan, that was broken to harness. The collar was a forked limb, padded, and used upside down. Fagan was very tractable under ordinary circumstances, but if the sledge got stuck he would take over the reins and use his own methods, and very often the driver would be driven. At the time of this incident the Drouin road was not opened, and there was only a narrow pack track to North Poowong. The sledge got caught against a log, so Fagan sheered off to release it, and got into the scrub, and pulled sledge and flour until it got jammed so that it was impossible to go further, and as his blood was up, we could not get near enough to undo the harness. We simply had to leave him until he broke himself loose, and the sledge or its ashes are probably there to this day. In the end we had to pack the flour. There was some excuse for Fagan's vagaries, as he was owned by a man who did the pit-sawing for Mr. C. Cook's first homestead, and was his tractor for hauling the logs to the pit; and, though Fagan was powerfully built and willing, it was little wonder that he developed the spirit of retaliation, as he was but one bull and the logs were heavy enough for a team, and when the two pit-sawyers urged him with saplings to do the impossible, there was surely some excuse if he raised objections.

The sharp jagged stumps of newly-cut scrub were a source of great danger to pack horses, as the rough nature of the tracks made many falls inevitable. The track itself was, as a rule, soft enough if there were no stumps to fall on.

I remember James Scott, junr., riding over a swampy flat a few yards from our first home on the Bass River. Surveyors had left one of their thin sharp-pointed sighting pegs made of green hazel, stuck in the middle of the pack track, which was feet deep in slush and mud. It was pointing towards the rider, who did not notice it, and the horse struggling through the slush: the stick penetrated his chest, and drove clean into the heart, killing him instantly. The horse was a particularly good one, and I can well remember the keen regret of the lad when relating his misfortune a few minutes after the event.

During that same Winter of 1878, I remember Mr. Charles Blew, of Whitelaw, passing our house along the same track leading a grey pack horse with a red gin case on either side of the pack saddle, and each case contained a child.

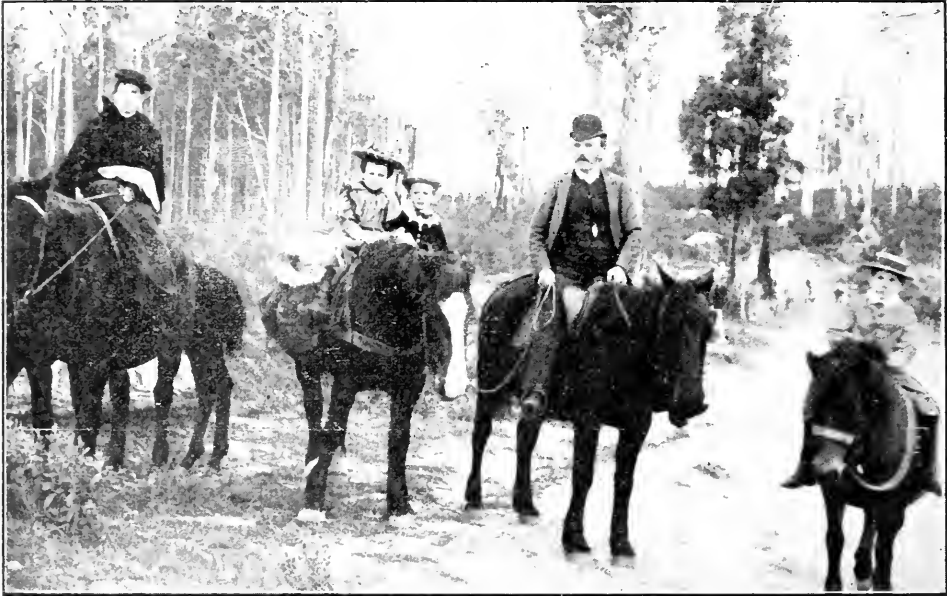
Another source of danger to pack horses was falling timber. Where a fire had been through scrub and killed the small growth, the horse might blunder against a small dry hazel which had been killed a year or two, bringing the whole tree down, with disastrous results to the animal's nerves, causing it to indulge in a series of acrobatic feats, often resulting in considerable damage being done to the contents of the pack: or, should it be a small blackwood, the stem would be sound, but a shower of small branches would fall on and around the horse with similar results.

A typical packing trip might be from Poowong to Jumbunna, leaving at 8 or 9 a.m. The greater part of the distance would be through bush and the balance through clearings. In Winter the portion through the bush would be a long chain of mud holes, every step a hole full of water with a ridge of mud dividing the holes: so the journey is one long splish, splosh, splash, splosh, with here and there an occasional underground watercourse, which would make the horse flounder for half a chain before recovering himself. On arriving at Jumbunna late in the afternoon some tea would be obtained, and the journey back to Poowong begun astride the pack saddle with a couple of sacks, if lucky, to lessen the wear and tear of the wood and iron saddletree, and a couple of pack straps hooked on for stirrup leathers. One might arrive at Poowong at any hour from 7 to 10 p.m., according to circumstances or luck. An item not to be overlooked on the journey was the number of gates and sliprails to be attended to. Almost invariably there would be one or the other on entering a clearing from the bush and another at the other side of the clearing: and these were very awkward to handle in the dark, and in the bush it was more than dark, it was inky black. As a boy I have vivid recollections of the weird and blood-curdling howl of the packs of dingoes that used to roam about and molest the settler's sheep. There was also the incessant thud of the wallabies, as they jumped in the scrub, the grunt of the 'possum, the merry chirrup of the squirrel, the screech of the screech owl, the mopoke's familiar call, and the grunt and screech of the monkey-bear.

All these sounds were familiar to night travellers, and as the pace was limited to two or three miles an hour, there was much time for reflection on those things which could be heard but not seen.

Not the least interesting nor the easiest to erase from the memory of the packing days was the conversion of the pack saddle into a riding saddle. Many a settler had no other saddle for years, and if he had but one horse he at least was able to ride the pack saddle one way on his journeys. It was better than trudging through the mud and roughness of the track, but one never pretended that riding on a pack saddle was a luxurious mode of locomotion. One could get many a nasty jar from the iron saddle-trees, and with a couple of sacks to round off the sharp edges, and a couple of pack straps to serve as stirrups, it could only be called tolerable. V

My experience of pack tracks dates from 1878, and includes various experiences, such as a mail boy carrying out a private contract with the pioneer settlers, and afterwards taking a Government contract, then as a packer delivering goods from my father's store at Poowong to all parts of the district, and sometimes packing goods from Drouin, packing contractors' and survey parties to their various camps, packing goods and camps to various road and private clearing contracts carried out by my father, brothers and myself; as well as packing stores, grass seed, etc., from Poowong to Arawata, to Mirboo South and Gunyah Gunyah to land selected there by my mother, brothers and myself; and I would like to pay a tribute to the



PACKING CHILDREN TO THE PICNIC.

genial hospitality extended to travellers of all classes by the early settlers of South Gippsland. Until the advent of the Great Southern Railway, there was no place of accommodation for travellers in the hill country of South Gippsland, except at Poowong; Horn's publichouse in the bush on the Tarwin River, near Leongatha, and Leach's publichouse at Mirboo South; consequently the hospitality of the pioneers was severely taxed, but it was unflinching.

Two familiar faces on the pack tracks in the early days were those of "Dick" Atkinson, who for many years packed for Mr. James Scott, who had the first store at Poowong, and "Eddie" Dixon, who packed for his brother, who, in later years, had a store in the same township.

Finally, a word of appreciation of a class of men who were intimately associated with pack tracks and the life of the pioneers. I refer to the surveyors. It is a well-known fact that the surveyors pioneered many of the original pack tracks, and made many of them. In many cases the pack tracks followed the survey lines. In most cases the men who constituted the working element in these camps, many of them farmers' sons, were of a superior class. These camps were very migratory, and might be in Poowong, Jumbunna or Korumburra districts for a week or two, and the next week be at Beech Forest or at Omeo. The surveyor and the clergyman were the only professions resident in the bush, and one never knew when a party of surveyors would appear on the scene with their orderly group of tents and their invariable bush kitchen and cook, and many a settler and packman has had good reason to appreciate the solid and kindly hospitality shown by such men as Mr. John Lardner, Mr. Burbank, Mr. Jas. Walker, Mr. Thorne, and later by the surveyors who traversed the district in quest of a suitable grade for the Great Southern Railway; last, but not least of whom was Mr. W. G. Field, who finally succeeded, and later made his home at Whitelaw.



# Scrub Cutting.

MR. W. H. C. HOLMES.

The term "Scrub cutting" has been used in South Gippsland for the last 40 years to describe the felling of the forest timber. It is applied in other parts of Australia to the cutting of the smaller growths of timber, such as the mallee scrub in the North of Victoria, the brigalow and mulga scrub in Queensland, and the gimlet wood scrub of Western Australia, as well as the ti-tree and dogwood scrubs; but to call the heavy forest of South Gippsland, as it was in the 70's, scrub, was surely a misnomer, and to the uninitiated the term "scrub cutting" would give no adequate conception of what was involved in the operation it purported to describe.

Before entering into a description of the methods of scrub cutting it might be interesting to make some little comment upon the scrub-cutters themselves. In the earlier pioneering stages the scrub-cutters were the pioneers themselves. There were no roads, neither were there any names to the localities to induce labourers to come into the bush, food supplies were very difficult to obtain reliably, particularly meat, and many were the tales as to the source and quality of the meat supplied; and so, perforce, almost every settler had to initiate himself into the art of scrub-cutting—first, as I have said, to clear his track in, then to build his hut or house out of bush timber, all requiring, to be successful, an expert use of the American axe. For the first five to ten years of settlement nine-tenths of the labour of a progressive working settler was axework. Perhaps the best way to describe the training of these early settlers to undertake the class of work required of them as pioneers will be to give a list of the occupations they had previously followed, taking them as their holdings lay, beginning at Poowong and ending at Jumbunna. First came a butcher, then a town clerk, road contractor, family of school teachers, minister's son just from college, immigrant, Bendigo miner, architect, two school teachers, sea captain, publican's sons, editor of paper, market gardener, saddler, three English warehousemen, Ceylon nigger-driver, school teacher, brickmaker, Dookie College students, and so on. It will thus be seen at a glance that the great majority of the earliest settlers had absolutely no farming experience, much less a knowledge of bush work, to help them in their stupendous undertaking, and only those who have lived through it or had an intimate knowledge of the forest as it was then can place the right value on the physical endurance, dogged perseverance, and almost blind optimism that characterised the early pioneers; and one has but to think again of the extreme disparity between some of the occupations mentioned and the life in the bush as it was then, to feel the utmost sympathy for those who put their little all into a life of pioneering, to which some were entirely unsuited, and which caused many to go under after years of struggle. Gippsland has been truly designated "The Garden of the South," and much can, and probably will, be written of the success and progress of successful pioneers, but what about those others who have failed? Volumes could be written, if only the facts could be unearthed, of the self-sacrifice and pathos which attended the failure and ultimate downfall of some, though for-



SCRUB CUTTING

tunately few, of the early settlers. Having given a description of the various occupations of the amateur scrub cutters, a few words about the nature of the scrub, or more correctly speaking, the forest, will not be out of place. Whilst a bird's eye view of a Gipps-land forest presented something of a monotone to the eye, a detailed inspection revealed an endless variety of woods, shrubs, foliage, mossy growths, parasitical plants, and decomposed vegetation. To the scrub-cutter the primary consideration was the nature of the timber on which he had to operate. This, fortunately, was for the most part comparatively soft, though even in this respect there was great variety. Bluegum and blackwood were among the hardest of the larger trees, hazel and wattle being next, and the softest woods were gum saplings, native orange, and blanket-wood, the latter being of a very brittle nature. The tree-fern, owing to the peculiar toughness of its fibrous trunk, presented great difficulty to the inexperienced axeman, for whilst most of the forest timber chipped very readily in response to the blows of the axe, the fern-tree absolutely refused to do so, and although the axe could be driven into its fibrous trunk until only the bald head was visible, no chip could be removed until it was absolutely cut clean through above and below.

Amongst the drawbacks common to all these forests, perhaps the two worst were the swordgrass and wire grass. Swordgrass, as its name implies, has sharp cutting edges, and having a flat and somewhat rigid blade was responsible for many painful cuts, which were made more numerous by the fact that all stumps were supposed to be cut at a height of from 12 to 18 inches from the ground, thus necessitating a continual downward stroke, causing the fingers to slide down the cutting edge of the grass, which grew in very dense tussocks from three to eight feet in height. Strangely enough, the young blades, when drawn out from the sheath, had a gum-like salve adhering to them, which had healing qualities, and was constantly used by those working among it. Wire-grass was common to most of the forests, but was more in evidence along river and creek flats, and climbed up the trunks of trees and shrubs a distance of from fifteen to twenty-five feet. The stem was perfectly round, and felt and acted like a fine rasp, and as there were scarcely any leaves, the effect it had upon the hands and arms, particularly in hot weather, was the reverse of pleasant. This grass would create a tangle many yards in diameter around the trunk of a musk or sapling, and it often took a considerable time to clear a space sufficiently large to swing an axe, and there was also the danger of the axeheld getting entangled in the meshes overhead during the swing of a stroke and inflicting a serious gash on the user.

Assuming that the settler has made up his mind as to the site of his first scrub-cutting operations, and the first object was to select a site accessible to the nearest pack track, and on top of a ridge if possible, he would mark or blaze a line around the proposed clearing, and as the bush was so dense that in most places the view would be restricted to a few yards, he would provide himself with a compass, and starting from a point on a pack track or side line (as the surveyor's lines were then termed) would take note of some particular tree some distance off, which his compass showed to be on the line which he intended to mark. Making a direct line to this tree, he would strip a slice of bark off the front and back of each or, at least, most of the trees as he passed along. The inside of the bark and the sap-wood of the trees being very white, these marks or blazes — these lines were invariably called blazed lines — stood out in bold relief against the dark bark of the trunks and the dull green of the undergrowth:

and when he arrived at the tree first noted, he would again take the compass and note some other tree, and blaze a line until he arrived at it, and so on until that line was traversed far enough, and the same method, with a change of direction according to the shape of the projected clearing, until he arrived back, not always at the point he started from—the rough nature of the undergrowth and huge logs, and also the steepness of the hills, making it a most difficult matter to arrive at even a rough estimate of distance or acreage. Many selectors have been lost or bushed in the early days; in one instance a settler was bushed between Koomburra and Leon-gatha for nearly a week simply on account of the difficulty of estimating the distance travelled in the forest—and many a man has been hopelessly bushed within a few hundred yards of his own camp—so the use of the compass was very general, and the failure to carry one has often enough resulted in being lost. The area being marked out, the scrub cutter's first consideration was to see that his axe—the sole implement required—was in good order. In purchasing this all-important article in the 70's there were but two reliable brands to choose from, and it must needs be one of these. Next, it must be long and finely tapered to the edge of the blade, as most of the wood was of a very soft nature, and as the majority of the axes imported were too thick, much careful choosing was necessary to secure a nice, thin blade, but the quality of the steel, as is always the case, was a matter that could only be tested by experience and use—so that a carefully selected axe might cut hundreds of acres of scrub of various kinds, or it may turn its edge, or a gap may be made in it at the first hard blackwood or gum sapling it was tried on—so that occasionally a settler who owned a large area of bush, and who had more ready money than the average, would order a case of axes, and thus have a supply on which to draw in case of emergency, while his needy "confrere," when his axe turned its edge or gapped, had to trudge to the nearest neighbour who was fortunate enough to possess a grindstone. I can well remember when, 35 years ago, Mr. Leys of Loch was the proud possessor of the only grindstone for miles around, and how the settlers from far and near appreciated both his grindstone and his hospitality; and his name reminds me of an experiment carried out by him that was one of the most unique that has come under my notice. He was not a young man nor an expert axeman, and wishing to fell this particular tree, he bored with an auger a set of holes completely around it, eventually by this method bringing it to the ground. It may be taken for granted that the experiment was not regarded as a success, as it was not repeated.

Naturally, therefore, the scrub cutter entertains a very jealous regard for his axe, and on starting out to his day's work is careful to provide himself with a small whetstone or oilstone to occasionally rub up a dull edge, and also a piece of good strong string or a small coil of copper wire with which to repair a fractured handle, this latter being perhaps the most common source of trouble. A false blow, a little over-strain in endeavouring to wedge over a tree which is being felled, or an extra hard wrench to remove a tough or refractory chip, may cause ever so small a split in the handle, and if this be not immediately bound up, the next blow may split the handle in two, which may mean the loss of half a day, as the axeman will certainly have to go back to the camp and with great care burn or bore the broken handle out and put a new one in, or perhaps have to walk miles to the nearest neighbour or store to procure a new one, should he not have a spare one at hand. Much could be written about the varying qualities of axehandles as well as axes. The thickness of the handle was a constant source of trouble. Most of the

imported handles were made too thick, so those who got first selection out of a consignment were very careful to choose those that were thinnest, and particular preference was given to those that had the grain running through the widest way rather than across, thus obviating the risk of splitting when releasing the axe if tight in a tree. Those who were unfortunate enough to have to take the culls, and country storekeepers very often ran short—they very probably would not sell the poor ones if they did not—would spend a whole evening, perhaps, scraping an axehandle down to the size that suited them with bits of glass, a wood rasp, or a piece of sandpaper; the two latter, however, were for the most part luxuries, and the pieces of glass were the common medium of reduction, and an evening spent in this way would be amply repaid by the increased pleasure of working with a handle properly proportioned, and after a man has used a handle—the same applies to the axe—for a considerable time, if anything happens to it, he will experience the keenest regret if he has to procure a new one and go through the breaking-in process again. It was quite common to see a handle with six or eight inches of its length, and perhaps in several different places, bound with string, waxed thread, copper wire, pieces or strips of tin, and occasionally, in an emergency, a bushman would have to "rob Peter to pay Paul" by removing his bootlaces to repair a fracture.

So, equipped with axe, stone, and string, he leaves his camp, clad in moleskin trousers, held up mostly by a leather belt, as braces did not give free enough play to the shoulders for axework, leggings, slouch felt hat, flannel undershirt, and cotton top-shirt—the latter will soon be hung up on a limb with the billy of tea and the lunch—and a strong pair of boots, studded from heel to toe with square-headed sprigs standing out quite an eighth of an inch from the leather, so put to prevent slipping when walking along the rotten, slippery timber amongst the undergrowth, the green or barked fallen timber, or the greasy, wet soil on the hillsides. This class of boot has never been superseded, and is still popular over most parts of Gippsland, minus only the sprigs under the waist of the boot.

The first difficulty that presented itself was how to get an opening into which to fall the first trees. The usual method was to start in a gully or creek, and begin by lopping, or cutting, the heads of the tree-ferns, then any small scrub such as hazel, musk, or dogwood. These would probably fall around larger trees such as blackwood, wattles and gums, and would create a tangle that would have to be cleared away to get at the trees themselves, but an opening had to be made. Then the next largest trees, perhaps blackwood and wattles, would be dropped into the most open space available, and so by continually working back, a long narrow opening would be made along the gully or creek; then by carefully dropping the heads of each tree into the opening made, a longer face was obtained to work on, and by working away from the starting point there would soon be no need to let any trees fall into the standing scrub, one of the most important things to be avoided in scrub-cutting. Occasionally a tree with a very decided lean backwards will break the rule, or an unexpected gust of wind will force a tree back, but it is always a thing to be avoided if possible.

In what was known as hazel scrub there was not much timber excepting the large gum trees left standing after the scrub was cut; sometimes a few of the larger blackwoods or an occasional large wattle would be left, but in sapling country many of the settlers, whether they cut the scrub themselves, or let it by contract, only cut up to a certain diameter, some only to

9 inches, others up to 2 feet 6 inches, and in rare cases cutting everything, including the largest saplings. The practice of cutting up to 9 inches or a foot in diameter was soon abandoned, as too much timber was left standing, thus shading and preventing the cut scrub from drying, and making also a terrible litter of bark and small branches upon the new grass in the following year, and in a very few years the spars left standing would uproot and fall with the heavy winds, and require a second lot of picking up. Consequently, it soon became the rule to cut scrub to about 2 feet in diameter, which usually included most of the standing timber in spar country. The first eight to ten years of experience in scrub-cutting and picking-up was the dearest the early settlers had to buy, because it took so many years of solid toil to cope with troubles which arose solely through inexperience and errors of judgment.

As the scrub-cutting progressed, the process known as "nicking" became popular. This was done by cutting a small notch front and back in each tree; in hazels and small growths, just a few blows front and back would be sufficient, and in gum saplings, blackwoods, or wattles, a "scarf," say, a third through front and back, and so on. One, two or a number of men may work for hours, and then, when a large area is ready, some tree with good, spreading top is started off, perhaps near the top of a hill, and this, crashing into the nicked trees in front, soon becomes a vast, crashing, smashing, splintering, roaring and thundering avalanche of falling timber! This method of felling scrub was a distinct advantage over the old one of cutting the trees down singly, as the timber was compelled by the impelling force from behind to fall all in one direction, and therefore lay parallel and tightly packed on the ground for burning. It is really wonderful what good work was accomplished in this way, and as it required both skill and judgment to successfully negotiate a good "fall," it would, naturally, evoke a feeling of satisfaction in the heart of an expert axeman when a large area of scrub had been laid low in this manner, especially when the grinding, crashing and creaking with which the operation culminates, can be heard by his neighbours for miles around.

The wind is a factor which has always to be reckoned with. The old adage which is applied to fire, that "it is a good servant, but a bad master," applies equally to the wind in scrub-cutting. There is, perhaps, nothing more disappointing to an experienced scrub-cutter after he has been patiently nicking for some hours, and may be just ready to start off the fall, than for a gust of wind from an opposite direction to start backwards a tree that is somewhere in the front rank, and then back comes the whole mass, tearing and splintering through uncut scrub, hanging up in trees that refuse to break, and making an indescribable tangle and mess that will hamper his progress for the rest of the day.

With a good, strong wind in a favourable direction, much labour is saved in spar country, as the extra strain considerably lessens the amount of wood that has to be severed.

In spar country there was usually not many large trees, though there was ample evidence that there had been in the past, as the old dry stumps and many fallen trees still remained. On the steep hillsides many of these old trees lay along the sides of the hills, and when the spars were felled, being green and slippery, they would slide over the logs "like greased lightning," and when the top struck the bottom of the opposite hill, it would snap in two and ram feet deep into the loose soil.

Many of the narrow ridges, which had been studded with spars, would have scarcely any lying about after scrub-cutting, whilst the gullies on either side would be full of them. The fact that in many cases the gullies cost £4 to pick-up, up to 2 feet 6 inches in diameter, while the hillsides and ridges only cost from £1 to 30/- per acre, speaks for itself.

Spar country was the heaviest class of country to clear in South Gippsland, and called for the greatest endurance. It was incessant slogging in a hot, humid atmosphere, such as was usual in September, October and November, the months when scrub-cutting was usually done. It can easily be imagined that the scrub-cutter, toiling on the floor of a forest 300 feet in height, with the sun pouring straight down through the small open clearing he has already carved out, with scarcely a breath of wind penetrating to the lower level where he is working, must be in a veritable oven. There was, perhaps, no work all down through the pioneering that required so much endurance as scrub-cutting. Swinging a five- or six-pound axe from daylight to dark was as common then as the eight-hour Government stroke is to-day. But though it was hard work, it was clean and healthy work, and one could not perspire for five hours without acquiring an abnormal appetite, so the plainest of fare was eaten by the "new chum" as well as the "awful Australian" with much more relish than a banquet would be by some of their city critics. The billy-can loomed up large in the domestic economy, and great care was exercised in securing its safety during the day—hung up on a limb with the lunch, well back, out of the reach of falling scrub—but, alas! the unexpected sometimes will occur. The interested axeman unwittingly works back in close proximity to the larder, and a tree falls backwards, carrying others with it, until at length the tea-billy and the lunch become, figuratively speaking, "knocked into a cocked hat," and it is astonishing how mishapely the "William" can be without interfering with its capacity for producing the bushman's elixir of life, "billy tea."

To the casual observer the occupation of scrub-cutting might easily appear a most prosaic and uninteresting business, but in the pioneering stage of South Gippsland's history, every day spent in opening up the bush, indeed every hour meant the opening up of a new page of natural history; every fresh step exposed to the intelligent axeman an area that had never before come under the observation of civilised man, and that perhaps for hundreds of years had not been penetrated even by primitive man; for it must be remembered that the surveyors only traversed the boundaries of each selection, and their lines were only cleared sufficiently to sight the pegs with their instruments.

That the Australian savages had at some time roamed over this hilly country is evidenced by the number of stone axes that have been picked up here. I have picked up several between Nyora and Mirboo, but it is doubtful whether the natives ever frequented the hilly country of South Gippsland since the heavy forest growth appeared. The Messrs. Eccles Bros., who are amongst the earliest settlers, discovered in the bush on their property whilst scrub-cutting, a set of blacksmith's tools, evidently left many years before, and they are of opinion that they had been left by Whitelaw when he cut the original track through. The writer and Mr. W. Eccles, under Mr. A. L. Ayers, a surveyor who surveyed the original coal leases at Coal Creek, discovered, while running these survey lines, an old, overgrown road, evidently cleared perhaps years previously, a shaft 10 or 12 feet deep, now known as the Strzelecki coal mine, which pierced a seam of coal, the outcrop

of which showed in the gully a chain lower down, and also several sawn timber pegs that had evidently been used to peg out the leases. These pegs had originally been painted white, but had rotted off at the surface of the ground. Mr. Ayers had been told by a Mr. Harrison whom he knew that he (Mr. Harrison) had been through the Outtrim district in the 60's, had made a narrow dray track through the bush, and had taken a waggon in from the Kileunda side, and had found coal; but owing to the rough and hilly nature of the country, and no prospect of transport either by rail or boat, the project was abandoned.

Mr. John Western, of Arawatta, while scrub-cutting on his property, discovered an old, rusty pick on the banks of Ruby Creek, probably left years previously by some prospector during the period of the Stockyard Creek and Turton's Creek diggings.

I remember, over 25 years ago, near Turton's Creek coming across the remains of a billiard table when travelling through the bush. The young hazel scrub had grown up again, quite obliterating the site of the old settlement, giving some slight idea of the rapid growth of the bush in its virgin state and when the rainfall was heavier than at present. So every trace of the handiwork of man, and this was almost exclusively restricted to evidences of axework, was a matter of special interest to a pioneer scrub-cutter, and would afford ample scope for reflection as to the How? When? and Why? of its existence.

In the heavy blackbutt spar country a style of scrub-cutting, known as "bashing" or "Wild-dog flash," was adopted after a few years. It was done by cutting a number of spars about half-way through at the back, and when sufficient for a good fall had been "scarfed," one or two with good, spreading tops would be let down from the rear, and the weight and impetus would compel those in front to go forward, until the strain became so great that they would start to split upwards from the cut at the back, and would thus split up from ten to thirty feet and then snap off, the split portion riding on the highest point until the limbs struck the ground, when, if on level ground, the split trunk would kick back and fall with a thud to the ground. If on a hill-side, it would naturally slip headlong down the side with the falling mass. Much annoyance and danger was caused by an occasional tree resisting or escaping the pressure, necessitating a special trip by the axeman to finish cutting it, climbing through a terrible tangle, requiring considerable clearing to allow an axe to be swung, and difficult to get out of when the tree started to fall, and the tree, when it struck the scrub which had already been felled, would be a source of danger. Very often, if there is a spar within reach, an attempt would be made to fall it into the one left standing and thus bring it down, and some exceedingly clever work in this way can be done by a smart axeman. Should the tree aimed at be fairly tough near the cut, the falling trees may strip off all its limbs and leave it standing, a bare pole; in this case there is no option but to go out and chop it through to the last splinter. The method of "bashing" has advantages and disadvantages—the former being that the scrub is much easier and cheaper to cut, and when the burn is over, the heaviest end of the tree is split in half, and the heaviest half is left standing, attached to the stump. The disadvantage is mainly in appearance; instead of all the stumps presenting a neat and even appearance after the burn, they are an irregular mass of black slabs, varying in height from two to thirty feet. As these stumps could not be economically grubbed under ten to twenty years, it is apparent that an immense saving in labour





A BIG TREE SCAFFOLDED TO 150ft.

must have accrued from the fact that the selector was relieved of the necessity of handling the heaviest portion of the tree for that number of years, and by the time the stump was ready for grubbing, the cost of clearing the slab attached to it would be reduced to a minimum. Though this practice did leave the stumps somewhat unsightly, it was very popular in some districts, and to this day many of these long, black slabs are to be seen as monuments to its use.

In spar country particularly, it was very necessary to cut and fall the timber parallel with the gullies, and to avoid throwing it across the big, fallen trees, the object being to get the timber as near to the ground and as close together as possible. In some contracts a special clause was inserted, that all spars crossing large logs had to be lopped, and, as a rule, it was specified that the stumps of trees must not be left higher than about 18 inches, and, in some contracts, not more than one foot above the natural surface of the ground. These conditions were very easily taken advantage of, as the fallen scrub so completely covered up the stumps and the surface of the ground that, generally speaking, the owner of the property was very much at the mercy of the contractor, and much the same applied when it was stipulated that all timber up to a certain diameter had to be felled, as was often done in the spar country in the earlier times. Usually, the clause varied from one to two feet in diameter, measuring at three feet from the surface of the ground, but, as just now stated, the tangle of logs and branches might be anything from 3 or 4 feet to 10 feet in height, and it would be an undertaking to scramble over a hundred acres of cut scrub to measure every gum spar that had been left, especially if only up to one foot in diameter had been specified. I have known of isolated instances where scrub-cutters have been compelled to go back over their work and cut out trees that have been left undersized, but the consensus of opinion on the general efficiency of the work done during the 40 years of toil and sweat that it has taken to subdue the Gippsland forests is that no class of men have rendered more loyal and uncomplaining service under the most adverse circumstances than did the scrub-cutters. A proportion of the early selectors were men without means who were glad to work for those neighbours who could employ them, and when they had earned sufficient to lay in a few months' stores for themselves, would start scrub-cutting on their own property. Hundreds and hundreds of acres of the bush have been cut single-handed by men who have had to live alone and work in solitude, and only the man who has experienced it can realise to the full the awful silence and solitude of a wet Winter in a Gippsland forest—the short days, with the incessant drizzling rain, everything in the bush dank and dripping, the long nights, with occasionally the dismal howl of a pack of dingoes or the weird screech of a she-bear, as if especially provided to add a creepiness to the otherwise black solitude of the forest.

Some of the pioneer scrub-cutters of this forest were new-chum lads from England, Scotland or Ireland, and all honour is due to these men for their splendid grit and courage in adapting themselves to conditions that were totally new to them. The recently imported immigrants from the British Isles, when they come to Gippsland to-day, are usually informed that the conditions here are worse than is usual in other parts of Victoria, and perhaps there is some truth in the statement. But, if this be so, what must the conditions of 30 years ago have been to those other immigrants who faced the unbroken green area, with the nearest railway station at Dande-

nong, wages 15 - to £1 per week and "tucker," and usually ten hours' work per day.

After some years, small gangs of contracting scrub-cutters became established and took the larger areas of this work, and like most occupations in which manual labour is the chief factor, they were drawn from widely different classes of society, with, of course, the usual proportion doing "hard labour" on account of their "Bacchanalian" tendencies. Two instances of this class I remember in the 70's: one was a Cambridge University student, who cut scrub for years in the Poowong district, and was a splendid worker, but spent all he earned in drink. I was camped in the same hut with him and several other men when, in a drinking bout, he went out in the middle of the night and never returned. The scrub was searched for a week without result, and ten days later his body came to the surface of Mr. Burchett's dam. The other was the nephew of an English Baronet, and still another was an ex-policeman, who was dismissed from the force during the depredations of the Kelly gang. One might well wonder how some of these men took to scrub-cutting—perhaps the isolation suggested a change of environment; but, unfortunately, where "tucker" can be transported, so also can "XXX" and "three star," and although the local publican would not transport a chair or a piano to a scrub-cutter's domicile for love or money, it was comparatively easy to pack beef, flour, and whisky, and so the bush offered no solution of the drink curse to these unfortunate victims of the habit; and they would cut scrub like slaves for three months, and drink and suffer for a few days as a grand result of their labours.

Perhaps the extremely heavy rainfall of over 50 inches per annum, most of which fell between April and November, was the chief factor in the troubles which befel the scrub-cutter. Drizzling rain for weeks at a time, and no other occupation to fill in the time—generally an energetic man would keep going unless the rain was exceptionally heavy, and there was little danger of cold, the work being strenuous and incessant; warmth came naturally. The disagreeable part of the business was coming back to camp, wet through, and having to light a fire and start cooking; but the pleasure of changing clammy, soaking moleskins for warm, woollen clothes has a wonderfully soothing effect, and an hour spent over a genial camp fire, studying the possibilities of a kerosene tin bucket, a billy, and a camp-oven, will produce results, the pleasing nature of which will have been added to rather than otherwise by the discomforts of the work and weather.

Almost every selector had some time or other to face the difficulties of felling the large blue gum, white gum, or blackbutt trees. The first hut, or, perhaps, a two-roomed house would require palings and shingles, and as a rule it was for splitting purposes that the first attempt was made. If the operator exercised good judgment in the selection of a tree, so as to get a free splitter, the job would not perhaps be a hard one, but the average selector will admit that he has had many bitter disappointments and much wasted labour through want of knowledge in this matter of the choice of trees for splitting purposes. The method of cutting these trees down was for some years the same as cutting scrub; but as the spurs near the ground were sometimes abnormally large, and the wood on the spurs much tougher than, say, 8 or 10 feet higher up, scaffolding was used, so as to be able to cut above the spurs. Four forked sticks would be erected around the tree, and cross-pieces placed in the forks, and a few slabs placed across these latter for a staging.

Another device was to make a ladder with a wide spread on the lower part, with a platform near the top with stays underneath. This made

a very good stage on which to cut trees at from 8 to 12 feet from the ground. The most recent and popular method of cutting large trees, however, is by using a springboard. This is a slab about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 inches thick and 8 inches wide and about 5 feet long, inserted into a notch cut into the tree about 5 inches deep. Having driven the slab tightly into the notch, the axeman mounts upon the slab, cuts another notch, say 3 feet higher up, and inserts another slab, and so on, until he gets up to the rounded barrel of the stem of the tree. Some axemen are quite expert with these springboards; one man in the Foster district has a set of springboards half way up a very large bluegum tree, and has signified his intention of completing the stairway to the top of the tree.



LYREBIRD'S NEST IN STUMP.

## “Picking Up.”

MR. W. H. C. HOLMES.

Perhaps the most anxious time of the year for the early pioneer lay between the finish of the scrub-cutting, usually about Christmas time, and the time for “the burn.” For the first ten or fifteen years of South Gippsland’s history the yearly “burn” was the all-important event of the year to the selector. After months of incessant toil with the axe with anything from 20 to 100 acres of scrub awaiting a favourable day for burning, how eagerly and anxiously did he weigh the chances of each hot day after the middle of January. With a solid wall of timber from 60 to 300 feet high, the wind had not much chance to penetrate and lend a hand in drying up the sodden and rotten vegetation, which lay next to and mixed up with the surface soil, which was covered over by many feet deep of timber, and although the sun poured down in the hot Summer months with a fierce heat, still there were some years when there was not a sufficient number of consecutive dry days to ensure a good clean burn, and I have known several years when there was not one really good burning day during the whole of the Summer, and many settlers, rather than risk a bad burn, have kept putting off burning, in the hope of eventually getting a favourable day, and finally have had to postpone until the following Summer. This, of course, entailed serious loss, as there was the loss of the area cut for the whole season, and the carrying forward for another year also meant additional labour, as undergrowth, such as dogwood, wiregrass, swordgrass, musk and firewood made a prolific growth in the following Spring, and it was necessary to have this new growth slashed down several chains wide all round the fringe of the scrub to ensure getting the fire to travel, as most of the leaves and paper-bark, which existed the first year, and which was such an important factor in carrying the fire, would have disappeared, and unless there is a good strong hot wind, it is difficult to fire a burn the second year. Under normal conditions, however, a week or ten days of dry weather in the middle of January would be ample reason for the settler becoming restless, at dinner-time particularly. He knew that, soon after one o’clock, if any of his neighbours were lighting, the smoke would be seen as evidence; and, even should the wind carry the smoke in a direction that precluded the possibility of seeing it, the roar of the fire would proclaim the fact that “So-and-so’s burn” is alight. Upon the question of “burning day,” there was an unwritten law that was rarely transgressed, during the pioneering days at any rate, and it was that when a settler made up his mind to burn he hastened to his immediate neighbours and informed them of the fact. The necessity for this arose from the fact that for many years each settler would have a burn, small or large as the case might be, each year. Sometimes the areas would be adjoining, in which case the owners would consult together; or, if a little distance apart, there might be some risk, if one only wanted to burn, that the other would have to take steps to light his also, should a change of wind or other circumstances arise, causing his burn to be in danger of being lit accidentally. Having been notified, he would stay handy, and if there was much risk of ignition, would proceed to fire his own burn before it got too late in the day, it being generally recognised that to ensure a good burn of any considerable area of

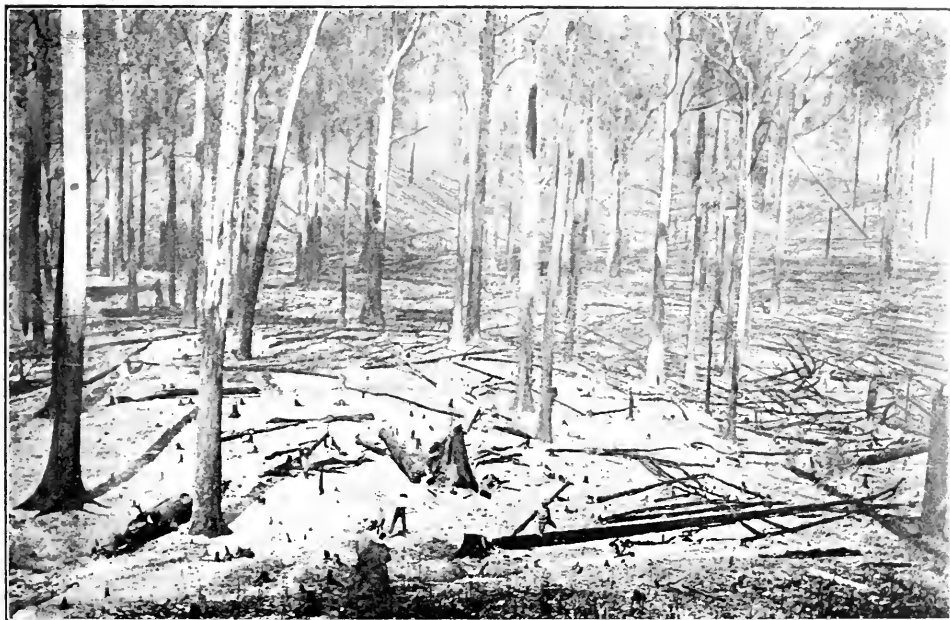
scrub it should be lighted not later than 3 p.m., and generally between 1 and 2 p.m. was the usual time. Occasionally a good burn has been secured in hazel country when burnt accidentally at night time, but such a circumstance would be very exceptional.

Lighting a "burn" is quite an exciting operation, and if a large area had to be fired the neighbours would be requisitioned to help. They would be told off, either singly or in pairs, to the various corners or angles, and each, at a signal—generally the first smoke—would start to light: and by using leaves, paper-bark or other such material, start fires, say every half-chain, until the line was completed, and the point reached where the next man had started lighting: and by this means a complete circle of fire made around the "burn." Paper-bark from the blackbutt and gluegum trees was generally used for torches, and as it was very plentiful, light, and in long lengths, could be doubled up into four or five thicknesses, and one torch would last long enough to make perhaps a dozen different lights. It presumably got its name from the fact that it was very thin, and nearly always curled around like a roll of paper, and this roll was the natural home of the numberless big, sprawling, hairy-legged tarantulas so common to the bush. Naturally, when one held the end of the bundle of bark in the fire to light it, these tarantulas would skurry along through the pipe and up the bare arm of the person holding the bark—not in a spirit of resentment or retaliation, but anywhere to get away from the smoke and fire. These spiders were my pet aversion: yet I have known and seen men pick up a tarantula with a body as large as a small teaspoon, and long hairy legs that would easily spread over the palm of a good sized hand, and allow it to crawl up his arms, around his neck, and over his face. Ugh! the horror of it makes me feel creepy while I write, even in my old age, and, plentiful as they were, particularly at burning time, I could never get used to them.

Although nearly 40 years have elapsed since my first experience of scrub lighting, yet some of the incidents were so burned in upon my memory and my fingers, that they are almost as vivid to-day as they were upon that occasion.

Once the fire had encircled the "burn," nothing more could be done to assist the operation, and no one thought of starting any other job while the result was in the balance, and all hands settled down to watch, drink tea and speculate on the possibilities—and the progress of a scrub-fire in South Gippsland is a spectacle that for awful grandeur beggars description. I have seen many pyrotechnical displays by world famous men, and I have also around the coasts of Australia and New Zealand experienced tempests of wind and water, such as I hope never to experience again, but I have never yet seen anything to equal the warring of the elements of fire and wind as has so often been seen by the pioneers of South Gippsland during the progress of a scrub-fire or "burn." What an endless variety of colour is there in the rolling, tumbling, surging and seething masses of smoke: and what a diversity of sound, with the roar of the wind developed by the fire!

The roar of the fire itself, the incessant crackling of the wire and sword-grass, the fizz and splutter of the gas in the green twigs, the occasional loud report of a bursting sandstone boulder, the prolonged crashing of a big green falling tree, the heavy thud of a huge dry stump, the belching roar of a great hollow dry tree that is pumping volumes of flame and smoke from a dozen or more portholes between its root and the topmost limit—and over all and



A NEW BURN.

Showing ground covered with white ash, and strewn with spars denuded of leaves and small branches by the fire.

everything, as far as the eye can reach, that weird, eerie, livid, yellowish-green hue, giving all around a most unearthly appearance, the face of the sun appearing like a great dull copper disc—would suggest to the uninitiated that the last days were at hand.

These conditions, however, were but transient, and dependent largely upon the number of fires in the locality. If there were not many, a cool breeze would clear the atmosphere probably before dark, and if the scrub burnt be mostly hazel, a fair idea of the result could be obtained two or three hours after the fire had been started; but spar country took some hours longer before it could safely be travelled over.

The term "picking up" in itself does not explain the work it is expected to describe. After the burning of the scrub, as described, all the operations of stacking the fallen timber that remains after the "burn" is included under the term "picking up"; whether the work is simply stacking the small ends and pieces usually left after a hazel scrub "burn," and which may be cleared up to a diameter of 9 inches or a foot, and worth anything from 10/- to £1 per acre; or heavy spar country, where there have been no large green standing trees, and where all the spars have been felled, and the "picking up" is to include everything in the shape of timber excepting the standing stumps, and which may cost anything from £2 to £6 per acre. When the work was let by contract, and included burning off the stacks of timber which had been "picked up," the contract was specified as "picking up and burning off." Naturally, as the years passed by and the wood became dryer and lighter, and the stumps rotted and were more easily removed, the work became very much

easier, until nowadays, unless one travels into East Gippsland, it is scarcely possible to realise the difficulties that confronted those who undertook the clearing of the burnt bush in its earliest stages.

For the first year or two the picking up done by the great majority of the pioneer settlers was done wholly by hand, and it must also be remembered that the timber they were dealing with had, from two to four months previously, been entirely green, and while this fact made the axework considerably easier than if it had been dry, it also meant that, owing to the excessive weight of the green timber, it had to be cut into very much shorter lengths, thus rendering the axework a very important part in the operation. The nature of the original scrub, of course, determined the class of work involved in the picking-up. On the river or creek flats and gullies the job was generally a very heavy one, the timber usually being composed of heavy gum spars, wattles from one to two feet in diameter, blackwoods up to 2ft. 6in. through, musk, hazel and other scrub growths. Flat ground was usually cut early in the Spring, so as to allow the heavy spars time to dry; and as a rule the heavy rains and underground moisture produced a heavy growth of green wire-grass over the tangled mass of cut scrub, and if the burn did not turn out to be a good one, considerable patches might be left unburnt, and these would be the first to receive attention when picking up started.

As with scrub-cutting, the axe was the first consideration, and it was just as important that it should be a good one and in good order, as the wood would be tougher than when felled, and everything being charred made it necessary to pay great attention to the edge of the axe. Generally, if a number of men were engaged in picking up, one or two would start "lopping" or chopping the timber into movable lengths, whilst the others would follow up stacking; or all hands would chop for an hour or so, and then go back and heap what had been cut. A favourite method, and one that proved very satisfactory in the earlier years, when the rainfall was much heavier, was for all hands to lop on wet days, and stack when it was fine. If the "picking up" were done by contract, there would have been an immense loss of time if men had to stop in camp on account of wet weather; and in some cases the contractors were settlers themselves, who were glad to get outside work to "keep the pot boiling," and as lopping was a clean job, and no matter how cold or wet the weather might be, he would be a lazy man who could not keep himself more than warm at this class of work. The great bugbear of the much-maligned Gippsland Winter was the incessant drizzle, raining incessantly for days, keeping everything sodden and soaking, yet not raining heavily enough to keep an able and willing worker inside. These were the days that a great part of the early settlers employed in cutting the timber into suitable lengths for handling. Lopping was a distinctly different operation to that of the city man, who, for the sake of his digestion, and for the sake of peace in his domestic circle, undertakes to convert one piece of firewood into several. In the latter case, 99 out of every 100 will stand well away from the object of their attentions, and with huge bashing blows will inflict an incision that would make a good bushman squint, and produce chips so small and ugly that they would scarcely burn. A great many of the early settlers attacked the Gippsland forest with just about as much knowledge of axework, and not all of them, even after 20 years of experience, made good axemen; but none would be many hours at lopping before experience proved to them that the quickest and most approved method of cutting a log in two, be it great or small, is to stand on top and cut half through on one side, and then cut the other side until the first cut was met. Probably if a



hundred novices were given an axe each and put to cut a log, say one foot in diameter, not one of them would start by standing on top of the log; but experience teaches.

Along the steep gullies lopping was a dangerous job, even to an experienced axeman. Many of the spars would span a gully at a height of 10, 20, or perhaps 30 feet from the ground, and it was neither an easy nor a safe matter to cut these into lengths. It was quite simple to cut half or three-quarters through the spar in a number of places; but it was another matter to stand on top and cut it in two when it at last snaps off with a report like a rifle shot, and falls to the ground with a thud and a jerk that would send the axeman headlong if he remained standing upon it when once it started to fall. So, at the first warning crack, throwing the axe away, he jumps for the clearest spot, watching closely the top end which he has just cut off, as this will in all probability, when it reaches the ground, start to slide down the hill until it reaches the gully. This is also a danger that is always present when lopping along steep hillsides, as at any time when a log is cut off it is liable to start slipping endways, and if lying across another spar will gain tremendous impetus before it reaches the gully below. Some hillsides were so steep that it was almost impossible to stand on the spars owing to the acute angle at which they were lying, and in such places it was customary to make a couple of notches on top of the spar for footholds to avoid slipping, although where this was necessary there was always the risk already mentioned of the log starting off downhill immediately it was severed.

The difference between the amount of axework necessary to lop an acre for picking up and that required to cut down the same area of green forest does not appear to the casual observer. A man may start out in the morning and cut down an acre of scrub. Here he has only to cut each tree or bush through or partly through, and he proceeds to the next one; and in laying low an acre of bush in the day he has made a considerable show, and has had an element of sport and plenty of noise and variety in the operation to which the bush itself has contributed; but the lopper, the picker-up—his is incessant slogging. No other word can so well describe this class of axework. Where the scrub-cutter has to cut the spar once to fell it, the lopper has to cut it eight or ten times to enable the pickers up to stack it. Of course, in dealing with this spar country I am treating it as the selectors had to cope with it 20 or 30 years ago, and it is safe to say that considerably more than half of South Gippsland comprised heavy spar country; and the great obstacle in picking up and clearing then was the fact that the stumps of all the scrub and bush that had been felled were green and solid and so numerous that the use of horses or bullocks for hauling was for years out of the question. In fact, in looking back over the earlier years it seems marvellous that there were not many more accidents to both man and beast in the picking up of the many thousands of acres of bush and the construction of the hundreds of miles of chock and log fencing, the materials for which had to be "snugged" up hill and down dale through a veritable labyrinth of stumps and logs and holes. This network of stumps just about doubled the amount of axework that would otherwise have been required whether for hauling or man-handling; for while two or three men might easily roll a spar 10 feet long and a foot to two feet in thickness over the surface of the ground to a stack of logs, the same number of men would not be able to lift a log a quarter the size over a stump a foot high. In this respect the axeman or lopper could save an immense amount of labour both for himself and for the pickers-up who followed him by using judgment and organising ability in the construction of the stacks; for,

although the axeman does not necessarily make the heaps himself, yet by the way he cuts the timber into lengths, he indicates where he intends they should be made. For instance, a couple of heavy spars may be riding across a large log; instead of cutting them into short lengths, he would cut them so that there might be twenty feet on either side of the log. When the stackers come along they would balance and swing these around until they fall parallel along the large log, thus saving a lot of axework, and helping to reduce the larger tree. The picking-up contractor, in dealing with spar country, found it much more difficult to get competent loppers than men to stack. The lopper must necessarily be a good axeman, and the man who could lop for eight or ten hours a day with an axe up to six pounds in weight required a physique and constitution that at once placed him well above the average of his fellows.

It will perhaps surprise many people to know that the saw was very little used in land clearing during the first twenty years of pioneer experience. In dealing with the large forest trees for building and fencing purposes, the crosscut saw was, of course, in constant use, both for felling and for cutting timber into lengths for splitting; but for clearing, either by contract or otherwise, the axe was almost universally employed.

Having lopped the area proposed to be picked up, or a portion of it, the business of stacking would be next proceeded with, and at this work, in contrast to lopping, employment could be found in some way or other for any man, so long as he is willing to work and has a measure of strength to put into it; and in describing the work of picking up it will make the description more intelligible if taken from the point of view of a picking-up contractor. Assuming that the loppers have got a start, they will first take those parts that have to be stacked and burned first, so as to make use of the warmest weather. These will be the patches of scrub that the burn has missed; here the ends of logs will be cut off where they protrude from the unburnt patches, and the picking-up team will stack all timber handy around the edge of the patch in such a way that a continuous heap is made completely around it, and if this is done in the early Autumn, say in March or early in April, by choosing a warm day with a good strong wind, and lighting these heaps about one or two o'clock at intervals of about 30 feet, a patch of half an acre or several acres may be burnt very successfully; and if the work is followed up and the remaining timber stacked and burnt while it is still hot, there is a great saving of labour. If a patch of this kind only partially burns, the same process repeated reduces the area until the whole is burned and cleared. If the "burn" has been a bad one, there will be parts of the scrub only partially burned or singed, perhaps just the bark and leaves burned, leaving all or most of the timber with the branches and limbs to be cleared. These parts will require to be done while the weather is warm, as the limbs and branches being all shapes make it difficult to build into compact heaps that will burn in anything but hot weather. As a general rule, the flats were the worst to burn, and it was here that there was the greatest difficulty in stacking. As there was no fall in the land the timber had all to be lifted and carried or rolled to the heaps. There was also the disadvantage that the timber on the flats was invariably the poorest burning wood, and many of the fallen trees were waterlogged and sodden. If a contractor had to pick up and burn off everything up to two feet in diameter, his aim would be to make stacks where the greatest quantity of the largest spars and logs up to this size could be got to each other, getting the largest logs together first if possible, it being very important that the heavier logs should be as near together and the end



PICKING UP.

as even as possible when stacked. The man who does the lopping contributes largely to the success or otherwise of this part of the stacking. In getting the logs together where the work is all man-handling, the next tool required, after the indispensable axe, is a hand-spike, one for each man; then two or three skids 10 or 12 feet long are required on which to roll the large spars over intervening stumps on to the top of the heap. Some were fortunate enough to possess iron crowbars from their earliest pioneering days; but, for the most part, the wooden handspikes were the more common. It may seem at this day somewhat incredible, but it is nevertheless a fact, that many thousands of acres of the heaviest timber was picked up without even an iron crowbar—just the axe, handspike and an old fire-shovel.

After the flats had been dealt with, the next in importance would be the gullies, and these have been by far the most expensive clearing in Gippsland, as the timber, when felled on the hillsides, particularly the large gum spars, would slide down, snap off at the head, and ram feet deep into the hill at the opposite side of the creek or gully. Many selectors picked up a chain or two on either side of the gullies, years before they did the ridges, on account of the great danger to stock through getting jammed or stuck between logs. As an instance of this, I know of a paddock of 10 acres which was fairly steep, and had everything cut down, which proved a veritable death-trap, 16 cows out of a herd of 23 being lost, although the grass was good.

If the gullies are narrow at the bottom, and the tree stumps have been cut reasonably low, making the heaps is comparatively easy, as the stumps make the chief difficulty. Often much labour would be saved, once the timber

lying in the gully is straightened and the heap started, by placing a couple of skids from the top of the heap to the side of the hill, and by using judgment in starting each log rolling to the heap, the largest spars could be stacked with very little difficulty.

These gully heaps burn the best owing to the fact that as they burn the timber falls together by gravitation, and is also very easily rolled together, next morning. Another advantage is that the gully heaps are continuous, and leave no burnt ends to be put together, as happens where the heaps are scattered and more numerous. In making a heap the first consideration is position; the upper side of a log lying horizontally along a hillside or a hollow in the ground being preferred as assisting stoking operations after the heap was burned down. Then the heaviest logs should be stacked first, as soon as the way is sufficiently cleared, and they should be stacked with the ends as even as possible, for it is the ends that protrude from the heaps that give most trouble when re-stacking next day. When the larger logs have been got together, the smaller ones are stacked into any spaces, more particularly in the ends, and, lastly, all the small pieces, roots and chips are stacked on each end; this last job falling to the inexperienced hand, who would probably be in the way at heavy logging. His job, however, makes all the difference between good and bad results. If the ends are well packed up, the fire will carry out around the ends of the heavy logs, and they will thus render down evenly and fall together. If not well packed at the ends, the heap will burn clean out in the middle, and the ends will remain the same size as when stacked. When building heaps on the hillsides, great care must be exercised as the logs are being piled up lest with too much impetus one should roll overboard and become stranded by itself, perhaps against a stump, in such a way that will give no end of trouble in getting it to another heap. In spar country, especially if the burn has been a poor one, the number of heaps per acre, when all the timber has been stacked, would be almost incredible.

If the weather is dry, and particularly if there is a good wind, the heaps stacked during the day would be fired in the evening. When it is intended to burn a considerable number of stacks, one here and there would be lit about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and by about 5 o'clock these would be burned sufficiently to allow a man to collect, with an old long-handled shovel, burning charcoal to start other heaps by placing a shovel full on top of each stack. This would, in the course of a couple of hours, create a study in pyrotechnics that would make the eyes of a moving-picture man water. The operator himself will assuredly shed more tears than he bargained for, and although with his day's work among the sooty logs, he will be as black as any Afghan, yet by the time he has been firing for a couple of hours and mingling his tears with charcoal and dust, both his appearance and feelings would beggar description. To those who had done the picking up, however, the burning off was an intensely interesting operation. Just how much of those heaps disappeared in smoke or was left in ashes, and how much remained to be re-stacked, was the all-important point; and the team, when they had finished lighting up, retire to the camp for supper, discussing the pros and cons; and in the interval preceding this meal have perhaps the most enjoyable few moments of the 24 hours, when they retire to the creek to wash. Stripped to the waist, it will take a considerable time to get right down to the original man; but when you do get him, it's really worth getting absolutely black to experience the pleasure of feeling white again. Mirrors are generally wanting where the picker-up performs his ablutions, and a novice will certainly have no idea how black he is, and after giving the usual attention to his

frontispiece, with perhaps a little extra to make sure, the result will more than likely be simply ludicrous—cheeks, forehead and chin ghastly white in contrast with the eyes, sides of nose, ears and neck, which remain nearly jet black. He will surely get laughed at, and will go back to the creek and make sure of it next time, and in all probability will return only one degree better. Not that, after all, it will make much difference unless he change every stitch of clothing, which he is not likely to do, as in all probability he will be going around the heaps to poke them together after supper. So, as soon as his hands rest upon his pants or shirt, they will immediately receive the trade mark of his calling, and his experience of absolute cleanliness will be but as a dream.

Should the team, although tired enough with the day's heavy lifting, be energetic, an adjournment would be made after supper to go around the fires, where an hour or two spent in putting them together, when they are about three-parts burnt out, will make a wonderful difference in the amount of labour required to re-stack on the following day. If the logs, in a stack which has been reduced to say half a dozen, be quite hot but nearly out, they will, on being poked together, blaze up immediately, and in the morning, perhaps, only a few small ends may be left. In the whole of the work there is perhaps no time spent more profitably than in stoking the fires at this stage. Often enough, if a considerable area has been stacked waiting for a dry day to burn, they would be lit in the morning, so as to enable some of the heaps to be poked together during the day. The day following the burning of the heaps the first job would be to go round the smouldering heaps and re-stack them, reducing the number, wherever possible, by carrying the ends to another heap. This was, perhaps, of all the work the pioneer engaged in, the most enervating. None too fresh on account of the previous night's stoking, the hot stifling atmosphere among the smouldering fires, walking on hot ashes which are lying on top of steaming moist soil, and handling wood that is all charred, hot, and a great deal of it burning, made this part of the work very trying. The charcoal on the logs causes the skin on the points of the fingers to wear so thin that they appeared to have just a mere film left, and this would often crack and become very painful when stoking up the hot burning timber. It was very necessary when starting to stoke up in the morning, to note the direction of the wind, otherwise the smoke might give one a bad time before the job was finished.

Bluegum and blackwood were the best burning of the larger timbers, and blackbutt the worst—waterlogged blackbutt is incredibly hard to burn. I once had a contract to clear 90 acres at £3 15 - per acre in 1901, and there was one log in particular on a flat that had got waterlogged. It was within 100 yards of the camp, and hundreds of tons of spars were burned on it, dragged from near and far. Blackbutt spars 2ft. 6in. in diameter were stacked and burned and reduced until only the sodden hearts were left, and these were stacked again closely, and would burn for an hour or two and then go black out; that heap lasted for months; in fact, it was one of the last to go.

During the last 15 years the method of clearing has become entirely different; the green timber has either disappeared or is dead, the stumps can be now removed with much less difficulty, logs that would then take a man days to cut up would now burn out in a few hours if set alight. The Trehwella jack, one of the most useful implements introduced into Gippsland,

marked an epoch in the history of clearing, and horses and bullocks now make easy work and a finished job where such was simply impossible before.

Some idea of the quantity of timber that grew on spar country can be gathered from the fact that in picking-up contracts the specifications provided for clearing up and burning off the chips, and this item alone might account for a considerable loss on a large contract. Picking-up as an occupation in years past was like fern cutting is now, something to fall back on for all sorts and conditions of men. If a man got down on his luck, no matter from what cause, he could generally get a job of picking-up if there was nothing else doing. Consequently the tent or log hut on a burn would often house a heterogeneous collection of personalities—perhaps a dozen men, and no two of the same trade or occupation. In conclusion, I append a few verses written by a picker-up in a hut not far from Korumburra over a quarter of a century ago, and which are probably posthumous. The writer had got down, and a subscription was raised by the early settlers to send him back to the old country again, and nothing has been heard of him since. The lines will go to show that the bushman's knowledge is not necessarily confined to the occupation that he follows.

N.B.—The lines above mentioned will be found at the end of the chapter on The Dairy Industry.



# The Roads, and How We Got Them.

MR. T. J. COVERDALE.

Two things have combined to make South Gippsland notorious wherever its name has been mentioned, and these are its scrub and its roads. The stupendous fact of the one, and the equally stupendous viltness of the other, make claims for it to a place on the scroll of fame that few districts can hope to rival. The scrub, however, over nearly all the country has been conquered; but the bad roads remain, and the problem of them is likely to be handed down to the third and fourth generation—probably further—the Country Roads Board notwithstanding. But the roads problem of to-day is very different from that which the pioneers had to face. To-day it is how to make bad roads better: with them it was how to get any roads at all, for the surveyed ones were absolutely useless even when cleared.

Although for more than thirty years before we came the Lower Gippsland road, had half encircled this country on its devious way from Melbourne to Sale, via Port Albert, no effective attempt had been made to force a road through the dense wilderness of scrub. In an account of a journey round the coast by the Assistant Protector of the blacks, Mr. Thomas, published in the "Port Phillip Patriot" of 6th May, 1844, a quaint record is found of what was probably the first attempt at roadmaking in the scrub country, and which it might be interesting to relate. It runs: "Mr. Thomas states there is a road over the ranges (between the Bass river and Mr. Chisholm's station) as fine and direct a road as any surveyor could have formed, running through a *thickly timbered and scrubby country*, so that it has the appearance of a continued groove, scarce a stump to be seen, the trees cut down to form it being cut to the very base and carefully put in the scrub so that no obstruction intervenes." On enquiry he found the road had been made by barkers to sledge their bark to the coast. But "the poor fellows," he sympathetically adds, "after making the road, paying for the bullocks and rations, and working for six months, were £15 out of pocket." What an argument for a railway or a road grant! But probably there were no deputations in those days.

But civilisation's first effectual mark was laid on the wilderness when G. T. McDonald, in 1862, completed the track that bears his name. This was the biggest piece of road surveying ever done in South Gippsland. Although he did not plot it as the two-chain road it is now, he ran the course through-out and cut a track along it. It ran easterly and north-easterly from Tobinyallock to Morwell, a distance of about seventy miles, and for the most of the way through the heart of the big scrub country. It was a monument to the skill and perseverance of the man who, after more than two years of difficult and tedious exploring, completed it. His supplies had to be packed from Cranbourne, distant during part of the work over sixty miles. The road was intended for a better stock route from Sale to Melbourne, but was abandoned, as there was no permanent water on it, although it ran through an exceptionally wet country. The reason of this is that for the most of the way it runs along the top of a dividing range which falls away sharply in places, especially to the southward.

Although he had to grope about in the dark, so to speak, through the scrub, it is surprising how little alteration was needed in the route surveyed by him when the clearings let daylight in upon his work. Clearing his seven foot "track" along the line, he unconsciously wrote his name in history; and then the scene of his labours was left to the silence of the bush again for the next twelve or thirteen years. When the first pioneers came in, the track was entirely overgrown and very difficult to trace, so much so that some of the blocks were surveyed right across it—the land surveyors not noticing it at the time. After being run again, it became the base line for the survey of many thousands of acres, and as they came in, the settlers kept opening up the old seven-foot track further and further east. And this seven-foot track was the only road in the district for some three or four years, and had to carry the traffic of many square miles of country. Its condition in the Winter may be left to the imagination.

The first survey of part of McDonald's Track as a road was made by Thornhill in 1876 in conjunction with the survey of the Bluff road.

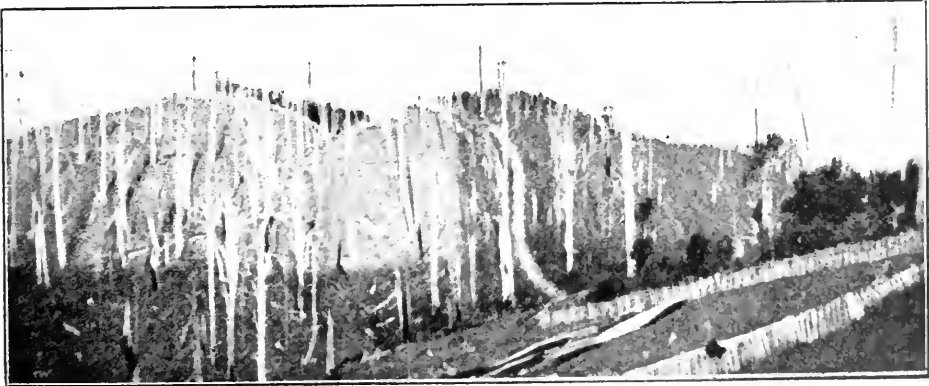
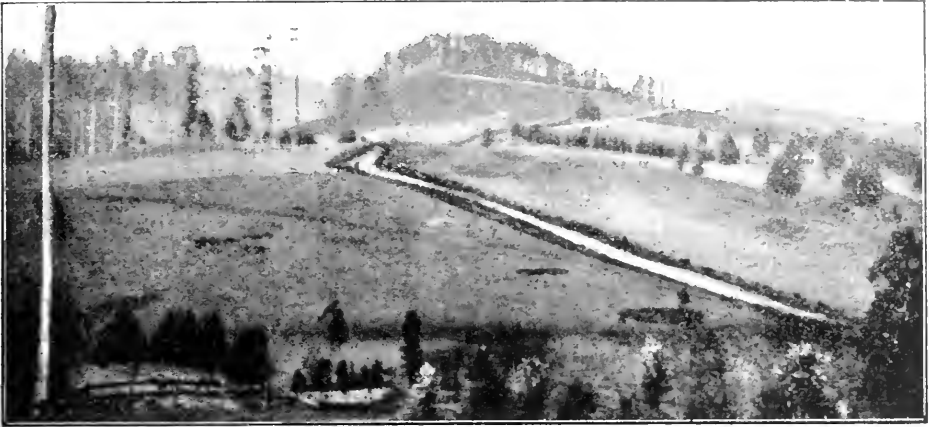
With the object of avoiding the sandhills on McDonald's old route from Tobinyallock, or perhaps of giving us access to a "port" (!) at the Red Bluff, he started from the Grantville road a few miles further along and picked up McDonald's Track a little east of the site of Nyora, and surveyed it thence about fourteen miles eastward, whence it was afterwards continued by the block surveyors. A surveyor named O'Brien about two years later surveyed that part of it from Tobinyallock over the sandhills to Nyora junction. At this time also Thornhill surveyed the road from the Bluff road to the Bass at Sunnyside.

In 1878 a Government Grant of £240 was obtained for clearing McDonald's Track, and two miles of it was cleared a chain wide from Poowong eastward. Later on the settlers and the Shire Councils did the rest, and it is now a main artery of traffic for a wide district.

Although a good deal of skirmishing had been done with the scrub in the west, nothing worth the name had been accomplished in the way of road-making when the great rush for land set in. Murray and Hargreaves surveyed a road from Grantville in 1878, which was afterwards continued by Lardner as the Jeetho West road. They also surveyed one to the Bass at Paul's selection to give access to the country further south, in 1879. But many thousands of acres had been rapidly taken up wherein no roads whatever existed, except the useless sectional roads. The country was covered with a network of pack-tracks stretching out many miles from the different bases, and the condition of these could only be realised by those who had the misfortune to travel them. They were mere ditches of mud, full of roots, stumps and crab-holes, running through a tunnel of scrub over hills and gullies. Through these the unfortunate horses had to struggle with their heavy packs, splodging along knee deep in mud for many a weary mile. In Summer, as the tracks dried, they worked up with the action of the horses' feet into transverse ridges about two feet apart, looking on the hillsides like gigantic ladders. One stretch where the track went up the side of a red hill used to be called "The Golden Stairs," though the language heard there at times did not always favour the comparison.

Such was the condition of the country in the matter of roads for some years after settlement first began. And as the roads given on paper by the Government were, in some places up the sides of precipices and in others in





SHOWING TYPICAL LOCATION OF SOUTH GIPPSLAND ROAD.

The mark on the face of the hill in the lower photo is a road, not a waterfall.

the beds of creeks, being put in at every mile or so without the slightest regard for practicability (the land being surveyed on the chessboard pattern, the same as if it had been level country) the settlers had to find an entirely new system of roads for themselves, that of the Government being nothing more than a huge practical joke. And certainly it savoured much of the humour of the first of April to tell a man there was a road to his block, and let him find out when he got there that part of it was perpendicular and the rest ran along the bed of a creek.

Had the Government of the day done as later Governments have done, and surveyed the roads through the district, adding the cost, which would have been comparatively trifling then, to the capital value of the land, it would have saved a world of trouble and expense in forcing roads, at enormous cost, through private property later on, and hastened the progress of the place enormously. But this was not done, and the settlers had to work out their own salvation in the matter of roads.

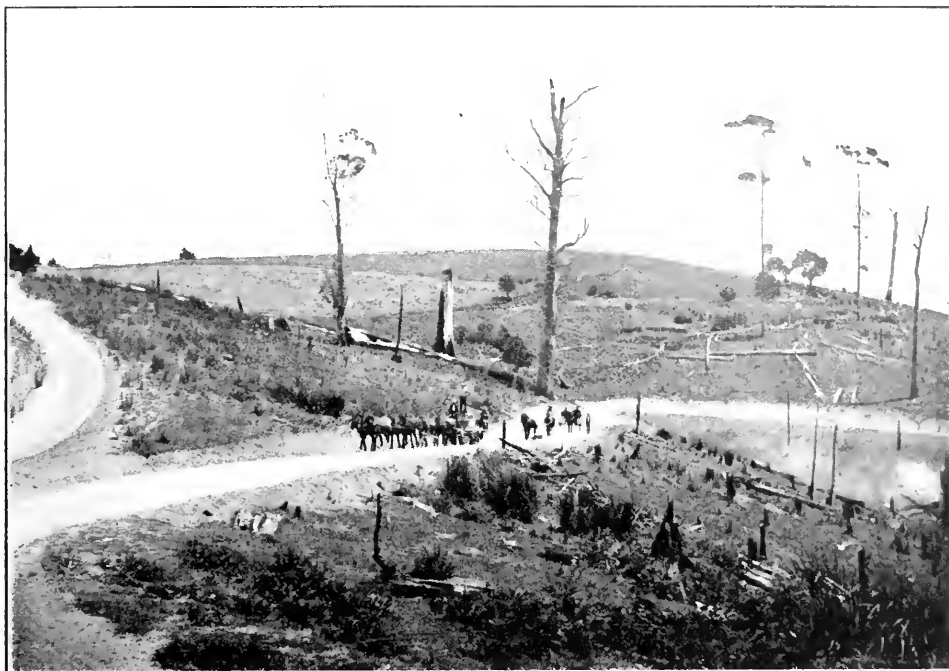
Armed with compass and tomahawk then, they had to scramble for weeks over miles of scrub covered ranges and gullies, that seemed to be jumbled about in hopeless confusion, in wearisome efforts to find practicable roads. The density of scrub obscured the contour of the ranges beyond a radius of a couple of chains, and it was like finding a road in the dark with a lantern. In fact, a good arc lamp would have shown more of the country on the darkest night in the open than could be seen through the scrub in the daylight. First one ridge and then another would be laboriously explored without success: one that you thought was going to take you to your objective on a good grade would suddenly drop down into a gully on a grade of one in two; or another equally promising would suddenly jump up as steeply, while a third would probably turn off at a right angle to your course. If a big creek or river were discovered, the flat usually found on one side or the other of these would be tried for a route: but these were often swampy or required too many bridges; so the ridges were favoured most as being drier and less costly.

Had money been available to do earthworks many short cuts could have been made and better grades obtained. But there was none, for we were not in any Municipal district at first, and later, when we were, the rates in most cases amounted to only about thirty shillings or two pounds per square mile. Certainly there was a good subsidy with it after a while, but subsidy and rates alike were mostly all spent at the centres, so that the roads were often taken over the tops of hills on grades of one in six, to save the expense of side cuttings, when a deviation round the side would have given a good grade.

In 1879, after much tedious exploration of the intervening country, a road was discovered by the settlers from Poowong, on McDonald's Track, to Drouin on the newly-opened Gippsland line and cleared by them for a narrow dray track. This road formed the only access to the railway for many years for a large district. Narrow, crooked and ungrubbed, its condition in the Winter was atrocious and often quite impassable. Previous to this the Bluff road and McDonald's Track had formed the only outlets for some two hundred square miles of country.

In 1880 a number of road routes having been discovered and blazed through the scrub by the settlers, Surveyor Lardner was sent up by the department to make permanent surveys of them, improving the grades where possible. The first of these surveyed was the Main South road from Poowong via the present site of Bena, and eastward to a point on Whitelaw's Track, about half a mile south of the present Bena junction, to which latter it was afterwards altered. But the Main South road proper turned south off this road a mile and a half west of this point, and was surveyed three years later by Mr. Lardner via Jumbunna to Anderson's Inlet on the south coast. In 1880 also he surveyed Whitelaw's Track. Whitelaw had cut this "pack-horse track," as he called it, from Foster nearly to McDonald's Track, in 1874-5, and cleared part of it for a dray road. It was intended at the time for a short cut, via McDonald's Track, from Foster to Melbourne, but was abandoned when the gold mines at Foster gave out, though the survey party had reached within a couple of miles of McDonald's Track.

In 1881 Lardner surveyed the Drouin to Poowong road, previously mentioned, and the East Poowong road; and later the Jeetho West road from the Main South road to Hargreaves survey of 1878, giving access to Grantville on Westernport Bay. In 1883-4 he surveyed the Mirboo road from



DEVIATION ON MOUNT VIEW ROAD. Old Grade, 1 in 7; New Grade, 1 in 28.

The Old Road is shown on the left of picture.

Whitelaw's Track, also the Fairbank road, thus forming the first connection between the settlements of Korumburra on the west and those of Mirboo on the east. And so our road system began to develop at last.

As all this country had been taken up under the Land Acts of 1869 or 1878, most of it was still held under license. While the land was held under license the Government could put roads where it liked without compensation, and many of the principal roads were so taken; but a little later, when the people began to get their leases and Crown Grants, the opening up of new roads became a costly business, and the cause of much wrangling and heart-burning where opposition was met with. And in some cases the strongest opposition was offered; parliamentary influence was frequently invoked, and very unparliamentary language sometimes indulged in before finality was reached.

In those days the man with a road grievance was common. He was either trying to get a road through the property of a neighbour who was blocking him, or a neighbour was trying to get one through his. In either case the other fellow was always in the wrong, and was turning out a much inferior stamp of a man to that which he—the man with a grievance—had always believed him to be. This opposition was largely due to the fact that people were beginning to get their places cleared, their homesteads built and their paddocks arranged, while neither the councils nor the people requiring outlets could afford to give as good compensation as they do now.

After these preliminaries had been fought out, and sometimes before, all those interested would turn out and cut a pack track or sledge road along the

new survey line, clearing off the scrub and big logs a few feet wide and bridging the creeks. Little grubbing was done at first till the stumps began to get aggressive, then the worst of them would be taken out. Later on this would be made into a dray road with a little more clearing and earthworks, and rebuilding of the bridges.

It often happened that some settlers would be cut off from the main roads by gullies or ridges, necessitating wide detours to reach these roads, with much heavy clearing and bridging often to be done by them alone; and some of these men have not even yet got decent outlets.

Providing these outlets and making deviations round the sharp pinches on the ridges that the early pioneers went over the tops of to save side-cutting, forms a considerable item in the business and expenditure of the Shire Councils to-day. But before this was begun, the Councils, as soon as they were formed, took up the work of clearing the main tracks and converting them into alleged roads—mud canals would better describe them. In Winter nothing could travel them but the pack-horse or the sledge; and the mud might be seen rising up in front of the latter when in motion like a combing wave in front of a fast travelling boat. A long stack of timber that had been cleared off the road lay along each side, blocking the water in places from getting away. These piles of timber and the standing scrub alongside would be splashed to a height of several feet with liquid mud thrown up by the passing traffic. Out of sight, beneath a foot or more of mud, stumps, roots, and crabholes lay in wait for wheels or sledge, or the feet of the unfortunate horses and cattle that an unkind fate had condemned to travel on, or in, South Gippsland roads.

Corduroy was pretty largely used by the settlers in the early days to keep them out of the mud, and the forests of saplings of all kinds through which the roads ran afforded abundance of material for the work. Spars of six or eight inches in diameter were cut into lengths of eight or ten feet, and laid close together, transversely to the road, along the worst stretches. The result as a liver stimulant was hard to beat, but as a road it left much to be desired. A better system of corduroy was adopted by the Shire Councils later on, of splitting slabs of about four inches by nine and ten or twelve feet long out of the big timber, and laying them on longitudinal bed logs. When well laid, this made a good road and lasted for years. But at each end of every piece of corduroy a large mud hole very soon formed, and drivers were often faced with two problems: one was how to get on to the corduroy, and the other how to get off it, and as the patches of corduroy might be anything from a mile to a few chains or even a few yards in length, these problems came pretty frequently. In the hazel country the roads generally worked up into one continuous slush all the way, but in the open mess-mate country they wore into deep holes from a couple of yards to half a chain in length, with alternate stretches of fairly good going. These holes were frequently patched with corduroy, with the result that two holes grew where only one was before, and the man who patched was not regarded as a benefactor to his country.

The sedimentary rock of the district when burnt was often used as a substitute for blue metal: it was piled on stacks of wood and burned for several days. The burning hardened the rock, and it would last for some years on roads where the traffic was light. Burnt clay was also occasionally used for the same purpose.

For many years the Councils had a most difficult and disheartening task in trying to cope with the work of purchasing and making roads, and the



ON THE BOOLARRA-FOSTER ROAD.  
Since Metalled by Country Roads Board.

cost in some cases was enormous. The purchase, clearing, bridging, earth-works and fencing would often cost over £500 per mile; the metalling costing from £500 to £800 per mile more. And this had to be dragged out of people who, for obvious reasons, could in the meantime make little or nothing off the land.

In the early eighties many of the Gippsland Shires received from the Government a subsidy of £3 for every £1 collected in rates, beside special grants, in consideration of their peculiar road difficulties and the loss of the tolls which had but recently been abolished. But several of the South Gippsland Shires were constituted too late to benefit by this generous subsidy, which soon dwindled down to about six shillings in the £. But about the year 1907, during the regime of Sir Thomas Bent as Premier, the subsidy was increased, by which some of them received up to 12 - in the £. They also then received 80 per cent. of the license fees, which gave some of the shires an additional £500 per year. Special grants were also obtained occasionally, and with a general rise in land values, the revenues of the shires increased, and great improvements were made in the roads; to-day (1911), hundreds of miles have been cleared and formed, and many miles metalled.

Private individuals or small communities requiring particular roads were often called upon to contribute liberally towards the cost of them either in money, fencing or labour, and in the main justice was done by the Councils between these people and the general ratepayer. The old, useless sectional roads put in by the land surveyors were in many cases utilised by the Shire Councils to lighten the cost of those substituted for them. They may be dealt with in different ways; sometimes they are sold and the proceeds used in the

purchase of new roads, or they may be given in exchange for a new road to the landholder through whose land the latter goes. If not so dealt with, they are leased under the provisions of the Unused Roads and Water Frontages Act of 1903 to the adjoining landholders at a low rental. Half the proceeds of these rents was at one time returned to the Shires wherein it was collected, and the balance, together with the water frontages rents, paid into a fund from which the Government made grants to necessitous Shires. But since the formation of the Country Roads Board in 1913, these monies are paid into its fund.

Deviations and new outlets will be required for many years to come. A number of the original blocks, held often by members of families living on adjoining properties, are not yet residentially occupied; when they are, new outlets for them will be required; subdivision also, although a small item at present, is sure in the future to increase the demand for new roads. Although an immense amount of work—outsiders can never realise how much—has been done in the older districts by the Shire Councils and by the settlers themselves, there are still many settlers in places remote from main roads who are asking merely for earth roads to replace those awful pack tracks and sledge tracks they have struggled with so long. And these secondary roads must be given or the costly main roads of the Country Roads Board will lose half their usefulness.

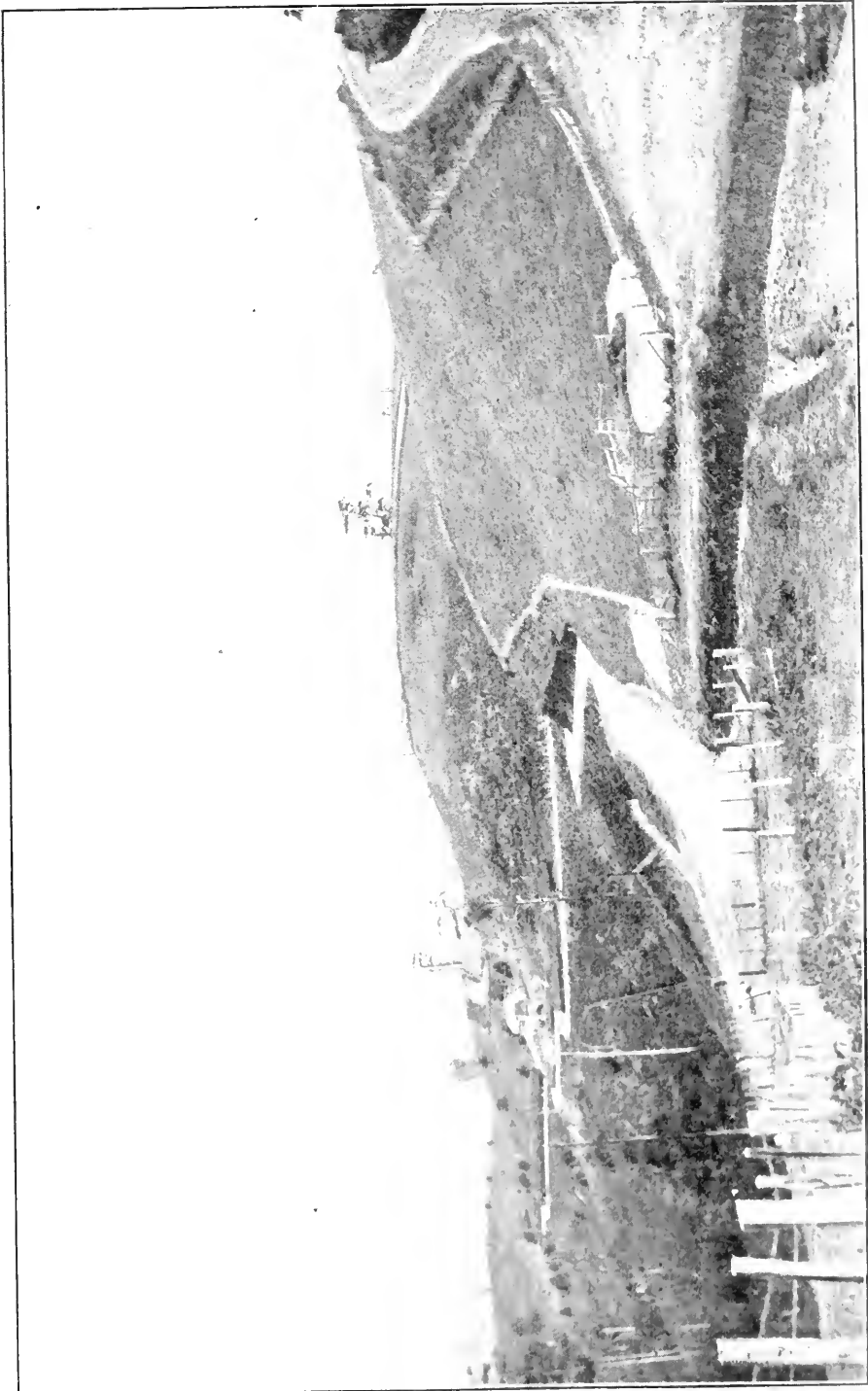
A word as to the constitution and purpose of this Board may not be out of place here. It was constituted in March, 1913, for the purpose of improving the existing main roads of the State, and where necessary, making other main roads. It consists of three members—Messrs. Calder (Chairman), Fricke and McCormack, and all its works are carried out under the supervision of the officers of the local Shire Councils.

For the operations of the Board, a sum of £2,000,000 was provided by Parliament to be expended over five years. Half this sum is a gift to the municipalities, the balance is repayable by them in 31½ years at 4½ per cent. interest and 1½ per cent. sinking fund.

This will be all right for the main roads, but will do little good for the men outback who cannot get on to them. If the Board can devise some means of assisting the Councils to help these unfortunates, it will earn the gratitude of the pioneers and of all who have the welfare of South Gippsland at heart.

\* \* \* \*

Soon after the above was written, the Great War broke out and the publication of this book was deferred until less troublous times. In the meantime, the Country Roads Board referred to above has done a vast amount of work in the districts here dealt with—spending something like £200,000 in re-locating, regrading and metalling the roads. Early in the operations of the Board, it was realised that the settlers far from the Main Roads were not getting a fair deal, and eventually in 1918 further sums, totalling £2,000,000, were made available by Parliament for what are termed "Developmental Roads." None of this money has to be repaid by the municipalities, but they will be required to pay sums equal to about 1½ per cent. per annum on it for twenty years. The roads to be operated on are those leading to railway stations, or on to the main roads, and are usually suggested by the Shire Councils and taken over by the Board when approved. This will meet the case of the men out back, but it is feared that, owing to the increased cost



SEA VIEW TO BROWN'S SADDLE DEVIATION.

Deviation of road, Sea view to Brown's Saddle, Warragul Shire, put in by Country Roads Board. The old road is seen going over the hills on the right - the new road contours the spurs to the left. The original grade on the old road was 1 in 3, later reduced by the Shire Council to 1 in 5. The grade on the new road is 1 in 20.

of labour and material since the war, this amount will not be sufficient, and either further grants will be required or a less expensive system of construction adopted.

It is satisfactory to note that of late years the Board has concerned itself much more extensively with works in the back country than in improving fairly good roads in the old, settled districts. This is as it should be, and if continued will revolutionise transport conditions here and in similar districts, and give them a fair chance beside other parts of the State.

One great permanent advantage derived from the operations of the Board is in the re-location of many of the roads, thus doing away with the old "switchbacks" on the ridge roads, where we were compelled to toil over the tops of hills for lack of money to make side-cuttings round them.





# The Pioneers of Poowong.

MR. A. GILLAN.

It was many years after Victoria was first settled (and this may be said to have commenced in 1835), before attention was directed by the Government and people to the portion of the State occupying the South East, and called South Gippsland. The province of Gippsland was named after Sir George Gipps, one of the Governors of New South Wales. The hilly character of the country and the dense forest covering it were two great obstacles in the way of settlement and occupation. In the early days it was nominally occupied by squatters, who grazed their stock on the open and less timbered country between the hills and the southern coast.

The overland journey of Count Strzelecki and his party (noticed in another part of this book) in 1840 from New South Wales to Westernport, and the survey of McDonald's Track by a surveyor named McDonald from Tobinyallock to Morwell in 1860, are two of the most notable events occurring prior to the advent of the occupation of the country for grazing and agricultural purposes. McDonald and his party must have had an eventful and trying time in carrying out the work entrusted to them.

The track starting from Tobinyallock continued east and north-east among the hills, following a tortuous course along ridges and watersheds to the main Gippsland road at Morwell. It is still used as one of the main roads passing through the country, which at first it opened up. It has also served a useful purpose in a different way: as when selection took place, it formed the base of the blocks taken up north and south of its course. In consequence of the country being opened up to some extent by McDonald's Track and the discovery of the fertility of the soil when cleared of trees and scrub, it was thrown open for selection under the Lands Act of 1869. This Act entitled the selector to take up an area of 320 acres at a yearly rental of 1/- per acre for a period of 20 years, when he obtained the Crown Grant.

Between 1870 and 1875 selection took place only to a moderate extent, but during the succeeding five years the country may be said to have been rushed by a stream of selectors from different parts of the State. The country was approached for selection from different quarters, but the main stream of those in quest of land came by the Westernport and McDonald's Track routes, another of smaller volume from Drouin. The District of Poowong, from its situation along McDonald's Track, and only a short distance from the poor country intervening between Westernport, was among the first to be settled.

James Scott and family may be said to be the first settlers. Mr. Scott came in 1871 from Westaway Station at Westernport, where he had been settled for several years, having come there previously from the Talbot district. It was mainly through the favourable reports of the fertility of the ground given by the workmen employed by Surveyor McDonald in opening up the track previously mentioned that induced Mr. Scott to come at first to the District of Poowong. Mr. Scott, when he came, erected a hut of

fern stems on the block which his son, R. G. Scott, selected, covering the roof with fronds. When the family joined him they had a narrow escape of losing their lives, owing to a tree falling quite close to the camp. A large box filled with crockery sustained the full force of the fall, with disastrous results to the box and contents.

The fern house soon gave place to a more pretentious building, erected at the south end of the block along McDonald's Track, which in time was licensed, and many who came in search of land made for this place, which was a popular resort in the first years of settlement.

Mr. Scott and his large family of boys took an active part in promoting settlement and developing their farm. Mr. Scott, besides grazing, engaged in cheese manufacture with successful results. He also took much interest in establishing a market for stock at Poowong. This has proved highly useful to the local community, and the sales at first were conducted at his own place by Hyde and Howard, of Dandenong, and it is still one of the leading district markets, the auctioneering firms attending same being Alex. Scott & Co. (A. Scott being a son of Mr. Jas. Scott), Joseph Clarke & Co. and F. J. Little Proprietary Limited.

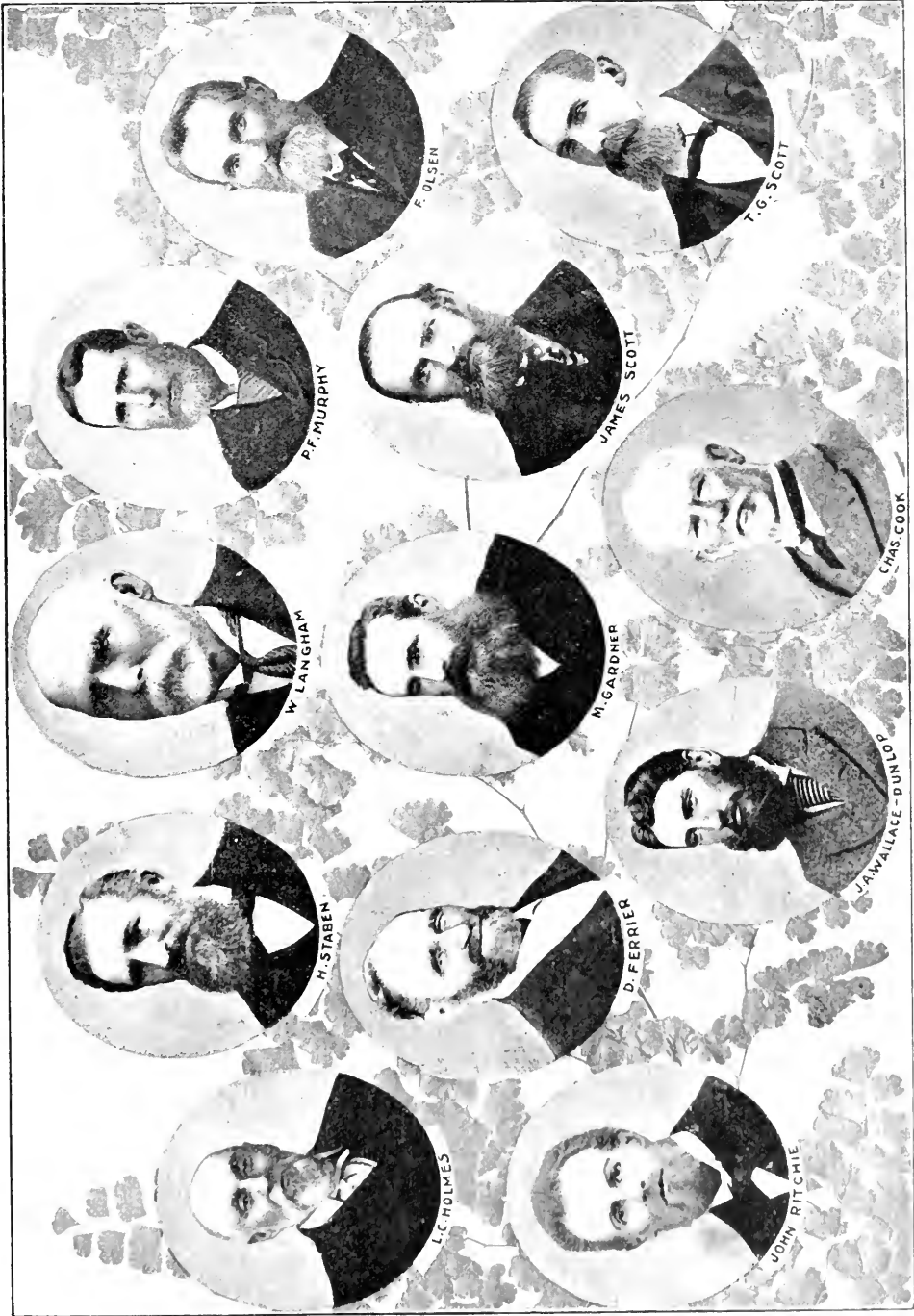
Mr. J. A. Wallace-Dunlop came to the district from Brighton also in 1874, selecting near Mr. Scott. A young lady, Miss Fanny Mawbey by name, pegged a block adjoining Mr. Dunlop's, and by and bye became Mrs. Dunlop. This was an example of similar arrangements being agreed upon in a number of instances by young men and women contemplating, after selection, a matrimonial partnership.

Mr. Dunlop was a useful member of society, being skilled as a veterinary surgeon, a qualification that made his services in this direction highly desirable at times.

Mr. H. Littledike was one of the early pioneers, and one who took an active part in the advancement of the district. He was a member of the Buln Buln Shire Council for many years, taking a prominent part in its proceedings. He was thoroughly conversant with the curing of bacon and conducted this line of business at his homestead for a number of years. He met his death by accident in one of his paddocks, through a branch of a tree which he was burning falling upon him.

David Ferrier, adjoining Messrs. Littledike and Dunlop, was another of the early pioneers, and was well known as a carrier by pack and conveyance. By these means he transported the goods and chattels of a considerable number of selectors to their destination, not unfrequently exposed to a great risk of life or limb in carrying out various undertakings.

Mr. C. Burchett, who came from Brunswick, selected in February, 1876. His block was directly opposite the Poowong Township Reserve, and the southern end, abutting on McDonald's Track, now forms part of the township. Mr. Burchett, on settling at Poowong, immediately attended to the religious interests of the settlers living in the district by conducting services, which at first were held in his house, and afterwards by taking an active part in the erection of a Union Church, which for a time served all the Protestant inhabitants. Mr. Burchett was also one of the early Councillors representing the Poowong District in the Buln Buln Shire Council. This Shire was constituted in 1878, the meetings of the Council being held in Drouin. Mr. Burchett took considerable interest in the Athenaeum, erected at Poowong in



GROUP OF POUAONG PIONEERS.

1884, and the Library connected with it, being Secretary and Librarian for many years.

Mr. and Mrs. Horsley came from Maldon, where they had resided for about 20 years, to Poowong in June, 1877, their selection being close to the township on the eastern side. Mr. Horsley was the first blacksmith at Poowong, and Mrs. Horsley the first post-mistress. The mails were obtained from the Grantville coach at Lang Lang, and carried to Poowong on horseback. This method gave place in about 1880 to a coach service between Drouin and Poowong, established by Mr. Howard for the carriage of passengers and mails. From the muddy character of the tracks, especially in winter, and the partial clearing of them, the mails were very irregular in arrival, and frequently people would have to wait until night at the Post Office for the mails that should have arrived soon after mid-day. On such occasions, and they were frequent, Mr. and Mrs. Horsley earned the gratitude of the residents by providing shelter and hospitality to those waiting for their overdue mails. In 1886, when Mrs. Horsley gave up the Post Office, a presentation of a silver tea and coffee service and salver was made to her as an expression of appreciation and respect by the people of the district. Of her family, two of her sons were Councillors in the Poowong and Jeetho Shire Council.

Mr. Gardner took a leading part in the agitation for a railway from Drouin to Poowong. Mr. Robert J. Murdoch, senr., and Mr. Walter Foreman also took an active part in this agitation. The Government of the day favoured the proposal, and had a line surveyed. This was afterwards abandoned through a change of Ministry, and a decision of Parliament in 1883 to build the South Eastern line from Dandenong to Port Albert. This line passed through the district about four miles south-west of Poowong, too far to be of any benefit to the township, although of considerable advantage to the locality.

Of the local stores, Mr. J. Salmon had the first in the Poowong township. Mr. R. J. Murdoch had the store at Cruickston, and Mr. Thos. Adkins the store at Strzelecki. Mr. Jas. Scott had the first store in the district.

In 1876 Messrs. J. McCord and George Henry came to Poowong, and were the first to settle on land south of the Bass. Soon after selection they opened up a track from Poowong across the Bass to their selections. Mr. Henry and family became large contractors to the Shire Council. These settlers came from the Geelong district, as also Cook Bros., who came in the following year, and selected on the western side of Messrs. McCord and Henry, whilst Mr. Duncan McTavish from Melton selected on the eastern side in the same year.

Mr. Hugh Campbell, nephew to Mr. McTavish, came to Poowong in 1880, and settled, with his uncle aiding him actively in buying and selling stock in connection with his pursuit as a grazier. Messrs. Cook Bros. were both teachers; one of them, Mr. C. Cook, had charge of the Poowong State School for upwards of 25 years, when he was superannuated. Mr. Cook was secretary for many years of the Athenaeum. He also took an active interest in the establishment of the Poowong Co-operative Butter Factory in 1892, and was its first secretary. His brother, Mr. E. Cook, was secretary for many years of the Poowong Cemetery Board.

Mr. T. G. Scott came to Poowong in 1876 from the Dumolly district and got a forfeited block, first selected by Mr. J. Beckett, west of Mr. R. G. Scott's

selection. Mr. Scott was noted for his friendship and hospitality, and on leaving the district he was the recipient of a gold watch, given to him at a banquet by the residents of the district.

Mr. Walter Grieve came also from the Dunolly district same year and selected a block adjoining Mr. Scott.

Mr. Robert Motton came from Melton about 1876. Two blocks along McDonald's Track and east of Poowong were selected by Alice and Louisa Motton, members of his family, and two more have since been bought, adjoining, making a compact and valuable estate. Mr. Motton died in 1912 at the advanced age of 91 years.

Mr. R. J. Murdoch, who came from Port Melbourne, selected in 1876 along McDonald's Track at Cruickston, and for many years kept a store, and, as stated previously, took an active part in the agitation for a railway from Drouin to Poowong. Mr. R. J. Murdoch, jun., was one of the first directors of the Poowong Co-operative Butter Factory. His brother, Jas. Leslie Murdoch, was for a number of years a director of the same factory also, and after his brother's retirement, a member of the Poowong and Jeecho Shire Council for several years.

In 1880, Messrs. Murdoch, sen., and M. Gardner, as delegates from a public meeting, obtained a grant of £240 from the Public Works Department for the purpose of clearing about two miles of McDonald's Track, starting where the Methodist Church now stands. This was the first Government money expended at Poowong.

Mr. C. R. Mair on the occasion of his retirement from the Shire Council, of which he had been a member for many years, was presented with an address and purse of sovereigns. He was, besides, a justice of the peace, and took a leading part in all matters relating to the public welfare. Mr. Mair came at first from Brighton in 1877, selecting along McDonald's Track near Strzelecki, but in a few years sold his block and removed to the vicinity of Poowong. He was also a director in the Poowong Butter Factory for many years.

Mr. Thos. Adkins, who bought Mr. Mair's block, came from the Talbot district, and may be regarded as an early pioneer. He took considerable interest in pig and sheep breeding, especially the latter, and earned the reputation of one of the most successful breeders of sheep in South Gippsland. His family are still noted pig and sheep breeders. In addition to the store previously mentioned, Mr. Adkins had charge of the Post Office.

Mr. R. O. Timms, although not a selector, came to the district about 1882 from Camperdown. He bought the blocks first selected by A. Fraser and Agnes, his daughter, and L. F. Appleton, his son-in-law, also those belonging to Wm. and J. Lakeland. He took an active part in public affairs, being a Shire Councillor for many years, also one of the directors of the Poowong Butter Factory, and in 1897 he was accorded an expression of appreciation by the people of Poowong for his public services, by the presentation of a purse of sovereigns at a banquet held in his honour. He was also a Justice of the Peace. Mrs. R. O. Timms, whose maiden name was Margaret Mickle Lyall, was the first white child born in the Westernport district at Tooradin in February, 1853.

Mr. Wm. Treadwell, who was also a member of the Shire Council for many years, and a director of the Poowong Butter Factory, was presented with

a purse of sovereigns as a public recognition for his services. He came from the Horsham district about 1880, and selected at Poowong North, as also his brothers, John, Vincent and Thomas. All were reared in the Geelong district.

Mr. R. Gregg came from the Creswick district in 1879, selecting along the Drouin road near Poowong, half of a forfeited block. Subsequently, he bought three other blocks, near that which he selected. For some time in the early days he engaged in the carrying business from Drouin to Poowong, afterwards engaging in contract work for the Buln Buln Shire Council, at the same time carrying on dairying and farming with his family. Mr. Gregg is a member of the Cemetery Board, and has been for many years. One of his sons, at the time of the Boer War in 1901, joined a contingent from Victoria to aid the Imperial Army, and was promoted to be a lieutenant. Mr. A. N. Gregg, the son referred to, was for some years a member of the Poowong and Jeetho Shire Council.

Mr. A. Gillan, who came from the Creswick district, selected at Poowong North in January 1879, but did not come to reside on his block until 1885. He was a teacher, and was appointed to the State School at Poowong East. He was soon, however, transferred to the new school at Poowong North, which he held for upwards of nine years, when he was superannuated. He took an active part in the establishment of the Presbyterian Church at Poowong, by helping the missionary in taking services and acting as secretary to the Board of Management. In 1906, a presentation of a Cutler desk was made to him by the congregation and friends in the district in recognition of his work in the lines indicated.

Mr. Thos. Houlahan, who came from Ballarat, selected in 1876. He was a successful grazier, sending to market the finest bullocks in the district. He occupied a seat for many years at the Board of the Poowong Butter Factory, also at the Cemetery Board.

Mr. Walter Foreman, who came from Melbourne, was an early pioneer, and one who took an active interest in the agitation for railway communication to Melbourne. He was also a member of the Shire Council for several years.

Two workmen in the early days, who were noted scrub-cutters, are still in the district. These are David Sullivan and Batty Stewart, the faithful day man of the Shire Council.

These are a few brief notices of a number of the early settlers of the Poowong district.

A fact worthy of notice respecting the settlers is the large number of teachers that selected and came to the district.

Along McDonald's Track were Messrs. Ure and son, Misses B. and M. McLean, and Mr. and Mrs. Burchett; and between Poowong and Loch, Mr. and Mrs. Cook, also Mr. E. Cook and Miss Leys; whilst near Jeetho were Mr. and Mrs. Wilson, and at Poowong North were Mr. and Mrs. Bee and Mr. and Mrs. Gillan.

It may be noted that the first weather-board house erected in the district of Poowong, about 1882, was that owned and occupied by Miss McLean and now owned and occupied by Mrs. Beck.

# Recollections and Experiences

MR. CALEB BURCHETT.



In Victoria, about 38 years ago, there was a time of great commercial and industrial depression. Property of all kinds depreciated in value, building operations almost ceased, large numbers of men were unemployed, and much anxiety was felt as to the future.

It was then that the faces of many were turned towards the land, and the discovery of the rich soils of Brandy and Whisky Creeks opened up to rapid settlement the country which now includes the populous and prosperous towns of Drouin and Warragul.

By hundreds people entered that part of Gippsland, and in spite of the absence of roads, railways, or tracks, proceeded to peg out the land before survey, and soon the whole available area of good soil was selected, and also much inferior country adjoining, which remains with little alteration unimproved to this day.

It was then reported that good land was to be obtained on McDonald's Track, Poowong, and on both sides of the Bass river. It was on February 18th, 1876, that I arranged with young Sam, Medley to go with him into this new district. On February 24th, at about 8 a.m., we took our seats in a six-horse coach at the Albion Hotel, Bourke st. It was a clear, sunny morning, with a wind, which even then was warm, from the north. We arrived at Dandenong about 11, and exchanged the coach for a two-horse waggonette, and arrived at Cranbourne about one o'clock. We pulled up at Mrs. Harris's old Mornington Hotel, and soon did justice to a good meal, in anticipation of a long 24-mile walk. There was now a fierce, hot wind blowing, and almost the whole country was enveloped in fire and smoke. We passed through Sherwood, Tooradin, and Tobin Yallock, and about 8 p.m. arrived tired, heated, dusty and blackened at a "haven of rest" and comparative enjoyment. This was a slab house, newly erected, built and occupied by an intrepid bushman, commonly called "Jimmy Baker." His good wife, "Darcas" as he called her, soon made us happy in the delights of a pail of water and towels, followed by a splendid supper of roast beef, good, home-made bread and tea in plenty. Then we listened while "Old Jimmy" told of the excursions in the direction of the Upper Lang Lang and Bass rivers, and that tract of country now called Poowong.

Next day Sam and I walked up McDonald's Track: walking leisurely and camping at a creek to boil our billy and take our dinner. Then we pushed on until we came to a track leading into Mr. Littlelike's selection. We soon found his camp, and waited there till he and his two men came in from their day's work. They looked like aboriginals, as they had been "pick-

ing up," as it was called, after the first burn. Mr. Littlelike received us most hospitably. He was a true pioneer and one of the best bushmen who ever led settlers into South Gippsland.

Next day, Saturday, February 26th, 1876, my good friend Mr. Littlelike accompanied us four miles further up the "Track." Surveyors were then cutting some of the lines of the blocks selected. We partly followed on their work, but it was hard and laborious toil, and it was not till 3.30 p.m. that I drove in the fourth peg with my name, and the date of pegging attached. It was nearly dark by the time we reached Mr. Littlelike's camp again. We passed Mr. James Scott's selection, and it was then I first met that enterprising pioneer. He was really the first of that heroic band, and was followed by Messrs. Murphy, Littlelike, Dunlop, Gardner, Horsley, on McDonald's Track, and about the same time the early settlers on the Bass and Altop rivers, too numerous for me to name or particularise, especially as you have arranged for papers from gentlemen representing those localities.

The land I then selected is that on which I now reside. It was all covered with dense scrub of hazel, blackwood, musk and tree-ferns. The large trees were blue gum, with a very few white gum. I had to cut down sixty blue gums on the two-acre site cleared for house and garden. One of these I measured when felled, and it was just over 300 feet.

I built my house with blackwood poles—four rooms and a kitchen. The poles were placed perpendicularly; then with a paling knife I split out enough laths to do the whole interior of the walls, and plastered them with mortar made of the soil without a particle of lime. Two of the ceilings also were lathed and plastered with the same materials. These four rooms are still standing, with the lath and plaster work in good order after nearly 40 years of use; the coolest house in summer and the warmest in Winter to be found in Poowong. I also made and burnt a kiln of 60,000 bricks, and with some of these built the first underground cemented tank in the district, which has been a boon every Summer since. The residue of the bricks I built into chimneys all around the district, for which payment was made.

The first religious service held in the district was an impromptu one, held in a tent on McDonald's Track, about a mile west of the site of the township of Poowong, in the early part of the year 1877. The service was conducted by the Rev. J. C. Symonds, Wesleyan minister, during a visit to one of the early settlers, Mr. W. V. Hill; and at it was celebrated the first christening in the settlement, being that of David M., the infant son of the pioneers, Mr. and Mrs. James Scott.

The first church service in Poowong was held in the room where I am writing these notes. I wrote a notice and nailed it to a gum tree on McDonald's Track, inviting the settlers and others to Divine Worship. This was held on Sunday, December 30th, 1877, at 3 p.m. Mrs. Burchett played on our harmonium and led the singing on that occasion, but to her great relief, on the next Sabbath Mr. Cook kindly volunteered his help. The congregations increased, and soon the house was too small, and at a meeting held, presided over by the late Mark Gardner, J.P., it was decided to build a church. An immense tree was felled, sawn into plates, studs, joists, rafters and weatherboards. The present site was chosen. A "Bee" was held, the ladies provid-



ing refreshments. Giant after giant of the forest was laid low, and the scrub cut and cleared back, and by nightfall the site was ready to be handed over to the contractor, the late Mr. L. C. Holmes, who from plans drawn by Mr. Gardner, faithfully carried out the work of the erection of the first church. Shortly after this was opened the Education Department rented the building for a State school, which was opened by one of our first pioneers, Mr. Charles Cook.



A PIONEER'S HOME, 1877.

# Recollections and Experiences.

MR. ALBERT NICHOLAS.



In May, 1876, I came to the Jeetho district from Little River, near Geelong, to select land after visiting Brandy Creek, near Warragul, in company with my late father and elder brother. We left the Grantville road at Tobin Yallock and started to enter the forest, passing over the Cherry-tree Rises and Tinpot Hill, well known to many of the oldest pioneers as the only way in to Poowong. We took the wrong turn, and got into the late Mr. H. Little-dike's holding, and after a lot of wheel blocking and taking everything out of the cart, the next day we arrived at Mr. Wallace-Dunlop's place, on McDonald's Track leading towards Sale. Here the surveyor, Mr. Tucker, came on the scene, and as he knew of some land that had been already surveyed for someone who had not gone on with it, my father, after inspection, selected a block, which was later recommended to him at a Land Board that sat in Melbourne on June 2nd, 1876—less than a month

after he selected. This was no doubt quick work compared with the way things are done nowadays, but probably the fact of the land being already surveyed had something to do with the quick despatch. On the return journey we met Mr. R. J. Murdoch and his two sons going up to reside in Poowong.

After the granting of the land, we came back at once and did a little clearing; but, owing to the state of the weather, we went home and returned again on August 14th with others who had selected alongside. Then the "nine days' mizzle," as it was called later on, started, and our friends disposed of their flour, tea and sugar, and left "the last place that was made." Strange to say, two of them came back and selected near Fairbank, and still hold land there.

Our first burn was a bad one, but the growth of grass that came on the ashes gave us courage, and our second burn was much better. The seed was sown on it in February, and on May 16th following cattle were put on the grass, which was then eight inches high. The sowing of English rye-grass got from Staughton Vale was considered to be the best, but later on the caterpillars came in millions, and not a green blade of grass was to be seen after them.

The howling of wild dogs about caused us to watch, and when we found they came to drink at a small hole we had dug, we trapped one, and I thought it an awful animal to kill. First we knocked it down with a long stick; then hit it, on the tail, of course, with a short hazel waddy with a big knob on it. Then we carried him home, but still he lived; so we hung him up by the hind legs and cut his throat. We eventually got his skin, so you may conclude he died. A pack of them killed and ate our poor old dog Rover afterwards, and only left us a few of their toes as recompense for the dog. After going in for sheep we found the footrot very bad, and this, combined with the "nine days' mizzle," wild dogs and eagles—the latter very bad on the young lambs, and very large; many were poisoned, measuring 6ft. 6in. from tip to tip across the wings—compelled us to give up the sheep, and they were disposed of. We had erected a house and sheep yards, in which we put the sheep every night, but the dingoes got more daring and came during the day-

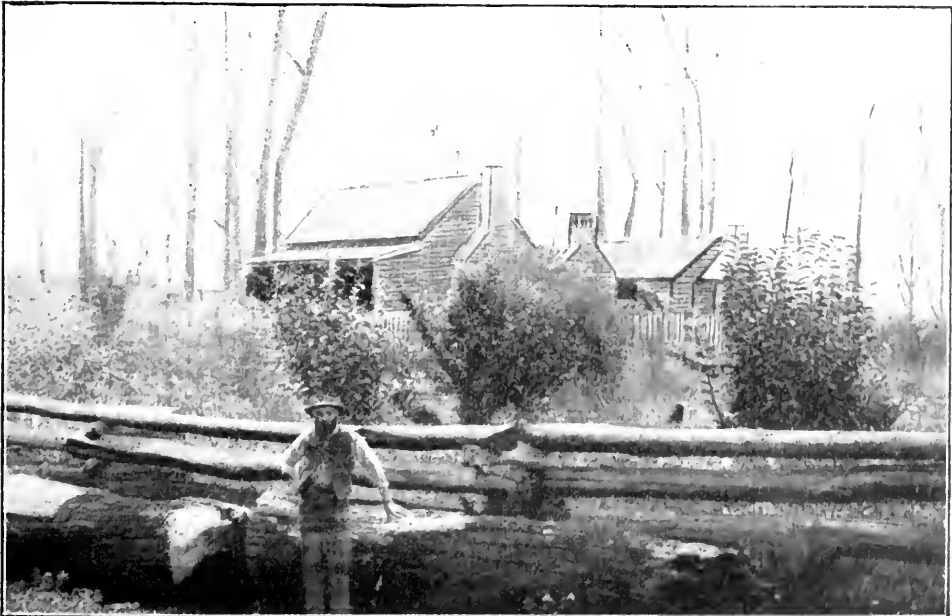
time. I remember well a large brindle one returning for more while we were away home for poison.

In our next burning of scrub I was surprised to notice the tops of a small belt of green blackwoods burning while the body of fire was chains away. This was the last burn my brother stayed for; he eventually selected in Ōmeo, and still resides there with a large family. You will admit he did his share towards making a home for the younger members of the family. About this time a younger brother and my mother came up, and a little dairying was carried on, and the road opened up from Poowong to Drouin, which gave a shorter outlet for produce and for stores coming in. Prices for potted butter were often only 4½d. per lb. in Melbourne.

Messrs. Murdoch and Sons, before opening a general store at Cruikston, got a Mr. Emerson to burn a kiln of bricks for them, which were used in the chimney of the commodious residence and store they built.

People living in the district to-day would hardly believe that flour was £2/10/- per bag, sugar 6d. per lb., and beef the same, and other prices just as high in comparison; but it is not to be wondered at when all stores had to be carted from the Red Bluff by a narrow track with mud up to the axle, and hazel scrub about 30 feet high on each side.

Early in 1877 Mr. Willie Hill, a selector over the Bass, whose father was chaplain of the Melbourne Gaol, and was murdered there, took some interest in getting up Divine service in an enclosure at the top of Scott's hill, at the junction of McDonald's Track, the only track over the Bass towards Bena; the Rev. J. C. Symons officiating. A tent was erected, and service held; and Mr. D. M. Scott, of Korumburra, was the first child christened there. In the early days of Poowong his parents kept a store there, and were always very kind to visitors who were, like themselves, striving to make a home in this vast wilderness.



A PALING HOMESTEAD.

# Recollections and Experiences.

MR. T. W. HORSLEY.



The writer can claim to be one of the very earliest pioneers of South Gippsland, having settled in Poowong as a boy in the year 1877—38 years ago. The journey to Gippsland in those days was a long and tedious one. On the 19th of January, 1877, I, in company with my father and other early settlers, left the Albion Hotel, Bourke-street, by coach at 8 a.m., and proceeded to Tobin Yallock, now known as Lang Lang, which we reached at 5 p.m., and then started to walk to Poowong, a distance of 18 miles, and my first night in Gippsland was spent in a tent on the hill known as Tinpot. Next morning we continued our journey, and reached Poowong at midday. My first impressions of Gippsland were not too favourable, the country being one dense mass of scrub and tall trees, only one or two of the very earliest settlers having any cleared ground, and such luxuries as having a cow to milk or a horse to ride were unknown, as grass on nearly all the selections was a negligible quantity. The chief

difficulty of the early settlers was to obtain supplies, all goods having to come by boat from Melbourne to the Red Bluff at Westerupport, and thence carted to Poowong, a distance of 16 miles.

I was one of the first scholars at the Poowong State school, of which Mr. Chas. Cook was the first teacher. I also had the pleasure of attending the first church service held in the district, which was conducted by the Rev. J. C. Symons in a tent on what was then known as Scott's Hill, at the junction of McDonald's Track with the south track. After being in Poowong six years I selected in the Parish of Jumbunna East, the block I secured being forfeited by a Mr. Hill; and Mr. Jno. Glew, the earliest pioneer in Jumbunna, piloted me over the land. For several years I was engaged in clearing and working on my land, living in a tent and a rough bush hut, and having to undergo all the hardships of camp life: and not being able to obtain supplies, it was difficult at times to get enough to eat. My most lively recollection in this respect was of having to live on wallaby and wheaten meal for a fortnight. Although the life was hard, time was found for a little pleasure, and a debating society was formed, the meetings being held at the house of Mr. Murdoch McLeod, and occasionally we would indulge in a game of cricket, thinking nothing of journeying to Kileunda or the Powlett for the pleasure. With the advent of other settlers and the opening up of the country, the improvements in roads and living conditions, life became more pleasant, and I have no cause to regret having been one of the earliest settlers in the Jumbunna and Moyarra districts.

# Recollections and Experiences.

MR. T. J. COVERDALE.



There is a great fascination for most people in the early records of those places that have been won from the wilderness by the hand of man and made centres of industry and civilisation. Later generations wonder and speculate as to what some particular place was like in its wild state; who was the first white man to set foot in it, and what he was after; who were the first pioneers, what they did and where they came from. And it is well that those who came first should leave behind them some account of what the country was like then, what they did, what were their experiences and what their impressions, ere it be all forgotten in the oblivion of an unrecorded past. To this end I have been invited to contribute an account of that part of South Gippsland in which I settled first, viz., the district of Poowong and Jeetho, with my pioneering experiences therein. In so doing I thought it might be interesting to begin at the beginning and find

out who were actually the first white men to penetrate the wilderness of scrub.

The first, then, were the members of the Macarthur-Strzelecki expedition, who passed through this district from Yass Plains, N.S.W., in May, 1840. The purpose of this expedition was to explore the country southward to Wilson's Promontory, and in the direction of Westernport. It consisted of James Macarthur, Count Strzelecki, J. Riley, and two other white men with a black boy, Charlie Tarra; and they had with them six horses. Macarthur, who, by the way, was the son of the man who introduced merino sheep into Australia, organised the expedition and financed it at a cost of £500, his object being to explore the country for pastoral purposes. Strzelecki was the "navigating lieutenant" of the party, and was glad of the opportunity afforded him of making certain scientific observation he had long been desirous of undertaking. But it is curious how his name has become so prominently associated with this expedition to the exclusion almost of that of Macarthur, who promoted and financed it. Starting on January, 1840, they crossed the Latrobe River, Gippsland, on the 15th of April, and soon afterwards, running short of provisions, they decided to at once make for the old settlement at Westernport. "Then, on the 27th of April," says Macarthur, "we abandoned the horses and proceeded on our way without provisions except monkey bears, till May the 12th; on that day we reached Westernport, where we were kindly entertained by Mr. Berry and Mr. Ross and Messrs. Massie and Anderson, who then occupied that country, and remained there several days, regaining our strength." Thence by boat and on foot they reached Melbourne.

The location of their track through this country has often been debated. By the courtesy of Mr. Saxton, of the Lands Department, Melbourne, I obtained a tracing of a map of his route which was given by Strzelecki to J.

Riley: placing this on a modern map of the district of the same scale and carefully co-ordinating them by means of common data, the route of the expedition is clearly indicated (see plan). The position of this line was scientifically determined by Strzelecki, and the accuracy with which he struck his objective through the dense scrub and over broken country testifies to his skill and the exactitude of his calculations.

The map given to Riley is thus humorously and significantly dedicated "Melbourne, June 26, 1840. To his fellow monkey-eater Riley. From E. P. de Strz."

Some time after Riley and Charley Tarra, with two companions, went back to the spot where the horses were abandoned and recovered the properties, finding one horse dead and another alive; the others had disappeared.

In 1841 Brodribb, with Kirsop and McLeod, came through from the Latrobe. He says, in his "Recollections": "We thought to avoid the difficulties Count Strzelecki encountered by keeping some miles north of his course, but had great difficulty on account of the dense scrub. We took it in turn to cut away the scrub to allow our horses to proceed, keeping as nearly as possible due west. On the tenth day we came out on some rough coarse grass which our horses ate with relish, and camped one day. We then proceeded along a high range with scrub on each side for some distance, and two days later arrived at Dr. Jameson's station, Westernport."

The next explorer to venture into the unknown in this part of the world was one Odell Raymond in 1842. He had taken up country on the Avon river, and a friend of his, one Campbell, who had ridden some miles to the westward, returned with a story that he had sighted Westernport from the top of a high hill. From personal observation and bitter experience later on, Raymond declared this "must have been a damned lie." However, he believed it at the time, and set off with two white men, Brodribb and Pearson, and a black boy to find the Bay and cattle country. He started on Strzelecki's trail, and followed it pretty closely all the way; but our inhospitable country was no kinder to him than to the Count, for he also nearly perished by the way. An allowance of two tablespoonfuls of flour and a snack of bear each per day was all they had for fourteen days, and for ten days of that time it rained without ceasing. They were cut to pieces with swordgrass, and, with "their clothes and boots torn completely off them," they reached the Bay at last a little north of where Strzelecki struck it.

The next adventurer was McDonald, who in 1862 completed the survey of the "Track," now a great highway that bears his name. The plan of his survey is thus endorsed:—"Plan of trial survey from Melbourne to Gippsland, via Cranbourne and Yallock. Diverging from the Lower Gippsland road at Yallock Bridge and joining the Upper road at Morwell Bridge.—G. T. McDonald." The "Yallock" referred to is now known as "Tobinyallock," and the stream as the Lang Lang river; the track thence to Morwell was seventy miles in length, and from McDonald's field notes I take the following remarks. The country where the town of Poowong now stands he describes as "dense hazel and mink scrub, timbered with large white gums, mostly dead." Fifteen miles further east it is "thick scrub, timber all dead and ground thickly strewn with fallen timber." Ten miles further it is—"timber all green, scrub more gross, but not so dense."

As the pioneer surveyor of the district and one in whose footsteps the earliest settlers trod a short account of McDonald will not be out of place here, nor uninteresting to many who have often wondered who he was and

whence he came: and to Mr. J. G. Saxton again I am indebted for the following brief sketch:—

“Mr. G. T. McDonald was a native of Dumfries, Scotland. He arrived in Victoria in 1853, and did much good work as a surveyor in this State. In 1870 he married a daughter of the Hon. W. F. Mitchell, and eight years later went to Queensland, entering the survey department there. He also took up land in that State, where he resided with his family for thirty-seven years. He died at Wynnum, a suburb of Brisbane, in 1915, in the eightieth year of his age: he was an honest workman and a genial, kindly gentleman.”

In 1869 or 1870 Surveyor Irwin erected the Trig. station at Mt. Lyell, but that was all the history he contributed to the local annals.

In about the year 1870 or a little later Usher ran a track from Tobin-yallock through this country to Foster, but it was too rough, and was abandoned.

In 1873 Turner, a mining surveyor, made a survey which is styled: “Survey plan of connecting line from Coal fields at Strzelecki Ranges to Anderson’s Inlet, South Gippsland.” Starting well up the inlet, it crossed the plains, and, picking up the Outtrim ridge, came up through the site of Jumbunna to about a mile or a little more north of where Korumburra now stands, following the main divide.

Next came Whitelaw in 1874. His survey is termed “Plan of Pack Horse Track between Foster and Mt. Lyell, date 12 8 76.” This followed the Whitelaw Ridge from McDonald’s Track through the site of Korumburra and along the Mine road past the old bore, then across Coal Creek south-easterly to Foster. Reginald Murray, in his geological map of 1875, shows another track which he calls “Whitelaw’s Track,” running from the old bore to McDonald’s Track and about a mile to the east of the ridge; also another leaving Whitelaw’s ridge about a mile north of Korumburra, making northerly and westerly and crossing the Bass in Mr. Henry’s block and about two miles west of the ridge. Then turning sharply to the north-east it regained Whitelaw’s ridge a mile below the McDonald’s Track Junction. This he calls Turner’s track. But, as there are no official plans in the Lands Office showing these routes, they were probably trial surveys.

I well remember the first time I saw the old Whitelaw’s track. Garrard and O’Grady had just pitched a big survey camp on a tributary of the Bass, about half way between McDonald’s Track and the place where the Whitelaw railway station now stands, preparatory to surveying the country round the head of the Bass river for occupation; and, with several other land hunters, I was camped near them. There was a rumour about in camp of an old track somewhere to the south-east, and taking a Sunday off I set out with a man from the camp to investigate. After half a day’s scrambling through the scrub, we struck it in the south-east corner of what is now known as H. F. Williams’s block—then applied for by one J. Matthews, and later held by him. The road here was subsequently altered to its present position by Surveyor Lardner. Where we struck it the track was then about eight feet wide and messed up with fallen stuff; but, after following it for a short distance eastward, it suddenly opened out into a well-cleared dray track about half a chain in width, which, after continuing about a mile or more, ended just as abruptly. On this old clearing and in Eccles’ block about a quarter of a mile north of where the Korumburra reservoir now is, we came on an old deserted camp of considerable extent that had evidently been abandoned in a

hurry, or with the intention never fulfilled, of returning to it again, as all the paraphernalia and implements of the camp lay rotting and rust-eaten around. It looked as if they had just started to widen the track for the proposed road between Foster and Mt. Lyell and then abandoned the idea. The decline of the mines might account for this, but why was the camp deserted so suddenly? One, Silas Baker (brother of old Jimmy), who lived at Tobinyallock over forty years ago, told me he had seen the men passing through there on their way to Melbourne. They were half starved, and told him the boss had left them and had not returned, and they had no tucker. Another account states that some of them went south to Foster, whence they got their supplies, and could not reach there on account of the big floods in the Tarwin and the Foster rivers. Probably these were the packers; and on their falling to return on account of the floods, the others had to clear out northward to the nearest settlements for food.

However that may be, none of them ever returned to the old camp, and the through road to Foster was abandoned. But the cleared portion formed a beautiful "sanatorium" for all the snakes in the district, being the only spot where they could find a "place in the sun"; and most of them must have availed themselves of it, for we killed seven or eight in a very short time, and many got away. My companion's sight was not very good at any time, and, to complicate matters, he had recently been "liquefying" his assets so successfully at a pub, on the road up that he could not always tell the real snakes from the others; so we shortly took to the scrub again and left at least one variety—the most dangerous—behind. They were inclined to doubt our discovery at the camp (the condition of my companion perhaps had something to do with this), but knowing the reserve with which the accounts of even the most voracious travellers are often received I had thoughtfully provided myself with corroborative evidence in the shape of a crockery plate, picked up from a number lying round the old camp. As the crockery age had not arrived with us, this was accepted as conclusive; one man remarking "they must have been bloomin' toffs to go in for them things here."

In 1873-4 Mr. Reginald Murray made a geological survey of these ranges, and his necessarily rough plotting of the creeks and ridges was wonderfully accurate, considering the nature of the country, as revealed later by the clearing of the scrub. He, too, on at least one occasion found the "eternal food question" acutely urgent.

Such is the brief story of some of the first adventurers into the untrodden scrub. The scrub no doubt had a charm for many; it may have been the charm of the unknown, for the unknown was always close around you. The forest of bare poles—unbrageous trees under other conditions—that seemed to have thrown off all their garments so as to beat each other in a mad race toward the clouds, and to stand around with nothing but their hats on, together with undergrowth up to your head, prevented you from seeing what was going to turn up next. You might stumble on to a precipice, a river, or a mountain, all invisible a few minutes before. Perhaps the scrub would change from musk to hazel, or from hazel to musk, or from either to sapling country, where the great old forest trees suddenly disappeared or lay around like giants slain on the battlefield of some elemental war; and you wonder what is the reason of it and how it all came about, and speculate as to the solution of a hundred other problems that a day's march through the scrub suggested. Your eye, always on the lookout for signs, notes a mark on a tree; it may be



only a scar caused long ago by a falling limb or tree, or it may be an old blaze. You pull away the moss and examine it carefully: it is only a hole now three or four inches deep and as many wide; soon the sap will have covered it completely. The woodlice are scuttling about inside, and you brush them away, together with the powderings they always surround themselves with, and peer curiously in. Then you see something you can swear to—something you half expected to find—it is the mark of a white man's axe! The axe had reached the redwood, and it is taking the old tree a long time to heal the wound—a little deeper and life would have been too short for it to do so. But whose was the hand that made it so long ago? What was he after there so far from the tracks of the known wanderers in the wilds? Was he lost? And if so did he get out alive, or did he perish there a wanderer in the solitude of scrub—"so the voiceless bush might fold him in her arms of gruesome gloom?"

But it was an exceedingly rare thing to come on a very old blaze. I remember once knocking the sapwood off a quartered post, and under a bulge in the sap an old blaze came to light. The redwood had become dead at the blaze before the sap covered it, and there was no effective attachment between them. A sapling will soon cover over a blaze, but an old tree takes much longer—a large blaze it may never cover. But a detailed account of the scrub and its ways I do not propose to give here, as that has been done elsewhere.

There was a good deal of bird and animal life in the scrub. Wallabies, of which there were several kinds, were numerous, but there were no kangaroos. Monkey bears and opossums were also numerous. Besides these there were dingoes, wombats, tiger cats, bush rats, pugney possums and flying squirrels, together with a varied assortment of snakes, lizards, scorpions and other creeping things. And you might often see a platypus disporting himself in the creeks which contained at one time a good deal of black fish, eels and a small kind of spotted trout. Snakes were not nearly so numerous in the scrub as they became afterwards when the country was cleared. (I am conscious here of a great temptation, but have grace to resist.)

Birds were numerous, and there were many varieties, from eagles to wrens, including jays, satin birds, lyre birds, Derwent or whistling jacks, ground thrushes, whip birds, woodpeckers, leatherheads, parrots, black cockatoos, laughing juckasses, with an assortment of wrens, besides many mopokes and owls for night duty. There were no white cockatoos, black and white magpies nor crows when we came. After the first few years the magpies began to come, much to the disgust of the jays, who fought them viciously for years, but were beaten in the end. And now there are very few of the jays about. The white cockatoos never came, and only occasionally in the Summer will you see a few crows. Satin birds were a nuisance to those living the simple life. They were notorious thieves, and made no scruple about burgling the primitive and often not too well stocked larders of scrub cutters or selectors. If they could not get in by the door they would go down the chimney, which usually offered great facilities for this mode of entry. The jays were no better; soap was their favourite delicacy, and if you left a bit on the bench you need not bother to look for it when you came home at night. There were a few blue satin birds; these are the males who attain the colour when seven years old; though some maintain the members of both sexes have the right to don the blue on attaining the full age of nine years. If so, as there were only about ten or fifteen per cent. of blues, they cannot be a very long lived race. The birds did not sing much in the scrub in

Winter, the most vocal being the whistling jackasses, the lyre birds and the laughing jackasses. But occasionally on a wet day the jays would make a great noise with their cry of "two-and-two are four, two-and-two are four." There was generally a lyre bird or two at hand yelping out its own far-carrying note, or taking the parts by turns and with rapid changes of all the other performers in the forest orchestra. While singing, the cock bird dances round on a mound of earth about three feet across and one in height built for the purpose. Most of the birds had a good deal to say in the Spring, especially in the early morning and at the turn of the day about four o'clock. The whip bird especially would then have many remarks to make in his peculiar "cracked" voice, which were invariably and immediately endorsed, encored, or approved of by his mate, with her "cheep-cheep," which might mean "hear, hear" or "that's so." The lyre birds are bad sleepers, and on moonlight nights would often wake up at all hours to try over a few bars of some parrot, cockatoo or jay bird ditty. But the voice of a wakeful lyre bird was not the only sound that vexed the silence of the night.

Soon after nightfall and far away in the scrub you would hear the dismal howl of a dingo, answered the next moment by another and still another, till half a dozen of the brutes were making the night hideous with their long-drawn mournful cry. This would be sure to start a few old bears, who would growl out a warning note, or perhaps an assurance that all was well so far. The dingoes were the deadly enemies of the bears, killing numbers of them when the latter came down to change trees or to feed on the young grass, which they were fond of. Then a couple of opossums would start fighting or love making, neither of which they seemed able to do without a lot of noisy tuttering; or a flying squirrel would take his chattering flight from the top of some high tree and end it with a flop again the trunk of another. The mopokes and the owls were nearly always "on the flute" somewhere after sundown; while a startled bandicoot would often run "sneezing" off among the undergrowth. There was no cry of any animal heard in the scrub in the daytime except that of a bear or occasionally some prowling dingo. The bears would always utter their slow gurgling growl after a sudden noise, such as the crash of a falling tree or a loud clap of thunder.

Such was the scrub with its birds and its beasts, its pioneers and its problems when I first knew it in the year 1877. One morning in June of that year my brother George and I boarded the Grantville coach at the old Albion Hotel, Bourke-street, bound for South Gippsland. We had a good run out to Dandenong, where we changed horses and then spanked along to the old Sherwood Hotel, where we left the mails and a few sixpences and stopped for dinner further on at Tooradin. Soon after leaving there we got into trouble, for the roads were frightfully bad; we had to walk for miles, the Yallock lane especially being very bad. About a mile from Tobinyallock we got aboard again and drove up to the store that then stood at the corner of the Grantville road. It was surrounded by a sea of mud, but some thoughtful person had built a wharf about forty feet long out from the store, at the end of which the coach berthed, and the passengers walked ashore. But there was no accommodation to be had there, so we had to go a mile further on to a settler's place on McDonald's Track (Baker's). Mrs. Baker received us with dismay: she said she had no accommodation for visitors, and she was always telling people so, but they "would keep on a'comin'." We had been prepared for this, and sympathised with her earnestly, but pointed out that ours was quite an exceptional case. We succeeded at last in getting a shake-down. Keeping a place of accommodation was quite foreign to the poor

lady's ideas and ways of life. But being more good-natured than strong-minded, and seeing that people "would keep on a'comin'," she had to make provision for them at last in sheer self-defence. Later on they kept accommodation paddocks as well, and many a time when travelling with cattle we would put in the night there listening to old "Jimmy" Baker's yarns of the early days. He was quite a character in his own way, and very entertaining when you got him fairly going. He was much after the style of "Dad" in "On Our Selection." He often told me that when he started there he "hadn't had nothing only half-a-crown, a bag of flour and the family." But I was never sure as to whether he classed the latter as an asset or a liability.

Next morning we started on foot for Poowong, sixteen miles up the track. It was raining, of course, being Gippsland and Winter we could expect nothing else. About three miles out we came to the Cherry-tree rises, where a lot of native cherry trees grew—Nygros—hence "Nyora." Then a few miles of heath and sand hills and we came to Timpo Hill. A few more miles of heath, then some open messmate country, and at last the scrub. It started almost at once—a dense mass of hazel and tall thick swordgrass. Entering this we saw a dark narrow tunnel seven feet wide through which ran a canal of mud. Things did not seem a bit cheerful, for the scrub looked dark and gloomy in that Winter's afternoon. However, we plunged in—literally so, for it was impossible to avoid the liquid mud, the scrub and swordgrass being too thick at the sides to walk through. A mile or two of this and we came to "Scott's," the only house we had seen since we left Baker's. It was the home of the late Mr. James Scott, who had been there about three years, and the centre for years after of all the life and business of the settlement. It was hotel, store, butcher's shop and, unofficially, post office; for, anyone going down took letters left there, and people coming up brought any lying at Tobinyallock for the settlement. Here we saw the first scrub clearing. It looked strange to us, just a green patch surrounded by walls of scrub and thickly studded with dead trees and full of little creeks running with clear water, with any amount of big logs lying about. After making the acquaintance of Mr. Scott and discussing the prospects of the new settlement, he showed us, on a rough plan of his own, a great deal of new country still open for selection that he had been through himself. But we were bound for the homestead of Messrs. Cook Bros. on the Bass, who had been there for about eighteen months.

The pack-track, at that time going south, left McDonald's track about a quarter of a mile east of Mr. Scott's original homestead, which was on the south-west corner of the property now called "The Priory." Going straight down the big hill to the Bass it ran southwards through the properties of Messrs. Cook, Holmes, Ireland, Hosking and Fuller, and was afterwards continued south as the country was taken up. It was a rough track in those days, with steep shoots in it where the horses just put their feet together and toboganned to the bottom; the rest of it was like a flight of stairs with each step a puddle hole. All pack-tracks soon work into a series of holes and transverse ridges about two feet apart, and the holes a foot deep, caused by the horses following in each other's footsteps. At last we caught a glimpse of a house far down below us. Previously we had been walking entirely by faith regarding the house, for a look around would satisfy anyone's unaided judgment that a house was about the last evidence of civilisation likely to be found in such a place as that. But it was there, and we were soon receiving the welcome of our friends and exchanging news of the outside world for their experiences in the new. After having a look round next day, we

decided the important question "to peg or not to peg" in the affirmative; and starting the following morning under the pilotage of Mr. E. Cook to look for country soon left all evidence of civilisation, except what little we usually carried about with us, far behind. Scrambling through the scrub for three or four hours southward and eastward, we at last came on a patch of good hazel country that no one hitherto had seemed to have wanted since the Creation, and we fired the first shot of a long campaign by sticking in our pegs. Getting back in the evening we came across Mr. Chas. Cook splitting shingles out of a big blackwood alongside the track not far from the camp: they were good shingles too, I remember. Shouldering his saw as he prepared to accompany us home, "Well, boys," he remarked, "I've done a good day's work to-day, and I hope you have too." In the years that followed we often wondered if we had.

Returning to town, we lodged our application, and in due course were recommended, and soon afterwards, when the blocks were being surveyed, we came up with a team and outfit. We had learned in the meantime that we could get on to our blocks from McDonald's track by going some distance above Poowong and striking south; and also that Garrard and O'Grady, who were doing the surveys, had cut a track southward as far as one of our blocks. McDonald's track was too bad at the time to take the team much beyond Scott's, so we put the packs on the horses there and set off to find the new track where it turned off McDonald's track. We came to it eventually, after going about four miles, and turned southward along it. That was our first experience of pack-tracks and packing. It was a badly cut track; narrow, and with only the biggest logs cleared, and went in a straight line over gullies and hills, some of the latter having a grade of one in three. It was dark when we reached the survey camp, two miles south of McDonald's track, but we had to get back that night, so mounting the pack-saddles we started back in the dark. Saplings hung across the track here and there, and unless you kept your hand out in front of you all the way they would wipe you off the saddle before you were aware of them in the dark. After that even the mud of the main track was welcome.

As soon as the surveys were far enough advanced we let some scrub to be cut, and I camped with the surveyors to look after the cutting of it and to explore generally, to find out where the blocks lay relatively to the rest of the world. By the old agreement for cutting that scrub which I discovered the other day among some old papers, and which is dated November 1st, 1877, I notice that one Con. Sullivan and his mate J. Marra agreed "to cut the scrub for the sum of one pound per acre. All green timber up to 9 inches in diameter to be cut not more than 12 inches from the ground, and all other timber to be bark ringed." That was the usual style of agreement, except that in heavier scrub you cut up to a bigger dimension.

Our camp soon began to grow, and before long assumed considerable proportions. Besides a strong survey camp a number of new selectors had come in and camped alongside, making it a centre from which to explore for outlets and make themselves acquainted with the whereabouts of their blocks. One night we had a terrific gale: the saplings were bending over some of the tents in a most alarming manner, for no one had bothered to do much clearing, and presently, in the pitchy darkness, a great tree crashed down close beside the camp. It was no use looking for safety—in the midst of miles of scrub one place was as safe as another—so we just sat up and thought of our sins till morning, and unanimously decided to cut down a big tree at the back



THE FRINGE OF THE SCRUB

which was on our minds all the time—that is if we were not under it or another one before the night was out. But when daylight came it was calm, and things looked safer, and the tree was a very big one, so we decided to let it stand, which it did for twenty years or more.

Our next affliction was the illness of the old cook. Rheumatic fever, he said it was, and there was no one in camp able to say that it was not: so, after doctoring him for a while, we decided he would have to go out: but this was a big proposition, for we would have to carry him out, and he was very heavy, also several of the men had left camp, which made it all the worse for those who remained. The first half mile was up a grade of one in three, and the rest of it a succession of hills and gullies. The track was narrow and muddy and full of little hazel stumps: occasionally, when taking a spell, we would accidentally set the stretcher down on one of these, but we soon heard of it through the patient, whose language was not impaired nor yet improved by his affliction. But we struggled on with him till we landed him on McDonald's Track and forwarded him thence to Melbourne, which was the last we ever heard of him.

By this time Sullivan and Co. were getting on well with the scrub-cutting: they were expert hands and got over a good deal in a day.

Scrub-cutting in hazel country is rather pleasant work, and affords scope for a good deal of ingenuity and skill. But it is dangerous work in heavy spar country, especially for new chums. A neighbour of mine was caught in a "fall" on one occasion when cutting scrub, and was stunned and lay for three hours unconscious. When he recovered, he found himself pinned down by a small sapling across his chest. His axe had fallen almost out of his reach, but after a long while of scratching and straining he managed to get it at last, and slowly and painfully nicked the sapling in two and freed himself. His feelings may be imagined when he revived and realised his position—alone and pinned to the ground with apparently no hope of release.

The scrub had a very sweet scent when cut a few hours in the Spring or early Summer. The blackwood, lightwood, hazel, musk, blanketwood, supplejack and wattle all flower freely and have a very sweet perfume.

Burning-off time was always a very anxious one for the selector, but not for the same reason as it is now. There was no danger then of the fire spreading. It never seemed to run in the scrub very far, and there were very few buildings, fences or grass to get burnt, so the windier and hotter the day the better for our purpose. January and February were the favourite months for burning off, and the desire of every man was to get a good "burn" so that there would be little left on the ground to pick up and burn afterwards.

The game was, in lighting scrub, to get it lit all round as quickly as possible. The more men you have for this purpose the better. Some people would light on the windy side only: this was a mistake, for in the first place the wind might change just after you lighted it, and in the next, unless the wind be very strong, the heat of the fire will still it, or, rather, cause an inrush of air from all sides. This draws the fire upwards, but prevents it from travelling, and should there be a ridge across the line of march, the fire will not travel well down the opposite side. But if the scrub be lit all round, each fire draws the other to it by reason of the upward rush of rarefied air and the consequent inrush from all sides. I have often heard men who had been lighting on opposite sides disputing as to which way

the wind was blowing when they were lighting and the fire got going. One would declare it was blowing a gale from the west, the other fiercely maintaining that it was blowing from the east "something terrible," and, of course, they were both right. And it does blow "something terrible" when there is a good burn on: I have seen the tops wrenched off big saplings, and limbs off big trees carried far on the gale.

Then the animals begin to clear out from the cut scrub: wallabies, bandicoots, snakes, lizards, bush rats, and occasionally a possum or an old bear, with now and then a lyre bird who has been caught prospecting for grubs under the scrub in some damp gully. They all seem to know the danger long before the fire comes near them—probably they hear the roar of the fire. But how do they know that means danger? The old bears always trust to the trees for safety unless one happens to be on the ground near the edge of the cut scrub, then he will make for a tree out on the clearing. But in a strong fire, those in trees on the burn have no chance. I have often seen big green trees wrapped for an instant in a mantle of flame, then a black cloud would float away from the top, and every leaf be left hanging stiff and brown and dead. A good burn is a grand sight. The fire in great billows of flame rolls across the scrub or shoots upwards as the wind catches it, black-red masses of smoke hang low on the scrub one moment, and the next are tossed high by the volcanoes of fire beneath. Immense sheets of flame reach out ahead and seize the dry trees and stumps, then the fire rushes on and leaves them behind—flaming records of its march—like burning homes in the wake of a ravaging army. And all the while bands of skirmishers, in the shape of burning bark and sparks, lead the attack on the enemy in front: hundreds of little spurts of flame and smoke showing where their shells have fallen. A gale roars through the timber, and soon you hear the boom of the big, dry trees as the fire begins to bring them down. Then the watcher far away sees vast, round-topped volumes of smoke rising slowly, pile on pile, for a thousand feet, there to remain for a while stationary, or "in sullen grandeur sail like floating Alps" across the sky.

After a good burn in hazel country, the ground is covered with a white ash and the hills gleam white through the trees as if covered with snow, till the first rain falls. But in spar or in musk country the ground is black, and in the former, covered with great spars and not at all a cheerful landscape.

Picking-up and burning off the timber left after a burn is begun as soon as possible. As in cutting scrub you begin on the gullies, and sending two or three men ahead with axes, cut all the spars into handy lengths, say 10 or 12 feet or more, according to the size of them; then have five or six men following up stacking. Keep at this till a windy day comes, then light one here and there among the heaps; let these burn down a bit and then with a shovel take a few coals and put on each of the other heaps. Before the heaps are quite burnt out, go round and throw them together: this saves a lot of work, as it is easier to keep them burning than to stack and start them again. Pile against big logs where there are any, and so reduce them or burn them right away. Picking up and sowing should be finished by the end of April. If you cannot do it by then, stack the timber and sow the seed, and burn off the timber next year. Some sow the seed in Spring, but I do not believe in it: there is not time for it to get rooted before the hot weather, and the rye grass will probably die out.

Rye-grass, cocksfoot and clover were the grasses usually sown, but many other kinds were also tried, and usually did well. The rye-grass did not stand well at first, but this was owing to errors in stocking and the looseness of the soil, also to bad seed in some cases. The Spring grass was often allowed to go to seed before it was stocked, which, of course, weakened it; then the caterpillars ate it out the first two or three years. Bad seed off first year's grass was often sown with the worst results, and rye-grass got the reputation of not standing. But I know paddocks that were sown entirely with rye-grass which gave a splendid pasture for twenty years, but the seed was off a very old pasture. After a while, the rye-grass gradually worked in and is to be found all over now, although the cocksfoot is the predominant grass. Clover always did well, but some years better than others.

After two or three years, a great deal of the scrub began to come again, especially on clearings that had been lightly stocked. The swordgrass was the worst trouble, and it might cost anything from five to thirty shillings an acre to hack it out with mattocks. On well-stocked clearings the second growth did not trouble much at first, but practically the whole of the land had to be gone over again sooner or later for this purpose. I know there is not an acre of mine that has not been so treated. Dead timber also began to fall, very soon necessitating further expense in clearing up. This will give some idea of what the clearing of the country meant to the pioneers, independent altogether of the original clearing; and will also enable socialists to calculate the unearned increment.

As we have now arrived at the stage when most of the pioneers have got small clearings, built temporary cabins and come up to reside, it might be interesting to note what manner of men they were. All the professions were represented, and most of the principal trades and callings, with quite a number of young men from the Government offices and city firms. Many ladies, too, had selected, but very few had, so far, ventured into the wilderness. It was largely a community of bachelors, and the consequence was that those offices in the domestic economy usually administered by the ladies were often filled by ministers notoriously unfit for their positions: reconstruction was often resorted to, but it was more for the sake of a change than with any hope of improvement. The cooking and washing departments were generally scandalously administered; but there was a lot of ingenuity shown in the short cuts invented, and in the substitution of new methods for the old ways of doing things. A neighbour of mine, a student of Sandhurst, who had abandoned the sabre for the axe in search of fortune in South Gippsland, noticed a wringing machine in McEwan's window one day when in town, and immediately saw possibilities in it never dreamt of by the inventor, nor hinted at by the most mendacious advertiser. Making it his own, he took it home and screwed it on top of an old blackwood stump. Going over one Sunday morning to exchange ideas, I heard a voice just before I got out of the pack-track:—"Johnnie, what the devil are you feeding it so hard for; I can hardly turn the damn thing." When I got up to them, my friend, clad in a smoking cap and a big pipe and little else, was slowly turning the handle of the machine while "Johnnie," standing between a bucket of water and a pile of soiled shirts, was carefully wetting the latter—"sousing them," he called it—in the bucket and feeding them to the machine. This was repeated till they looked all over alike, then they were "done." I suggested they were only spreading the "soil" over them, and there should be some preliminary ceremony. Others, again, had a simple method, which was merely to anchor your linen in the middle of a running stream and let nature do the rest.



Baking was another problem with which we wrestled with ever-varying results. We had begun with damper and advanced through Johnnie cakes and fritters to "Powder" bread. But one progressive—Jones was his name—the son of a Manchester cotton spinner—declared that the yeast age had arrived, and proceeded to demonstrate the fact. Getting a pound of hops from the store, he jammed about half of it into a billy of water with some sugar, and boiling the lot for a while, he let it cool; then mixed the brew with some flour, and getting as much of it as he could into the camp-oven, put it on the fire, lit his pipe and awaited results: we all did. After about an hour we began to get impatient: Jones said it would "rise," we said it wouldn't. One man with sporting proclivities wanted to make a "hook" on the event, while another was whistling "what will the harvest be." A third thought Jones should have either left a few hop leaves in it, or put in a bit of powder to help it rise. Jones smoked on in contemptuous silence. At last, when the strain was beginning to tell, he consented to remove the lid. But, alas! instead of being any bigger, the thing was smaller than when it went in. "Well, I'm d—d!" said Jones, "must have been bad hops." Afterwards, he said he might have been a bit too premature in the use of the "yeast." It was as tough as leather and bitter as gall: even the satin birds would not eat it—one peck was enough—and they "passed."

As it was in the garden of Eden, so it was here: man came first and woman later. Very few of her for a while, but as many ladies had taken up selections in the district alongside those of her brothers or fathers, it was necessary for them to fulfil the residence clause, which some of them did, with considerable misgivings on account of the wildness of the country. Two there were who so little trusted the look of things as to go armed. It was bad enough to come amongst a lot of unprotected bachelors armed with the ordinary weapons of the sex, but to add lethal weapons to their armoury was hardly fair—or so one man thought when giving one of them a ride down to Scott's to catch the coach. The lady was accommodated with a seat on some bags in the bottom of the dray, the driver sitting on an upturned bucket in front. The road was a sea of mud, with stumps and roots underneath, and there was much jolting. But nothing happened for a mile or two, then there was an extra violent jolt, followed by a pistol shot, and a bullet passed through the bucket on which the driver was sitting. Being a rather nervous man, he immediately jumped overboard into the mud, preferring the ills he saw in front to those he knew not of behind. Looking round, he regarded the lady with the gravest suspicion, to say the least of it, which was not much allayed on seeing her laughing heartily behind a smoking pistol. "What did you do that for?" he asked. "Oh," she said, "I took this thing out to see if it was all right, and when the cart gave a jolt that time, I put out my hand to save myself, and must have knocked it on the bottom of the dray, and it went off; but you need not have jumped so: I did not mean anything." "How was I to know what you meant? If you don't mind, I will take that thing now." "Oh, it's all right," she said. "Yes, I am afraid it is," he replied, "that's why I want it." And he firmly declined to come aboard again till she had handed over her gun; securing that, he kicked the mud off his boots and climbed on board. For the rest of the journey, whether from a belated feeling of gallantry or the instinct of self-preservation (lest she might have "another" about her) he accommodated the lady with a seat alongside him.

Eventually the households settled down to the ordinary routine of a civilised community so far as the conditions of the country allowed. But, although there was a certain amount of social life after a time on "Tho

Track," as we used to term McDonald's Track, the women out back had a monotonous time. Those who could not ride had either to stay at home perpetually or be taken out on a sledge. Walking was out of the question, and of vehicular traffic there was none. And the highest admiration is due to those women who through all the long years of struggle and waiting remained at their posts in the lonely scrub till brighter days came for the settlement, and their families reaped the reward of their sacrifices and self-denial.

Let us take a glance now at the prospects of the settlers in, say, 1878, or three years after the first settlers came in. I fancy if some clairvoyant could have raised the veil of the future and shown them the next ten or twelve years, most of them would have thrown down their cards and declined to play the game. The district was almost entirely without roads, except for McDonald's Track, which was only seven feet wide and a mere pack-track in the Winter time. In addition to the enormous initial cost of clearing and sowing the land, which at that time was anything from two to six pounds an acre, they had to set to work and find roads for themselves and clear them. Had practical road lines been surveyed for them at first, they could have made shift to clear a rough road or a pack-track along them. But they had to spend months with compass and axe, exploring ridges and gullies for miles through the dense scrub, for roads or even pack-tracks into their holdings. Almost all the main roads were discovered and blazed by the settlers themselves before the scrub was cleared, and all the Government did was to send up a camp of surveyors to survey these roads, plot them on paper and give them official existence. These were only the main roads; many of the back blocks were without outlets for twenty years longer.

In addition to all this work and worry, there was a vast amount of other public work to be attended to in the provision of post offices, schools, churches, halls, and in connection with municipal matters and the agitation for railway communication. Then if he had any time afterwards, the selector might devote it to making a living. But how was he to do it? As I have said before, the settlers were very mixed as to the callings, professions, and trades; few had ever been on the land before, and, of course, the majority were entirely inexperienced. Good men though, shrewd and up to date as a rule, progressive and willing to give their time to public matters. But it was not easy, even for experienced, practical men to make a living under the conditions. The nearest station they could reach—Dandenong—was nearly fifty miles away. Roads there were none; and prices for cattle, sheep, butter and such things were low. At first, many went in for fattening cattle, and some with large clearings did fairly well; but most of the clearings were too small, and the men too inexperienced to buy their store cattle to advantage, and often lost money. Sheep were also tried, but the dingoes were very bad and used to take heavy toll if the sheep were not yarded every night. This brought on foot-rot and played havoc with the sheep unless they were constantly attended to and the hurdles shifted every few nights.

Others, again, went in for dairying, packing out their stuff for miles to places whence the coach or carrier could take it. In the early days, of course, there was no coach even. With the price for butter at 4d. per pound, at times there was often less than nothing in it; still, those who stuck to it all through, taking the good with the bad, came out best, for they had the young stock. Dairying is now a parlour game compared with what it was then.

With no separators, no butter factories, no cream waggons, and often the most temporary sheds and yards—sometimes none at all—and produce to be carried on pack saddles for miles through the scrub, one cannot help admiring the extraordinary pluck of those who carried it on then. But amidst all our afflictions, we always had the consolation that the country was all right. Every kind of stock did remarkably well, there was always plenty of rain and plenty of grass. But small clearings, bad roads (or, rather, none at all), dingoes and complete inexperience on the part of many of the settlers were enough to bring disaster even on the land of Canaan in its prime. The country languished for years and many passed out, selling at very low prices. One block near me and now within a mile of a railway station, sold for 25/- per acre. Another a little more than two miles above Poowong was offered to me in 1881 at £2 10/- an acre with 150 acres cleared and a house on it. It is now—1914—worth £20 an acre.

About that time the scourge of caterpillars was very bad, recurring for several years, just at the season when the cattle should be topped off. I have seen a beautifully green paddock eaten out and left bare and brown in 48 hours. And I have seen the caterpillars so thick against a big log that had stopped their march, that you could easily have taken a shovel and filled a barrow in a short time. After these came the winter grubs that ate off the grass below the ground, necessitating sowing most of the land again.

In 1878 the first concerted effort was made by the settlers to get assistance from the Government in making the roads, and a big meeting was held in Tomlinson's barn, which stood then just about where Mr. Mair's residence now stands on McDonald's Track, two miles east of Poowong. We had made attempt to clear the track ourselves, but it was too much for us, as those out back had their own outlets to find and clear as well. The meeting appointed Mr. Murdoch, sen., and Mr. Littlelike to go down and ask for a Government grant to clear a portion of McDonald's Track. They were successful, and tenders were called for clearing two miles of it one chain wide. All timber to be cleared up to two feet in diameter. The part cleared was from the west side of Mr. Barchett's frontage to the east side of Mr. Mair's, or two miles eastward from Poowong. Tomlinson did the work for £240. This was a great boon for a while, but the road soon cut up and was as bad as ever.

At this time, people got all their goods and things by water from Melbourne via the Bluff, on Westernport, Captain Lock, of the "Swan," doing most of the trade. But sometimes there would be a head wind and he could not get in (she was a sailing craft, about 30 tons) for perhaps a week or a fortnight, and as there was no mail to let you know when she arrived, you might have to go several times before you got your load. A man named Nelson used to cart the goods from the jetty and store them till the people from the hills came down for them. But it was a very unreliable service. I had a cargo on one occasion that went to "The Bluff," New Zealand. It took about six weeks to discover the fact, and ordering another lot; the weather broke in the meantime and the roads were atrocious. I went down for a load by way of the Bluff road and found Mr. Robert Murdoch there at Nelson's after a load also. Someone had told us that the road by Lang Lang was better than the Bluff road, so we decided to go back that way. It was worse if possible, and we were in trouble before we got to Tobinyallock corner. The sand hills were not so bad, as there had been a lot of rain, but the black flats at the Saw-pit Hill track pulled us up again, and we had to double-bank and unload and do all sorts of things before we got to Timpot Hill. Bob had too

much on for his horses, but I had a fair load and could get through fairly well. There was a big hole at the end of a piece of corduroy someone had put down at a creek on the Poowong side of Tinpot Hill. I had had a horse down in it and nearly smothered twelve months before, and it was no better still, but I managed to dodge it this time. Bob thought to improve on my track, and drove straight through it, but he got to the middle and stopped there. We got him out, but by that time it was nearly dark, and going a little further we camped for the night. It came on to rain hard and it was too much trouble to light a fire. Bob broached his cargo for a bottle of whisky, and having a bit of tucker left, we made a night of it under the tarpaulius.

We were out before daylight next morning and fed the horses; they were shivering with cold, for we had no rugs for them. We put the collars on to warm their shoulders a bit before starting, but they were not too keen on it then. However, after a little humoring, we got them away, and by the time we got to the hills they were in good going order. We had more scratching coming round Dunlop's cuttings, but we did not get anchored again anywhere, and we parted company opposite the place where Mrs. Beck's house stands now, two miles east of Poowong. Bob had only another mile to go to reach home, but I had to unyoke, and, putting the pack saddles on the horses, load them up and go two miles further southward by a very rough pack-track over hills and gullies. Our old track then left McDonald's Track at Mrs. Beck's (then Miss McLean's) and went straight down the big hill at the back. It was the outlet also for Messrs. Jones, Matthews, Plummers, Johnstone, and several others. I give this experience as a fair sample of many of the kind that both myself and other settlers had in the early days. Later, we got the road opened across to Drouin, which was rather worse if anything.

The bad roads and pack tracks made it very difficult to handle stock also. Imagine driving 500 sheep through a muddy pack track six or seven feet wide, with the scrub too thick and rough for them to leave the track. Soon after we had been settled in the country, Mr. Langham, sen., and I brought up a flock of ewes and lambs from Cranbourne; before we took delivery the roads got bad, and McDonald's Track was mud from side to side, with islands of comparatively firm ground round the butts of the trees. The sheep got sick of the game, and making for the dry ground round the trees just stood there—"passive resisters"—till we chucked them off into the mud, when they would strike out for another island and wait to be dislodged again; some would get on the logs and trees rolled to the side and walk along a log or sapling till it became necessary to take to the mud again, when the leader, with ten or fifteen behind him, would stand still and wait for something to happen till we went along and launched them also. A man who could stand this sort of thing long and keep calm would be fit for the company of angels any minute. By the time we got them into the pack track they seemed to have developed the wading habit and strung along fairly well.

In taking out cattle to the market, we usually started with a few more than we wanted, to allow for desertions en route through the pack track. We sold a lot of cattle once to Mr. Alec Scott, who was hard to beat in those days when it came to a bit of stock-riding. Among them was one very wild bullock that had been bred on the place; he had always been a bother when handling cattle, so we determined to run him out. We had the best of him on the clearing, but as soon as we got into the pack track he made off to explore

a rough gully in the scrub with Alec, and two or three more of us in pursuit. We soon got into scrub where it was impossible to follow him on horseback, and took after him on foot. Tearing through the scrub for an hour, led by the sound of the dogs, we finally lost him altogether. But Alec was not satisfied, and had another shot at him—this time with some quiet cattle—about a week later, and precisely the same thing happened again. As a rule, the dogs would stick them up in rough scrub till you could get round them; but if they were very determined, nothing but a bullet or a bulldog would stop them. Alec was not to be beaten, however; he came again, but this time with a rifle and a pack horse, and "Wild Billy" went out very quietly.

Such was cattle-droving in the early days. Although there were no boundary fences for many years, the cattle seldom strayed away. They did not care about going far into the scrub; in fact, during most of the year never went into it at all; but in the Winter time they would go into it a good deal, eating swordgrass, wire grass, and occasionally the cathead ferns. There was very little edible stuff in the scrub they could reach, but they were very fond of the blanketwood and hazel when felled for them; also of the young hazel coming up on the clearings which often formed a good standby in a hard Winter.

In 1878, after a petition and the use of much red tape by the Postal Department, our first official Post Office was established at Mrs. Horsley's residence, and for many years Mrs. Horsley was Postmistress. There was no township at Poowong then, but, in 1885, after that township was formed, the Post Office was removed there. At first the mails were carried on horseback from Tobinyallock, arriving on Sunday. Later, they arrived on Saturday night, and as the Post Office served a district as large as an English County or a German principality, people used to come for miles for their letters; the fences in the vicinity of the office being festooned with saddle-horses on Saturday nights.

About this time also—1878—the school was established at Poowong, Mr. Chas. Cook being the first teacher; also the Methodist Church, the services which had been previously held at Mr. Burchett's residence.

In 1878 the first cattle sale was held at Dundlop's yards, Mt. Lyell, by Stratford Strettle. Later, they were held at Scott's, and eventually established on their present site by Leach, who first opened the Poowong hotel where it is now; having purchased the license and hotel from Mr. James Scott, he removed the old building up to its present position.

In 1878, also, there was a talk of forming the new province into a shire, but we had not sufficient revenue, and it was felt to be premature, so nothing came of it. In November of the same year the Buln Buln Shire was constituted, and a considerable portion of our country was included in it; the boundary line between it and the Shire of Philip Island and Woolamai running east and west, about three or four miles south of McDonald's Track. Although fixed on paper, it was not easy to define this line on the ground, and I received rate demands from both Councils, being valued at £18 annual value by Philip Island, and £15/10/- by the Buln Buln Shire for the same block. Considering that neither of the valuers had ever been within twenty miles of the land, the difference in the valuations was very excusable. We were entirely unrepresented in either shire, and, of course, not a shilling of rates came our way. In the early part of 1879 we sent Mr. Gardner and Mr. Murdoch, sen., to ask that portion of a Government grant be expended on a

new road just discovered to Drouin, and also to ask that our district be formed into a separate riding. Buln Buln not then being divided into ridings. We got the grant, but did no good about the riding. But in the same year we sent in Mr. P. F. Murphy to represent us at the Council table. We were no better off, for, of course, he was outvoted. In 1880 Buln Buln was divided into four ridings, and we formed part of the south-west riding, represented by Gardner, Ould, and McHugh. Gardner lost his seat through absence the following year, and Wilson was elected.

In 1882 the Warragul severance took place, and the remaining portion of Buln Buln was divided into two ridings, the north and the south; we being part of the south, which was represented by Messrs. Connor, Grant, Burchett, Barr, Sutcliffe and Gannon. In 1883 Burchett resigned and Matthews was elected in his place. Still we were very little better off, and, having had a large slice of the Philip Island portion of us added to the South Riding of the Buln Buln Shire in 1882, we put up a fight to get a separate riding, consisting of all territories south of a line running, roughly, east and west a few miles north of Poowong. We succeeded, and Buln Buln was re-subdivided, and we formed the South Riding, represented by Crs. Fuller, Glew and Littledike as first councillors in 1884. This arrangement existed with, of course, the ordinary changes in the representation, until we were formed into the Shire of Poowong and Jeetho in 1891.

To return to 1879: after the mail had been carried for some time on horseback from Tobinyallock, Mr. G. Howard started a coach between Tobinyallock and Poowong, running at first three times a week, by which we got the mail more frequently; but the Sale line was now opened, and we began to speculate on the advantages of being able to tap it somewhere with a road. Drouin was the nearest point, and with their usual enterprise and self-reliance, the settlers set about finding a road for themselves; there was no hope of either the Council or the Government doing it for them. This they eventually succeeded in doing, and after partially clearing it themselves, it was surveyed and some Government grant money spent on it by the Buln Buln Council. A coach very soon started to run on it, leaving the Post Office at 11 a.m. and arriving at Drouin at 5 p.m., returning next day; and later a daily mail. But the road soon got into a frightful state, and in the Winter of 1881 the coach had to stop running, and the mails were carried on horseback.

I remember on one occasion going up to the track with a friend to take the coach to Drouin. We walked on a bit, as the coach was not quite ready to start, expecting it to overtake us, which it never did; and we tramped all the way to Drouin. And that was a very common occurrence: the coach was constantly breaking down, and we would have to do the rest of the journey on foot—five, ten or twenty miles through the mud, and often in the dark, too. A man named Cahill was, I think, the first to run the coach through to the Track, and afterwards Mr. Sid. Watts ran it for some years.

Shortly after the road was opened to Drouin, Mr. J. Salmon opened the first store in Poowong township—the one owned by Mr. Gregg—and owned for many years previously by Mr. B. Chaffey. Owing to the Drouin road coming on to "The Track" at Poowong, the centre of business shifted from Scott's to the township, which was a Government reserve. The hotel and license were purchased from Mr. Scott by Leach and removed to the present site at the corner of the Drouin road, and the township began to develop the usual features of such places, even to an "Athenæum" Hall a little later.

There had been a store and Post Office at Cruickston from 1877, but no township ever developed. Mr. Chaffey also opened a store at what is now Abshot in 1883, later kept by Mr. A. M. Salmon, where the first Korumburra Post Office was opened. The office took its name from the parish, the town of Korumburra, six miles to the south, not then existing.

In 1880 Mr. Surveyor Lardner arrived to survey a number of roads previously discovered and blazed by the settlers. This was an epoch-making event, as the survey of roads gave the place a topography it had previously lacked. It was one immense district to the south of McDonald's Track, vaguely known as "Down South." And the nearest we could get to locating a man anywhere from Korumburra to Kengwak was to say he was "somewhere down south," Poowong being at that time the hub of the settlement. After the roads were surveyed we were able to locate each other more definitely and had a better idea of distances, also places began to be named and locate themselves in men's minds. Interests also began to localise more, and occasionally a road proved an apple of discord in some district where hitherto all had been brotherly love and kindness.

Mr. Lardner camped first on Mr. E. C. Holmes' selection, "Wombalano," and surveyed the main south road from Poowong and along where Bena now stands, and on to the east boundary of Hewitt's block, junctioning there with Whitelaw's track. In the same year he surveyed Whitelaw's road from McDonald's Track southward to the west boundary of Eccles' block (Whitelaw's survey was only for a pack track), and from that point nothing was done for some years. He also surveyed part of the Jeetho West road in the direction of Grantville, Hargreaves having surveyed part of that road in 1878. Later, Mr. Lardner surveyed other roads in the district, and in 1883 surveyed the road to Anderson's Inlet from the main south road at Whitelaw, via Jumbunna and Outtrim. In the same year he also surveyed the Two-chain and One-chain roads at Arawatta. In 1880 he surveyed the Danish settlement road, East Poowong. During the next few years these roads were cleared in a sort of way by the Buln Buln Shire Council, but for most of the year they were only fit for the pack-horse or the sledge.

In 1879 people began to talk of railway communication, and a meeting was called by Mr. Walter Foreman and Mr. Chas. Cook at Scott's hotel. The latter had already done a good deal of work in connection with the matter, and although nothing came of the meeting at the time, he and a few others still kept the agitation going. But it was not until 1881 that concerted action was taken by the whole settlement.

In August of that year we held a meeting in our local "Forum," Tomlinson's barn, which was largely attended. As it was rather a historical event, it might be interesting to quote a few extracts from that old meeting; for, although the Dromin to Poowong League failed in its specific object, it did splendid work in showing the necessity of a railway through the new province, and thus materially helped the much later project of the Great Southern line. I quote from the old minutes.

"Meeting convened by Messrs. Salmon, Dunlop, Mair, Coverdale and others with the object of securing more general and hearty co-operation upon the question of railway communication, and a view to test the present political situation upon that subject.

"Mr. Tomlinson's Barn—Aug. 6th, 1881. Attendance not less than fifty.

"Mr. C. Burchett in the chair. Mr. W. Salmon, Hon. Sec. pro tem. Mr.

Salmon, as principal convener of the meeting, moves the first resolution embodying the formation of a league composed of two committees, with detailed account of working. Seconded."

"Mr. Henderson, Lardner's Track, is in favour of route being settled prior to formation of a league, and introduces the second resolution—which is treated as an amendment—That this meeting is in favour of adherence to the Drouin to Poowong route."

"Seconded by Mr. Cook. Carried unanimously.

"The league was then formed, with power to add to their number, consisting of the following:—R. F. Jones, President; C. Burchett, Vice-President and Treasurer; C. Cook, Hon. Sec.; with many other names as members following."

For the next few years the history of the settlement is mainly the history of agitations for railway communication. At first the people were unanimously in favour of the Drouin to Poowong route, as a glance at the list of membership of the league, which includes representatives from Korumburra, Jumbunna, Jeetho West and the districts thence to Drouin, shows. But soon conflicting interests began to produce dissension, as other routes were proposed; and it is surprising to note what a number of other routes were proposed. In the correspondence dealt with at a meeting of the League held on September 17th, 1881, I notice letters from Dr. Dobson and Mr. R. J. Fuller "re tramway from Queensferry to Jeetho." And Dr. Cutts, Col. Mair, and Mr. E. C. Holmes waited on Mr. Bent, Minister for Railways, to ask if that or the Neerim line would prejudice the Drouin to Poowong line.

At the same time also, a line from Pakenham to Mirboo received the attention of Mr. Bent. That scheme provided for "a line 86 miles in length, which should start from Pakenham and be continued via Mt. Lyell across the Bass at Jeetho West, and tap the Mirboo district on the way to Foster." But engineering difficulties caused this to be abandoned.

In August, 1882, the ambitions of the Drouin to Poowong League seemed about to be realised, for "a railway commencing at or near the Drouin railway station on the Melbourne and Gippsland line, and terminating in the Parish of Poowong," was scheduled in the Bill of that time. But, although after much delay and worry it passed the Lower House, it was hung up in the Council, and a Dissolution following it was not included in the Bill of 1884; and the old League, after much work and expense, went out of business.

About this time, Mr. Gibb, M.L.A. for Mornington, had introduced a scheme for a line—the Great Southern—via Cranbourne and the Bass Valley to Alberton; and many people in the western and southern portions of the settlement had seceded from the Drouin-Poowong League and given their support to this proposal. Although it was the original intention to take this line via the valley of the Bass, the engineers said they could not get a practical grade out at the head of the valley. So trying the Allsop Creek—a tributary of the Bass—they succeeded, with the assistance of the settlers, in getting a practicable but costly route for what is now the section from Loch to Korumburra. The Poowong settlers desiring to have the line nearer to their district, obtained a survey by the late Mr. Norman, of the Railway Department, of a route discovered by them out of the valley of the Bass, which gave the required grade, but necessitated a considerable loop in the line. Mr. Speight pointed out to a deputation that waited on him that it



would increase the length of the line by nearly two miles, which, apart from the added cost, was undesirable on a main line without some compensating advantages. So the Allsop route was adopted: but those who travel by it between Korumburra and Loch, unless they are old identities, little think that it took over two years of surveying before a practicable route was discovered between those two points. Of course, the country was nearly all under scrub there then. On June 2nd, 1891, the line was opened, ten years after our first meeting in Tomlinson's Barn to form a Railway League. In the meantime, of course, other Leagues had been formed, and much hard work done by the people in the South of the Settlement to get the line through, for at one time it looked as if the engineers would not succeed.

About the year 1881 there was rather a lull in the rush for land in the scrub country, and a few of us took to writing it up in the press. Whether it was owing to that, or an opportune dry time in the north and in the other States, there was a decided increase in the demand for land here. Most of the Arawatta country was a *terra incognita*, and I remember taking out a number of men at different times to peg out there. The following extract from an old record will serve to illustrate the *modus operandi* of "selecting" and "pegging":—"January 26th, 1883.—Had another South Australian over, took him out east, camped one night at George's hut, left there 5 in the morning, travelled east till 11 o'clock, then north and east and south and west, and home to hut between 5 and 6 o'clock. Found some real good hazel country. He pegged for himself, four sons and one daughter. His name is Branson, has a grown-up family, and is the inventor of the stump-jumping plough. The country is very good, but a long way out." That would be to the east of Arawatta somewhere. "George's Hut" was near the confines of civilisation, which was then about Messrs. Lancey's surveys. Going out on another occasion with some more selectors, we camped the night with Mr. John Western and his brother. They had just completed a new hut—their first attempt at house building in Australia, for they were "new chums." It was a very good hut too—they had taken more trouble with it than colonials usually do, and it was proportionally more comfortable. They had a noble fireplace, round which we all sat and talked till far into the night, they telling us about England and we telling them about Australia, and between times discussing all the problems of the earth, from the origin of the Aztecs to whether artificial grass would "hold" in the scrub country. The late Mr. John Brydon was there too, I remember. He had just come down, and was camped either in a tent or in a big hollow tree that had fallen not far from Mr. Western's hut. He had his stores in the tree, I know, but am not sure whether he was camped in it: there was plenty of room, for you could stand up inside the butt as it lay. And all around close up to the hut was the heavy musk scrub with immense black butts towering above it; a little creek at the back crowded with great tree ferns provided the family water supply. In front the pack track ended. Westward you went by it to civilisation: eastward you went by the compass into the wilderness—into the unknown, where you could travel for fifty miles and see nothing but scrub. It was amusing to see how afraid men from the open country often were of the scrub when they were any distance from the friendly survey lines. They were constantly haunted by the fear of getting lost: few of them had any idea of direction or of keeping a straight line through the scrub nor yet of using the compass.

But selecting here was soon to receive a check, and many of those who selected never got their land, for the Government reserved about sixty square miles of country for mining purposes. Those who had had their land recom-

mended were all right, but those who had just selected or whose applications had not yet been considered were disappointed, and all the unselected country was closed to selection.

As this was considered to be detrimental to the district, a meeting was held in Tomlinson's barn, and later one at the "White Hart," in Bourke-street, with the result that a deputation waited on the Minister, and after a lot of worry, red tape and loss of time we got the reservation removed in respect of all the country except about two thousand acres. But by that time most of those who had pegged out had gone elsewhere, declining to be humbugged any longer over it. A friend of mine who had pegged the block on which the Kardella Station now stands had it offered to him after the worry was over, but he declined to go on with it, and so missed a good thing.

About 1882 some of the earliest settlers about Poowong and Jeetho were beginning to show good results from the land, which drew attention to the country and encouraged further settlement. Mr. McTavish in May of that year topped the Melbourne market with lambs at 11/- a head and sheep at 15/- a head, Mr. Kynock also topping the fat cattle market with bullocks at £12 12/6 a head. In that year also was held the first horse parade, Messrs. Dunlop, Matthews, Scott and others exhibiting.

The country around Poowong now began to look more settled, and the township began to develop. Goods were packed out from it for many miles in all directions; and from the Post Office services were established and the mails carried on horseback to several outlying districts. Being the terminus also of the Drouin to Poowong road, it continued to be an important centre until the opening of the railway. But for the settlement generally these may be called the "dark ages," and they continued until the opening of the lines. There was little work being done, as the people had got through most of the capital they came with, and the conditions of the country prevented much being done in the way of making money. A great deal of the eastern and southern country had not long been taken up. The Moyarra road, in fact, was not surveyed until 1887 by Mr. Lardner, and pack tracks, mud and scrub were still the leading features of the country. But soon after the coming of the railway and the constitution of the Shire things began to improve: more land was cleared, and sheep farming began to be profitable. Instead of being five or six days on the road, sheep and lambs could be landed at Newmarket in a few hours. The other markets of Melbourne were opened also, the cost of living was reduced, and the volume of business was increased in many ways. The butter industry also began to develop, and became one of the chief factors in bringing about an era of prosperity. A co-operative butter factory was established at Woodleigh, also at Poowong, others at Bena and Moyarra, and soon after others again at Korumburra, Loch, and Kongwak.

The development of coal mines provided local markets for a great deal of produce, built up townships, brought trade and business, and helped the small grower in many ways.

The granting of local government soon had a beneficial effect on the roads, for if we did not get much roadmaking done we got the roads cleared, which, with the clearing of the properties alongside, made a great improvement on the old pack-tracks. At first the revenue was small and we could not do much—in fact, there was one year when all works were stopped for want of revenue, owing to the pace having been too fast previously. But a little later, when the land became more valuable, valuations were raised and the revenue increased,

and we were also granted considerable sums for making roads to railway stations: this, together with pickings which we got from time to time as the result of special appeals to the Public Works, enabled the Council to give people outlets and improve the roads very considerably. And now, in spite of criticism to the contrary, I venture to say that neither Government nor Country Roads Board could have administered the revenue more honestly or to better advantage than the local Council has done.

The decade from 1890 to 1900 was an eventful one in the settlement. In addition to the events mentioned—the opening of the railway, the establishing of local government, etc.—it was memorable on account of a great snow-storm in 1895. The snow broke down a great deal of the scrub, lay for a week in some of the shaded gullies, and was a foot deep on the clearings. On February 1st, 1898, was the great fire—Red Tuesday, it was called. This was the biggest disaster the settlement ever knew, but as it hardly belongs to early pioneering days a short reference will suffice. The worst part of the fire seemed to come from the Warragul side on a strong north-east wind, but there were other centres of fire as well, and before night practically all the settlement had been swept. Homesteads were burnt in all directions, most of the fencing was destroyed, numbers of sheep and cattle were burnt or killed by falling timber, and the survivors roamed at large and starving over the desolated country. Most of the stock that were saved were taken down to the bayonet grass plains near the coast or elsewhere out of the district. Those that remained were fed on hay or chaff brought from Melbourne. The country was covered with fallen timber, and the people had to start clearing, sowing, fencing and building again. Great quantities of dogwood came up, but it was cut after a time and the fallen timber burned off, and the country looked better than before. Prosperous years followed, and will continue to follow, for its nearness to Melbourne, its climate and its soil give the country advantages that are permanent and invaluable.

The roads no doubt are still bad in the Winter time in places, but compared with the past—what a change! The visitor from the city sneers at them—the old pioneer thinks of the early days, of the days when he bored through the tangled scrub with compass and tomahawk in search of an outlet and glad if he could find a decent pack track: of the days when he had to force sheep and cattle through those tracks and pack in through them everything he used, and out through them everything he sold except what could walk out. He thinks, too, of the time and money and effort that he has expended over those pack tracks and roads, over railway leagues and municipal agitations, over clearing and sowing and building. He thinks of the Great Fire and its disasters, of the re-building, re-clearing, and re-sowing. Then he wonders if succeeding generations will ever understand what South Gippsland cost the early pioneers—what it cost them in money, in effort, and in years.

# Recollections and Experiences.

MR. H. DOWEL.



My father and I landed at Grantville in March, 1875, coming from Melbourne to Hastings by coach, and from there to Grantville in Jones' fishing boat. After staying at Grantville for about a week, we went to the Bass river and pitched our tents and commenced stripping wattlebark and splitting staves for sale in Melbourne. We carted the bark and staves to Grantville with a bullock team until the road was unfit to cart on, and then started to pack them, using six horses which I had to drive, making two trips a day from the Bass to Grantville, a distance of about six miles.

In about two years' time, finding that the bark and staves were not paying, and the land on the Bass being thrown open for selection, we started to guide the selectors to their respective holdings. From the hills on the west side of the Bass we could see a great belt of green timber, so we decided to explore this timbered country. Providing ourselves with a compass, we started off, and found it to be apparently good country, covered with a dense forest of musk, hazel, etc.

After this we started and cut a pack-track through the scrub as far as what is now Mr. T. Horner's. From there we went through the scrub with the aid of a compass, and blazed a track coming out on a portion of Captain Fuller's block at Bena. Mr. Delaney and his sister were the first to peg out land at Woodleigh. My father was next, selecting 110 acres there, and Mr. W. Bonwick followed on further to the east.

A great influx of settlers now took place. They came from all parts to secure land in this virgin forest now that it was thrown open for selection, and, being acquainted with the lay of the country, and having by experience proved to be expert bushmen, we were able to show numbers of them suitable blocks to peg out.

Among the early ones was Mr. R. Ward, who selected at Woodleigh, but threw up his block and later on acquired 320 acres at Almurta. Mr. Flack subsequently took this abandoned block. Messrs. Scanlon and Fribbs took up blocks adjoining Mr. Ward's on the east, and in that direction the tide of newcomers selected their holdings, the majority of whom were piloted in by us. Among these were Messrs. A. Ward, Cron, Matt. Bowman, and Jas. Clarke, where M. Bowman, junr., and Painter now are.

On the south of my father's block we showed in Messrs. Magill, Henry and Michie, and later on Messrs. Biggar, Louis Stewart, Edwards, Scott, Sheepway, Jos. White, Uren, R. Wilson, J. Thompson, McKenzie and W. Thompson selected there.

The first scrub we cut at Woodleigh was 50 acres for Mr. Warris, of Ballau. We started to pick it up, when he threw up the land, and Mr. J. Hayes took it up, and still holds it.

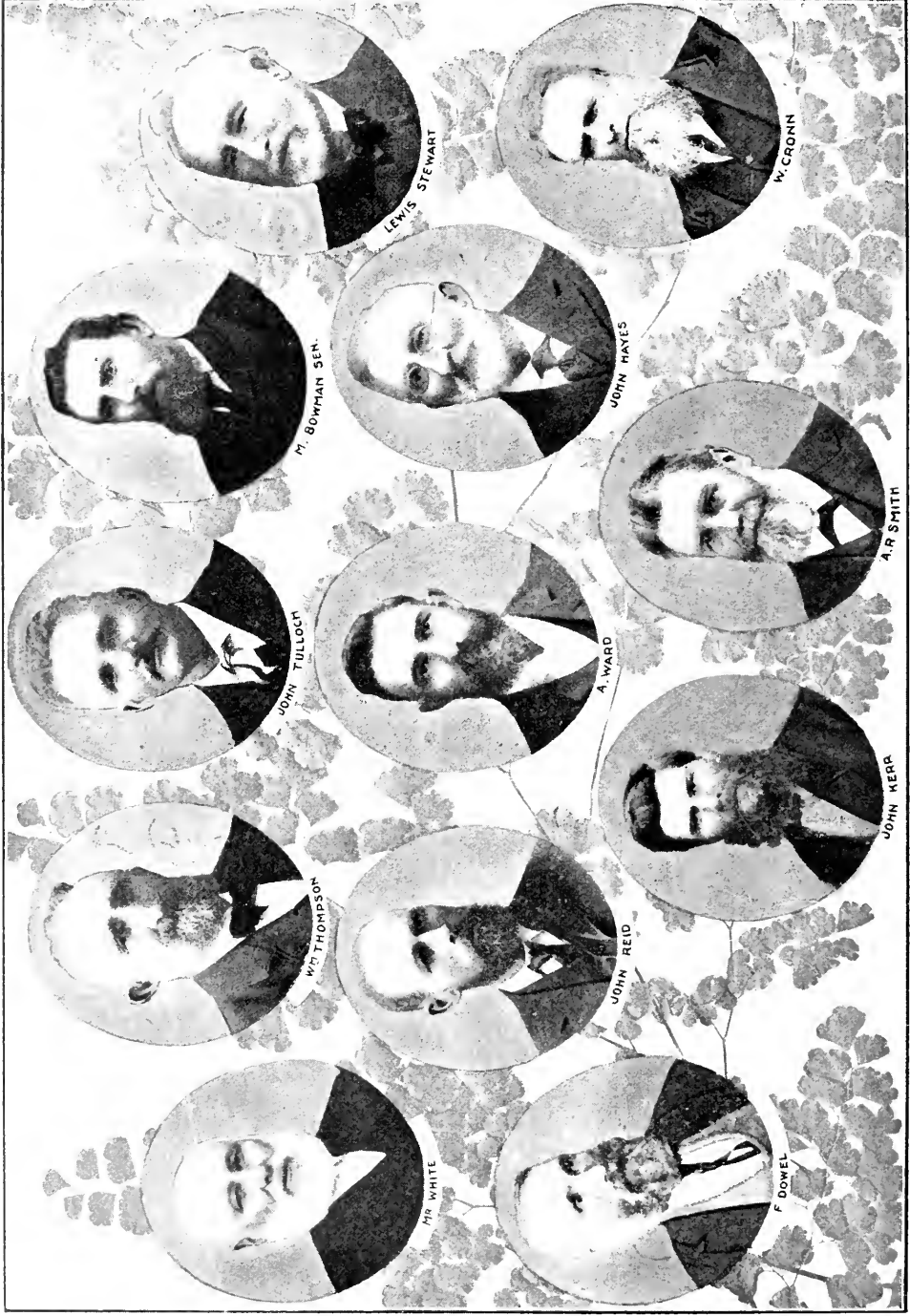
A surveyor named Hargreaves about this time surveyed the road from Woodleigh eastward towards what is now Bena, and I worked for 14 weeks for him while he surveyed new blocks. There were 11 of us in the camp, which was pitched on what is now Mr. McCabe's land, which was the first block I assisted to survey. I had to cut the lines clear of timber and branches for sighting, and later was promoted to the duty of flag plumbing. Messrs. Canobio's, E. J. Wilson's and Bunn Bros.' blocks were then surveyed, and we shifted camp to M. O'Donnell's, and from there surveyed Rose's and O'Donnell's land. Later on the camp removed to Patterson's, now Whitelaw, when I left it.

Meanwhile as settlement progressed my father started a store, the first in the district, at Woodleigh. He had built a four-roomed house with verandah entirely of blackwood, making the walls, paling roof, uprights and slabs for floor all of that valuable timber, which grew plentifully in large trees in the surrounding scrub, and was very free to work.

Later on my father had a three-horse team with which he used to travel all the surrounding country, including Grantville, Kileunda, Anderson's Inlet, and Tarwin as far as Waratah Bay, selling all sorts of goods—drapery, boots, jewellery, etc. That was about 30 years ago, and the journey took over a week to perform.

There was plenty of work cutting scrub for the newcomers and those who, as yet, lived in other parts. I took my share, and up to the time when I selected land of my own, I helped to cut 3000 acres. I left the survey camp, and, in company with my father, my brother George and Mr. Henry Bonwick, we cut 50 acres for Mr. W. Bonwick, the latter's father. Later on we cut 80 acres for Mr. Harding, 160 for Mr. Jas. Clarke, 100 acres for my father, and 100 for Mr. Delaney. Out of the scrubcutting season I used to take all sorts of work, and at last selected 110 acres at Glenalvie. After cutting some scrub and sowing the burn with grass seed, I started dairying, milking 17 cows, and sent the butter to Melbourne, getting 4d. per lb. for it, and at the end of the year I found that I had only made £17. I had to pack the butter as far as Mr. Jos. Thompson's at Krowera, a distance of about eight miles, and he took it on to Jeetho, charging 6d. per box. Sometimes when I had only one box to pack I would get a bag of dirt or stones to put on the other side to make the pack balance. I cut the balance of the scrub on the block the second year and sowed it down with grass, and then milked about 30 cows, and purchased a De Laval separator and packed the cream to the Moyarra Butter Factory. That year I made about £160, which I considered very satisfactory for the first year's turnover. In packing the cream to Moyarra I had Lance Creek to cross, and as there was no bridge I had to carry the cream over the creek on a log and then swim the horse over when the creek was flooded. A neighbour erected a temporary bridge over the creek, and one day when the creek was flooded he was carting his cream over the bridge with a horse and sledge, when the bridge started to drift down the creek with the lot. After some difficulty the man reached the bank safely, but the horse was drowned. Next day the neighbour and I went and got the sledge and horse out of the creek with a bullock team. That was one can of cream that never reached Moyarra Factory, there being more sand than cream in the can.

After living in Glenalvie for 17 years, I decided to sell out, and I then came and settled in Moyarra.



WESTERN GROUP OF PIONEERS.

# Recollections and Experiences.

MR. J. ECCLES.



I was pleased to learn that a meeting of those who have been associated since the early days with the progress and welfare of this fair province of Victoria had been convened with the object of collecting material for the compilation of a historical record of pioneers and pioneering work; and I felt proud of being one of those who, it was expected, could furnish material for such a record. The period of which I write is in the seventies and early eighties of last century. The lands of South Gippsland were available for selection. The Government, to show its good faith in the belief that a new province could be added to Victoria, had caused to be cut through the dense forest a highway which was, and is still, known as McDonald's Track. Along this cleared cut, men possessed of that spirit of enterprise which is characteristic of the British race, tramped, in many cases all the way from Cranbourne. Pushing out south-west from

various points of the track, these early landseekers entered a primeval forest, practically undefaced by the hand of man, and untenanted by aught but wallabies, native bears and other harmless fauna. Settlement had already taken place in the neighbourhood of Poowong, and, as a rule, each newcomer pegged out his selection as near to the already selected area as he could get it. Anyone unacquainted with the early history of the place might be easily led to conclude that the sturdy men who first settled down to carve homes out of the trackless forest, where giant eucalypts struggling for sunlight, towered over a lesser growth of blackwood, hazel, wattle, musk, blanket-wood, dogwood, fern and wiregrass, must assuredly have been bred to the soil. That this, in many instances, was not so, a glance in retrospect at these early comers will suffice to show. Walter Johnston forsakes the deck of a mercantile clipper, and settles down where Whitelaw's Track now is. William Langham builds himself a home at Ivy Hill. Jones leaves the architect's office and builds himself a house of very primitive architecture near the source of the Bass, which, after the lapse of a few years, he passes on to the late Henry Sanders. Matthews Bros., from India, erect a bungalow on a hill overlooking the same stream. John Ness and Henry Eccles settle down on adjoining areas along Whitelaw's Track. Harry Williams bids farewell to station life on the Upper Murray, and finds a home farther south. Christopher Mackey, tiring of a soldier's life on the north-western frontier of India, hews down the forest trees close to where the township of Korumburra now stands, while a "brither Scot," Andrew Mackay, engages in the same occupation on an adjoining area. Other pioneers, notably H. Hewitt, C. Blew and Kewish, settle down in the proximity of what is now Whitelaw. The Patterson Bros., still keeping in contact with the softgoods business, open up under the historic name "Otterburn"; and W. Blake imposes the equally historic

name "Chevy Chase" on the clearing on the opposite side of the road. Other early settlers in the immediate vicinity of Korumburra were Christopher and James Yorath, new arrivals from Wales; also John and Wyndham Thomas (uncle and nephew): while on the south side of Coal Creek, Peter Shingler and Ernest Smith, fresh arrivals from rural England, peg out two selections and enter upon real pioneering work, building first a primitive dwelling which for some few years marked the limit of settlement in that direction.

When we hear of brave men venturing into unknown and unexplored regions of the earth, enduring almost incredible hardships, merely to widen our geographical knowledge, we are full of admiration, and thrill with pride in our race; and I venture to say, without much fear of contradiction, that the sturdy pioneers who penetrated and carved homes out of this wilderness of vegetation were built of the stuff of which heroes are made. Armed with an axe, the newcomer, as a rule, first cut a bridle track along hillsides, into deep gullies: here through fern beds, there across the boles of fallen trees, till a neighbouring clearing or a track cut by an earlier settler was reached, thus giving a connection with the provision store and the outside world. The Spring and early Summer months heard the sounds made by the swinging axe reverberating through the forest hills and vales, for scrub-cutting was proceeding apace, each settler being anxious to get as many acres levelled as the time at his disposal would admit. Then, as the sunny period crept on, anxiety deepened, for a good burn meant not only a saving of labour, but the preparation of a good seed bed. Then followed the laborious and grimy task of picking up and throwing into heaps the charred poles that fire had failed to reduce to ashes. Fire was again employed to rid the land of these heaps, and then succeeded the sowing of European grasses. This pressing business completed, the settler knocked off work, not to carry bricks, for there were none, but to hew palings and rafters out of the bluegums and blackbutts, that, for want of lateral space, shot upwards to the amazing height of some 250 feet, in order to build himself a decent habitation: for at the beginning he was mainly either a tent dweller or a hut dweller. An ever present necessity was the opening of a dray track to admit of goods inwards and outwards being transported in larger bulk than was possible on a pack saddle, a means of transport extensively employed for some years. A Government party, under the command of a surveyor named Whitelaw, had cut a track from Stockyard Creek with the intention of forming a junction with McDonald's Track, but for some reason, failed to do so, and stopped some few miles short. When the first settlers pushed their way through, some miles south, they were surprised to find this track. To make a dray track between this terminal and McDonald's Track, a number of pioneers—Hewitt, Blew, Langham, Johnston, Eccles and Ness—formed a working bee, and, after eight weeks of laborious work along the watershed of the Tarwin and Bass river basins, made the long-wished-for junction. So well protected was this track from the sun's rays that, even in Summer, the surface never properly drier, while the first rains of Winter made a change rapid and complete. The fairly good road became a mere sludge channel, where the pack-saddle and the sledge competed in a sort of friendly rivalry. An event of some moment, particularly to the rising generation, was the advent of a State school. Mr. Inspector Tynan, after visiting the locality, and seeing the necessity for such an institution, arranged for a building to be constructed and leased to the department. This pioneer educational establishment, built on very primitive lines, out of gum trees that had grown on or about the site, was in one respect on ideal modern lines—the ventilation was perfect—but in another



respect it had a serious defect, which might be classed "fatal," it was not snake proof. Here, in this bush-built school, with Mr. E. F. Williamson in charge, the sons and daughters of many of the pioneers were educated—lads who have since become shrewd, prosperous men, in professions, in business, in farming and grazing pursuits, and, above all, respected and reputable citizens of our Commonwealth.

Thus the early years of settlement came and went, each succeeding year saw the clearings extending, and more and more acres of English grasses growing on the heavily fertilised soil, with an unsurpassed luxuriance. It was not, however, the fortune of the settlers to gather in every case where they had sown. More often than not, a crop of grass, the first fruit from the soil, was destroyed in an incredibly short time by a devastating horde of caterpillars. Yet, despite all difficulties and discouragements, the sturdy pioneers pursued their heavy task with a courage worthy of all praise, the lowering clouds slowly uplifted, dairying and other kindred industries struck their roots, a stream of wealth that has never ceased to increase in volume to the present time began to flow in: the era of prosperity had arrived.



# Recollections and Experiences.

MR. FRANK DODD.



After suffering the heat and discomfort in Echuca and Elmore—1864-1878—and the deaths of four children, my wife and I decided to move to a cooler climate. South Gippsland was chosen. In Xmas week, 1877, I reached Moe, and engaged Mr. John Gallagher to show me the land. We reached the Tarwin river on January 1st, 1878, and I pegged out 320 acres. In the following September I had scrub cut at 22/6 per acre, and then returned home for Xmas.

When we came into Gippsland the railway was not completed to Melbourne, having been built from Sale. Staying at Morwell for one night on my return at the Club Hotel, which was then only a bark and sapling dwelling, I left next morning for Mirboo North, accompanied by my son, Messrs. Geo. Goldsmith, senr., and Wm. Wright, who worked for me at that time. The latter had with him on this occasion the first domestic cat to be brought out to Mirboo. We reached Mirboo North that night and stayed with Mr. J. Gallagher, who had two large tents pitched in the scrub on Mr. Mat. Brennan's selection. We had partly walked and partly ridden the 20 miles, the horses being tied up to musk trees, and with plenty of wiregrass growing around they were able to get their fill, for, be it known, that there was no English grass at that time, and chaff could not be carried. This first night in the bush, filled as it was in those days with wild animals, such as wallabies and opossums, together with bird life, is something to remember. The journey was completed next day, 10 miles further on to the Tarwin river. Thus we came into the wild bush of South Gippsland in the last week of the year 1878. My nine-year-old son was the smallest specimen of the white human race to see the Tarwin river in those days, and claims to be the youngest pioneer of the Mirboo district. The first days were full of excitement, and truly the forerunner of many stirring incidents that were to follow, for, it must be remembered, that we were 30 miles from the nearest railway station, also butcher, baker and grocer, and 70 miles from the nearest doctor. As there was no grass on the river at that time, the horses had to be taken back to Mirboo North, now "Baromi," for grazing. This meant that when you wanted to go to Morwell, the nearest railway station, 30 miles away, you had to walk the first 10 miles to catch your horse. The amount of vegetation at this time was wonderful. The blackbutt trees ran up to a height of 300 feet, the blackwood trees 90 to 100 feet, and the musk, hazel, pittosporum, blanket-wood, jeal wood and several kinds of myrtle, with supplejack and the lovely ferns all combined to make up a dense mass of undergrowth very hard to penetrate, and one could easily lose their bearings in such a jungle. In one gully, "Marsh's," there were skeleton ferns over 70 feet high, and one Queen fern measured 15 feet in circumference at 3 feet from the ground. A

lot of good splitting timber was available for building purposes: the manner of getting it split was at first rather crude, but in a short time better methods prevailed.

At this time the butchers, "Howlett and Ellis," of Narracan, over 30 miles away, used to call once a fortnight with a piece of good fresh meat, together with a quantity of salt junk. They also brought letters and papers, and took letters back for posting. Of course, everything was packed in on horse-back, and along very narrow tracks. Turton's and Lydiard's Tracks respectively.

Early in the year 1879 we were surprised one Sunday morning to see two blackfellows and a white man, who soon made their mission known. They were in search of Wiberg, the ship's carpenter from the s.s. "Avoca." He had left the ship, taking with him a box of 5000 sovereigns that did not belong to him—hence this visitation of Detective Eason and two blacktrackers. Their intention was to follow the river down and come upon Wiberg from the rear, as it was known that he was living about the mouth of the River Tarwin, at "Anderson's Inlet." The party stayed all day, and did some damper making, also they made fire with their fire sticks of "jealwood," a scrub tree that was very plentiful in the bush at that time. The method of raising fire with them was very simple—a piece of wood about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter was split in half, a countersunk hole made on the flat side, and groove cut from that to the edge of the piece of wood, and then a small round piece of similar wood fitted at the end into the countersunk hole. The small piece of wood was then turned with the hands after the manner of a drill. This caused a friction, and in a very short time began to smoke. The little black particles were run down the groove on to some very fine bark and then blown into a flame.

An amusing incident took place between the butcher and this party. Mr. Ellis was returning from the river after delivering his meat. He was walking behind his pack-horse, and, as it was raining hard, had a bag over his head and shoulders to keep off the wet. Suddenly, to his surprise, a black-fellow sprang out from behind a tree, and, presenting a gun at him, ordered him to hold up his hands. Of course, he did so in the shortest time possible, and then another blackfellow and a white man came on the scene—they were after Wiberg, and thought they had got him. This joke was told for many a day afterwards round the camp fires. Needless to say, this party did not get Wiberg. It is said that after leaving our camp they went down the river a day's journey and farked on it, did some fishing and returned to Morwell.

At this time things began to move forward and it was thought that the good old adage, "God helps those who help themselves" should be put into action. In December, 1878, a public meeting was called to form a vigilance or progress committee. This consisted of Messrs. F. Dodd (chairman), Keogh, Manton, Scott and J. H. Jagoe (secretary). The object was to obtain better communication with the outside world, and to this end it was decided that a dray road should be cut from Yinnar via Penaluma's (now Boolarra), crossing the Morwell river there, then up to Earl's and Manton's, and on to the Tarwin river, finishing up at the 28 mile tree, whose stump still stands. That was the distance from Moe, on what was known as Lydiard's Track. It was decided that each selector should go himself and work, or send a man in his place, or contribute £5. A start was made at this work about the latter end of February, 1879. During this time some stirring incidents took place. The

Summer was a dry one and the whole country got on fire. Fortunately, most of the men were away on the road engaged in clearing, and so the danger of loss of life was reduced; for it must be remembered that there was not any clear space at all—only sufficient to pitch the tents on. Let me give one experience. The butcher had just gone a little while before, after having called on his fortnightly trip, when we observed a fire some distance away. Before long it came close to our camp at Mr. Marsh's. I and my son went across to help Mr. J. Rodgers, who worked for Mr. Henry Marsh while he was away road clearing, to shift camp. Tent, blankets, etc., were carried across the river for safety. When we returned, we looked round for our dinner, some of the nice beef steak left by the butcher. It had been cooked and left in the frying pan by the camp fire. To our dismay, we found the dog had finished it off and was busy licking out the pan. Later on in the day the fire crossed the river, and then we had Mr. Marsh's camp and our own to shift. Two days after the wind chopped round and we had to move the camp a third time. Afterwards we were safe from fire, but it was a fortnight before we saw any fresh faces, for the whole country was alight, and we could not get out, nor could anyone get in to us. The smoke was dreadful, and though the moon was at the full during this period we did not see it, and for days the sun was obscured. The last two days of, shall I say, our imprisonment we had only oatmeal and treacle to live on. Trees were falling at the rate of one a minute for some periods of the time. As far as memory serves me, we were the only people on the river at that time—the remainder being away on road clearing. They, too, had some exciting times with bush fires, tree felling and bridge building.

The river at this time afforded some good fishing, being practically full of blackfish. It was during Christmas week, 1878, that Mr. Peter Carmichael brought some English trout and placed them in the river, but they were never seen after. When the road had been cut through and the selectors returned to the blocks of land, things began to move a little more, though the work was very hard and most of the settlers were inexperienced with the new order of things. The greatest celebrity at that time was Jack Gallagher, who was making any amount of money by land showing at £10 per block, and in some cases having two or three men with him on one trip. People must have had land hunger very badly at that time, for they not only had to pay their £10 down to Gallagher, but it meant a walk of 30 miles each way—no motor car in those days. He was a splendid specimen of a bushman, with steel-grey eyes that seemed to look you through, and could spin yarns by the hour. His first prize story was about himself. He fought in the Maori war and was captured by the Maoris, who handed him and another prisoner over to the care of Maori women with instructions to fatten them up ready for the oven. Jack, however, would not fatten; the thought of it preyed on his mind so much. Every few days his captors would feel his ribs to see if they were putting on condition. His mate proved of a better disposition, and being a good "doer" was eaten, but Jack managed to escape. To hear him tell this story round the camp fire at night and in the unknown bush made one's flesh creep.

In the month of June we had heavy rain and gales, and one night during a high wind a large limb fell from a tall tree a distance of 150 or 160 feet across the ridge pole of the tent in which J. Rodgers was sleeping, with the result that he was pinned to his bunk and had several ribs broken. He lay thus till morning, until I, on the opposite side of the river, noticing

that no one was moving about, sent one of my young men over to see what was the matter. The river being in flood, this man had a long clothes line tied round his waist in case he should be swept off his legs. Finding the state Rodgers was in, he came back and set off to Morwell to bring the doctor. Meanwhile, another of my employees, J. Millar, undertook to nurse him. The bringing of the doctor was a long job. W. Wright, who walked to Morwell, 30 miles away, telegraphed to Sale for Dr. McDonell, who came down and rode out the next day, set the ribs, etc., went back on the third day, and Wright returned again to his work on the fourth day—rather a long job altogether. It is pleasing to relate that Rodgers made a good recovery. He left the district a few weeks after—quite satisfied with his experiences of pioneering.

During the Autumn of this year the first grass seed was sown and a fair acreage was put down. The first land sale of Township allotments in Mirboo took place, also Mr. Goldsmith, after purchasing a corner block, made preparations to build a store and dwelling house. Mrs. Geo. Goldsmith was the first white woman to visit the river—staying a few days. She returned some months after to live at the store at Mirboo.

I also prepared to bring in my family and set to work to have timber sawn for a three-roomed house, by means of a pit-saw. This was slow work and cost over £100, although the dimensions were only 16 feet by 32 feet.

Mrs. Dodd and family came in to live on the river in August, 1879, bringing three boys and two girls. Their mode of reaching the new home was of a somewhat exciting character. A coach was run at this time from Morwell to Matt. Brennan's at Mirboo North. This part of the long trip was all right, but from Brennan's to the Tarwin was done on horseback. This proved a thrilling experience for one who had never been on horseback before, and to ride along a bridle track such as that was required some nerve. Wm. Smith, who worked for me, took the two girls, one on each side of him, sitting as best they could on leg and knee, with a rope tied round the lot. I took the youngest boy, a nine months old little chap, in front of me, and at one awkward place the horse stumbled and fell. The boy disappeared in the ferns and scrub, but was soon recovered, none the worse for his fall. However, the journey was completed, and all reached their new home in great spirits, and were soon settling down to the new life, and pioneering began in earnest. This was the first family to come on to the Tarwin river to live. Though the life was hard and much privation had to be endured, the three eldest sons and two daughters are still strong and lusty and going well.

As showing the cost of living, it might be said here that I paid £6 for the packing of 8½ cwt. of goods for ten miles. In those days there were no bakers or grocers calling for orders, and when there were families it was no small undertaking to provide for them. Sickness of any sort was practically unknown, and in any case one had to do most of their own doctoring. A bushman's kit always had a box of Holloway's pills and a bottle of Painkiller, also a pocket knife and piece of string in case of snakebite.

At this time the original selectors were on their blocks—Mr. Wm. Hughes being the lowest down the river, and then the Goldsmiths, Dodds, Marsh, Shearer, Jagoe, Hollingsworths, Keoghs and Scotts. A railway league was formed, and in August, 1879, a petition was presented to the then Minister of Railways asking that a line of railway should be constructed, and at the close of 1880 the construction of 20 miles 15 chains of railway was authorised to be made from Morwell to Mirboo. This railway league, of which I was

chairman, agitated for a line from Moe to Welshpool. Had this line been made, and it could have been carried through had the surveyors searched long enough for suitable grades, a magnificent piece of country would have been opened up, and thousands of pounds worth of timber would have been sent into the market. Through there being, however, no available outlet, it has been destroyed for marketable purposes.

The first organ to arrive in the district was brought by me, and was carried from the bullock waggon at Mirboo to my place in a sling on a pole for a distance of four miles. Messrs. Wm. and E. Goldsmith assisted me in this. This instrument was used afterwards for the first church services held by the Wesleyan home missionary in my house, and is still in use. The first religious services were, however, conducted by the Church of England clergyman in Mr. Goldsmith's store at Mirboo south, and good congregations were the order of the day. In course of time the Church of England people, with the assistance of others, built a very nice church at Mirboo south, and this was used for many years, but was burnt down in the big fires of 1898. In the early '80's, a Wesleyan home missionary, now the Rev. Jas. Smith, was stationed at "Lyre-bird Mound," near Leongatha, and it took him three days to reach my house for the purpose of arranging for Sunday services—one can now travel from one point to the other in three hours. These services were carried on under great difficulties. A bugle was used for the purpose of letting the congregation know when it was church time.

For many years the selectors worked on, spending money, and making none. It is safe to say that no one made any money from their land for the first five or six years.

In passing it might be mentioned that the bush missionary had a hard task set before him. The roads were of the most primitive kind, and all travelling had to be done on horseback. The selector's hospitality was unbounded, and the minister was always sure of a warm welcome. The services were held once a month for some time.

The first birth on the Tarwin river took place in my family—a boy—in February, 1880, and this little chap died in November of the same year. As showing the pluck and endurance of the pioneer women as well as the men, I may be pardoned for relating the following: This baby boy not being strong, it was decided to take him to Melbourne for medical advice; this meant carrying the child on horseback 30 miles to Morwell, and then the long train journey to Melbourne. The mother was away a fortnight and sent word to say that the child was doing well, and to meet her on a given date at Morwell. This was done, I, the father and husband, riding into Morwell, leading the spare horse. Imagine the shock I received when the mother put into my arms the body of the child—it was dead. It appears that the little fellow had had a relapse, and actually died in the mother's arms while attending Dr. Lloyd's surgery. The doctor gave a certificate of death, and the mother, not having any friends in Melbourne, and knowing that I would expect to meet her in Morwell that night, brought the child up in her arms, no one in the carriage knowing that the child was dead. Surely, an ordeal few would like to experience. The next day, Saturday, the journey out into the bush was made. I had to carry the child in front of me on horseback, and had to get off the horse in several places and walk down the hills, they being too steep to ride down. On Sunday morning a coffin was made of blackwood slabs: the grave was dug by Mr. Edward Hughes and another; and thus on



LOOKING DOWN ON THE SCREE

Sunday afternoon, November 14th, 1880, away from the pomp and ceremony and the busy throng, the little chap was laid to rest on a high bank of the Tarwin river.

A week after this by eldest son and I took away the first lot of bullocks, which had been brought in some nine months before, but owing to all the English grasses being swept away by caterpillars, the cattle had to go. They were sold for less than they cost. We were away a fortnight, and on returning home found that my youngest boy, who had not been strong from birth, and was two years old, had sickened and died. Thus again the mother had been practically alone when the second child died. Again, on a Sunday, this boy was buried beside his brother, and under just similar circumstances. Just about this time Mr. Geo. Goldsmith lost his wife, and he was left with a big family.

Mr. W. B. Hughes, J.P., was the first settler to bring sheep into the district, but they were not a success, owing to footrot and the prevalence of dingoes. The first butcher on the river was Mr. W. Warner, who came from Foster and whose daughter used to drive sheep from Foster, 20 miles distant along a narrow bridle track, and as there was not a living soul between the two places, this was no small task. A milch cow was quite a novelty at this time. The bush was alive with birds, the lyre bird being very much in evidence. In July, 1879, the first laughing jackass made his appearance, also the grey jay; the magpie was not seen for several years after this time.

One of the sights of the bush was the supplejack, which climbed in some cases a height of 140 to 150 feet, and when in bloom it made the big blackbutts look very pretty. It was a common thing to cut a supplejack vine close to the ground, and then by catching hold of the hanging rope or vine to be able to swing out some 40 or 50 feet.

During the years 1881 and 1888 there were several incidents of note. In the month of January, 1881, a new chum by the name of Palmer set off to Mr. Goldsmith's store to purchase some provisions, and among other things he got potatoes, gunpowder, etc. In returning he took the wrong road and went on towards Foster about four or five miles. Finding that he was on the wrong track he struck off through the bush and at once lost his bearings. As he did not return the next day, Sunday, a search party was formed, and the various survey lines were traversed, guns were fired and much cooe-ing done, but it was not till Monday midday that he was found in a gully half way between the present Foster and Farmer's roads about opposite the present Dumbalk Mechanics' Institute. He was very hungry, had lost all his groceries, etc., and his clothes were torn to shreds. The first thing that he asked for was some pins so that he could pin up his torn trousers. He was got out allright and in a few days had quite recovered. Up to that time the letters and papers were brought to Mirboo North 10 miles away, and the selectors took it in turn to go for them on Sunday. A mail contract was then let, and the mails carried from Foster to Morwell, via Mirboo North and Darlimurla, three days a week each way. The mailmen were made of tough stuff, as they covered fifty miles each day on horseback, and this in Winter was a very hard task to perform. The late Mr. J. H. Jagoe was the first postmaster at Mirboo.

In the early '80's a fine lot of settlers came into the district, including the Mairs, Davies, J. Perrin, S. Perrin, W. Baines, Berryman, D. Henderson, J. Carmichael and Benn; the three last named bringing large families with them, and all are deservedly entitled to the greatest praise for the part



which they took in pioneering the district. After these came Messrs. Trease, White, Hendry Bros., Dale, Patterson, Beattie; all of whom played their part in opening up the country, and though most of them have gone the way of all flesh, more especially the old people, their names should be recorded. Of those who selected land and came on the river in the years 1877 and 1878, and who have resided continuously, only two remain, viz.: Mr. B. W. Hughes and myself. Of course, Mr. Geo. Goldsmith is still alive and living on the river, and though he did not actually select land, three of his sons did, and he financed them for many years, while he bought land in the township of Mirboo, and was the first man to open a store and later a hotel and place of accommodation. One incident connected with Mr. Goldsmith's father is worthy of note, and almost reads like a tale of fiction. In April, 1888, the old grandfather died, and, having expressed a wish some time before to be buried alongside my two boys on the banks of the Tarwin river, his wish was carried out; one of the grandsons, Jas. Goldsmith, went to Mirboo North for the coffin. It being Winter, and the roads very bad, he essayed to pack the coffin down on horse-back. Being of an awkward shape, it would not ride properly, and so gave a lot of trouble to balance it. In one place it capsized, and in putting it right again Jim lost his boot in the mud and could not find it. He finished the remainder of the journey, some five miles, with one boot on. When he arrived at the house where the old man was lying, it was just dark. After the necessary duties had been performed, a number of young men took turn about to carry the coffin to the grave, about a mile and a quarter away. The night was dark, and torches made of bark were lighted to show the way. When the graveside was reached it was found that the side had started to fall in, and this was propped up by palings on one side and stayed across. The coffin had to be lowered end on, and young F. C. Dodd being the smallest of the party, was let down into the grave so that he might lift the coffin along on the bottom of the grave. This was no easy job, and, when completed, he looked up to see the faces around the grave peering in, and his father holding a lighted lamp so that the clergyman could see to read the burial service, rather a trying ordeal for a lad of 15 or 16 years of age.

A number of dangers were encountered, the principal ones being the danger of snakebite and falling timber. Of course, these are still with the South Gipps-land resident, but not to the same degree. In the early days there was no known antidote for snakebite, and no doctor in case of accident, though it is surprising the small number of accidents that happened in the early days.

The names of three men must be mentioned in regard to the opening up of the down-river country. These were Messrs. Jas. Gilligan, sen., J. Findley, and J. Hutchin, who were the first men to travel down the river from Mr. Wm. Hughes' selection to Anderson's Inlet. Soon after their trip the land on both sides of the river was taken up, and before long large spaces of clearing were made. The first mails to Findley's, three miles from Meeniyan, were carried by my son, this being a private mail for some months, but in a short time it was taken over by the Postmaster-General, and became a Government contract.

The surveyors who surveyed the blocks of land in the 80's did much to open up the valley of the Tarwin, foremost of these being Edward O'Grady, Langtry, Langford and Lardner. At the end of the 80's the first State school was erected by the heads of families, the timber being split and the whole building put up principally by Messrs. White, Trease, Dodd and Hendry.

In June, 1890, Mrs. Dodd died, leaving a family of nine behind. Thus the two first pioneer women died; the other, Mrs. Geo. Goldsmith, having borne the burdens of the pioneering work uncomplainingly. Their names should be written in large letters on the scroll of fame, for they had to be their own dressmakers (no sewing machines being available), breadmakers, doctors, nurses, and attend to a hundred other duties besides, often not seeing one of their own sex for months, and rearing their families at the same time.

That the valley had been inhabited by the blacks in early times is proved by the fact that stone tomahawks and stone spear-heads and sharpening stones have been found.

At the end of 1891 Mr. James Hendry, of the Foster road, was killed by a falling spar. His body was put on a sledge and taken about 10 miles in this way, and the rest of the journey to the Mirboo North Cemetery in a spring dray.

Mirboo and the surrounding district has taken a very heavy toll of those who first went into the forest, as they did the hardest work, spent hundreds, and in some cases thousands, of pounds on their blocks of land and then left them, broken in pocket as well as in heart. Much remains to be done. But the work of the pioneer can never be fully recorded by anyone. Let us hope that their work is recorded by a Higher Power, and that their reward will be great.

The above notes are given from the writer's actual experience and from correct dates.



A RUSH HOME.

# Recollections and Experiences

MR. A. GILLAN.

During the period between 1875 and 1880 a very considerable extension of settlement and occupation of Crown Lands took place in Victoria. Many of the residents in the district between Creswick and Clunes, where I then resided, being in charge of the State school there, went northward to the Goulburn Valley and the country around St. Arnaud, where they took up land and settled in those parts.



The desire to obtain some land took possession of the writer, but he never for a moment thought of going northward. His thoughts were turned to the south, where he heard of land being open for selection near Western Port. During the Christmas holidays of 1878 I paid my first visit to the Poowong district.

At Ballarat East a man came into the same carriage, who, I found, by conversation, was also in quest of land, and on his way to the Poowong district. His name was Wm. McGregor. On arrival in Melbourne, Mr. Wm. McGregor and I visited the Lands Department, inspected some maps, and got some information about the district, where selection was going on apace. On the following day my companion and I started by Cobb and Co.'s coach from the Albion Hotel, in Bourke-street, to Cranbourne, having been joined by one Mr. Lakeland, also from Ballarat East, who had already selected in the Poowong district, and was proceeding to visit his selection and see the work done on it by his nephew who was cutting the scrub. At Cranbourne the trio procured a vehicle and driver from Mr. Bethune, a storekeeper there, and were driven to Tobin Yallock. Here we were left to our own resources. After refreshing the inner man we started on our journey, walking until after 10 o'clock in a clear, cloudless night, then made tea, gathered some ferns for our beds, stretched our tired bodies thereon, and were soon under the dominion of "Nature's soft nurse," balmy sleep.

The following morning saw us early astir on the way to our destination along McDonald's Track, passing Dunlop's and James Scott's places before any signs of life were evident. The character of the country was now very different to that passed over, skirting Westernport and the intervening part. Great giants of trees met the gaze along the track, and tall, graceful hazel scrub bounded it on each side. In a valley between J. Scott's and Poowong, a waggonette was noticed thrust in the scrub, which gave some evidence of civilisation in this, at that time, remote locality.

Poowong had then only one house erected, and the first person seen there was the late Mr. Horsley, senr., who gave us directions to the hut occupied by Mr. Houllahan, whom, on reaching the place, we found actively engaged at

the first meal of the day, and a fine, stalwart young man without coat and vest and one of his braces dangling behind, came out and accompanied us a short distance, showing us the way to Mr. Appleton's place, our destination. Mr. Appleton, with Mr. Fraser, his father-in-law, and Miss Fraser, daughter of the latter, had three blocks together, subsequently forming part of the estate of Mr. R. O. Timms, and now of Messrs. Osborne Bros. The ground of Mr. Lakeland previously mentioned formed also part of the same estate, having been sold to Mr. Timms. We remained here and elsewhere for a couple of days looking around, under limited conditions, owing to the density of the scrub, along survey lines bounding the selections and other coigns of vantage, and, at last, on the third day we pegged out our blocks.

A track had just been opened from Poowong North to Drouin, and by this we journeyed to the latter place, caught the contractor's train (the Gippsland line being then under construction), which took us to Bunyip, from which the line was completed to Oakleigh and open for traffic.

Mr. McGregor and I then lodged our applications, having been duly sworn by a magistrate that we had not previously selected, and paid the usual fee of £1. A survey fee of £20 per block of 320 acres was soon after demanded and paid by the applicants. It may here be stated that Mr. McGregor did not keep his block. Having changed his mind, he applied for a refund of his survey fee and obtained it. The same block and another adjoining were taken up by Messrs. J. and B. Tribe, from South Melbourne, and now owned by Mr. R. Gregg and Messrs. Kidman and Beverly.

In 1885 I came down to reside on my block, having carried out the necessary improvements in the shape of clearing the scrub, sowing grass seed, fencing and building, but inasmuch as I did not carry out the residence clause,  $4\frac{1}{2}$  years rent was forfeited by me, or, in other words, double rent was charged for  $4\frac{1}{2}$  years.

The encouragement given then and now by the Lands Department and the Closer Settlement Board, a creation of the Government since those days, to settlers taking up land is in striking contrast. The survey fees are less, and there is less stringency required in observing the residence clause: in fact there is a system of nursing carried on by the Closer Settlement Board towards the settlers on irrigation areas in the north of the State which was altogether unknown in the days of the settlement of South Gippsland.

Considering the pluck and energy of the early pioneers in this part tackling a country covered with dense forest, and the fact that an unproductive province has been converted through their labours into one highly remunerative to the Government, the old settlers and their descendants have ample reason of complaint that such rigid adherence was required by bona fide selectors in observing all the regulations of selection, and at the neglect so far shown by the powers that be in aiding in the development of this part of the State from the advent of settlement up to the present period.

The different birds, animals, varied scenery and density of the scrub and other features that came under notice made me think I had arrived in a new country altogether, which was true in a sense but not in reality. I was delighted with the whole scene, and although conditions have very much changed—the native bear is now seldom seen, the coachwhip bird, the bell bird, the lyre bird and other birds have retired as the scrub was cut down—I

am still delighted with the appearance of the country in its partly denuded state, still pleased with the character and potency of the soil, the salubrity of the climate; and the pioneers and others inhabiting this part, for energy, ability and intelligence, will compare favourably with any other class of citizens in the State, or even in the Commonwealth.

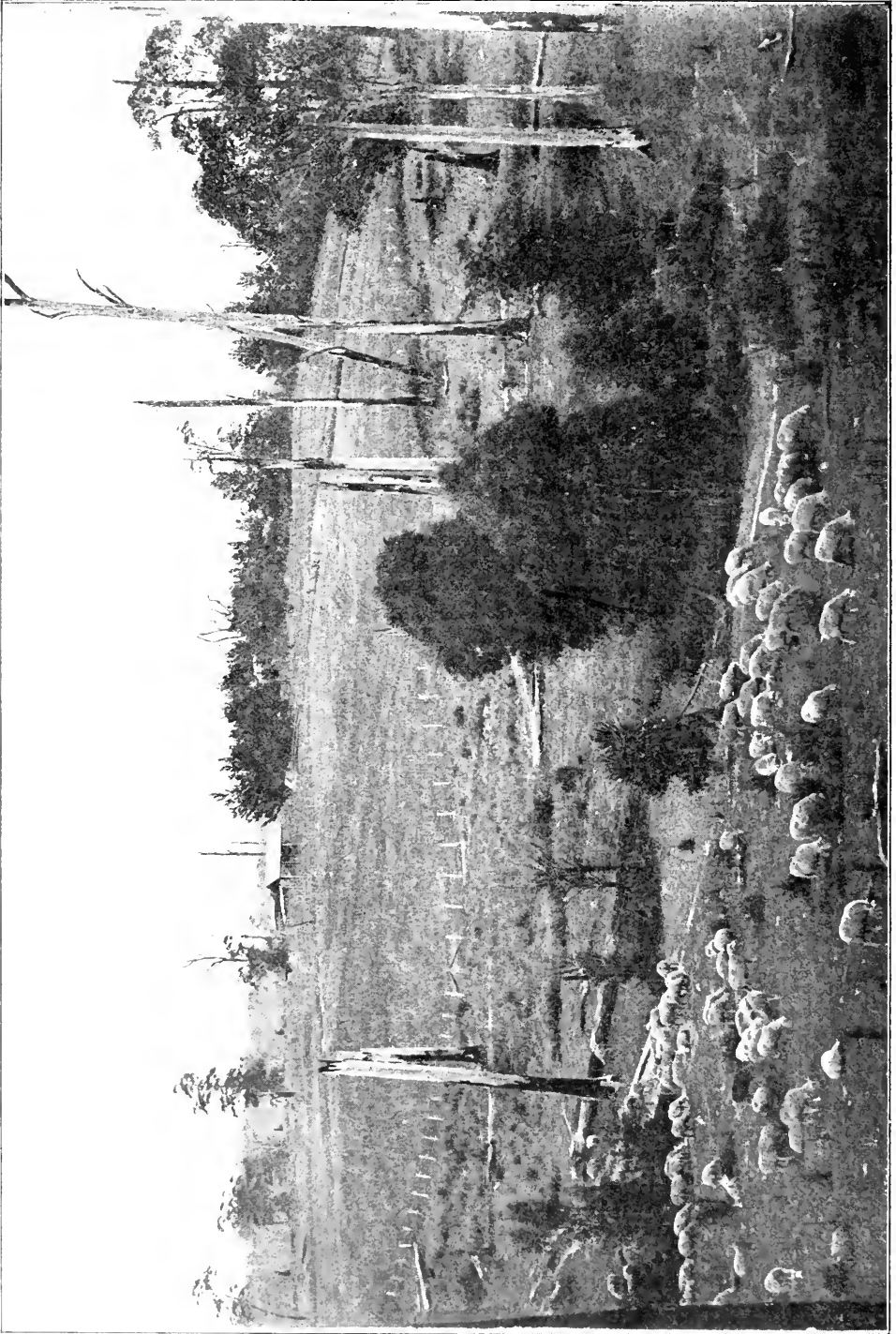
The building of the Gippsland railway line and settlement in the Poowong and surrounding districts were almost contemporaneous, and Drouin being due north, about 18 miles distant on the line named, all the traffic passed along the road connecting these places. This traffic was also increased by the diversion of much of that which previously came by the Western Port route. The Poowong end of the road as far as the Royal Hotel or Halfway House, as it was usually named, was opened up by the residents of Poowong, Messrs. Gardner, Horsley, Burchett, Murphy and McTavish taking a prominent part. When the line from Melbourne to Drouin was opened in 1879 the mails, which had hitherto come by Western Port, now came to Drouin, and thence per coach to Poowong. Owing to the extensive traffic in supplying stores to the settlers, building materials and replenishing the local stores at Poowong, Bena and McDonald's Track, this road in the Winter season became a regular quagmire, and a journey along it per coach or otherwise was often of an adventurous character. Often the coach, carrying passengers and mails, would get bogged, when the former would have to get out and walk some distance along the muddy roads, no easy task, until a part less boggy would be reached, when the coach would again be utilised for their journey. Parties carrying goods, etc., would travel several together so that they could assist each other in the boggy and most difficult parts of the road.

The Royal Hotel on the Lang Lang was a place of considerable note in the early days. This was kept by Mr. and Mrs. Clifton, who settled there on their selection in 1877, and were noted for their civility and attention to the public on this road.

Mr M. Gardner and Mr Patrick F. Murphy were the first councillors elected to represent the Poowong district in the Buln Buln shire. At next election Mr. C. Burchett, Jas. M. Gannon and George Grant were elected.

Besides the coach carrying the mails run by Mr. Sutcliffe of Drouin, Mr. Hodgkinson of McDonald's Track also ran a passenger coach between Poowong and Drouin; and the carriers in the early days were Messrs. R. Gregg, Poowong, G. Pratt, of North Poowong, and Mr. James, of Bena. The stores carried on in the district were run at Poowong by Mr. J. Scott, and later by Mr. J. Salmon; at Cruickston by Mr. R. Murdoch, and at Strzelecki by Mr. Adkins.

The first work in the way of improving the selection was to cut down the scrub, consisting of hazel, blackwood, wattle, musk and some other varieties, also at same time to ringbark the large trees, in order to kill them. This was usually done in Winter or early Spring, and the fallen scrub burned towards the end of the Summer, then what was left was picked up in heaps and afterwards burned. A mixture of clover and grass seed was then sown, which, from the deposit of ashes on the surface and the character of the soil, grew luxuriantly, producing pasture highly favourable for the fattening of stock or for dairying. Owing to the hilly character of the country, and the distance from markets for the disposal of produce, together with the absence of roads, cultivation was confined to what was required for consumption on the farm, so that grazing and dairying were almost the only sources from which



THE HOMESTEAD.

an income could be derived. This brings the dairying industry of the Poowong district under review, and as this is the subject of another paper, no further comments need be made respecting it.

Owing to the absence of roads in the early days, a considerable amount of traffic was carried on by packing. Narrow tracks connecting different places were cut through the scrub, and along these boxes of butter, eggs, crates of fowls and porkers, not to speak of children, who were also occasionally carried in this fashion, would be transported along these by faithful horses, plodding along through mud and slush and ascending and descending tracks that assumed the aspect of stairs, each step in Winter being marked by a muddy pool. A gentleman not far from Poowong was telling the writer that he met a pack-horse winding its way through his selection driven by a young man, who a number of years afterwards became one of the Councillors of the Poowong and Jeetho Shire. The pack was laden with a pair of turkeys on one side and a little girl on the other. The turkeys were sold in Melbourne, and the little girl in course of time became the young man's wife.

In conclusion, a few notes may be made about the present appearance of this district in its partially cleared condition. In looking around, the horizon bounding the view presents a jagged outline of trees, some green and full of vitality, whilst others stand out prominently with gaunt and bare branches bereft of their foliage, and appealing as it were to heaven against their destruction by the hand of man. The country at large is more or less covered by these silent witnesses, intermingled with live trees here and there, and often by patches of green timber which have been left untouched in the progress of clearing, or left purposely as a shelter for stock, or a source of supply for future requirements on the farm. This is very important, as there is no doubt as time passes and timber becomes scarce, a patch of green timber on the farm will be regarded as a valuable possession. Many are now regretting their neglect in this respect, that such foresight was overlooked when clearing their selections. The traveller, in passing through the district, will notice some paddocks with large patches of bracken fern growing thereon, others dotted with bunches of swordgrass. The ferns are useless as feed for stock, but the swordgrass will be eaten by stock, especially in Winter, and if young will be much relished by cattle and horses. Cultivation is the most effectual method of clearing the ground of these growths. He will also notice, say in December or January, promising crops of oats, maize and potatoes, also paddocks of onions, and patches of peas, mangels and pumpkins; and outside these areas fine paddocks of grass and clover, on which numerous herds of cows with well stocked udders are grazing. Horses, too, sleek and in good condition, are also to be seen, with occasional flocks of sheep and lambs, all giving evidence of a fertile district and of an energetic and prosperous community. To these evidences may be added the comfortable and well-appointed homesteads that meet the eye of the traveller in all directions, and should be attend a market in one of the leading townships, additional evidence of prosperity will be afforded in the style and character of the horses and vehicles, driven by well-dressed farmers and their wives, or members of their families from the surrounding country. The views of the country from hills and ridges are striking and beautiful, and when seen in the morning, when the sun is making his appearance, or in the evening near sunset, is still more pleasing and delightful. At such times the shadows cast by the hills and mountains when the sun is rising, or taking his departure with an admixture of sunshine striking hills and prominent places here and there, also the halo

of glory surrounding the retiring orb of day, especially should the sky be flecked with light clouds in the west, produce a picture of nature before the spectator hard to surpass.

The roads in the district wind along creeks or follow ridges and often across valleys and over hills, making them, as a rule, expensive to make and maintain. This is rendered more so owing to the absence of suitable road metal. The sandstone under the surface soil is unsuitable for this purpose, as in a short time from exposure to the atmosphere it crumbles, and if used on a road is reduced to powder or mud, according to the weather, making the road muddy and boggy should traffic be considerable. It must be remarked that as time passes and the judicious expenditure of the rates available by the Shire Councils of South Gippsland, the roads are gradually improving, and now that special attention is being given to the formation of main roads connecting the principal townships by the Country Roads Board, a further improvement may be early expected. Good roads, by affording easier facilities for the transport of produce to the railway stations, will cause an increased area to be put under cultivation, and thus benefit the entire district.



A NEWLY-FELLED TREE, "FERN GROVE," MIRBOO SOUTH.

8 ft. in diameter at cut 11 ft. from ground.



# Recollections and Experiences.

MRS. R. J. FULLER.



In 1876 Captain Fuller, my father-in-law, my husband and his sisters selected land in the neighbourhood of Messrs. Horner and McCabe, but threw that up and afterwards selected in the present site (near Bena). In January, 1878, Mr. Fuller severed his connection with the shipping firm to start for the land to build the house for us, which was a matter of some consideration, as Captain Fuller and my husband thought it would be too rough for my sisters-in-law, the children and myself. So 25 acres were taken up on the Bass, where Sunnyside now is, as there was a dray track to there, and we could take some furniture: for we could take nothing but what could be taken on a pack-horse to the larger place. I thought, "only five miles: they can ride there and back every day," to which, when I mentioned it, they replied "they would only be back once a week." That decided it. I said, "Then I am going to the big place." A four-roomed house was

commenced, but took longer to build than was expected; it was not complete when we arrived. Towards the end of March Mr. Fuller came down with a covered American waggon and one horse. Mother was troubled that the rain might come through the cover, so we got American leather for the cover. We sent all luggage possible by boat, much against my will; for I thought if I could stack the waggon like a furniture van the horse could pull it. So the first week in April we started from Richmond with a crate of fowls and ducks tied to the axle, provisions for the journey, clothes, bedding and five children, the eldest six and a half years, and the youngest four months old. We reached Tooradin Hotel late at night, thoroughly tired. Next morning no sign of breakfast, so started off, as we expected to arrive at the hut at Sunnyside that night. We had breakfast by the wayside, dinner also. Late in the afternoon the horse came to a standstill and refused to move, in a swampy place, the second night out from town. Now the American leather came in handy. We took the cover off the trap to act as a tent, spread the American leather on the ground, and made up the bed for the night. There was difficulty in finding water for the horse and our tea. Then we tried to settle for the night, and what a night it was! The dingoes came howling round, and I was afraid they might try for one of the children. Next morning, up with the first peep of day, breakfast, then to unload everything by the roadside, the horse then pulled the empty trap out. Then we went on with the children and bedding only, leaving the crate of fowls and ducks and other things packed up on the roadside for Mr. Smith to bring to his place afterwards. We arrived at the hut at Sunnyside for dinner. On again; when towards evening we reached Mr. A. R. Smith's home near what is now Loch, where he and Mrs. Smith made us very welcome for the night.



AN EARLY HOMESTEAD.

At daylight next morning Mr. Fuller started for the horses, and finally we commenced the last stage of the journey with a boy and girl in new sacks turned half way down and hooked on, one each side of the pack-saddle; one child being put in each sack, and they travelled splendidly, much better than I have seen children travel in boxes.

Being Sunday, we had several to help; Captain Fuller took one child on the horse in front of him, a neighbour took the other on his back for part of the way, as it was about a five-mile walk over hill and valley, and we arrived safely, although too tired to remember how we got them all fixed for the night.

So we started our second home, the first with all the little labour-saving devices that a handy husband could make; the second with all these to come. For furniture, we had a cradle, sewing machine taken to pieces and packed in the cradle, and a rocking chair, also taken to pieces; all the rest had to be made on the premises, as we did not get anything but what came on a pack-horse for six years.

Being used only to town life, I had everything to learn and no neighbour near enough to get any knowledge from. My first recipe for bread-making was: Put some yeast (which was kept in a tin not tied down) in the flour, and some warm water, and let it rise all night; in the morning put some more warm water to it and make it stiff; when it is risen enough you bake it.

Needless to say, there were many failures, and the bread-making was a thing I never liked, although for many years I never used less than a ton and a quarter of flour, and one year two tons.

Then dairying, of which I knew nothing, had to be learned. The first churn was a 7lb. square coffee tin, in which the cream was shaken until the butter came: "then wash and salt it," were the directions I received: and I expected to find, when I turned it on a plate, that it would look like a lump of good butter, and was disgusted to find, after trying with a knife to pat it into shape, that I only made it look worse, but was very glad to have that and the milk for the children. Captain Fuller had got a good vegetable garden when we came.

At this time no one along the South Track had any grass, and there was no woman further out. The next to arrive was Mrs. C. Blew, but I did not meet her till several years after.

The year before we came up Mr. Fuller had sent some fruit trees, and their experience was varied on the journey. They started by coach from the Albion Hotel in Bourke-street, Melbourne, to Grantville, then by bullock team and horse dray to Mr. A. R. Smith's, finishing by pack-horse. Two years after our arrival they were removed to another site, and very pleasant and useful we found the fruit when they came into bearing.

As soon as we were, in a measure, settled in the house, the men had to start building again—another four-roomed house attached to the one we were occupying. Before the second one was finished Captain Fuller went to town for his daughters. Mr. Fuller was to meet them with horses at Mr. A. R. Smith's, but owing to the uncertainty of the mail arrangements they walked up and surprised us. It was a great change for the girls to come to the quiet of the country.

In the Spring there were a number of heifers coming in, so we had to begin milking: we had already gained some knowledge of butter-making.

Our weekly papers had been anxiously looked for, to pick up any hints on dairying, but, as there was not much interest taken in dairying then, there was very little correspondence on the subject. Our first trouble was getting the "Cherry" churn in: it could not be taken to pieces for packing, so Mr. Fuller had to carry it on his back for some miles.

The leading price for butter that Spring was 4½d. a pound, so we decided to pack ours in kerosene tins and solder it down and keep it till the Autumn; after all the expenses we only got 6d. a pound return. A few years after, for potted butter, salted and kept till the Autumn, we got 1 2 per lb. Since then we have milked as many as 119 cows in a season.

When Mr. Fuller's mother and my mother were sending our goods (and they sent a great number of things) they purchased and cleaned kerosene tins and cases to pack them in, so we had a good supply; they were also easy to handle in packing both in and out.

In the early Spring of 1879 we decided that I should go to town; we were to start directly after dinner and stay the night at Mrs. Horsley's, but the horses thought differently, for from early in the morning till nearly three o'clock in the afternoon they dodged about the so-called clearing, 190 acres without a fence, round one rough patch, then round another, galloping

past the house to the other end till they had had enough, when they stood. It was then late in the afternoon, towards the end of September, and nearly dark when we reached Mr. E. C. Holmes's clearing—not half way. Miss Kitty Holmes (afterwards Mrs. W. Salmon) kindly invited us to stay the night, and made us very welcome and comfortable. We started next morning, rode to Poowong, then coach to Drouin, then train from there to town, and finally reached mother's at 10.30 at night. We now make the journey to town in less than four hours.

I returned in November with a six weeks' old baby. Mr. Fuller met me at Poowong the morning after I arrived, with a quiet horse and side saddle, also a pack-horse. After adjusting his pack he put me up with the baby on my knee, and we started on the final five-mile stage of the journey, he leading the pack-horse, my horse following, as he was used to when they were packing. The greater part of the way was just through a narrow bridle track only wide enough for packing. If the horse did not keep in the middle of the track I should have been knocked off by the trees on one side or the other. All went well till we got to a steep hill in Mr. Hoskin's, where Mr. Fuller stopped to adjust his pack, which, amongst other things, was topped up with half-a-dozen milk dishes, which were inclined to slip off; and the horse he was using liked to take a bad piece of road at a run. He said to me "Go on," which I was glad to do; after reaching the bottom, I wanted to wait, but "Tom" was on the homeward track, and reckoned he was in charge, so we dodged on; there were no fences to stop at, so he kept going till he brought me to the back gate, where there were plenty of willing hands to help us off.

Mother was anxious to come up to see us all, for, as she said, "if she did not come up she would see nothing of us." It was arranged for her to come up in February, and it was an annual trip, even after the railway was through, as long as she was well enough to take the journey. Mr. Fuller met her at Poowong with the side-saddle and the pack-horse, which was much needed, for she always lamented that she "could bring the children so little." This was her first time on horseback; she was very tired and stiff when she arrived. As they came along she asked when they would reach a clearing. Mr. Fuller said, "We have passed through some." When they reached the next he told her; she only said, "Oh, is that a clearing?" She may have expected it to be like an English meadow, as we were sowing English grasses. Mother used to go for a ride occasionally, when we would show her the improvements made since her last visit, but she would only say, "You are spoiling all your pretty roads." I have always been sorry she was not well enough to come up when we were able to drive, for she always enjoyed going about. She used to stay a fortnight, and the first time she was up she asked me to send her some calico and she would make it up for the children during Winter, as she was obliged to stay in the house most of the Winter; and she made all the underclothing till they were able to do so themselves; this was a great boon to me, as only mothers of large families know, as that was not the time of "ready-mades."

After Mr. Fuller's sisters left I did feel the want of a woman's society so much; the men could get about better than the women—they had not the children to think of. While Mr. Fuller's sisters were with us they gave the eldest children a little schooling, for as they were growing up their education became a cause of anxiety. Their father used to set them copies and sums at night, ready for them to do next day, but it was trying for him after

working hard all day, not an eight hours' day either, often twelve or fourteen, or from daylight to dark; but we did our best. In the daytime it was difficult to keep the children at their lessons and attend to my other duties. I tried taking one of them to read when I was in the dairy skimming, but it was not a great success. The three elder ones went to town to attend school at different times, but they did not settle very well, leaving a large family and the freedom of the country. Then going to live with the old folks was too quiet—they were always looking forward to coming home.

When Mr. J. G. Wilson's eldest daughter returned from finishing her education she took her three sisters and our three eldest to teach. We had been agitating for a school for a long time. After Mr. Fuller had interviewed one and another, we were at last promised that if a site suitable for the different families was secured, one would be built. Mr. J. G. Wilson then gave an acre of land; the Jeetho school, No. 2690, was there erected and opened early in 1885, and originally intended to accommodate the families of Messrs. Canobio, J. G. Wilson, N. Bennett, E. J. Wilson and our family of eight, who for some time were attending the school together. Mr. E. J. Wilson was appointed teacher.

During the month of February we made up the order for the year's supply of all we expected to require, as the tracks were so bad for packing until after Christmas; all carting was done by bullock-teams as far as the road was open. It was difficult to decide what stores would be needed, as it partly depended on what labour we should employ in the coming year. Boots were no small consideration, as growing feet and chilblains had to be provided for; our usual yearly order was 23 pairs.

In early years Dr. Elmes visited Poowong to vaccinate the children, and as they increased southward, the day after vaccinating at Poowong he came to our home to do the children that were waiting there. It was easier for him to come than to take all the babies to Poowong. Although he said, "We ought to be much obliged to him for coming," we told him, "If the Government wanted the children vaccinated they could send someone to do it; Poowong was too far to take babies." As it was, one father rode from Leongatha carrying his baby in front of him, 13 miles; surely that was enough. There was quite a meeting of mothers and fathers on these occasions.

In 1891 the railway was opened. The pioneering to my thinking was then finished. During the time there had been plenty of hard work and great anxiety, but I have never regretted leaving the city.

# Recollections and Experiences.

MR. W. H. C. HOLMES.



After occupying the position of Town Clerk of Laurence, the scene of the once famous gold rush in the south of New Zealand, for some 13 years, my father, who had always been interested in farm life, decided to come to Victoria and try his fortune in the Gippsland bush, of which he had heard from his brother, Edward Carter Holmes, who had the previous year (1876) selected land near Poowong, and who spoke of the tremendous forest country and wonderfully rich soil that was available for selection. My father travelled to Victoria by the steamship "Arawata," after which his property and the district of Arawata were named, and landed in Melbourne on September 1st, 1877. He took coach at the Albion Hotel, Melbourne, on October 6th, at 8.15 a.m., for Tobin Yallock, reaching there late in the evening, the fare being 11/6. He stopped the night at Flintoff's Hotel, and walked the next day over the Cherrytree rise and the sand hummocks of Timpot Hill, and then crossed the

Bass River at Sunnyside, and stayed the night with Mr. A. R. Smith, one of the earliest pioneers of the Loch and Jeetho district. The next day he walked to his brother's place, about four miles or less, which took just four hours, and in his diary describes it as "a fearful journey." Four days later he was engaged, with his brother and nephew, in cutting a pack track over the same route by which he had come, by W. V. Hill's, T. Fordyce's, and Miss Leys' land to Mr. A. R. Smith's. On December 3rd he walked to Scott's Hotel and store on McDonald's Track for the mail, but had to go on to George Baker's, near Nyora, to get the letters, and on his way back walked round the block opposite Scott's Hotel, and affixed to the four corner pegs the following notice, as copied from his diary:—

"Notice.—I, the undersigned, hereby give notice that I am an applicant for this allotment, containing 160 acres or thereabouts, by virtue of the 19th section of the regulations under the Land Act 1869. Jeetho, December 3rd, 1877. Laurence C. Holmes. Witness, E. C. Holmes."

Having forwarded his application and survey fee, and relying on his priority of application to secure him the land, he began scrubcutting on the land near the Bass River. The land was surveyed by Mr. Burbank, and my father attended a Land Board in Melbourne, but the land was granted to Mr. Poole, of Tooradin, and thus the first attempt at land settlement was a disappointment.

By this time the family was on the way from New Zealand, and provision had to be made for some sort of a home, so my father applied for and got a garden license for five acres on the water reserve along the Bass, adjoining the land he had previously applied for, and cut about an acre of scrub,

and started to build a log hut, but had only got a start when our arrival in Melbourne stopped building operations, and means of transport for family and outfit became the pressing duty. So a horse was borrowed from Mr. Wallace Dunlop and a spring cart from Mr. R. G. Scott, and a journey made to the city, and on May 11th, 1878, the whole family—father, mother and six children—left Melbourne for the Gippsland bush. The Springvale Hotel was reached the first night, Tooradin the next, and then the Cherrytree rises. The sand hummocks at Tinpot Hill proved too much for the horse, and half the load had to be jettisoned, necessitating a return journey from the top of the hill. I was commissioned to go to Justin's selection, about a mile ahead, and try and borrow another horse. On the way I made my first acquaintance with a monkey bear. The animal had climbed up a small stunted gum, and, wishing to study it more closely, I prodded it with a stick, an experiment which I have never repeated, as the amalgamated aroma of eucalyptus and monkey bear that I carried about with me for days afterwards, quite cured my curiosity. We eventually arrived safely at Scott's late in the afternoon, and were entertained by Mrs. James Scott in her genial and hospitable manner. Our future home lay just a mile south of McDonald's Track, with a pack track as the only means of communication, so we had to unload the cart and carry the most necessary requirements for the first night's lodging. A temporary calico roof was rigged up, and we made a second trip to the depot on McDonald's Track. I can still remember how frightened the new arrivals were at the incessant thud and crashing through the undergrowth of the frightened wallabies, how strange the opossums, squirrels, screech-owls, tiger cats and other animal life seemed; our whole surroundings, in fact, were entirely strange to us, only about an acre of open ground, walled in by bush hundreds of feet high, and no sign of house or civilisation, but the very novelty was a charm, rough and uninviting as it was in other respects. And thus we started in the Gippsland forest with five acres of garden license, all bush except half an acre of burnt scrub, no stock, very little money, and no bush experience. A small plot of turnips about a chain square was our standby for the Winter: fortunately we had a few months' supply of provisions. Having neither grass nor cows, we were glad to get what milk our neighbours could spare, and by degrees a bush home was erected and a garden established.

As land was selected and the number of families resident in the district increased, a public meeting was held with a view to having a building erected for school and church purposes on the township reserve. Messrs. Mark Gardner, Caleb Burchett, Scott, Horsley, Cook and Holmes took an active part. After the usual application to the Education Department a site was obtained in the standing bush. This was cleared, and the contract for the building let to my father, who, though not a tradesman, had some experience in building. The timber for framework and the weatherboards were sawn by pitslayers out of a bluegum near at hand. The doors, windows, roofing iron, etc., were brought by steamer to Westernport, and by dray to Poowong. It was on this building, the first to be built with public money in this part of Gippsland, that I served my apprenticeship as a boy of 10 years to bush carpentry, and I still have a vivid recollection of the adverse criticism that followed my initial attempt at mortising and tenoning. That the committee had not had a wide experience in Australian hardwoods was proved within a few months of the completion of the contract by the gaps which showed between the weatherboards as they shrank, as a lap of only  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch had been specified. The building is still standing as part of the Methodist Church.

One trouble we experienced while building it was want of water to drink. McDonald's Track followed the ridge constituting the watershed of the Lang Lang, Bass and Tarwin rivers, and crossed no watercourses in a distance of 12 or 15 miles. Often we had to dip water out of ruts on the track, and the flavour of monkey bear and gum leaves in the billy tea still remains with me as one of the recollections associated with that pioneer building. It was opened for church services on November 3rd, 1878, by the Rev. Symonds (Wesleyan) and as a school on December 2nd, 1878, by Mr. Chas. Cook, who taught in it until the department built a new school.

The first cattle sale was held by the firm of Stratford Strettle at Mr. Wallace Dunlop's yards on October 9th, 1878, which I attended. Sales were afterwards held at Scott's yards until the municipal yards were established.

In the Winter of 1879 my father made a private contract with the settlers between McDonald's Track and Jumbunna to deliver mails along the South pack track, and the writer, then 11 years old, delivered them on foot. This mail-service, unofficial as it was, was the first exclusively within the district, and constitutes the writer's first claim as a pioneer. At the time there was only one mail weekly to Poowong. It came from Tobin Yallock, first by pack-horse, and later by vehicle. During the Summer months its arrival was fairly consistent, but during Winter and early Spring was most erratic, as breakdowns were of frequent occurrence. Mr. Horsley, a blacksmith by trade, had erected a small slab smithy, where, in his spare time, he worked at jobs for the settlers, and there the selectors would assemble on Saturday evenings and burn Mr. Horsley's charcoal, which fortunately was plentiful, while they killed time by singing, dancing and telling yarns until the arrival of the mailman. My business was to get the mail on Saturday night, take it home, three miles on foot after dark, then next day (Sunday) walk and carry letters and papers between eight and ten miles. The original settlers to whom I delivered mails were:—E. C. Holmes, W. V. Hill, J. Hosking, N. Bennett, J. G. Wilson, R. J. Fuller, R. Kewish, Pobjoy Bros., Chas. Blew, W. Blake, Yorath Bros., D. Selby, John Thomas, M. W. Elliott, Henry Hine, Wyndham Thomas, Chas. Muller, P. Neilsen, H. Kimberley, W. Kay, Henry Bristow, John Glew, John Patterson, W. T. Patterson, H. E. Leslie and Lardner's camp of surveyors. My destination was "Otterburn," immediately south of where Whitelaw is now, the most pretentious bush dwelling south of McDonald's Track, owned by Patterson Bros., originally warehousemen, who began operations in the bush on a scale that gave me the impression that the selection would develop into an extensive station, and the hospitality of the owners was quite in keeping with this idea. The first local brand of cattle that I remember was theirs—PB over O. This was the terminus of my private mail contract for some years, and there I spent every Sunday night during that time. They and a friend, Dan Selby, were batching for a time, and their cooking and breadmaking was the usual lottery, with the chances largely in favour of a blank failure, and occasionally a batch of bread would weigh and appear more like a grindstone than what it was intended for. On the occasion of one of these dismal failures two nephews were staying with them, and one of them, Charlie Potts, was commissioned to feed the failure to a Berkshire boar. "Dennis" grabbed the missile and held it firmly between his tusks, but could not pierce or break it, and in rushing round, dashing the loaf upon the ground, first on one side and then the other, in his frantic efforts to break the crust, he struck Charlie Potts on the leg, breaking it between the knee and ankle. He was carried on a stretcher along the pack track to Poowong, and then went by coach to Drouin, where the leg was set.



and then went on to his home in Melbourne. This was the first serious accident "Down South," and illustrates how simply serious consequences may follow initial experiences in batching.

As the main South pack track did not intersect some of the settlers' clearings, side tracks were made to connect; some followed survey lines, others were simply walking tracks with footholes cut in the sides of the larger logs, and often just a log to cross a creek or gully. These kept clean enough for foot traffic until the pack tracks became almost impassable, and then horsemen would fossick out any by-tracks, no matter how rough or narrow, and eventually there would be only two options—mud or bush. It usually took me from about 8 in the morning until dusk to do the trip, and the load carried was usually a leather bag containing letters slung across my shoulder and a sugar bag for papers and parcels carried knapsack fashion on my back. There were many divergent tracks at which letter boxes were placed, and there, settlers would await my arrival, and, provided with writing materials, write their replies to the incoming correspondence. As these were the days of the "Berry blight" and the "Kelly gang," one can understand the eagerness the settlers evinced for their budget of news, and the mailboy was expected to have the latest news ready to tell, as impatience could not wait for the opening and reading of the weekly papers. I can well remember the speculations of some of the settlers as to the possibility of the Kelly gang taking to the South Gippsland ranges to elude the police. As showing that some of the settlers kept up with the times and clung to at least some of their earlier habits, previous to an important race meeting in the city, the mailboy would be entrusted with numerous commissions to purchase money orders to be enclosed to "Miller's" or "Tattersall's," and naturally the all important enquiry after the event was the names of the placed horses. It is a somewhat significant fact that out of at least half a dozen successful investors in these sweeps, not one has reaped any reward for his labours as a pioneer, though some of them have worked hard enough to merit it.

On many occasions I had company on my trips, the settlers themselves, new land-seekers, and visitors, who might arrive by the mail coach on Saturday night, and would elect to walk out with me for company or as a guide, and many times my load has been lightened by their assistance. The first settler I escorted to "Otterburn" was Mr. M. W. Elliott, who was then, though a comparatively young man, afflicted with impaired eyesight. We were overtaken by night in the pack track between R. J. Fuller's and Pobjoy's, and although it was near full moon it gradually became pitch dark, and we afterwards discovered that we had been held up for about half-an-hour by a total eclipse of the moon. This, however, was but temporary, and we resumed our journey, but owing to his failing eyesight Mr. Elliott had a most distressing journey; but there was nothing for it but to plough through the continuous chain of mudholes, as he could not see to pick his way through the bush.

Mr. Dan Selby, one of the pioneers of the Stockyard Creek gold rush, was with us on this trip, and was the victim on June 11th, 1883, of the second serious accident in the district. He was holding a horse at Mr. Elliott's place, when it suddenly plunged and struck him on the right arm and broke it. He was carried on a stretcher by eight men to Poowong in the night time along the pack track. After staying overnight he went on by coach to Drouin the next day.

When Messrs. Elliott and Hine had established their bachelor home at "Ambleside" we were asked to extend the mail service there, and we did so,

which meant an addition of two or three miles to the journey. The settlers were increasing, and the mail became heavier, necessitating the use of a horse for the service. Among the new settlers were Messrs. Spring, Clancy, Miss Shepherd, and later Messrs. McLeod, Matheson, Williams, Rainbow, Parsons, Elms, Herring, and many others. On July 8th, 1883, my father obtained the Government contract to convey the mail by horse from Poowong to McLeod's, on the top of Mt. Misery, where the Jumbunna East Post Office was established, with Miss McLeod as postmistress. There was a hut in McLeod's clearing, where we used to camp for the night, with the horse in a small yard adjoining, his feed being brought down behind the saddle. The return journey began at daybreak the next morning to catch the 10.30 a.m. coach from Poowong to Drouin. At this time nearly the whole journey from Poowong to McLeod's was by pack track through the scrub, as very little of the country was cleared, and the contract price was £40 a year. My brothers, Edward and Robert, carried out this contract for some years, and it was afterwards carried by Horsley Bros. and Geo. Matheson, the latter being the first to carry the mails on this road by vehicle, using a spring cart with two horses driven tandem.

On August 15th, 1879, my father and I started the first clearing in the Poowong township, on a site for a store for Mr. J. Salmon. There was a store at Murdoch's, three miles east of Poowong, and another at Scott's, one mile to the west, but, as the main roads met at the township site, it was the most suitable position for a business. The timber cleared off the ground was stacked on either side of the allotment against the standing wall of scrub. We also erected the store, and 12 months after, my father purchased the business, and from this site my brothers and I packed and sledged goods to all the surrounding districts. One consignment which we carted from the Bluff at Westernport and then packed on two horses to Yorath Bros. comprised a large sack of loaf sugar which, in passing a jagged sprag of an uprooted tree, got ripped open. I afterwards learned that Mr. Yorath considered loaf sugar the most economical, and it was so in this case, as, though the track, where the accident happened, was very muddy, I was able to collect most of it with very little waste, and the bag reached its destination minus very little more than I had been able to eat during salvage operations.

While living at the store we had a thrilling experience with fire. My father was away, and Mr. Burchett had a considerable area of scrub ready to burn right opposite the store, which stood on a small cleared allotment in the green standing scrub, and with a cleared road in front. The wind seemed favourable, and it was thought quite safe to light. The school was situated close to one corner of the cut scrub, and the children were sent home before lighting. A number of them had to pass the store, and two of Mark Gardner's boys and some other children stayed at the store to watch the "burn." About half-an-hour after lighting the wind changed, and blew the fire across the road, lighting the timber piled on either side of the allotment, and before it was realised that there was a probability of being hemmed in, the whole of the bush was alight, and the heavy burn completely cut off any chance of escape by the road either east or west. Mr. D. Ferrier, who was taking some pack horses "down south," anticipating trouble, came to our assistance, and was hemmed in with us. The children were put under blankets and made to lie on the ground near an underground tank, and my mother sprinkled water over them from a watering can. The older ones climbed on the roof, and with buckets of water put out any lighted bark that was blown on it. It was impossible to look over the ridge owing to the fierce

heat driven from the roaring burn. There was some powder and other explosives in the store, which were removed and put in a safe place. The position we were in for several hours would be impossible to describe, and it has always been a marvel to me how the store escaped, as the piled logs and bush were only a few yards distant on the other side. In a couple of hours all the fences, yards, outhouses, as well as the heaps of wood, were gone, the scrub, which was very dense, had all been burned up underneath, and the road for a mile eastward had been swept clear of undergrowth on either side, and was littered with big trees and branches that had burned and fallen. All our fowls, two calves, a pig and a dog were burned within a few yards of the store. Our experiences in the bush fires of 1898 were severe, but, though they lasted longer, were not so acute as on this occasion. Had it not been for the strenuous efforts of D. Ferrier and C. Burchett, the store must have caught fire, and our only shelter would have proved a death-trap. My father had the business until 1882, when he sold it to Mr. Ben. Chaffey.

My youngest brother became ill with dropsy, and died on September 17th, 1879. The nearest cemetery was at Cranbourne, so my father made a coffin with what timber he could procure, and on Government land, in the dense bush just behind the Methodist Church, we dug a grave, and, with the assistance of Messrs. E. and W. Cook, E. C. Holmes and C. Burchett as coffin-bearers, we laid him to rest in the silent forest. Mr. Burchett read the service, and I believe this was the first death and burial in the Poowong settlement. On 17th November, 1883, another and younger brother was accidentally drowned at our home on the Bass River, and my father once again made a coffin for his youngest son, and the writer had the sorrowful task of re-opening the grave for the burial of another brother.

In December, 1879, my father obtained the contract for clearing a portion of McDonald's Track near Justin's, and from then on for over 30 years we had contracts in the Buln Buln, Narracan, Woorayl, and finally in the Poowong and Jeetho Shires. In 1893 we cleared and made the first formation from Radovick-street, Korumburra, to the South-road at Cornuck's. We also made some of the first side-cuttings on the Drouin to Poowong-road, between Pheasant Creek and Poowong.

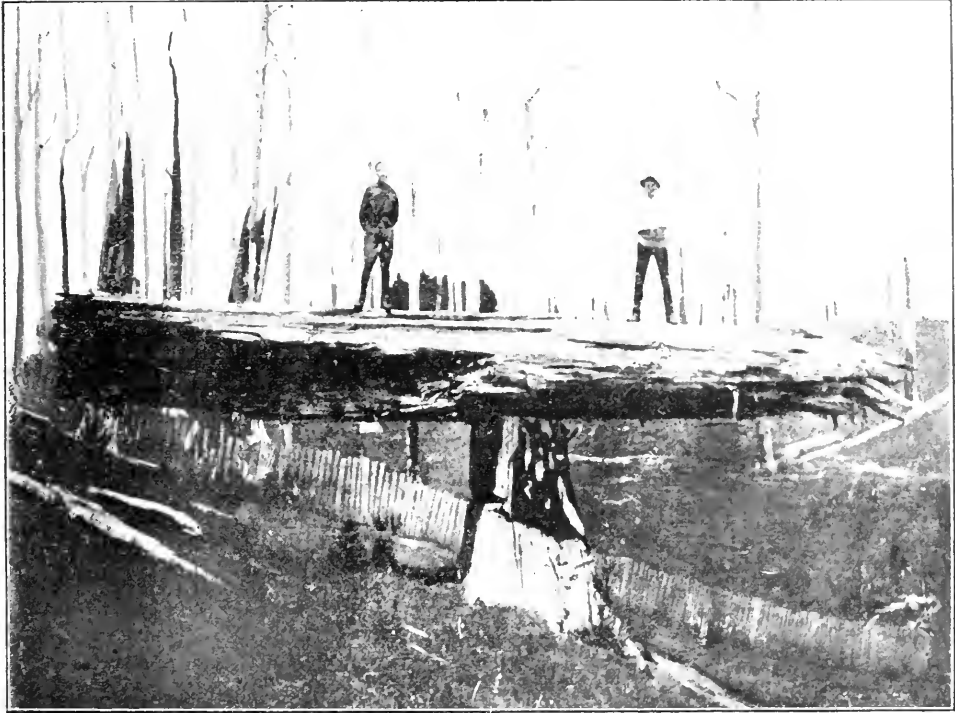
After applying for a number of blocks of land without success, my father was granted two 20-acre sections on the Bass River between the two bridges, and there we made our new home, and brought our goods and chattels on a bullock waggon owned by a well-known local carrier, Thomas Stafford. This was the first waggon to travel over the side cutting and bridge that had just been completed. The bridge was narrow, and the approach was steep, and unfortunately a bullock trod on Mr. Stafford's toe, and the whip handle retaliated. The leaders turned and got locked against the body bullocks, and the impetus of the waggon caused a deadlock. I happened to be standing on the bank behind the waggon holding one of the children in my arms, and, as there was no one else about to blame, Thomas picked on me, and in his most flowery language expressed his opinion about things in general, and after exhausting his vocabulary spent an hour or more in undoing what he had done. This speech declared the Bass bridge open for vehicular traffic.

One of the greatest problems during the first decade of settlement was obtaining suitable clothing and footwear for the abnormally wet climate and surroundings. Keeping boots watertight seemed almost an impossibility. For many years the only bootmaker nearer than Cranbourne or Drouin was a very hardworking, honest, local celebrity named Billy Baker, who owned

a few acres of land, and was the sole support of his mother, who lived with him. In a small two-roomed hut Billy toiled night and day to keep the settlers' feet dry, and the passer-by on a dark evening would be certain to see a dim light in the window of his cabin, and either hear the tap, tap of his hammer or the toot of his cornet, the latter his only source of recreation. He had original ideas on finance, and kept his well-earned savings on the premises in an old-fashioned stone pitter, and paid for all his requirements in cash. On one occasion Mr. Geo. Motton and Mr. F. E. Damon called for some repairs, and were sitting round the fire. Mr. Motton was paying his account, and Billy asked Mr. Damon to hand down a tin, in which small change was kept, from off the shelf, in order to balance the account. Mr. Damon was about to take hold of the tin, when he noticed a large snake lying full length along the shelf. Instinctively he jumped back, and, grabbing the nearest weapon, an old axehandle, was about to deal the death blow, when Billy clutched his arm and arrested the stroke, imploring him not to interfere with the snake, as it had been his pet for two years, that he was never troubled with mice owing to his snakeship, and he would not have him killed for anything. When Mrs. Baker died, Billy came to our place to arrange for the burial. My father was away from home, but generally kept material on hand, so, with the assistance of a man, George Avery, working for us, who had been a ship's carpenter, I carried out the duties of undertaker, gravedigger, sexton and chaplain with an assurance that now seems startling for a lad of 15 years.

On September 2nd, 1887, a heavy windstorm uprooted a number of big trees near Whitelaw, one of which fell across a tent occupied by four men engaged in clearing timber on the route of the railway. Two of the men were killed outright, a third had his arm broken, and the fourth was so dazed and affected by shock that he had to be taken to Melbourne for treatment. My father made the coffins at Poowong and took them part of the way by dray and then made a sledge on which he took them to the scene of the accident. He brought the bodies back by sledge to the dray track, where they were transferred to the dray. A heavy hailstorm had occurred the previous night, giving the country the appearance of being covered with snow. On the journey back darkness overtook them near Pobjoy's, and it was also raining heavily, so the gruesome cargo was left in the cart in the bush, my father and brother arriving home late at night and drenched. Next morning my brother and I set out with fresh horses, and brought the vehicle to Poowong.

A startling experience befel our whole family on September 3rd, 1883. We were living close to the bridge on the Bass River, and our water supply was a spring on the side of a small lagoon, and under the root of a large dry tree, about 190 feet high. We were all seated at breakfast, and my youngest brother, John, was sent for a bucket of water. When he returned he made some remark about the roots of this tree lifting up, but no attention was paid to the matter. A few minutes later there came a terrific crash as if a thunderbolt had dropped on the house, but the only evidence we had in the room was that one of the rafters had split from top to bottom and fallen on the floor, fortunately without hurting anyone. The three bedrooms lay between the dining room and the tree, and when the door was opened we found that my mother's bedroom had been completely wrecked, and the rest of the rooms had miraculously escaped, except that the roofing iron was battered. The tree was between three and four feet in thickness, and was mostly decomposed sodden wood. Had it been six feet longer the whole house and family would have been pulped. My mother's room was nothing but a wreck of smashed tree and building, and the four iron legs of the bedstead were



A BALANCING TRICK BY THE STORM KING.

In a gale, a big tree was blown down, and, falling across a stump, broke off at each end and left 30ft. of the centre balanced as shown.

driven through the sawn hardwood floor. It is a remarkable coincidence that it was not once in months that my mother sat at breakfast with the rest of the family, yet on this particular morning she had providentially left her room and joined the others at breakfast.

Another experience with a tree befel us at Arawata in September, 1888. We had erected a camp to cut scrub, and usually worked there during the week, and walked home to Poowong on Saturday night and back on Monday morning. One Saturday night we had gone to Poowong as usual, and on returning found that a green tree about two feet in diameter had fallen across the camp, demolishing everything.

Probably the heaviest wind-storm experienced in this district since its settlement occurred at 1 p.m. on October 11th, 1892. The gale was of cyclonic force, and though it only lasted about 20 minutes it wrecked many miles of forest country, travelling in gutters or strips. One strip of heavy bluegum timber on McDonald's Track past Adkins and Son's store was so completely devastated that it was months before the Woorayl Shire Council got the logs cleared and the road opened for traffic. The storm had made such havoc in the shire that all the available labour was employed, and the portion being one of the heaviest was left until the last. The track of the storm is still shown by the big bluegum uproots to be seen in patches in various parts of the district. In some cases whole acres of scrub were

levelled by the wind, and were burnt by the settlers, thus saving the labour of scrubcutting, and illustrating the old saying that "it is an ill wind that blows nobody good." The writer had cut an acre or two of a patch of 35 acres of scrub, when this storm occurred and battered most of the rest down. Many cattle were killed. In one case a settler lost eight cows killed by one tree, in another case three cattle were killed by a tree, and in an adjoining paddock, heavily timbered with dry trees, in which 30 or 40 head were grazing, not one was injured.

Although I know of dozens of trees being struck by lightning, I do not know of one fatal accident from this cause. Within a radius of 10 chains from where I write I know of eight tall bluegum trees that have been struck during the past 20 years, and each has had a small strip guttered out from top to bottom. I attribute the cause to an outcrop of ironstone on the east and a bluestone blow close by on the west. About 4 p.m. one muggy day, when the writer was digging in the garden, without the slightest warning of approaching storm, a sudden swish and hiss passed him, causing him to drop the spade as if he had been shot, then instantaneously a crashing explosion occurred, and nothing further happened. On looking round, no trace could be found of anything being hit, but subsequently it was found that on an adjoining property the larger of two trees growing together, one about three feet and the other four feet in diameter, and both solid as a rock, had been literally torn to pieces. The paddock for chains round looked like a timber yard, newly split wood lying everywhere, one piece about 20 feet long and the size of a fencing post being hurled six or eight chains down the hill and driven feet into the ground in the hard dry roadway. The other tree was still standing, but a great rent 30 or 40 feet long right through the solid dry tough bluegum told of the immense force of the explosion.

In the early 80's, in company with other lads of my own age, it was an annual custom to make a sporting excursion to Lang Lang or Tooradin. Hares and ducks were the chief game, and although we took this trip for many years in succession, we never saw or shot a rabbit east of Yallock Creek. Seeking a change of sporting ground, and hearing there was a pack track open to Anderson's Inlet, Sam Gardner and I left Poowong on April 7th, 1882, and started with blankets, food and ammunition to see what sport could be got. Our instructions were, after leaving the scrub and reaching the heath country, to go by compass due south until reaching the Buffalo track; after that certain plains and belts of timber were to be observed and followed. We got on all right to the Buffalo track, but darkness overtook us, and we lost our reckoning, and had to rely solely on the Southern Cross and the compass. We could hear the roar of the sea, and were tempted on this account to bear to the west, but decided to keep due south, and struck Screw-creek track, just at the shores of Anderson's Inlet. We rode round some distance, but could find no house, so returned to the track, where there was a small ti-tree mia-mia with a couple of bunks. We decided to stay there, but there was no fresh water. Then we heard dogs barking not far away, and rode towards the sound for about a quarter of a mile, when we found on a rise a nice little homestead occupied by Captain Beck. There we were offered hospitality and paddocking for our horses. We stayed there three days and saw a few ducks, but never got within shot of one. On the return journey we saw several kangaroos and two emus in the open country.

On September 7th, 1883, I was commissioned to serve a summons on a man at Black's Station, at the Tarwin. I rode via Whitelaw's track to Mr. Jacob Thomas's, near Leongatha, where I was further directed. On reaching

the Tarwin I could find no bridge, so decided to hobble my horse with the stirrup leather and swim across. Close to the bank was an old deserted hut, where cattle had been camping. I entered it and put my saddle down, when I noticed a continuous ticking, as of many watches. Every time I stirred I heard the same sound. Then I noticed that several large sheets of newspapers were lying on the dust floor, and that when I moved some hundreds of fleas hopped and when they alighted on the paper made the noise I heard. I beat a hasty retreat, and was glad that I wore leather leggings and white moleskins. Just as I was prepared to take a header to cross the river, two men came upstream in a boat and kindly offered to put me across. Then I had about three-quarters of a mile to walk to the homestead across the famous Tarwin meadows, which were then mostly swamps and thick clumps of ti-tree. I was somewhat alarmed by several mobs of fat cattle that came circling round me, but a few vigorous cracks of my stockwhip induced them to retire. I delivered my piece of blue paper and stayed the night in the men's hut. As I learned that it was considered very risky to go through the mobs of cattle I had seen the previous day, I returned by another and less exciting route.

In 1882 I was one of a party engaged in surveying the coal reserves near Coal Creek into coal leases, under Mr. Ayers, who was acting for Dr. L. L. Smith and Mr. S. Crawcour. We stayed at Mr. Shingler's, and the writer has a vivid recollection of the first night or two when he and some others slept on a kind of loft made for storing with a floor made of round hazel poles extending across the hut from the top of one wall to the other. The poles were of various sizes and shapes, and in their own silent way made night hideous. Mr. Ayers had some previous knowledge of the coal deposits of South Gippsland, having been with a surveyor named Harrison, who had surveyed this same country many years previously from the coast side. We came across survey lines, white painted, 4 x 4-inch pegs, that had rotted off and fallen down, and indications of a narrow waggon track that had been made into the hills. Logs that had been cut and rolled to one side were quite overgrown with moss, and only the cut logs and blazes remained to show that a road had once been made through the bush. We also found a small shaft in the gully at the rear of where the Korumburra State school now stands, which pierced a seam of coal four feet in thickness. These leases comprised two areas of 1250 acres each, and as all, with the exception of a very small corner of heathy plain, was dense forest, and Mr. Shingler's hut was well outside the boundaries, and there were no tracks of any kinds, the work of traversing these lines to and from our work meant a fair day's work without doing any survey or other work. On one of our return trips to camp we struck an old survey line which Mr. Ayers thought would bring us to camp, but after following the direction until dark we found we were bushed. We had with us a miner whose lungs had been affected by dynamite fumes, and he said he could go no further and would look for a hollow log to camp in. We persuaded him to keep going, and started coo-eeing in the hope that Mr. Shingler, who would be wondering what had become of us, would hear us. About half-past ten we heard a faint reply, and made our way back to camp, which we reached completely knocked up and starving, as we had nothing since early morning but a small lunch. This was the only occasion on which I have been lost in the bush in Gippsland, and I often think, when driving at night time in Korumburra under the glow of the electric light, of the different circumstances under which I crossed the same spot in 1882. Not long after this Mr. Mackey, who lived on his selection near Korumburra, got lost in the bush on his own land, and wandered about for nearly a week without any food except roots, eventually emerging on his own clearing more dead than alive. My brother

Robert, when with Mr. Field's survey camp, near Leongatha, was overtaken by darkness on the pack track near Fairbank in company with another member of the camp. They managed to get off the track, and had to spend the night sitting under a tree waiting for daylight to enable them to resume their journey.

After surveying the Strzelecki and Coal Creek leases, Mr. Ayers let a contract to the writer and two others to drive a tunnel. Camp outfit, tools and provisions were brought by pack horse to Shingler's, and then everything had to be carried on men's backs along survey lines to the camp. The writer's duties were cook, wheeler out, and preparing props and staves for timbering the drive. The cook's outfit consisted of a billy, a kerosene-tin bucket, and a camp oven lid, so there was not much variety in the cooking—damper or scones made on the camp-oven lid, and boiled beef—and a walk twice a week to Shingler's for provisions was part of the programme. While I was busy cooking damper, cutting and splitting props and wheeling mullock up a steep grade on a line of split slabs in a muddy wet gully, the Coal Creek Coal Mining Company and the Strzelecki Coal Mining Company were floated, and promoter's shares offered locally, and I well remember there was considerable competition for these by some of the selectors, and the results of my operations in the coal shafts and drives was invested in promoter's shares in the Coal Creek lease, but the investment was made in a mercenary spirit, and perhaps it was a just retribution that the result of those weeks of hard labour should have to be written off as a philanthropic contribution to the development of the mineral resources of South Gippsland. On September 22, 1882, two large blocks of coal were hewn from the tunnel at Silkstone and my father packed them out and forwarded them to Melbourne, where they were for some time on view at the White Hart hotel.

When the little settlement on McDonald's Track possessed a church, store and a public house, it became necessary that, as a township, it should have a name. South of McDonald's Track was the parish of Jeetho, and north was the parish of Poowong. So a public meeting was called to choose a name for the first township in the hills. There was no doubt that either Poowong or Jeetho would be selected, but feeling ran high as to the claims for preference. On the north, or Poowong, side was the public house; on the south or Jeetho side were the church and store, and the Jeethoites made the further claim that the Government township reserve was on their side of the track. But one old Scotch gentleman who lived miles away from the scene of debate remarked disdainfully, "Jeetho, indeed! A gospel shop, and a paltry, tin-pot store. I'll vote for Poowong." That settled the question. A vote was taken, and the little hamlet was named Poowong.

As settlement increased, the need of a more commodious public hall was felt at Poowong, as, up to this time, 1884, the old Wesleyan church had done duty as church, public hall, and school. After several public meetings had been held to discuss ways and means, tenders were called for an Athenaeum, 40 x 24 feet, nearly opposite the church, and my father obtained the contract. An old district identity, James Bishop, who had some experience at pitsawing, undertook, with the writer as assistant, to pitsaw all the hardwood necessary for the framework. The necessary pitsaws, files, dogs, lines, etc., were obtained, and a fine-looking tree about 4 feet in diameter in the bush on the township reserve was selected. While two men cut it down and into lengths, Bishop and I built up a log saw-bench and excavated a pit underneath, and when everything was in readiness, we rolled one log into position to start operations and discovered, to our dismay, that the timber was "dosey."



and absolutely useless. Another tree was selected and another pit built, 26 feet long, and the ground being level we had to excavate the pit to a depth of three feet, to avoid rolling the logs too high. August being a wet month, it was usual for the pit to fill up every night with the rain, and, as the writer had the inferior post of bottom sawyer, it was his duty to bale out the pit while the top-sawyer sharpened and set the saw. Then the day would be spent standing and walking in the muddy pit while making herculean efforts to keep a badly set saw on the line. However, after about two months' work, the necessary timber was ready, and the hall came into existence. It was destroyed by fire in 1898, and another and larger one was built in its place.

In September, 1886, my father, brothers and I erected the Poowong police station, the first lock-up in the hill country. The material had been cut out in Melbourne and only required putting together and bolting when it arrived. The same year we had several contracts for scrub cutting, and one for scrub cutting, picking-up, and burning off. The Summer was exceptionally wet, and we, as well as many others, were unable to get a burn until the following Summer. In the meantime, there had been a prolific growth of undergrowth, which had to be slashed over the whole area before a burn could be obtained. This involved additional work and expense, in addition to the loss of a year's grass.

Covering the flats and along the creeks and rivers were large quantities of silver wattle trees from a few inches to two feet in diameter. Several attempts were made to find a remunerative market for the bark, but none were successful. In 1878 my father interviewed several merchants in Melbourne, and found they were prepared to pay £5 a ton for silver wattle bark delivered in Melbourne. A Mr. Noble from Geelong was the first to test the market value of the bark. My brothers and I did some stripping on this occasion. The bark was cut into 3-foot lengths and tied in bundles, and left some time to dry before carting. Owing to difficulties of transport, very little was sent away. A few years later Messrs. Wallace-Dunlop, C. Cook and E. C. Holmes, jun., made several attempts to develop the industry by carting it to Dronin with horse teams as back loading, but not much came of the enterprise except experience. It was thought at one time that some of the forest timber, especially blackwood, would become of considerable commercial value. A large quantity of blackwood staves were split and sent to Melbourne from Ruby, and blackwood logs from Kardella. The latter place was the centre of a large belt of good bluegum timber, and when the railway was opened, sawmills were erected and a thriving business done in sawn hardwood, the price at the station being 6 - per hundred super. Treefern stems cut in lengths from four to six feet were also sent away in truckloads, for planting in tubs or gardens.

During the earlier years of settlement, ploughing was out of the question, owing to the innumerable stumps with which the ground was studded, so that all cultivation was done with either spade or hoe. If oats were to be sown, they were broad-casted on the newly-burned ground, which would then be hacked over with hoes to a depth of a few inches, and nothing further was done until harvest. Potatoes were planted along a line and the earth hoed over them. Some extraordinary yields were obtained by these primitive methods of cultivation. I have seen numbers of Early Vermont potatoes weighing from four to six pounds each. It is remarkable that neither vegetables nor fruit developed diseases or blight, the chief enemies being parrots, wallabies and caterpillars.

In many cases the settlers' homes were log huts with shingle or bark roof. A few may still be seen, the crevices stopped with the mud of 30 or 40 years ago, and while many of them were really snug and comfortable, yet to me they will always be associated with tarantulas and tiger snakes, and as they happen to be my pet aversions, the association robs the log hut of that poetry which past history might otherwise lend to it. The great difficulty in building a bush house was to make it snake proof: in fact, this was almost impossible, as these reptiles could crawl through such small openings, under the doors, through the openings in the floors, which were usually made of dressed blackwood or gum slabs, made of green timber, which would shrink a great deal during the first Summer, and leave ample room for snakes to enter. If their visits were restricted to the hours of daylight it would not have been so bad, but on hot nights they were liable to be in any part of the house at any hour of the night. Our next-door neighbour, a lady of rather nervous temperament, would not retire to rest on a warm night without first spreading newspapers all over the floor of the bedroom, so that if a snake got into the room, they could hear it. I have often sat alone in my sitting room reading or writing, and have heard or seen a picture on the wall move when everything else was still, and I do not know of anything more nerve-racking than trying to locate by sound the position of a snake inside the lining of the wall under such circumstances. I have in my possession a sea chest with a hole three inches in diameter that was blown out of it a quarter of a century ago in a snake adventure. My wife and I had retired to rest, when a peculiar, creepy sound in the partition wall arrested my attention. It was as if a hand were passed quietly along the sleeve of a coat. One might hear it for a few seconds, then it would cease for some time, perhaps several minutes, then it would start again. My wife objected to the company, and retired to the old homestead. With lamp in one hand, and a carving fork in the other, and straining every nerve, listening to locate the snake's whereabouts, I stabbed hessian and paper through and through, and thought I had secured him. Eventually I decided to go into the kitchen, some 30 feet distant and under the same roof, to get a gun which I always kept loaded in Summer-time. As I reached the gun down from the hooks on the wall, I noticed what appeared like a galvanised iron pipe about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter coiled around the ceiling wall-plate, which was exposed. To my surprise it moved, and then it dawned upon me that it was the underneath part of the snake. Placing the lamp on the table I fired and shot it in two. About two feet of the head end dropped and I fired another shot, finishing it off. On hearing the reports our people came to see the kill, and, on investigating, we found that I had just missed the piano in the next room, which I had forgotten in my excitement, and had fired into the sea chest which stood against it, and which contained fancy crockery, wedding presents and other household goods. Some of the crockery was smashed, but as the piano had escaped and the silent visitor been secured, we had a cup of coffee and no recriminations. On another occasion my wife and sister were alone in the house when one of them saw a snake at the front door. They got a gun, and by some accident it went off in the sitting-room, the shot passing through the roof and leaving a record of the incident that will last as long as the homestead. The snake disappeared under the house, but my wife's brother appeared on the scene, and by arranging two mirrors so as to reflect the rays of the sun under the house, discovered the snake coiled up about the middle of the building. Being a crack shot he killed the snake and we cut a flooring board and managed to remove it. One Summer afternoon my sister, on entering a bedroom, saw a snake coiled up on a dressing table in front of the window. As she came into the room the snake moved quietly out through

the open window, but not quickly enough, as my sister dropped the window, pinning it to the sill, where it was held till someone came and dispatched it. Many other incidents might be given of narrow escapes as well as more serious happenings, but enough has been said to convey some idea of the constant horror and dread that was experienced, especially by the women, during the hot nights of the Summer and Autumn months. Several doctors, notably Dr. Mackenzie, made exhaustive experiments with snake-bite cures, and many, including the writer, brought in snakes, dead and alive, with which the doctor would experiment upon domestic animals, sometimes using the live snake, and at others extracting the poison and injecting it. I remember taking a black snake six feet long, the longest snake I have ever seen in Gippsland, which was killed in Mr. Twyford's kitchen by a man throwing a brick at it.

Until the Drouin road was opened, the only doctor who visited Poowong was Dr. Thos. Elmes, of Berwick. On his first visit after the opening of the railway to Drouin, I was deputed to take a horse to Drouin for him, and as we only owned one horse, my return to Drouin was on foot, a journey not easily forgotten.

The first attempt to acclimatise fish in the local streams was on October 25, 1887, when I drove to Drouin and brought two large cans containing salmon trout from the Ballarat acclimatisation gardens. My instructions were to drive carefully and empty one can into the Bass and the other into the little Bass, south of Poowong township. I carried out my instructions, but I doubt if after so long a journey, miles of it over rough corduroy roads, any fish survived.

In the same year Mr. Lempriere, living near Bena, made the first attempt locally to make ensilage. He built a stack and invited the farmers to gather and see the result. Although there was a considerable amount of waste, the stack, when opened up, proved that it was possible to conserve the rich Spring and Summer growths of fodder profitably for Winter use, and that cattle would readily eat it, although in neither smell nor appearance did it seem agreeable. Mr. R. O. Timms of Poowong was the first to try it on a large scale. He built a large shed, grew a considerable area of maize, which he stacked green and pressed by means of wire strainers. On ensilage made by this method he milked over 100 cows, with good results.

Mr. Mark Gardner and his son Charles were the first to embark in the cheese-making industry. They built a small cheese factory, and carted the produce to Drouin as soon as the road was opened.

The Bank of Australasia at Drouin was the first to open business at Poowong, sending a man there once a week. In 1884 they leased a building from Mr. B. Chaffey, and on November 4th my father started putting in the counter and fittings for the new branch, of which Mr. Swyer was the first manager.

Prior to the erection of the Athenaeum, dances and parties were held in Mr. P. F. Murphy's capacious barn loft, which had a good hardwood floor. The Poowong Cricket Club and a minstrel troupe loomed up large in the social life of the settlement, and provided much entertainment, particularly for the younger people. The cricketer's ball was an annual event, and a bachelor's ball with a return dance was a regular institution. Another feature of the social life of those days were riding parties to gatherings and entertainments, particularly holiday time, church tea-meetings and concerts in outlying districts. Sometimes between 20 and 30 would make up a party to go to an entertainment and perhaps assist with the programme at a place

10 or 15 miles away. Local annual picnics were a distinct feature, and each locality had its annual day. I attended the first picnic "down south" on New Year's Day at R. J. Fuller's homestead, Framlingham Park. Later, an annual picnic was held at Jeetho at Messrs. Bennett and Hoskins', and, still later, one at Moyarra. On Boxing Day an annual picnic, which for some twenty years gathered visitors from far and near, was held at Mr. F. Kelly's farm at Strzelecki, and one peculiarity of it was that for many years in succession visitors were treated to a thunderstorm, until this began to be looked upon as part of the programme. Picnics were held regularly on Easter Monday at Brydon's, Kardella; and at Fairbank, and at Kardella on New Year's Day, the Sunday School picnic and distribution of prizes has been in existence for a quarter of a century.

Banquets were somewhat rare in the Poowong district, yet it so happened that two were tendered to local residents within a few weeks, one to Cr. Chas. Mair, J.P., on October 31, 1890, at which the guest was presented with a purse of sovereigns in recognition of the public services he had rendered to the district, and the other to Mr. James Scott, the oldest pioneer, on December 29 of the same year.

Sheep raising in the scrub country was for many years a most precarious business, owing to the wet conditions, which made foot-rot so prevalent, and to the ravages of the dingoes, but in spite of the drawbacks there were some who stuck to the business and eventually made it a success. On October 10, 1882, I packed out the first consignment of wool-packs to Mr. John Glew, who was the first to introduce sheep into the Jumbunna district, and the wool was later packed out in bales on horseback. I also assisted in building several sheep folds for settlers who were having losses by dingoes. Some tried tying bells on some of the sheep, but this only proved a temporary expedient, as the dingoes soon got used to the sound of the bells and took no notice of them. Baited gin-traps and poison were also tried, and, finally, sheepfolds made of stub fences five or six feet high were built, and the sheep folded every night.

In September, 1883, my father, brothers and I took a contract from Mr. T. Gannon to cut, burn, pick-up and ring 50 acres of scrub near Bena—scrub cutting, 15/6 per acre—picking-up, 12/6 per acre—and sap-ringing, 2/6 per acre. Ye Gods! think of such a contract to-day, when men earning 16/- a day will strike without a personal grievance. We wanted work, and we wanted money, and we got plenty of work and a harvest of experience, if we did not get much money; and I will say this of both labourer and contractor in Gippsland: it was a rare thing for a contract to be undertaken and not satisfactorily completed, whether it took eight or twelve hours daily to make a fair wage.

In 1883, Government surveyors were sent to the district to find a route for a railway from Dandenong to Port Albert. Great difficulty was experienced in crossing the watershed between the Bass and Tarwin rivers, and this delayed the construction of the line for several years. Local amateur efforts were made to discover a suitable route, and, when it became probable that a more southerly route would be selected, the Poowong residents became much keener in the search. On September 9, 1883, my father, Mr. Geo. Henry and Mr. Geo. McCord spent a day searching the bush through the properties of Thos. James, F. Cutts, W. Salmon and R. Kewish, but without success. On January 5, 1885, the writer, with Geo. Cook, G. Henry and Geo. McCord, spent two days traversing two different routes from Poowong to Mr. C. Blew's (Whitelaw) without finding a practicable route. When the Alsop route was adopted, meetings were held at Poowong to protest against the line

swinging off from Poowong, and a deputation, of which my father was a member, waited on the Minister of Railways on September 17, 1884, but without success, and another deputation, including Messrs. R. O. Timms, T. J. Coverdale and W. F. Salmon, interviewed the Minister on August 8, 1885, but they also failed to get the line diverted to Poowong. While obtaining signatures to a petition for a railway to the district, I called at a settler's home at dinner time and asked the settler, who was standing at the door, for his signature. He answered abruptly, "No, I won't sign anything. What's it about?" I explained the object, and he then invited me in to dinner. Afterwards I left with the signature, but the old gentleman justified the statement he had made, for he was unable to write.

My father had applied for many forfeited blocks of land, the only land available locally to 1884, but without success, although he attended Land Boards at Warragul and Melbourne. Eventually, however, he applied for land abandoned at Korumburra by Mr. Herbert Howard. It originally comprised 320 acres, but the Government reserved four sections of 20 acres each for village settlements. At the Land Board at Warragul my father was granted 130 acres. Having only 50 acres at Poowong, we decided to leave Poowong and settle at Korumburra. There was a dray track cleared along McDonald's Track and for a short distance along Whitelaw's Track, and from this the only means of transport was partly by sledge and then by pack track. Mr. Matt. Holland when clearing his property had brought in his belongings on a bullock dray, which was pulled up short at the end of the dray track in the middle of the bush, and remained there for years, one of the best known mile posts on Whitelaw's Track. On our first going out to cut scrub, two of us walked and led pack horses carrying food, bedding, tent, tools, etc., and a hired man, a young German named Adolph, walked, and, needless to say, it rained heavily. We were overtaken by darkness, and I won't easily forget that first night "on our selection," with a wet tent, wet blankets, in the wet bush, and the difficulty we had in finding enough dry wood in the dripping scrub to light a fire. But we were used to such experiences, so when daylight appeared we made our way to Mr. Nicholson's, got grazing for our horses, cleared a patch of scrub to make a decent camp, and soon got to work cutting scrub by day and making the acquaintance of our neighbours by night. We cut this scrub in October, 1886, and the diary of my father contains the following prospect and retrospect on the following New Year's Day: "During the past 12 months I have been granted 120 acres of land in Korumburra, 2 miles from the proposed terminus of the Great Southern line. We have cut 15 acres of scrub for a start, and if I can sell my present homestead, we shall leave Poowong this year, and go to Korumburra, where I presume my wanderings on this earth will see a termination." The sequel has proved this to be prophetic.

We arranged with a cousin, Harry Boulter, a bricklayer, who had also some knowledge of brickmaking, to burn a kiln of 20,000 bricks on the land, and build a house with them. We packed the material for a pugmill, barrows, covering for bricks, etc., from Poowong, and started moulding bricks the first week in March, 1887. The weather proved so wet that, at the end of the month, when we had 17,000 moulded, we decided not to make any more, as it was not likely we could get them dry enough to put in the kiln. On the last Saturday in March we had all the bricks stacked in the kiln with a plentiful supply of wood, and it was arranged that Boulter and my brother Ed. were to stay and take turn about night and day firing the kiln, while the rest of us returned to Poowong until the following Monday. The weather became worse,

heavy rain set in, and on Monday morning Boulter and Ed. arrived in Poowong with the doleful news that the kiln had collapsed, and that the bricks were boiled instead of baked; and thus our dream of a brick house ended in smoke and steam. Out of the wreck, however, we sorted enough bricks to build a brick kitchen, which is still a standing monument to a huge fiasco.

In 1887 I made application for several blocks of land around Poowong and Jumbunna, but as there were other applicants, and my youth told against me, I was not successful. Later, my brother Edward and I selected land in the Mirboo South district. My block consisted of 160 acres of heavily-timbered blackbutt country, part of which I cleared, but afterwards sold the lease of the land. My brother gave up his original selection and settled on a block on the Foster road, Mirboo South, which had been granted to my mother. Several of the family still live there, and, thus, our family interests for over thirty years have been divided between Mirboo and Arawata.

On March 22, 1888, a meeting was held at the Poowong monthly market with the object of forming a new shire. My father was appointed secretary, and drew up a petition with that object. This was the preliminary step in the formation of the Poowong and Jeetho shire, though the formation of a new shire was discussed as far back as 1878.

Messrs. James Scott and Sons, of The Priory Farm, Poowong, were the first to launch out into the dairying industry on an extensive scale, and the first to tackle the great problem that has always confronted the South Gippsland dairy farmer—that of providing a clean and lasting cowyard. As there was no stone near at hand, they carted stone from an outcrop on McDonald's Track near Cruikston, a distance of three or four miles along a very rough draytrack. Unfortunately, the stone was not very satisfactory, though a great improvement on the mud yard previously used.

Our family has been dairying continuously since 1884, when we started in a small way, making butter, salting and storing it in kegs for market. When we left Poowong we had 23 cows, and the first Winter, having only a few acres of grass, we rented from Mr. Matt. Holland a newly-sown burn on which all the big timber had been cut down to make the paddock safe for his pure-bred milking shorthorns. The feed was good, but we lost 17 head through getting fast among the logs, or stuck in crabholes in the gullies. My father purchased from Messrs. Bartram & Son the first vertical cream separator in our district, and acted for many years as their agent. The Fresh Food Co. arranged with us to cart cream along the one-chain and two-chain roads to Kardella station at 1/- per can, and this arrangement continued until the Korumburra Co-operative Butter Factory opened in August, 1900. Our last trip with the cream waggon was with four horses and one can of cream, which, with three others, was the first cream churned in the new factory. The last mile or so of the road to the station was almost all downhill, and was in Winter and Spring just a smooth-surfaced mud canal. The sledge would float on the surface, sending out waves of mud on each side as it progressed, and the mud oozed up between the planks of the decking. It was all plain sailing until the runner of the sledge struck an underground root or stump, when the driver stood a good chance of being precipitated head foremost into the liquid ooze.

Although the rainfall in this part of South Gippsland from 1877 to 1893 was much heavier than in later years, it is remarkable that there was, during that period, no fall of snow sufficiently heavy to whiten the ground: so the whole population was surprised on Monday, July 21, 1895, to find the whole face of the country covered with a mantle of white. The snow continued to fall until midday, and by that time the tops of the highest hills were covered to



"STUCK IN THE MUD."

a depth of two feet. Being midwinter, the snow did not thaw readily, and lay about with little change until the following Thursday, and in sheltered spots it lasted for ten days. It caused great devastation in the forest through the unusual weight of the snow upon the foliage tearing off large branches and even uprooting some of the scrub trees. Another heavy fall of snow occurred on August 20, 1905. There was over a foot on the higher points on this occasion, and eight weeks later, in October, there was another fall of several inches. There have been several small falls since, but only on the higher elevations.

While the bulk of the disabilities and hardships of the Gippsland pioneers has arisen from the rainfall and its effect upon the conditions under which they worked, yet there is no more thrilling page in the history of the settlement than that of the bush fires which occurred from December 24, 1897, to February 27, 1898.

Diary Notes.—"On the 31st December a fire started east of our place, caught a log fence on an adjoining property, and then caught a chock and log fence around a grass-seed paddock of ours, which it burned out. A slight thunderstorm during the night arrested the progress of the fire, but trees were blazing and falling all night long. Maize, oat and potato crops were failures, owing to the long spell of hot weather. Fruit trees failed from the same cause; grasshoppers and caterpillars devoured what little grass there was and destroyed the vegetable gardens. January 17.—"Still fearfully hot, and no sign of rain. Terrible fires at Neerim, Thorpdale, Traralgon. . . and general devastation in Gippsland, but so far we have escaped with the loss of some fencing and some grass hay." January 28.—"Water ran out at home-stead, and had to sink in paddock." February 1.—"This has been a fearful night and day, fires everywhere. Edward's wife has had a terrible experience, her first child was born this morning at 4.30, and all night the house was in

imminent danger of burning: trees alight, and showering sparks over the homestead and outbuildings. All day the fire raged north of us, but a strong east wind kept the full force away from us, but it swept through Messrs. Ritchie's property, burning grass, fences, and a large milking shed, though they managed to save the homestead. Mr. T. Rowe and Mr. Raines lost houses, sheds, machinery, vehicles, cows, pigs, sheep and fowls, and Mr. Raines' life was only saved by the efforts of his family. Mr. F. Kelly's herd of cows was caught in a death trap and burned to death. Mr. Geo. Rowe's hay-stack and sheds are gone, but the house is still standing. February 2.—All hands, including the girls, have been watching and beating out fires all night. A strong east wind has been blowing until daylight, and all over Kardella is ablaze. Yesterday's beating has checked the fire from Ritchie's side, but to-day it is making headway through Western's, so I am getting the separator unscrewed in case of emergency. 106 at noon: had to put cans of cream in water, unable to deliver at Kardella on account of fires. Wind dropped towards evening, and the fires in Western's and Twyford's, where the most danger was, steadied down, and all hands were able to get a good night's rest, which was much needed, as some were completely knocked-up with the heat and smoke, and night and day watching and beating out. February 3.—Wind calm, temperature more moderate, but dense smoke everywhere: boys cut down several large, dry trees that might catch fire near house and shed: watching and beating out fires in our paddocks. Still very anxious on account of fires. February 4.—Day commenced hot, with strong westerly wind. At 1 p.m. all Aeschlimann's was ablaze, and position now so serious that we sent Mabel on horseback to Korrumburra for assistance, but the fires were all over the district, and everyone who could had gone out. The excessive heat continued until 4 o'clock next morning. A belt of fire a mile wide raged within 40 chains of the house: there are small fires in our paddocks, but we have kept them in check. February 5.—Wind changed to the west, and the fire has got out of control in our 19-acre paddock, so we have had to abandon that side of the gully, and try to hold the fire from coming up the hill towards the house. Sunday, February 6.—Cool, and fires dying down: no watching. Monday, February 7.—Getting hot again, 98, and very close. Tuesday, February 8.—Very hot at 1 p.m. The fires got into our grass-seed paddock and burned all the seed and fences as well as pines and oaks, then, crossing the road, it swept up towards the house. Big trees caught alight, scattering showers of sparks across the house and orchard. The whole place is now in imminent danger, as it is impossible to work against the wind. We, and some neighbours, making 15 in all, beating continually. At 2 p.m. we removed all portable things of value from the house, and covered them in the garden with wet blankets, which we kept sprinkled with water by a watering can. An old log dairy caught fire dozens of times, but was saved by a spray pump and buckets of water. Once Fanny got inside the house, only just in time to pull down some burning curtains. At midnight the oat stubble north of the house caught alight from a tall, burning tree, and was completely swept, as well as the orchard, hay-stack and small plantation. There was not an inch that was free from showers of sparks driven by the wind from the blazing trees alight from root to topmost branch. Like last Tuesday, it was almost dark at 4 o'clock: through the black pall of smoke the fires appeared a livid blue, giving everything a weird and unearthly appearance: the sun looked like a big copper ball through a red-black smoke haze. All night 18 of us battled with the element, and most of the workers were at last unable to see: some were totally blind, but all were affected more or less, but fortunately the greatest danger was passed. The wind changed to the east with heavy



clouds and sprinkling rain. Saturday, February 12.—“Thank God! We have saved our horses and stock. Our cattle, horses, sheep and pigs are like other people’s, everywhere: no fences, crops all gone, no grass, and still no sign of the much-needed rain; we had a little maize, but as the fences got burned, the stock have cleaned it up; a hundred chains of fencing must be got up at once. The prospect for the Winter, particularly for stock, is worse than gloomy, but, thank goodness! the Government is offering to assist with fodder, wire, and grass seed”—and a last reference to the diary shows that from February 11th to the 20th was fairly cool, but again, on the 22nd, the temperature rose to 100 and over every day for a week, but, fortunately, the fires had burned themselves out, and South Gippsland for the most part was blank desolation, at any rate in appearance, and those who had regained their eyesight were busily engaged in fencing, and hunting up their stray stock, some of which were not recovered for months, and others never found.

During the construction of the railway line from Dandenong to Port Albert, a brisk trade was carried on by farmers living close to the line in butter, meat and vegetables, and prices showed a big margin of profit, compared with the wholesale prices previously obtained. Then, when the line was completed, the opening up of the coal mines created a good local demand for produce. The three main roads into Korumburra were Whitelaw’s track and the Jumbunna and Kardella roads, and it is hard to say which was the best or worst. The Kardella road followed the railway line for some distance, and in clearing the railway line the trees had been felled into the scrub, and the track was swampy, boggy and crabholey, and wound in and out and round stumps and logs. The traffic and loghauling of four sawmills working at Kardella made a bad track ten times worse, and in Winter it was absolutely impassable for vehicles. It was the custom for several years for Kardella residents during the Winter months to tie their horses up at the station and walk the three miles to Korumburra along the sleepers, carrying poultry, butter and other produce on their backs, rather than face the road. For many years five or six of my brothers and sisters, my wife and I, assisted as an amateur orchestra at entertainments in Korumburra and the surrounding districts, and often we have carried our instruments, including a big “bass,” from Kardella to Korumburra. On one occasion, when Kardella was populated by a number of sawmilling hands, we had tied up six horses at the station and walked to Korumburra. On our return we found that someone had mixed things up, saddles reversed and changed and stirrups removed, etc., and as it was pitch dark, and we had no matches, it took a long time to straighten things up. My brother could not find his leggings, which were strapped to his saddle, and finally went home without them. Next morning, when he went to catch his horse, he was much surprised to find the leggings had been securely buckled on its front legs.

A thing which astonished the settlers was extraordinary length of the worms found in the flat and swampy country. I have measured one of these “candle worms” which extended to a length of nine feet. Occasionally I have found their eggs—something like a chrysalis, amber coloured and transparent, from two to three inches in length, and sometimes containing an embryo worm several inches in length, in a quantity of fluid. I once found a laughing jackass which had died of strangulation while trying to swallow one of these worms. It had succeeded in swallowing part of the worm, and then, while endeavouring to break or shake off the balance, the worm got twisted round its neck, and eventually caused the bird’s death. On another occasion, I had unearthed a particularly large worm and cut it in two. I put the two halves

in a bucket, and not long afterwards a lively cackling arrested my attention. A jackass had taken possession of one half of the worm and swallowed part of it, and his mate had taken hold of the protruding portion, and both were engaged in a tug-of-war, tugging and screaming and flapping their wings. It was some time before the worm parted, and I don't know who laughed most, but I believe we beat the "jacks" at their own game.

In finishing this retrospect, covering just 40 years of Gippsland experiences, the writer may be pardoned for placing on record his firm belief that the province of South Gippsland, which has been added to the State of Victoria by the indomitable courage and endurance of the pioneers, will in the future play a still more important part in the history of the State. A New Zealander by birth, the writer has also had a glimpse of Tasmania, crossed South Australia twice, made four trips to Queensland, and travelled over much of the northern State with cattle, chiefly from Rockhampton out west, and through the famous Darling Downs, down through New South Wales; and has also made three trips to West Australia, as well as over most of Victoria; yet, with all South Gippsland's faults—rain, mud, and bad roads—I love her still. Yes! in preference to any and all other parts of Australia that I have seen. Early associations naturally cause strong attachments, but the quality of the soil, and strongest of all other considerations, the unfailing rainfall, has always, in my estimation, placed South Gippsland as pre-eminently one of the most reliable districts for agricultural and pastoral pursuits.

The quarter to half a century forming the transition stage from primeval forest to farm homesteads has in other lands, such as Canada, produced writers in prose and verse such as Will Carleton's farm ballads and Ralph Connor's splendid tales of the Canadian backwoodsmen; yet it is not for lack of either incident, pathos, tragedy or comedy that the pioneering of Gippsland has not found expression in literature. Many of the old Gippsland pioneers were the exact prototypes of the fine characters portrayed by Ralph Connor, and the great problems of the Gippsland bush, which were in many respects similar to those of Canada, except that the distance from civilisation was not so great, only served to develop the fine characteristics in these men who had come from the most highly civilised parts of the British Empire to the very farthest outpost and faced the almost insuperable difficulties of transforming, in a new country, "a howling wilderness" into a smiling cornfield—a transformation which, in Gippsland, has been literally accomplished.

# The Lyrebird in South Gippsland.

MR. L. C. COOK.



The Lyre Bird is so called because the male bird's tail feathers take the form of a lyre, an ancient musical instrument used by the Egyptians, Assyrians and others. This bird, in common with the Bird of Paradise and other gorgeously clad feathered beauties, is much sought for his beautiful feathers. The male bird only is of value in this respect, and nature has in consequence made him far more shy than his consorts (for he generally has several hens associated with him): indeed, a more difficult bird to see it would be hard to find. You hear him whistling away merrily, and can generally approach almost within sight of him: he continues whistling, and just as you think you cannot fail to see him this time there is silence and he is gone: and this is repeated till you cry enough and you return home wondering what he is like.

It seems incredible that such a large bird, hand-capped as he is with such a heavily feathered tail, can conceal himself so well and so quickly.

He is justly claimed to be the Champion Mocking Bird of the World, and he well sustains that claim, and as time goes on even adds to his reputation, if that is possible, for an ornithologist friend of mine recently claimed that the bird is reproducing the sound of the motor horn as well as the train whistle.

He is a past master in imitating the birds around him: the crack of the coachwhip bird, the melodious note of the male satin bower bird, the anvil ringing like note of the bell magpie (locally called jay or black magpie), and he can faithfully imitate the simultaneous whistling of a whole flock of parakeets.

The fact that this inimitable mimic still reproduces the notes of birds that have long since left his locality leads to the supposition that the young male imitates his parent's repertoire, which is natural and pleasant, and reminds us of the old days when we hear our beautiful mimic imitating calls that, excepting his reproduction, have not been heard anywhere near his vicinity for many years. It justifies us in seriously considering the possibility that the notes we call the lyre bird's own may, after all, not be his own, but instead be the notes of birds of an extinct species.

It would be difficult to imagine a more trying call to reproduce than that of the wattle bird, a harsher one than the grating sound (like a rusty hinge being turned) of the gang gang cockatoo, a sweeter than the trill of the harmonious thrush, or some of the white-backed magpies' notes, and many the smaller birds such as the sericornis and different wrens: yet the lyre bird



THE HEN LYREBIRD.—Why this Photo, is so Successful.

I had paid many visits this season to the nest of this Lyrebird in the company of different ornithologists from Melbourne with the camera, and the hen became quite used to our coming and used to follow us through the scrub, and I noticed that, if for one second she lost sight of us, she sprang up on to the nearest tree. It occurred to me that I could make good use of this habit, so when Mr. L. G. Chandler visited the scrub I showed him a leaning fern covered with mosses and lichens—a veritable bush pedestal, and asked him to focus his camera on the top of the pedestal at the very best distance to take a perfect photo of this bird as she was sitting on it, and, incidentally, remarked that when he had done so and concealed himself, I proposed to induce her to pose there for him to take her. He thought I was only joking, and I had some trouble to induce him to take me seriously. He got me to hold a match box just clear of the stump, and looking through the lens could decipher the print. He considered he had got as close as desirable to the stump, I proceeded to the nest, and looking through the screen, and when the old bird came up walked very slowly towards the camera, the bird following in my tracks. When she was just against the stump, I stopped. She did likewise, and began scratching about. Directly her eye was taken off me, I lay down, and a second later the hen, looking up and not seeing me, sprang on to the stump (that being nearest), and seeing me on the ground, sat and gazed, while the photographer, with a soft rubber bulb in his hand, took not a snap but an exposure.—J. Cook.

Photo of hen Lyrebird in scrub, taken by Corp. L. C. Chandler (considered the best ever taken in the bush).

apparently finds no difficulty with any notes, sweet, harsh, guttural, melodious as they may be: with wonderful power and exquisite taste in modulation he passes from one to the other with interludes of notes we call his own, and those who have been privileged to hear him at his best, as in June and July, agree that the lyre bird, as a mimic, and as a producer of a pure melody, is without a peer in any part of the world.

The hen bird can also imitate a little, especially the simple notes of the magpie and others of a similar class, but in a very subdued way, and can only be heard a few yards away, while the male bird's notes in suitable country can be heard a mile away.

The hen is comparatively tame, and only lays one egg, though occasionally two have been found in a nest (the second one most probably being laid by another hen), and the egg takes a long time to incubate. They do not vary greatly in colour. Mr. A. J. Campbell describes them: Colour varies from light to very dark purplish grey, largely blotched more or less, with dark brown or sepia and dull purplish slate.

The majority of nests are now found off the ground, a favourite site being the top of an old stump. The nests are very large, and built of sticks, and artfully concealed and lined inside and beautifully finished off with rootlets, especially those of tree ferns. In the old days most of the nests were built on the ground, but since the advent of the fox, by far the greater number choose a leaning tree, top of hollow stump, top of tree fern, uprooted trees, etc. The hen sits on its young for an incredibly long time after it is hatched, and when the latter does leave the nest it is nearly as big as its mother. They perch at night in the tops of the highest trees, and can, when they like, fly very much better than they are credited with being able to, but rarely fly when they can gain the same end by running or springing.

The male bird works up a dancing mound in the courting season, upon which he dances when going through his mocking to the apparent admiration of the hens. This mound resembles a miniature garden bed, nicely rounded upon top and an average size of an ordinary round table.

No Zoo in the world has been able to keep a lyre bird, and it is cruelty to try. I have had many requests for them, but always refuse, as they are birds of the bush, and we all think so much of them that the thought of their suffering in captivity is unendurable to us.

Not very far from my home is a little reserve of native scrub thoughtfully purchased and retained as a beauty spot by the late Mr. Geo. Stevenson, of Melbourne. It contains about five acres of virgin scrub, and as it is situated right in a basin with hills on every side, has escaped every bush fire. This reserve has for many years had my special attention in the way of protecting the birds, and it now contains 11 lyre birds and several satin bower birds, which every year build their bower or playground and also nest there, as does the gang gang cockatoo, a bird whose egg is practically unknown to science. The lyre birds in this scrub are easily studied, and many hundred visits have I paid to their haunts by day and by night, for their habits of roosting are very interesting and well worth watching. One hen bird last year let a lady friend stroke its head with my walking stick when we were near her nest, and another time followed us to the edge of the scrub, and on one occasion, while concealed watching for the satin bird to come and play on his bower, the young lyre bird just from the nest discovered me, and on calling in a

peculiar way brought her mother to her. As I kept quite still they watched me; then the mother bird emitted the same call, which was promptly answered, and within quarter of an hour eleven lyre birds were around me, none of them further away than 20 feet, and hissing at me till my head ached. I had some cast off feathers in my hat, and was reclining on the ground, and this may account for the peculiar way the birds acted.

As the lyre birds are becoming so very rare, and are so endeared to the hearts of Gippslanders, I would like to take this opportunity of entreating landholders to spare them a little shelter, for since the advent of the rabbit very little cover is being left for this most interesting and gifted bird.



MALE LYREBIRD ON DANCING MOUND.



LYREBIRD'S NEST.

# Surveying Recollections.

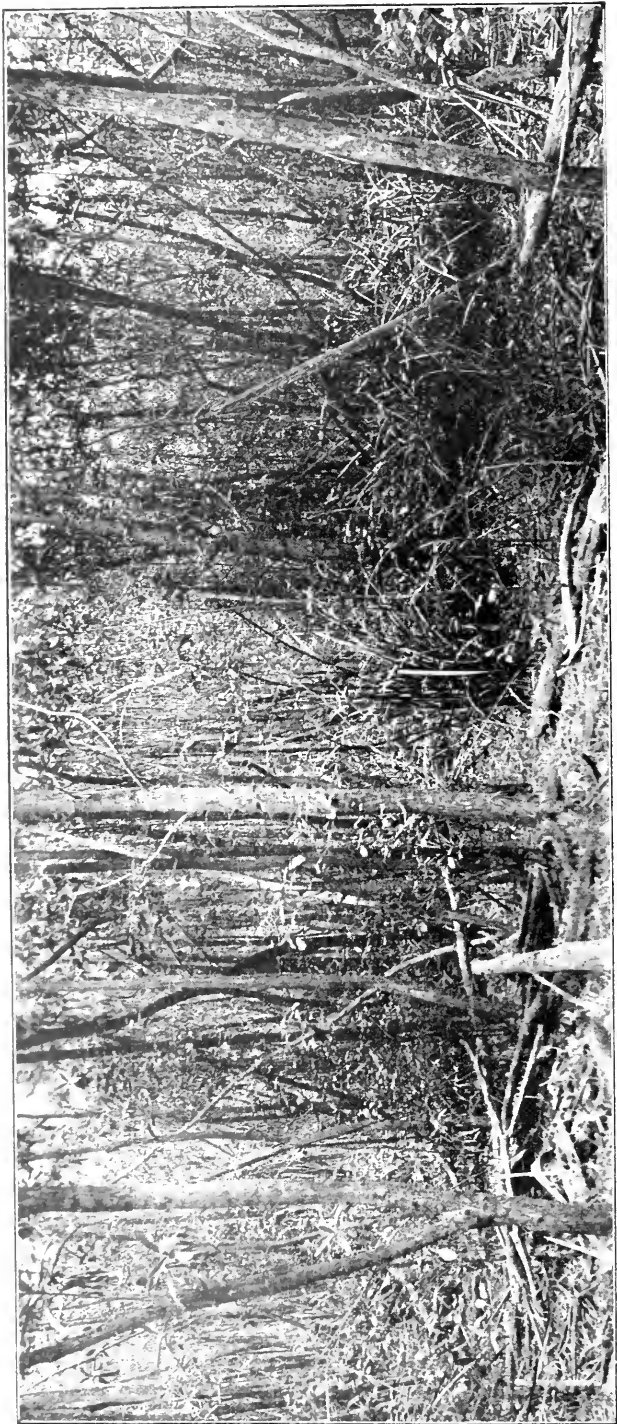
MR. J. LARDNER.



It will be remembered that settlement in that part of the country here referred to commenced after the passing of the "Land Act 1869," which provided for "free selection before survey," limiting the area to 320 acres. The first place that attracted notice was at Brandy Creek, on the main Gippsland road, 65 miles from Melbourne, and the first person to apply for a selection was the late Mr. John Rogers, in 1870, who went from Churchill Island, in Westernport.

I may mention here that an area of about 5000 acres was surveyed in suitable sized blocks by Mr. Callanan, late Surveyor-General, about the year 1865, around Brandy Creek, and Mr. Rogers was the first to select a block, as before stated, in 1870. Such was the density of the scrub and timber that the general opinion was that the land could never be cleared or made fit for settlement, but between 1870 and 1873 every block of the area surveyed was taken up and mostly occupied, and clearing carried on in the manner you are all familiar with, viz., scrubcutting, burning off and sowing down with grasses, etc., on the ashes after the burn. In the beginning of 1873 I went to Brandy Creek to survey several selections that were applied for in the unsurveyed country, and remained there until I had cut up about 10,000 acres during that year. Selectors were then coming to Brandy Creek from all parts of the colony, but such was the density of the forest and scrub, and no tracks of any kind away from the main road, that no one would venture into the forest without a guide, and as it was necessary under the regulations to personally peg out blocks, guides were employed to "show" blocks and peg them out, and bring the selectors back safe to the only little accommodation place at Brandy Creek, known as the "Bungalow in the Jungle," kept by Mr. Jimmy Hann. The guides charged from £10 to £15 for each block shown.

I have dealt at some length with this locality, but as it was the first place where the experiment was made in clearing dense scrub land and turning it to profitable account, I considered the matter of some importance. I will now say good-bye to Brandy Creek for about four years. During that time selection went on rapidly, the survey of the Main Gippsland Railway was completed, contracts were let and works were under construction. I returned to Gippsland in May, 1877, to survey the new townships along the line between Bunyip and Moe, and surveyed several roads leading to railway stations. In the beginning of 1880 I shifted part of my camp from Drouin to Poowong to survey roads required in the parishes of Jeetho, Jumbunna East, etc. I have pleasant and grateful remembrances of the kindness and assistance accorded to me by some of the early settlers there in placing pack-



BLANKET LEAF AND HAZEL SCRUB, WITH SWORD GRASS. BOTTOM



horses at my disposal for shifting camp, etc., free of charge. My first camp was pitched on Mr. E. C. Holmes' (or Miss Holmes') block, and we obtained our supplies from Scott's store, on McDonald's Track, Poowong. The first road which I surveyed started from McDonald's Track, at Poowong, and followed generally a pack track which had been cleared south and south-east after crossing the Bass River, through the selections of Messrs. Henry, McCord, Holmes, Ireland, Hosking, Fuller, Blew and Hewitt to the boundary of the parish. Some branch roads were afterwards surveyed along pack tracks leading to the several selections, and in some cases the locations of the roads were approximately fixed by biased lines selected and explored by those already on the land who had an opportunity of knowing the country.

The next most important road surveyed started from a point at Blew's (now Whitelaw station), passing through what are now the townships of Jumbunna and Outtrim, crossing the Powlett River, thence across the plains, to Anderson's Inlet (Inverloch). This road also followed a pack track approximately, and passed over the top of McLeod's Hill, but a few years later, when the country got cleared, I made an important deviation to the east of the hill, which reduced the grades, which were very steep in the first survey. Another road which I surveyed later started from a point between Jumbunna and Outtrim, passing through Moyarra and Kongwak, southerly, and crossing the Powlett River at Tulloch's, and thence south-easterly across the plains to Anderson's Inlet. I need hardly say that the object of these roads was to afford ingress and egress to those who had settled on the land, and great credit was due to those pioneers who went into this unknown forest country and had not only to carve out a spot for a first home, but had to explore and find the best means of getting to and from the land, clearing it of its dense crop of timber and scrub, and making it fit for settlement. The physical features of the country were generally broken and hilly, but not mountainous. I formed a very high opinion of the country, judging by the clearings made up to that time, but I never anticipated the magnificent development that took place during the fourteen years I was absent from the district, nor the further great improvements made since returning in 1904, and I certainly look upon the district now as second to none in the State.

I might conclude my remarks by a short description of the timber and scrub on the land as I saw it. The timber south of McDonald's Track consisted principally of "bluegum," with patches of blackwood in some places. The trees were of no great height compared with what we called the "tall trees of Victoria," but in some parts there was a dense growth of saplings and young trees, while all empty spaces were filled in with dense scrub, consisting of hazel, musk, dogwood, tree ferns, etc. The work of clearing such "sapling" country was necessarily slow and expensive. I might add here that since the country got cleared and the features of the country made visible, it has been found practicable to make important deviations in many of the roads, as first surveyed, when the difficulties of picking out the best roads were almost insuperable.

The following is taken from the "Gippsland Mercury," September, 1903, and will further explain Mr. Lardner's work in South Gippsland:—

"He joined the Survey Department on the 26th November, 1866, and worked in the field under Mr. J. Hardy, in the Melbourne district and Cape Otway Ranges up to the end of 1868, then joined Mr. Callanan's party (late Surveyor-General) in the Mornington Peninsula, and worked with him in

the Melbourne district until 1870, when he took charge of the party and succeeded Mr. Callanan in the field. Mr. Lardner was engaged chiefly in laying out streets and blocks in the suburbs of Melbourne, including Parkville, opposite the University, now thickly built on; also on the St. Kilda-road and Queen's-road, Albert Park, on which are built very fine mansions and residences. In February, 1873, he went to Brandy Creek, where a rush for "scrub land" had set in, and cut up about 10,000 acres of very rough country for selection during that year. In 1874 he surveyed 11,000 acres of the Kooweerup Swamp, north of the Westernport Inlets; worked in water sometimes above the knees, and had to cut through dense ti-tree scrub. This work was very trying owing to the wet and the scrub. He continued to work at various parts of the Melbourne district until he shifted to Gippsland again in 1877, to survey the new townships along the railway line, then in course of construction. He laid out all the townships between Morwell and Pakenham, including Warragul and Drouin; surveyed roads connecting the railway and the new settlements to the south, and through to the coast, the country then being nearly all dense scrub. He surveyed and levelled the Moe Swamp with a view to drainage. He surveyed and laid out all the new townships on the Great Southern railway line, including Korumburra and Leongatha, now important towns. Mr. Lardner continued working in South Gippsland, making surveys and laying out roads leading to townships, etc., until July, 1890, when he went to Bairnsdale to fill the position of Land Officer. In July, 1896, Mr. Bruce having retired from the service, Mr. Lardner took over the work of the Sale office, in addition to that of Bairnsdale, without any additional salary. In 1899 he was promoted to the position of District Surveyor for Gippsland district, which extends from the Morwell River on the west to Cape Howe on the east, and the New South Wales border on the north. He was Chairman of the Land Classification Board, Commissioner for taking affidavits, etc., Classifier under the Land Tax Act, and several other offices. Mr. Lardner is in good health, and, as a very excellent citizen, has helped forward many a movement, and we hope he will continue to do so. Of such stuff were the pioneers made, and it is with the utmost disgust that we hear some of the present generation hooting at men who are retired on an allowance, sometimes beggarly in its nature, when we have it in mind that these men have encountered and conquered difficulties which young men who consider themselves something in these days would not dare to face."

# Early Coal Exploration in Gippsland.

MR. REGINALD A. F. MURRAY, F.G.S.

The following reminiscences in connection with the above subject are mainly of a personal character or within my actual knowledge; but as my association with coal exploration only commenced early in 1873 a few outlines of what had been done previously may serve as a useful introduction:—



Early history of Victorian Exploration has it that Hume and Hovell, the first pioneers to cross the Murray, made their way down to the coast in the neighbourhood of Cape Patterson, some 16 miles eastward of Westernport, and there saw the outcropping coal seams exposed in natural section between their containing rock-layers on the sea margin. Be this as it may, anyone who travelled along the shore in that locality could not fail to notice the seams, though of late years they have become less distinguishable owing to excavation and concealment by overlying rubble through sea action.

As far back as the early fifties a sturdy old English (or Welsh) coal miner named George Davis is reported to have carried a small bag of coal on his back from Cape Patterson up to Melbourne to show to the Governor (Mr. Latrobe). When Mr. Alfred R. C. Selwyn came out as Government Geologist he devoted much attention to the geology of the Cape Patterson coal deposits and their containing rocks as far as natural exposures enabled him, and about 1860 to 1863 some work was done to exploit the seams exposed on the coast (then known as the "Rock" and "Queen" veins) with a view to tracing their inland continuations. Some hand-boring was also done by a Mr. Seddor, but the work generally was of a desultory character, and a good deal retarded by the faulty nature of the rocks and the occurrence of volcanic dykes, some of large size, found to traverse them.

About this time, too, Mr. Richard Daintree, field geologist, under Mr. Selwyn, investigated some of the country along the Bass River, and found some small coal seams. Subsequently a company was formed to work the Cape Patterson seams, and a mine opened up a little way inland from the coast. Some 1800 tons of coal are reported to have been raised and shipped to Melbourne. The shipping place was a deep gut in the rocks where, under specially favourable weather conditions, a boat could be loaded and take the coal to a vessel standing outside; but it is a frightfully dangerous place and quite impracticable as a regular shipping place. Some of the old mooring rings were to be seen when I last passed the place some 35 years ago. From data at that time available Selwyn was unable to report hopefully on the field, though the quality of the coal was good, if inferior to that of New South Wales as a gas producer; nevertheless, he indicated the advisability of extended search inland towards the Strzelecki Ranges.

Of developments from 1862 to 1873 I have no personal knowledge beyond the facts that the Kilemda seam was found and also the Sandy Waterholes seams between Kilemda and Westernport, but towards 1873 one of the many spasmodic movements in Victorian coal development took place, and Mr. McKenzie, chief coal viewer for New South Wales, was engaged to report on the prospects. The Geological Survey Department, under Mr. Selwyn, had been abolished in 1868, and he and his staff of assistants, including myself, dispensed with, but subsequently, under Mr. Brough Smyth, Secretary for Mines, and Mr. Couchman, Chief Mining Surveyor, I had been re-engaged as a geological surveyor, and it fell to me to take charge of a party of men to open up the exposed coal seams at Cape Patterson for Mr. McKenzie's inspection. At this time, too, the Kilemda mine had been opened, a company having been formed to work it. Messrs. Latham and Watson, Bendigo mine owners, seem to have been the principals, and a Mr. Thomas was mine manager. A shaft had been sunk to cut the coal seam on its dip inland from its exposure along the cliffs, and a heading driven along the coal for some distance, the thickness being 20 inches to 2 feet, and the quality excellent. A tramway was also laid to the jetty on the eastern passage of Westernport, near Griffith's Point, now known as San Remo.

My party was composed of Cornish miners engaged from Clunes, splendid lode miners, though not experienced in coal: however, that did not matter, as they had only to sink and costean where I told them. We tackled the "Rock" and "Queen" veins at their outcrops, sinking various holes and cuts through them so as to get sections of the seams. In some places work could only be done at low tides, the holes having to be baled out at the next ebb, and so on. While camped in this locality in a ti-tree shaded hollow behind the sand hummocks, two little incidents occurred of a somewhat amusing character. The party, as before said, consisted of Cornish miners who had, it appears, come direct from the old country to Clunes and had no experience of bush life. On my return one evening I found them just back from work much excited about a monkey bear which they had found wandering on the seashore in the morning. They had kept him surrounded at a safe distance till one of them went back to camp for a gun and shot the poor brute, taking his skin as a trophy. On my laughing at them and assuring them of the animal's harmlessness, one said: "When we seed un first we thowt un was a say beer (sea bear). Another remarked, "We thowt un was a brave beast."

The storekeeper at San Remo used to send down fortnightly with our food supplies, but one Saturday he sent everything except the meat, and great was the tribulation of those sturdy miners, who assured me they could not work properly without meat. I chaffed them and told them that in their own country they only saw meat once a year, but that I would get them some, so, going out by early dawn with my rifle, I soon got a big kangaroo and brought back its hind quarters and tail, which were cut up and made into a steamer or sort of big Irish stew with potatoes and onions, for the Sunday's dinner. The majority of the party relished this all right, but two or three "passed" the kangaroo, which they considered to be among the animals forbidden in the Bible to be eaten. In vain was it pointed out that the kangaroo was not mentioned at all in the Bible, that it chewed the cud, and that as regards the cloven foot, it went one better than the sheep or bullock, having three toes instead of two. No use! Prejudice was too strong. Happily the arrival of the meat next day ended the difficulty.

While the men were carrying on the work of making excavations on the exposed coal seams and on sinking a shaft inland (where the continuation of one of them was cut), I was engaged in examining the features of the rocks generally along the coast towards Anderson's Inlet, and also went to see the Strzelecki or Coal Creek seam, which had not long previously been discovered, and at which Mr. Seddon (already mentioned herein) was engaged with a party boring. This seam had been found by a prospector named James Brown, who made his way from Stockyard Creek, past Anderson's Inlet, and thence northward into the Strzelecki ranges. He found the coal exposure in Coal Creek, and after a week's travel without food emerged from the forest at Bunyip. He was evidently a good bushman, being able again to locate his discovery. A group of lease blocks were taken up (by whom I do not know), and a connecting traverse to them from Anderson's Inlet surveyed by Mr. Turner, mining surveyor at Stockyard Creek (Foster).

In due course Mr. McKenzie arrived and inspected the coal seams at the various points where my party had opened them up; he also went up to see the Coal Creek seam, and went through the Kileunda mine. His report to the Government was by no means encouraging; he evidently simply pronounced on the evidence brought before him, which certainly was at the time rather meagre. "Coal existent certainly and of good quality, but not in commercially workable thickness," may be given as an epitome of his expressed opinion. He made no suggestion as to larger possibilities or the directions in which to look for them; he spoke simply as a coal viewer, not as a geologist. Now I had not forgotten the views of my old chief (Mr. Selwyn) as to the possibilities of coal further inland from the coast; the Coal Creek discovery tended to strengthen those views, and being fond of exploration generally I asked Mr. Brough Smyth to let me make further geological examinations, which he did, giving me a free hand as to methods.

Coming down to Gippsland about the middle of 1873, I began with a preliminary tour of the country, and then settled down to the area occupied by the coal bearing (or possible coal bearing) rocks, commencing with short incursions into the foot hills of the ranges from points in the settled country from Sale to Port Albert, Foster and Anderson's Inlet on the southern or coastal margin, and along the Latrobe valley to Moe, and thence along the Moe valley to the Kooweerup on the northern flanks. These lines represent roughly the boundaries of the carbonaceous area (except an occurrence on the north of the Latrobe valley at the Tyers). Geologically the granites and silurian rocks of Cape Woolamai and the Mornington Peninsula and those extending along the north of the Kooweerup, Moe and Latrobe valleys constitute the western and northern boundaries, while on the south we have the silurian and granite of Cape Liptrap, Wilson's Promontory, the Hoddle Range, and Foster; how far the carbonaceous rocks extend under the sea between Capes Woolamai and Liptrap or eastward of Corner Inlet is unknown, but the boundary must be under Bass Strait between the mainland and Tasmania.

Mr. O. P. Whitelaw was then engaged cutting tracks in the South Gippsland ranges, and where convenient I used his camps as starting points whence to make investigations in the creek and gully beds on either side of the main range rising from near Rosedale and forming the watershed between the Latrobe drainage area and the streams running direct to the south coast. In order, however, to explore the Tarwin area, I adopted the only way then available, which was to go on foot. The funds at the disposal of the

Geological Survey branch did not admit of my having a properly equipped party: one could not take a packhorse without cutting a track for him, and there was no feed for him, and instead of being of use he would be a worry; besides a man on foot could go where no horse could. My brother-in-law, Mr. Henry W. Ford, was my companion assistant, and as we both had previous experience in exploring precisely similar country in the Otway ranges we understood well how to equip ourselves for the forest journeys and for periods of absence up to ten days or even more from inhabited localities. Our swags comprised necessaries and no more, in as light and compact a form as possible. Each had his blanket and a light change of clothes, with a sheet of waterproof American cloth or oilcloth. The provisions were as follow:— Small round cakes of the whole wheat flour containing all the strength-giving constituents of the wheat, not deprived of them as is the case with the white flour generally used for bread in deference to the popular prejudice for colour. One of these cakes for each meal was the allowance, so for a proposed ten days' journey each of us had thirty packed in a long round bag which fitted in the swag without making it too bulky. For meat each had a large piece of cooked corned beef, also of a shape convenient for compact packing. Some onions, tea, coffee, sugar and salt in quantity sufficient for estimated time of absence completed the commissariat supply. All was packed, with the blankets, etc., in neat long round swags with the oilcloth outside, so that everything was kept dry, and carried on our backs by means of broad shoulder straps, leaving our arms free. The billy hung on the end of one swag and the tomahawk strapped outside the other ready for use when wanted. I also carried, slung in front, a leather bag containing compass, aneroid, notebook, fishing tackle and other small requisites, with the midday rations, so as to avoid opening the swag. Altogether our loads at starting would be about 60 lb. each. We took no gun, there being little use for it, and besides it would be an encumbrance. We would get our swags carried by vehicle or packhorse as far as practicable into the margin of the forest and then plunge in. In camping at evening we would make a mia-mia in a few minutes with a couple of forked saplings about 5 feet high and a ridge-pole six or seven feet long, with sticks leaning against it and fern-tree fronds as a thatch and backing. Fern fronds, bracken and other suitable stuff were used to cover the ground inside, and on these we laid our oilskin swag-wrappers to keep out damp, and spread our blankets on top. A big fire was made in front of the mia-mia, so that no matter how wet we may have got during the day we could unpack our swags in shelter and warmth, put on dry things, sleep dry, and dry our clothes for next day. The fern fronds thatch kept off rain very well, though later we added to our stock a small light calico fly about 3 or 4 lb. in weight, which, spread over the mia-mia, made an effective shelter or could be used alone in dry weather. In some of the creeks and rivers, especially the Tarwin, we caught mighty blackfish up to 5 or 6 lb. weight, which, wrapped in bark and leaves and cooked in hot ashes, made a welcome addition to our food supply. During all our travels we never suffered from so much as a sore throat, but kept in excellent health and vigour.

Before entering on any details as to our explorations, a sketch of the then conditions as to tracks, settlement, etc., may be advisable.

McDonald's Track, starting from between Moe and Morwell up to the main watershed of the South Gippsland ranges, and following the same to Westernport, had been cut a few years previously, and was little, if at all, used, being so overgrown and blocked with fallen timber as to be difficult

to find in some places, though in others as open as when first cut. My explorations along this extended as far as where Poowong now stands. Dodd's track to Stockyard Creek started from Morwell, taking a spur up to the main watershed, following that to about Mirboo between the western heads of the Morwell and the eastern heads of the northern Tarwin, then descending to and crossing the southern Tarwin and rising to the range between that river and the heads of Fish Creek, thence by a spur between the Bennison and Stockyard Creeks down to Foster.

Lyddiard's track started from a point on McDonald's Track on the main watershed, followed that down to Dodd's track, crossing and diverging from the latter, and took another spur down to the southern Tarwin, crossed it, and rose to meet Dodd's track again on the range between the southern Tarwin and Fish Creek. These tracks were then mere bridle tracks, much obstructed, and little used, as the flush times of Stockyard Creek and Turton's Creek diggings were on the wane.

On the coast side were the tracks from Alberton to Welshpool and Foster, and thence to the Tarwin, near the head of Anderson's Inlet, where Jack Weydell had an accommodation hut and a ferry, whence the track followed the open country bordering the coast round the inlet and on to Cape Patterson, Kileunda and Westerport. All the country bounded by these tracks was uninhabited and clothed with a heavy forest of large timber and a dense scrub of various kinds, principally hazel, blanket-leaf, musk, dogwood, etc., and fern trees, besides much smaller vegetation.

On the northern side the trial survey line of the Gippsland railway had been cleared along the Moe valley, but the towns that now stand along that line were not. Selection was starting about Brandy Creek (now Buln Buln) and extending southward around where Warragul now flourishes; but very soon (about the end of 1874 and afterwards) it spread into all the South Gippsland forest country.

To return to my own explorations, which commenced early in 1871, my object was to search for exposures of coal and to obtain all available data as to the character of the rocks, the dips and strikes of their layers and any evidence that might be obtainable as to possible extension of known coal seams. I did not lose sight of the possibility of coming across another exposure of the underlying silurian rocks like the isolated auriferous outcrop at Turton's Creek, but was disappointed in this hope.

After various minor explorations in the eastern portion of the ranges, Ford and I undertook the traverse of the southern Tarwin, starting from Turton's Creek, its head. We simply took the best travelling we could find nearest to the bed of the stream, as only there could exposures of rock be seen, the hillsides being obscured by heavy soil. I kept a sort of rough survey by means of compass bearings and the time taken in travelling from point to point. After passing the crossings of Lyddiard's and Dodd's tracks we saw no signs of any previous explorers along the river till near the Inlet; though numerous exposures of the carbonaceous rocks were seen and observations taken of the dip and strike, no actual coal was met with. As we descended, the flats and reed beds along the river became more numerous and wider, and after being out about a week we found the junction of the main northern branch of the river, beyond which the more open heathy and bayonet-grass country enabled us to make an easy journey down to Weydell's hut. On another occasion, desiring to explore the Northern Tarwin, we started from

Moe and went up McDonald's Track as far as about the head of the Narracan, and were accompanied by a prospector named David Ryan, who showed where he had obtained prospects of very fine gold in a quartz gravel which occurs there. Ryan had previously discovered the great bed of lignite or brown coal on the banks of the Latrobe at Haunted Hill, and had sent me a sample which caused me to go and inspect it; its continuation was afterwards traced to the Morwell River, where efforts at development were made by the Morwell Brown Coal Co. Bidding farewell to Ryan, we turned southward from McDonald's Track and dropped into a creek, since named Elizabeth Creek, a branch of the Northern Tarwin; here we found coal of good quality in the creek bed, but the seam was only about 18 inches thick where visible. Lower down near the junction with the river we now saw ahead, looking like a low black cliff, what at first we took to be a great coal seam, but on reaching it found it was a lignite bed about 6 feet thick. Following down the river and making a rough survey as in the case of the southern branch, we noted the basaltic area that occurs about Leongatha, and also came upon traces of someone before us, in the shape of an old prospecting camp, where some gravel occurs on the left bank of the river. Finally, we emerged on the open country near the junction of the two streams, our last two or three days' sustenance being confined to blackfish and eels, and made our way down again to Weydell's hut. On another trip we travelled along the coast from Anderson's Inlet round Cape Liptrap, examining the silurian docks exposed there, and discovering the great limestone bed at Waratah Bay, and thence examining the west coast of Wilson's Promontory down to the lighthouse. We tried to return along the east side, but found it too rough, so returned by the west side.

From Mr. Laycock's selection near Screw Creek (Inverloch) we made another visit to Strzelecki coal seam on Coal Creek, and found Seddon's old boring camp deserted, boring tools and other things left and provisions gone to decay, except some tins of preserved milk, which we annexed and found satisfactory. From this camp we found a very faintly marked track going northward that had probably been made by Turner, the surveyor, and had apparently been only used once, by a party that had a horse or horses with them and just cut enough to afford passage through the scrub; one horse had succumbed, as we saw the skeleton. This track kept the spur between the northern Tarwin waters on the east and those of the Powlett and Bass rivers on the west, and came out on McDonald's Track upon the main range. Korunilurra is on this track, which was subsequently followed and opened up by O. P. Whitelaw. On my last swag-carrying expedition through the ranges Ford was not with me, but I took in his stead Christopher Lawlor, for many years since an inspector of stock. Equipped and provisioned as previously described, we started from the old coach road at Brandy Creek (Bulu Bulu), and passing where Warragul now stands, went up the Bear creek, a head branch of the Moe. Camping one night at O'Mahony's coal seam which Jack Gallagher and another man were opening up, we found they had run out of tucker, so, on leaving in the morning, we gave them a little of our store, thinking we would still have enough to carry us through. We made our way through the scrub up to McDonald's Track, crossed it, and went down into the northern Tarwin further westward than on my previous journey. My object was to examine any visible rock exposures in the head branches of the river, and then make up to the track that I knew Whitelaw was then cutting from Foster, and which had reached Coal Creek and was being extended along the



course of the faint bridle track previously referred to as following the spur between the Tarwin waters and those of the Powlett. While in the Tarwin valley, however, we were weather-bound for some days by incessant rains, could do nothing but stop in our *mia-mia*, keep a fire going, and eat our provisions, which were about exhausted when we were able to make a fresh start; but I felt confident of getting to Whitelaw's track and reaching his camp in a day or two. The travelling was very bad and the scrub very dense; carrying our now lightened swags about 3 miles a day was as much as we could do; still, we kept on south-westerly, and by some inadvertence must have crossed the old track without noticing it at a point a mile or two ahead of where Whitelaw had reached. Still thinking it before us, we went on till it was plain that we had got into the Powlett drainage area, and there was nothing for it but to push for the coast. We had then been four days without food, even our sugar had run out, though we had tea left and plenty of tobacco. We boiled nettle leaves, which tasted like coarse spinach, also the inside pith of fern-trees where the fronds start from. We could catch no fish, the creeks being flooded; and though we saw some bears, they were in trees too big to be felled with our tomahawk; having no gun, we could get no birds. Lawlor was for throwing away swags and making a rush, but I would not have it, considering the safer plan in our weakening condition to take things quietly and have good, comfortable rest at night. On the night of the fourth day without food we could distinctly hear the breakers on the coast, so knew we were not far off open country, and the next day struck the Powlett river (as I afterwards found) about two miles above Feehan's hut, but so flooded as to be uncrossable, and bordered with impenetrable scrub, so that it was useless to try to follow the river down, so I determined to keep back from the river in rather clearer country and follow its valley downwards. This, however, Lawlor would not consent to, saying that he would stick to the river and follow it; finding all persuasion in vain, and being equally obstinate myself, I took my own course, enjoining on Lawlor that as he was so bent on keeping to the river he had better do so, and not change his mind afterwards, as I would be sure to get out first and would know where to come back and look for him. We divided our tea, tobacco, and matches (six each), and also exchanged signed papers so that in case of either of us being lost and the other getting out, the survivor could show himself innocent of wrong. After a final ineffectual effort to persuade Lawlor to come with me, we parted, and I made back from the river, soon getting into better country and travelling quicker. I camped that night by a small creek, making a fire by the expenditure of one match, brewing some sugarless tea in a panikin (Lawlor had the billy) and sleeping very comfortably. Next morning, soon after starting, I came on some wild cattle and yearned for my rifle, but, nevertheless, knowing their habit of making for the coast country at night, I looked for and found their tracks through the scrub, and towards evening got on clear country near the Powlett Bridge, and reached the hut of a man I knew (Mr. Hitchins), who soon supplied my wants. Before dawn next morning Hitchins and I crossed the river and followed up the south side past Feehan's deserted hut to a log which Hitchins knew of by which we could cross. Here I cooee'd, and to my delight was answered from far back in the scrub, so I prepared some tea and food while Hitchins went in, and after much cooeeing found and guided Lawlor out. He had had a bad time, having, the first night he was alone, tried to make his fire with the damp stuff near the river, and used up all his matches without getting a fire or even a last light for his pipe, so had two cold, wet nights, fireless, with the company of a pack of dingoes that howled about him. However, a day's spell at the old

hut put us right, and we went to Laycock's at the Inlet, whence we struck off and reached Whitelaw's track, followed it up to his camp and thence back to McDonald's Track and out to the settlements. We suffered no bad effects from our fast, except feeling a bit weak for a day or two, and an inordinate appetite for about three weeks after. This was about the conclusion of my rougher exploration in South Gippsland.

Settlement rapidly spread up McDonald's Track, the Narracan and Mirboo. Jack Gallagher, with whom I had camped at Bear Creek, and told about the rich Mirboo land, went and found it and did well, showing selections to those in search thereof. Some land-showers of that time, used, it is said, to make the same block do duty for many applicants, but things got sorted out eventually.

The results of my examination were duly published in a sketch Geological Map of South Gippsland and a report in Geological Progress Report, No. 3, wherein I described all the then known coal seams, and expressed the confident opinion that Victoria possessed coal resources that would at all events partly supply her own requirements if systematically developed. This has come to pass: in the course of settlement and clearing, the Jumbunna seam was found; enterprise on the part of comparatively few who had faith, overcame the prejudices of the many who had none; borings, after many fruitless trials, at last located the Wonthaggi field, and, I believe, that were private enterprise allowed a free hand, a much more extensive field than at present known would be developed along and adjacent to a zone of country extending from Wonthaggi to Mirboo. Allowing for faultings and dislocations of the beds, there are surely tracts of good extent where careful trial will develop workable seams in the drainage area of the Tarwin Valley.

In my report mention was also made of the vast timber resources of the district, not only as regards the eucalypts, but other woods, and suggestions offered as to forest conservation in the way of selecting and demarcating a number of small or medium-sized forest areas of the best quality, rather than the indiscriminate reservation of a few large tracts containing, perhaps, a large proportion of useless timber.

No action was taken on this, and most of the best forest land was selected, the scrub cut, and the trees rung, to the destruction of an incalculable quantity of valuable woods that in a few years might have become available for use. There seemed then to be in the departmental mind a dread that selectors might make money out of the timber, so they were virtually compelled to destroy it, instead of clearing well and thoroughly only small sections at a time, getting produce from them, and extending them gradually. Many selectors exhausted their capital on scrub cutting and timber ringing over all their selections and were unable to maintain the clearings: the timber died with the dried bark hanging from it, fresh growths of scrub sprang up, and, unprotected by the green forest, quickly dried in Summer, so that disastrous bush fires were the result, the blazing bark from the dead trees being carried ahead by the wind to spread the destruction.

However, there is no use in crying over spilt milk: it is to be hoped that better care will be taken of the remaining forest resources of Victoria. The disastrous times of South Gippsland are disappearing, and the uninhabited forest of 40 years ago has become the home of a prosperous community. In

conclusion, it may be remarked that during my explorations I saw no indications of the dense forest country having been much frequented by the blacks, though it appears their stone tomahawks have occasionally been found.

As a rule the forest did not offer the attractions that the more open country did in the way of game, though, possibly, it was not always so dense, as I remember Mr. J. McMillan, a very early settler at Muddy Creek (Toora), told me that when he first came, the ranges about there, though wooded, were so free from scrub that one could ride through them, and that the dense growth sprang up after the great bush fire of Black Thursday in the early fifties. The scrub country was not very rich in fauna, there were no large kangaroos, but a few wallabies, most plentiful, however, on the outskirts. Native bears were fairly numerous, and one could hear occasionally at night the opossums, the flying squirrel and the tiger cat. Dingoes were occasionally met with. Of birds, the lyre bird was the most numerous, or, at any rate, the most noticeable; and there were parrots of various species, with a few of the smaller kinds of birds; snakes were not plentiful in the forest, though numerous in the more open country. Taking all things into consideration, I do not think there was ever a country in the world where, barring accidents, the explorer would meet with less danger as regards his health, vicissitudes of climate, or hurtful forms of life than in the South Gippsland forests of 40 years ago.



# Recollections and Experiences.

MR. A. C. GROOM.

It was, I think, the end of 1876 when I first became acquainted with the Gippsland scrub country. I went by train as far as Bunyip, thence by coach to Brandy Creek. At that time, the country had been taken up to a considerable extent as far south as Allambee. The Leongatha country, and in towards Anderson's Inlet, was being surveyed, and, if I remember rightly, a few blocks were taken up between Leongatha and Mirboo. A few selectors had taken up their residence in the Poowong district, while away to the south it was, I think, all virgin scrub, and only a few blocks taken up on the outskirts. My first visit to Poowong was, I think, in 1877 or 1878. A track had just been opened from Drouin, and I walked across from there, my guide being the late A. McLaren. We reached Frazer's selection in a heavy storm, and had something to eat, and then reached the late James Scott's hotel at 10 o'clock at night, wet through. I spent several days there; then Mr. Scott, acting as my guide, we went along McDonald's Track for some miles east, then down a surveyed line towards Moyarra. At that time only a few had come in to reside, but scrub cutting was going on in all directions. There were very few houses, and nobody could then believe that in a few years there could be such a miraculous change in the country, or that it would contain such a large population as now exists there. I have seen every township, both on the north and south railway lines, spring into existence, with the exception of Foster, which was an old mining town. My first visit to Foster was in 1876. I rode from Morwell to Bair's Tarwin hotel, left my horse there, and walked to Mirboo South, stayed the night there, and walked next day to Foster along a terrible track, and got, late at night, to Finlay's hotel at Foster, thoroughly knocked up. I spent a day at Foster, and then went on to Mr. Sheppard's at Toora, and from there came back to Mirboo. All that country was then in a wild state, only a few blocks being taken up between Mirboo and Mirboo South. At that time the Fish Creek country was being surveyed, but none had been taken up. I knew Warragul and Drouin some years before the railway was completed, and when there were only railway camps there; and rough ones they were. I held the first auction sale at Poowong in yards newly erected by the late James Scott. I forget what year that was in, but it would be in the early '80's. At that time I used to leave Warragul at 4 o'clock in the morning of the day of the sale, ride across to Poowong, hold the sale, and get back to Warragul the same night, which was a fair day's work, considering the state of the roads. Several times I had to camp out alone in the bush all night in the early days, and had neither fire nor food. I remember getting to a selector's hut one night about 10 o'clock, about 16 miles from Warragul along McDonald's Track, and found the owner absent and his hut locked. I got down the chimney, but found no tucker, as the owner had evidently been away for some days. At daylight I pushed on along the track, and got as far as the Coal Creek mine, where I got some food.

I made all these trips in the early days, to satisfy myself as to the extent and quality of the scrub country, in order to see what the prospects were likely to be, in the event of my establishing a business there. I have seen it grow from nothing, to becoming one of the finest and most important farming and grazing districts in the State, and, although my connection with the district has been severed as far as business is concerned, I look back with pleasure to the time when I was intimately connected with it, and met many of the old pioneers, and grand men they were.

# Recollections and Experiences.

MR. W. M. ELLIOTT.



In the year 1878 there was great talk about the splendid land and climate of South Gippsland, and I determined to select. I paid a visit to the district and stayed for a fortnight with Patterson Bros., with a view to gaining information as to the future prospects of those who determined to make their homes in the South Gippsland forest. Every one looked upon the golden side, they had great confidence that eventually, when cleared and grassed, it would be valuable land, but very few had any actual experience of the means or cost to put the land into that productive state. Eventually I determined that I would select, and took up a block that afterwards became well known in the district, finally settling there upon it in 1879.

The first thing was to arrange for a camping ground. My next neighbour, Henry Hine, had cleared about ten acres the previous year, so I decided with his consent to build a log hut on his clearing. We put up a fairly comfortable hut, sufficiently large to accommodate two of us, until such time as I could clear a portion of my own block and build there. I let a contract to cut 25 acres, which in due course was burnt, picked up, and sown down in grass. In common with the rest of the district, the native scrub came up again and again, and had to be re-cut. This, together with the burning off of logs with a view of improving the grazing capabilities, occupied all our attention. I then determined to put up a comfortable house. I secured the services of a first-class splitter, an old Tasmanian named Kimberley, and as we had some splendid blue gums, he was instructed to split everything necessary to erect a three-roomed cottage. This house afterwards became the hatching place of Leagues, deputations and all business connected with the advancement of the district. It also became a resting place for benighted travellers who came at all hours of the night, very often perished with wet and cold.

I was surprised one day by a visit from the Rev. Mr. Sparling, the Church of England minister located at Poowong. He was desirous of establishing a monthly service. I was only too glad to assist him by placing my house at his disposal. These services were continued for about ten months, when he left the district.

One of our greatest handicaps was the enormous cost of cartage and packing, which together cost about £10 per ton. We were continually discussing some means of reducing this expense, and finally determined to endeavour to connect with Anderson's Inlet. We, therefore, made a party to cut a track to the sea, viz.: Mr. John Glew, sen., J. Glew, jun., J. G. Wilson and myself. We started off at 7 in the morning, and, working by compass, after a laborious day arrived at the Inlet at 8 o'clock at night. Mr. Laycock kindly gave us a night's shelter. We returned by our blazes on the next day, and decided to cut a road. After some little delay we formed a "bee," and 11 of the selectors who were interested turned out and we cut a track right out

to the plains. The arrival and departure of the coasting craft were so irregular and uncertain that it necessitated repeated trips to ascertain if the vessel had arrived. We had, therefore, reluctantly to give up our new means of transportation and were compelled to continue the old, expensive way of getting goods via Poowong by pack horse.

We found the greatest difficulty in getting any returns for our labour and capital. When we started, fat cattle were very high in Melbourne, and for several years there was a continuous fall in values. Store cattle purchased for fattening were, after six or twelve months grazing, worth little more than they cost. Then the expense of getting them to town, which occupied a week, reduced our average profits.

My last venture in cattle was a line of forty bullocks which, after keeping for twelve months, realised 2/6 per head less than I paid for them, all expenses being out of pocket.

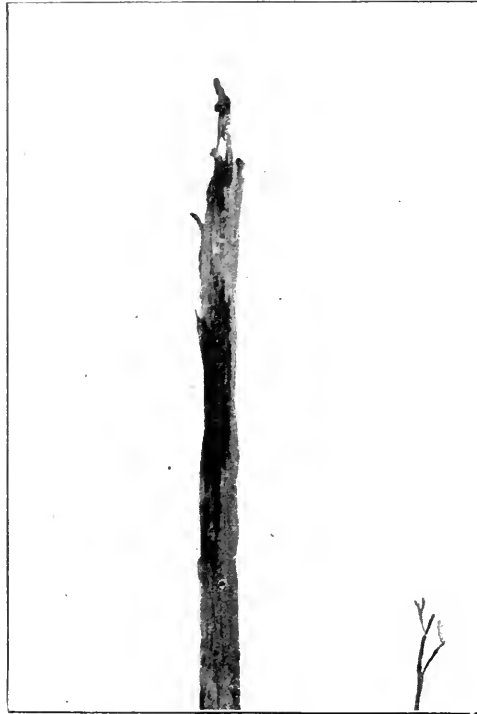
We soon came to the conclusion that the district would never make progress until we got railway communication. We formed a Railway League to work in conjunction with others in the district: numerous deputations were sent to town to advocate our claims. This necessitated interviewing country members and visiting those residing in town who had an interest in the district. All this meant time and expense, which we had to bear ourselves. Finally, the Great Southern Line passed both houses of Parliament, in conjunction with many others. As soon as it became known where the railway stations were to be located, it became necessary to get practicable roads surveyed to them. Mr. John Lardner, surveyor for the Lands Department, who was staying at my house at the time, advised me to get up a petition, signed by those immediately interested. I acted on this advice at once, but found some difficulty, as some objected to having their blocks cut up by roads leading to the railway station. These very people actually received more benefit than most of us who gave the surveyor a free hand to take the best road. However, we got sufficient signatures, and forwarded our petition to the Surveyor-General, who immediately instructed Mr. Lardner to make the survey.

I had been proposed and appointed as magistrate for the Eastern Baliwick, and, at the instance of Mr. Howitt, P.M., for the Central Baliwick also. I held this commission for a number of years, until I found I could not give it the attention which the position required, and I therefore resigned.

As soon as the Railway Bill passed both houses of Parliament, we were anxious that the Great Southern Line should be constructed as early as possible, and a meeting was called, if I remember rightly, at Yorath's house to consider what steps should be taken to that end. The general opinion of the meeting was that if we could only get the Railway Commissioners to visit the district, that would go a long way in support of our request. We received a hint that they would shortly make an official visit of inspection of the route finally surveyed, and we decided to tender them a banquet. The project was entered into with the greatest of enthusiasm, almost everyone within reasonable distance expressing their willingness to lend a hand. A committee was at once nominated and elected to make all arrangements. I was elected chairman, and we were given "carte blanche" and instructed to spare no expense. Contrary to the general usage, subscriptions flowed in quite liberally, and we had ample funds to do the thing properly. A working programme was immediately drawn up, and Messrs. Herring, Parsons and Fuller were instructed to ride to Drouin and thence to town to lay our invitation before the

Commissioners. The Commissioners received our delegates very kindly, and thanked them for our invitation, but pointed out that their position did not admit of their accepting a banquet, but as they proposed paying an official visit of inspection, they would be very happy to meet the pioneers of the district through which the railway would pass. This we thought good enough. Messrs. Yorath Bros. had a fairly commodious barn, which we proceeded to decorate with the flora of the district, tree-ferns, staghorn ferns, and others in great variety, supplejack and the flower gardens of the locality all lent their quota, the general effect was quite a transformation. Any city ballroom would be proud to make an equally fairly-like display.

Mr. James Gibb, M.L.A., and Mr. F. C. Mason, members for the district, were invited, and also the leading officers of the several survey camps and representatives of the local press. The appointed day arrived at last, and a large cavalcade rode towards Loch to escort the Commissioners and party (which included Mr. Richard Speight, chairman of Commissioners; Mr. Green, his colleague; Mr. Geo. Darbyshire, Engineer in Chief; Mr. Tulk, Engineer in charge of the construction of the line; and Mr. Jones, Supervising Engineer; and, I believe, also Mr. W. G. Field and Mr. T. Griffin, Engineers in charge of survey camps) along the line, and eventually a halt was made at Yorath's. Mr. James Gibb, M.L.A., who had always taken an active part in furthering the interests of our railway, introduced us, and informed the Commissioners that the residents were desirous of waiting upon them as a deputation. They kindly agreed to receive us, and we pleaded for the early construction of the line. We pointed out that no part of the colony was in such urgent need of railway communication as South Gippsland, owing to the almost total want of roads. The few roads we had were mere lanes of mud, impassable during the greater part of the year, and we were practically dependant on the primitive pack horse for all our transport. In reply, Mr. Richard Speight, the chairman of the Commission, said that Parliament, through the Minister of Railways, had handed a comprehensive railway scheme of 1600 miles, extending over a considerable part of the Colony, for them to construct, and all parts thought their claims paramount, and entitled to earliest consideration. He and his colleagues would endeavour to meet the demands of all as fairly as possible, and would construct several lines simultaneously. He expressed admiration of the indomitable pluck that impelled the pioneers to tackle such a stupendous task as subduing the South Gippsland forest. They were deserving of favourable consideration, and the Commissioners would endeavour to comply with their request as far as possible. On behalf of the deputation, I thanked them most cordially for their promised favourable consideration, and informed them that we had arranged to hold a smoke night in honour of the occasion, and hoped they would honour us by accepting an invitation. Mr. Speight replied that he and his party would be pleased to join us. It went against the grain to demean our elaborate preparations by calling it a smoke night, but in deference to the wishes of the Commissioners we decided to so call it in place of the more ambitious name of banquet, which in our estimation it richly deserved. However, call it what you will, it came off like "hot cakes." After a substantial repast, which was very acceptable after a day in the saddle, we had speeches, songs and recitations galore, interlarded with liquid refreshments. In short, we spent a very pleasant evening, and so, we hoped, did our guests. It was a glorious moonlight night, and we continued to argue the point long after the departure of our guests. In due course, the contract for the construction of the line from Dandenong to Korumburra was let to Messrs.



A MAN STUMP CARVED BY THE FIRE.

Falkingham and Sons. To our anxious impatience it seemed to drag its slow length along interminably. Any one of us, so we thought, could have completed the line in half the time. However, in course of time it was completed and opened in the year 1891. In the meantime, the land boom had inflated and burst, leaving but a wreck behind. The whole colony was practically insolvent. Financial stress gripped everyone, from the highest to the lowest. We anticipated that when the railway was completed, our district would have advanced by leaps and bounds, and there is no doubt that, under ordinary circumstances, it would have done so; we suffered with the rest of the colony. We had received no benefit from the "boom" owing to want of communication, but we suffered severely with all the rest.

But a district like ours was bound to forge ahead under any circumstances, and the dairying industry proved its salvation, as it did to other parts of the Colony. It was not my privilege to participate in the gradual prosperity, but it gave me great pleasure to see the establishment in the midst of the forest of the thriving townships of Korumburra, Jumbunna and Outtrim; to see the dense scrub fall under the bushman's axe, and in its place to see luxurious pasture; to see in course of time modern homesteads take the place of log and paling huts; to see, in fact, a new and prosperous province added to Victoria, where once the primeval forest stood, and to know that I had done my little bit towards it.

Not unalloyed has been the prosperity; the pioneer's work is never done. In course of time the giants of the forest began to decay and fall during the



Winter gales: these had to be burned off. Ferns became a constant source of labour. In 1898 a devastating fire swept through South Gippsland, ruining many, but in the end making for its advancement, and last, but not least, the ubiquitous "bunny" put in his inevitable appearance. Many who had had considerable experience with him in other parts of Victoria maintained that he would never make his home in South Gippsland because it was too wet, and their theory received some credence, owing to the fact that, for many years, he had advanced as far as Lang Lang but came no further. This was a fatal mistake, which led us to treat him with careless indifference when he made his appearance about Seaview and North Poowong. He had established himself about Drouin and Warragul, and from thence invaded our country.

Had we been fully seized with the seriousness of the question, effectual means would have been adopted to keep him, if not entirely out, at least to have checked him. But I have unbounded faith in my erstwhile co-workers. The same spirit that has brought the district to its present state of advancement will not yield it to the rabbit. Already, clubs are being formed to deal with them in a persistent and comprehensive manner.

Here endeth the last chapter. My task is nearly finished. Old age, with its attendant infirmities, press hard upon me. In a few short years I shall be gathered to my forefathers, and the place that knew me shall know me no more. Before I depart I have one ardent wish. It is granted. The mantle of the Seer envelopes me. I stand on the top of "Kilynon," the whole district lies stretched out before me in one grand panorama. Not a vestige remains of the vast forest that once so stubbornly resisted our labours. Hill and vale clothed in verdure as far as the eye can see! From the vale below rises the ploughboy's whistle and the milkmaid's song! Dairying still holds its sway, and cultivation is everywhere. Large patches of maize, rape and oats as well as some fodders unknown to me! Handsome villas attest the prosperity everywhere, surrounded by flowering fruit trees! The oft repeated thought arises in my memory: "We labour for our children." Alas! I had none. To all a kind farewell.



# Recollections and Experiences

MRS. A. R. SMITH.



In the year 1877 my husband took up land in the Parish of Jeetho West. He came up in his waggon as far as the Bass river and found the surveyors, Tucker and party, camped there, and as there was no bridge, the first thing to be done was to build one; so they set to work and felled a large tree and adzed it off, and got one of our horses across. Then she pulled the logs to make the first bridge, and clear the road up to our land, about two miles, through thick scrub 50 feet high.

The first thing done was to get 50 acres of scrub cut, burnt and sown with grass seed, so as to be able to build our first house, which was built of blackwood logs. They split them in half and put them in panels about six feet long: they dropped them in cleats from the top of the walls, the flat side inside, so that the canvas could be nailed on smoothly. We did not have floors for a good many years, but no one knew, for the ground was smooth and covered. It was a good-sized house, one large room, with two smaller ones on each side and a large, detached kitchen. It was lime washed outside, and looked very pretty amongst the giant gums, at that time.

I came up in November; the house was not finished, but I would not stay in Melbourne. I thought where my husband was, I ought to be: so I helped to put some of the finishing touches to it.

I shall never forget my trip up: the road from the bridge was a sea of mud, and full of big stumps cut close to the ground (Yankee grubbing, I think they call it).

I was very pleased when we arrived home: the new grass, sown on the burnt ground, looked beautiful, and in a little corner were some vegetables growing.

It took us two days to come from Melbourne: the first night we camped at the Yallock Creek. I was in the waggon, driven by a young brother: Mr. Smith and another brother drove two horses and drays, with the furniture, etc. We were in our sliprail just at dark, and had to go round a hill, on a side cutting: when near home one of the drays capsized, so they got the horses out and left the rest till next day. You may be sure we slept well that night, although we had to camp in the kitchen with the door not hung. We propped it up that night, and it was fixed up next day. In a little while I felt quite at home. There were so many little birds about then, and the lovely ferns quite charmed me. I had never lived in the country before, so I had plenty to learn. There was the bread and butter to make: and your own yeast, too. We bought

some cows and began dairying: there were no separators then: I used to skim the dishes of milk. We had a nice little dairy, built of logs, with a double roof, and shelves all round; so I could make good butter. We put it into casks and sent it to Melbourne to be sold.

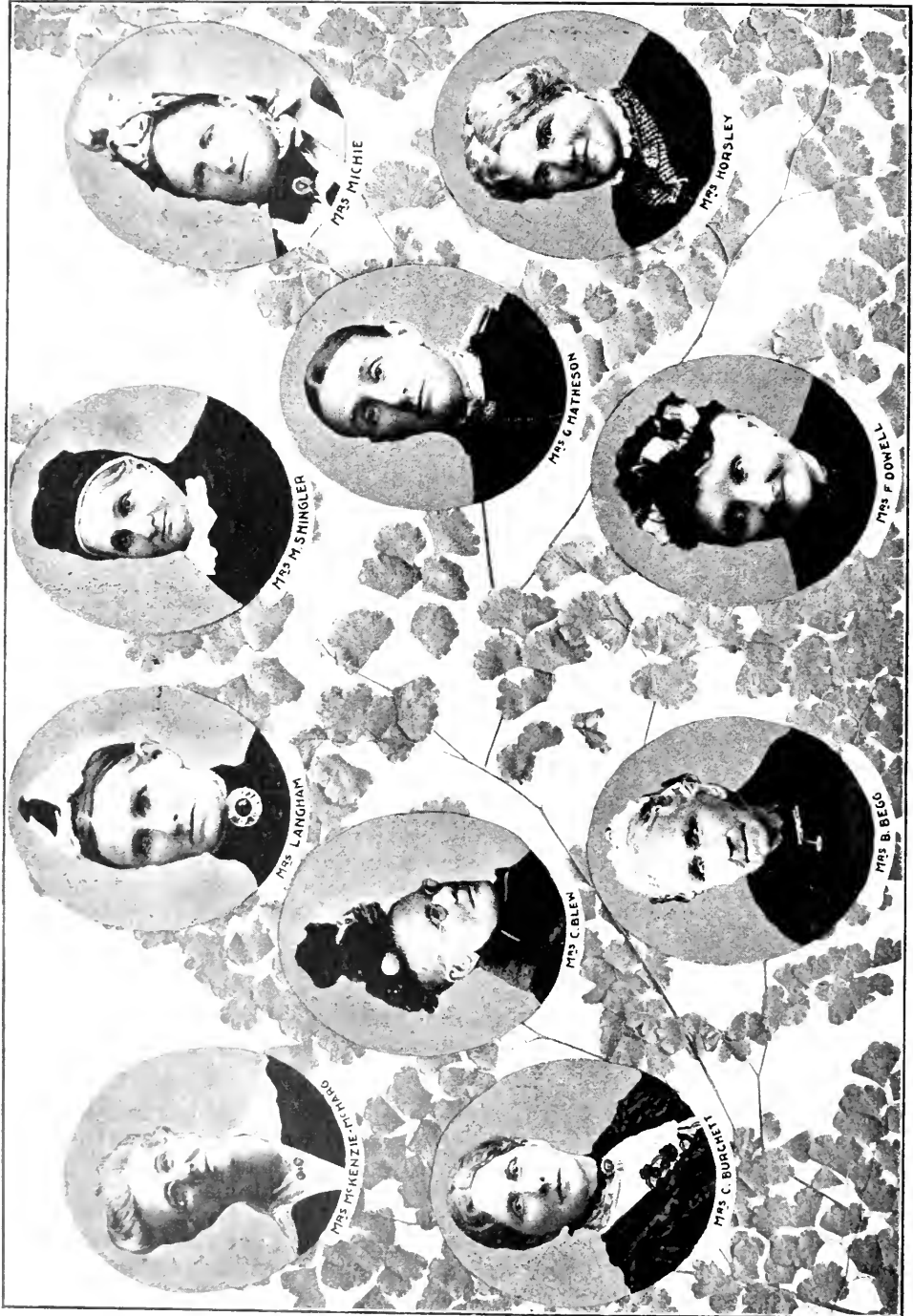
We had a very quiet time for a few years. It was two years before I went to Melbourne for a holiday. Sometimes we went fishing in the Bass and Alsop rivers: there were beautiful eels and blackfish in those days. I used also to go with the men sometimes, when they went out shooting opossums on moonlight nights. I used to ride an old horse we had, and carry home the game. We soon had a nice rug made of the skins.

At that time our place was as far as it was possible to drive a horse and trap: all the roads beyond us were only pack tracks: so we had many callers, who were obliged to leave their traps with us and pack their goods on horses the rest of the journey. I remember one man, his wife, and five children, came to our place: they had driven from Melbourne and camped on one of the plains the first night, but did not sleep much, as the wild dogs were howling round them. We put them up for the night, and in the morning they put four of the children in sacks on two pack horses. They put small boxes in the bottom of the sacks and stood the children up, and hooked the sacks on the pack saddles. The father and mother had to walk and carry the baby for some miles.

At the beginning of the year 1880 we had a "working bee," and built a log church with a paling roof: all the settlers for miles round turned out to help, and we opened it in March. Mr. Lau, from Warragul, came over (he was a Wesleyan): we had a nice service on the Sunday, and a tea-meeting during the week. We wondered where the people came from. Some of them had driven twenty miles to be present. It was a great success, although the women-folk had to bake in camp ovens all the good things that were on the tables. We had a big bonfire built up in the daytime and lit it up at night to welcome the people: also a bush merry-go-round for the young folks: which is a long sapling with an auger hole bored through, and put on the top of a flat stump, with a two-inch iron pin put through several inches into the stump: and at the ends of the pole they flattened it a little and put two pegs in to hold on by. Then the young men got into the centre and pushed it round and gave the girls a ride. The effect was grand, with all the big trees round and the blazing fire. We all went home very pleased with our effort. This church was built near the Bass river, and Mr. Lau was so delighted with everything that he called it "Sunnyside:" that is how it got its name (the Sunnyside Bridge).

The next thing to be done was to get a school, so we got our member of Parliament to intercede for us (I think his name was F. C. Mason). We offered to let the church building to the Education Department for £13 per year: it was accepted, and a lady teacher appointed. But, alas! one morning she went to school and found nothing but charcoal left. By some means it got burned down through the night. We never found out the cause, so we had to make another start. Next time we put up a weatherboard building, which is still intact, but not at Sunnyside.

We used to have to go to Lang Lang for our mail then: the neighbourhood used to take it in turns to go.



GROUP OF LADY PIONEERS.

One evening we were going to have a party, and just at sundown a gentleman drove up and said he was Mr. Pater, an inspector from the Postal Department, and asked if he could stay for the night. Mr. Smith said he was quite welcome to do so, but he could not promise that he would get much sleep. It proved a good opportunity for him to meet the people who wanted the mail service. He enjoyed himself, but, like the rest, he did not go to bed at all, as they all stayed till daylight. After that we had a loosebag at our house, and the neighbours came for their letters.

The next few years were much the same, scrub cutting, clearing fires, and fencing. It used to rain more in those days, sometimes for weeks. Several times in September the floors of the bridges were washed away, but as the timber was cleared the rainfall became less.

The next excitement was the talk about getting a railway. Some said it was impossible in a country like this, but after some agitation surveyors were sent up to inspect the routes. Then, I remember, one day Mr. Darbyshire and a party came along, over the river on a big gum tree, which we afterwards called "The Commissioner's Bridge." After they decided the route, we had many visits from the railway officials.

I was the first woman along the line from Loch to Jeetho. Mr. Smith and his brother and I went up to christen the falls round the cutting. We called them the "Hilda Falls," after the little daughter of the late Mr. W. G. Field, the surveyor of this section of the line. The name was sent down and registered.

Mr Falkingham was the successful contractor for one section of the railway, viz: from Dandenong to Korumburra, and you cannot think how pleased we were when we first heard the sound of the whistle. The line was opened to Loch on the 11th November, 1890, and it was the terminus for six months. In 1887 we had the township surveyed and called it Loch, after our very popular Governor, Sir Henry Loch; following the survey, a sale of allotments took place in Melbourne.

In the year 1889 the State school was opened, and in 1891 the Mechanics' Institute was opened by a grand Concert and Ball, at which Madame Maggie Stirling and other Melbourne artists sang.

During the making of the railway many buildings were added to the township, and the postal arrangements improved. Then came the Banks, the Colonial first, then the Union, which stands on the site of the first store.

After spending 33 years of usefulness in Loch, my dear husband passed away on April 12, 1910.

We sow a little,  
 We reap a little,  
 We bind our sheaves,  
 And rest.

# Recollections and Experiences.

MR. W. C. THOMAS.



Hearing, through the surveyor, Mr. Burbank, that there was a piece of good land to the south of Whitelaw's Track, which he had found when making his way to the coast, we decided to visit it. We travelled by coach from Melbourne to Oakleigh, train from Oakleigh to Longwarry, and then by saddle-horses—such as they were—from there on. Never having been in the busa before, the fearful roads, knee deep in mud, the rough shelters and often the rough meals, were altogether a new experience to me.

We stayed the first night at Scott's, at Poowong. In front of the store were twelve bullocks up to their girth in mud trying to get a log out of the way. In the morning we started down the South Track—I do not think it possible for such a track to be in existence to-day. We passed a very pretty spot on the way to Mr. Pobjoy's, and a charming young lady was baking scones in the old-fashioned camp oven. I was young, and would have been content to stay on Mr. Holmes' selection, but the order to march was given, and, discarding old "Charcoal," a horse which I was told was repeatedly sold for £1, but always got back to the original owner, as no one would keep him for more than a day, we reached the hospitable house of the Pobjoy Bros. about six o'clock. They did everything possible to make us comfortable. The next morning we left for unknown country, and at night found ourselves at a scrub-cutter's camp in the parish of Leongatha; many a time through that day the writer asked to be left behind. The camp was rough, but the men were very kind. One stripped the bark from a sapling, and after drying the inside by the fire told me this half circle of bark was to be my bed. I was so fagged out that I did not mind much where I lay, so got into the bark cradle with a blanket. In the morning the bark had closed round in the shape of a pipe, and I had to get out end ways. In the morning we were faced with a creek. The surveyor said the ground was about two miles away, as near as he could say, and told us to follow. We saw him go down until only his head was above water. I was fresh again, and followed; the other members of our party waited our return. After seeing about one acre of the now far-famed "Lyre-bird Mound" property, we returned to Melbourne and put in the application.

I arrived in South Gippsland at the end of 1878, being among the first to approach Leongatha by way of Inverloch, or Anderson's Inlet, as it is now called. Wallabies, kangaroos\* and wild dogs were in abundance, and the Tarwin teemed with blackfish and eels. It was also the time of the "Avoca" gold robbery, and Wieberg was supposed to be in the district. Anyway, Mrs.

\*The kangaroos were in the open country only.

Wieberg told me that Wieberg knew that I had a good gun, and if ever he asked me for it, not to refuse, but to put what price I liked on it. I never had the pleasure of meeting him, to my knowledge.

The opening up of the country was very rough work, and we had to survey tracks, and many a night we had rough hard beds after days of toil. My father and I surveyed, marked, and, where necessary, cleared a track—now known as Muldoon's—from Leongatha South to the "Clump," on the Wild-Cattle Run, about five miles from what is now Wonthaggi. We also made a track for vehicles from Leongatha South to Anderson's Inlet at a cost of about £150, and on these tracks Mr. Wain, Mr. Clieve and ourselves ran a fortnightly mail to San Remo (30 miles) for the convenience of ourselves and a few settlers. While making the track to the south of Jumbunna we, on more than one occasion, quenched our thirst by getting water from the holes in the low ground. Each hole had a circle of mud at the top, and we concluded that they were crab holes. For many days we carried water in billies from "Lyre-bird Mound," as we had then no knowledge that the Powlett River was so near, nor did we know that such a spring existed as Mr. Williams has on his land on the plains.

Clearing the land was a fearful task. There were 400 to 500 saplings to the acre, and bracken ferns 10 feet high. To-day there is hardly one tree standing, and the land is worth possibly £25 per acre.

The cartage of provisions, etc., was a very serious item, and it cost, by way of San Remo, £60 per ton to land it on the selection; now a train passes twice daily within  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles. What mistakes we made! and how dearly was experience bought! and yet few gave up the struggle against overwhelming odds. Very little sickness came our way. Salt beef was relished, and we seemed to thrive on hard fare. Our nearest doctor was 75 miles distant, and it was well he was not wanted often. Three cases happened where medical advice would have been welcome. One afternoon a messenger gave me a note from a selector about three miles further inland. It stated that his wife had died, and would I arrange to take the body to San Remo that night to catch the steamer at 7 o'clock in the morning so that she might be buried at Dunkeld. One could not refuse such a request. When the body arrived it was encased in the rough timber of the bush, which the husband had made after laying his wife out, as there were no other women out there. All through that night I walked, with one hand holding the horse and the other the lamp, over plains, through scrub and ti-tree flats, all unmade roads. Hour after hour passed until the 35 miles had been traversed, and we arrived at San Remo just in time to see the steamer move off. The husband had followed behind during that dreary night. The constable at San Remo was in a difficulty; he said we had no right to move a body without a doctor's certificate. Of course, we had acted in ignorance. The husband was anxious to have her buried in the family grave at Dunkeld, but after numerous telegrams to the coroner at Dandenong (I think) he gave permission for burial at San Remo. One of the most affecting sights was the school children gathered round that lonely grave. Evidently the school mistress had passed through trouble herself, and she had let the children gather the wild flowers, and at a signal they threw them into the open grave and almost filled it.

On another occasion a man was brought to me who had had a tree fall on him. No one knew what was the matter, but he was in fearful agony. This meant another trip to San Remo. During that journey his cries of pain

and his fearful cursing was such that I had to tell him that if he did not stop I would not go any further; the poor fellow did his best. When he arrived at the hospital in Melbourne they found his shoulder blade broken, and we had laid him on his back, and the fearful jolting of that night must have meant intense agony to him.

Just one other incident of hardship and isolation. On this occasion I received a letter from the husband asking me if I would go for a doctor for his wife, who was dying. He also sent a letter to the doctor, giving full details of the case. It meant a ride of 75 miles to Dandenong and 75 miles return. It was 6.30 a.m. when I received the message, and at 7 a.m. I started. Riding my own horse for 25 miles, I rode to a hotel, stated my errand, and was given another horse. Travelling for another 17 miles, I spoke to a farmer (Mr. Brett), and he placed at my disposal a very fine horse; it was fortunate for me, as the next 21 miles of road was more or less under water. The last place I pulled up for a horse was three miles from Cranbourne. A Mrs. Poole kindly let me have a horse for the last twelve miles. I reached Dandenong at 6.30 p.m., and on giving the detail letter to Dr. Moore he told me that the person was dead, and it was useless putting myself about. I then asked him to prescribe as if she were not dead, and I would chance the results by returning through the night. He called me a fool, but after getting the chemist to mix the medicine I started on my return trip at 7 p.m., picking up the different horses through the night, and reached the home of the settler at 7 a.m., doing the 150 miles in 24 hours, including stoppages. The wife was just alive, but on giving her the medicine she gradually improved, and is now one of the healthiest women in Melbourne.

I look back with a great amount of pleasure to the old days of pioneering in Gippsland, and am heartily glad to meet those who worked and won, as well as those who worked and lost, in the desperate struggle we had in the seventies.





# Recollections and Experiences.

MR. J. GLEW.



During the month of March, 1878, my father and I joined a party of landseekers, and, taking the coach at the old Albion Hotel, in Bourke-street, travelled to Tobin Yallock, whence we walked, via Cherry-tree rise and Tinpot Hill, to Littledike's, where we camped for the night, and made up our swags ready for the journey south. Our route was along McDonald's Track to the "Mousehole Track," a narrow pack track which took us southwards through the selections of Messrs. C. Cook and E. C. Holmes, to where the Patterson Bros. were camped (near Whitelaw) in a fern gully, where we also camped for the night. The next day we struck south, and after travelling a mile or so two of our party turned back. We others proceeded until we came to what we considered a suitable spot, when the others, beside by father and myself, decided that the difficulties in the way of clearing and the want of facilities for getting on and off the land

were too great for them to face: so they camped, while we traversed the country to satisfy ourselves that the country was good enough to peg out, which we did before we struck camp the next day. It was during September of the same year that I went down to take possession, immediately after the survey was completed by Surveyor Hargraves, of the Lands Department, and with a young brother pitched our tent on the site of the survey camp, on a portion of a block selected by Miss Bell, a Ballarat lady, and afterwards occupied by E. K. Herring. We set to work scrub-cutting, and by our own efforts cleared about 30 acres, and during the following season increased this to 100 acres, while my father had the same area cleared by contract. We then set to work preparing to build a house. The bricks were made on the property, the timber was sawn by pit sawyers on the hill just above the house site, the iron for the roof was sent from the city cut into four-foot lengths, and forwarded to Queen's ferry, carted from there to Ferrier's depot at the junction of McDonald's Track and the present road to Loch. From there it was carried on packhorses, which took two days.

As our stores, etc., were costing us at the rate of £10 per ton for carriage from the city, and finding that the distance, by the plan which I saw at the Lands Office, to Anderson's Inlet measured only 11½ miles, I decided to run a compass line as nearly due south as possible. My brother-in-law was staying with me at the time, having just pegged out a block on which the Jumbunna coal mine was afterwards worked, so I enlisted his services, as he was rather fond of adventure. After we left the hills, the travelling became difficult. It being September, the swamps were all full of water, and after a hard day's struggle we had to camp for the night on a platform we made by decking two parallel logs with saplings, which we cut off above the water level.



A TREE 484 FT. HIGH AND 306 IN CIRCUMFERENCE.  
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The next morning we again plunged into the water, and a quarter-of-an-hour afterwards we struck dry land. The remainder of the journey was comparatively easy, and we struck Laycock's (Anderson's Inlet), about ten chains west of his house. We had observed, while crossing the open country, what looked like a ridge running nearly parallel with our line, and intended to return along it with the hope of finding a spur that might prove practicable for a road. We had eaten our stock of provisions, and Laycock was reduced to two pannicans of flour, which he made into scones, and not being able to get provisions nearer than Kileunda we had to make the return journey via Kileunda, Bass township and Brazier's sawmill, and made the rest of the way home mainly along survey lines.

A pack track was opened up by Denny and Shaw, who had a store about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles east of Brazier's mill on the Bass, to pack stores in to the surveyors who were camped on Miss Bell's selection, and it was opened up from there to Paterson's. It was a very difficult track to negotiate, as it crossed all of the spurs running southward from the main ridge. I remember one very steep pinch in Frazer's selection where a man named Flowers was bringing in some stores for me, and had nearly reached the summit when his horse lost its footing and somersaulted to the bottom. As the pack consisted of flour, rice and sugar, I did not receive a great percentage of each on his arrival at my hut. I think he made only two trips, after which the track was abandoned, and very soon became worse to travel over than the survey lines. The bridge over the Foster, as it was named, soon became overgrown with wiregrass and rotted away. This route was adopted by Denny and Shaw with the object of reducing the carriage of stores to £7 10/- per ton from Melbourne. It took Flowers from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. to bring in the first consignment from the store to my place. By the old route, city to Queensferry by schooner, thence to Ferrier's depot by dray, thence by pack-horse to Jumbunna East, it was nothing unusual to not get our stores for three months from the date of their leaving the city. The packing distance, reckoned at 16 miles, occupied two days. Ferrier usually made either Fuller's or Pobjoy's the first day, reaching my place the following day about 3 p.m. We then used the pack track opened up by Denny and Shaw from Paterson's southwards.

Messrs. Hine, Elliott and self afterwards cut a track from Paterson's through Blake's, thence along Hine's west boundary to his hut, thence along the survey line between Hine and Elliott, and continued westerly along my north boundary for about 20 chains, then southerly to my clearing. We afterwards cut the track which was afterwards surveyed and gazetted as a road.

It was about this time that prospective settlers were visiting the locality, but not any of them could make up their minds to face the difficulties until the advent of Messrs. McLeod Bros., Elms, Herring and Parsons (who will doubtless relate their own experiences).

I recall a Footscray resident, who had a good look round the block afterwards selected by D. McLeod. After admiring the ferns and other beauties as they were presented to his eyes, he stood contemplatively for a few moments, and then exclaimed, "My word, won't the old woman have some clothes props if we come to live down here!" but they did not come. It was while this gentleman was with me that I went out one morning to try and get a lyre-bird's tail for him. While going along a gully I came across an old miner's shovel, which apparently had been left there many years prior to my visit, and near by was a large piece of coal, while just above was an

outcrop of coal. I reported the find to my brother-in-law, and later on to Mr. Stirling, the Government Geologist, but nothing was done with it till some years later, when the Horsleys had taken possession of the block.

Shortly after our first attempt to discover a track to Anderson's Inlet, the late H. E. Leslie and I found blazes going southward through the selections of W. Spring and Miss Shepherd. These we followed through to the open country, then, with the aid of Peter Neilsen, we opened up a pack track along the line of blazes, thence across to my clearing. It was not long after this when we received our first supply of stores via Anderson's Inlet. "Little Archie Bees" carted the first load from the Inlet to the foot of the hills, thence we took our stores to our respective homes on pack-horses, and by so doing effected a saving of £6 per ton. A very amusing incident happened in connection with this first load. Archie got very "coasty" en route, and, spying what he thought to be a case of "liquid refreshment," he forthwith broached it and knocked the head off one of the bottles, had a long pull at it, only to discover it was limejuice. It was some time after when he landed at the foot of the hills, and not having passed any water, when we met him all he was able to do was to open his mouth and draw our attention to its parched condition, whereupon we went back to the creek and got him some water, a billy of which he despatched in record time. After recovering his speech, he poured forth a most awful torrent of abuse on the "criminals" who had decocted such doughty rubbish, then fell exhausted alongside "Snowy" and the other bullocks of his team, who were taking a "siesta" after their long pull over the rough track across the plains.

It was not long after this that the united efforts of the "Down-Southers" opened up a sledge track, which the Shire Council, with a few deviations, widened and made into a dray road. I am just beginning to think there was a good deal of energy expended by us old pioneers in opening up tracks and in other ways to make life a little more endurable for ourselves and access more easy for those who came later on. I often feel sorry we had no amateur photographers. Had there been such a person amongst us, a photo. of the bridge put across the Powlett River below Neilsen's would have been worthy of a place in our albums, also snapshots of us all clearing the track—a merry crew in spite of the hard work we were engaged in.

I resided at Jumbunna East until 1887, when I sold the whole of the property to Mr. R. Seignior. I think I can reasonably claim to be the first "resident" pioneer of Jumbunna East, but do not think I had very much more varied experience in regard to pests, such as caterpillars, grasshoppers, thistles, etc., than the majority of my neighbours in the adjoining parishes.

# Recollections and Experiences.

MR. T. HORNER.



In the year 1851 I was living at Tooradin. This year is memorable owing to a great fire which swept over the country, and as the settlers were few and scattered, the fire held undisputed sway, burning grass, and, in many cases, crops of oats and also homesteads in its course.

The remarks in this paper refer to the districts and the owners of station runs surrounding Westernport. The owners of cattle runs to the north-west of the Bay were Messrs. Manton, Pike, J. Bowan and Cunningham, extending from Harewood, Mr. Lyall's estate, to Boolart, near Craunbourne. Eastward of these blocks was a large area known as the Yallock Estate, extending to The Gurdies, and owned by Messrs. Lyall, Meikle and Bakewell. This portion now includes Yallock, Monomeith, Kooweerup, Caldermeade, and Lang Lang. At that time this district was one great cattle run, the pasture being

native grass.

It was thought that the Kooweerup swamp was irreclaimable. The country around Tooradin then was one sheet of water, with ducks and swans swimming over it. Between Harewood and Tooradin, where the railway station now is, it was quite common to ride up to the saddlflaps in water. Harewood was named by Mr. Lyall, who was a great sportsman. He paid a visit to Great Britain, to Scotland especially, and when returning he brought out a number of hares, partridges and deer. The hares and deer increased in numbers, but it is supposed the tiger cats killed all the partridges.

Until 1855, and for some time afterwards, there were no houses between Yallock and Nyora, merely station cattle running all over the country. About 1870 part of the Yallock Estate was acquired by Messrs. McMillan and Glascock. There was no Lang Lang when McDonald's Track was surveyed through the hills.

I settled where I now reside, near Loch, in 1879, coming from Craunbourne. I and my brother cut and cleared a road over Percy's hill on the old road to Loch to bring up the bullock teams. Provisions were brought to the Bass at Sunnyside, and from there carried to the settlers' homes in the hills.

The late George Black, of Tarwin Meadows, when coming home from Melbourne during the late 50's with two men and three horses, got lost at Yannathan for 21 days, and they were compelled by hunger to kill and eat one of their horses. At that time there were some blacks, about 10, camped about Yallock.

The people were just as fond then of a dance as they are now, and would walk or ride miles to attend one. A young man named Ferguson walked from Caldermeade to the Bass for his horse to ride to a dance at Cranbourne.

The first school was on the hill on the road from Woodleigh to what is called Horner's road from Loch to Glenalvie, and the first teacher was Mr. E. J. Wilson, now retired from teaching, and residing near Jeetho.

Several instances have been known of Tasmanian convicts making their escape to Victoria. To accomplish this they would steal a whaleboat, by means of which they would cross Bass' Strait, landing at the Tarwin, and from there they would walk to Melbourne. William Smith O'Brien, a leader of the Irish rebellion of 1848, and who was transported for the part he took in it, was harboured for a time at The Bass by a man known as Chevoise Templeton, and being pardoned in 1856 he returned to Ireland.

The strawberry clover seed was found by Mr. Black, of Tarwin, in an old Dutch ship that was wrecked at the Tarwin in 1853-4. This clover has made the Tarwin district famous for fattening stock.

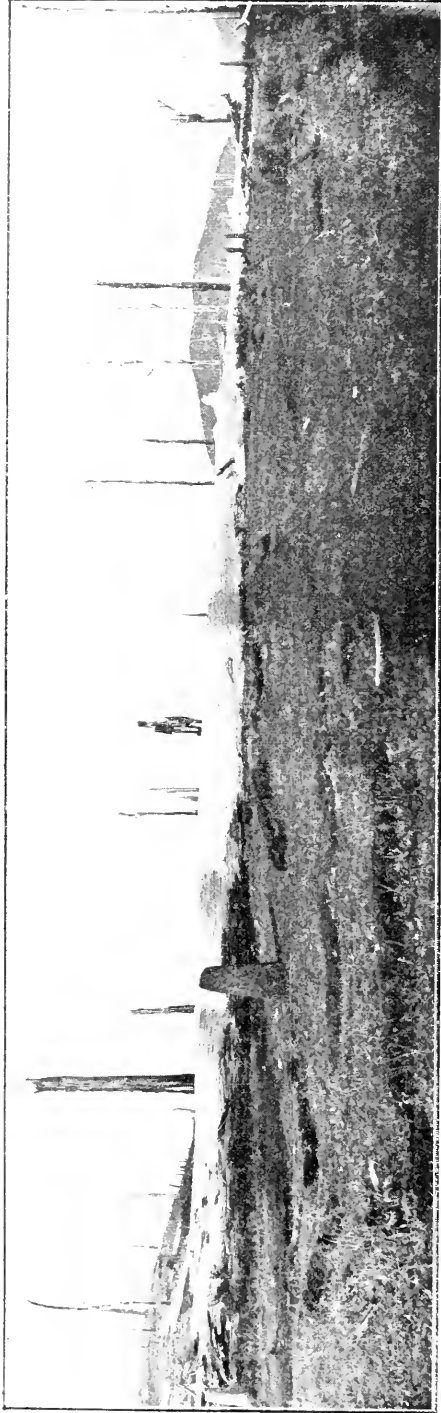


# Recollections and Experiences.

MR. W. JOHNSTONE.



When about eight years old I journeyed, with my mother, by train to Gippsland, leaving Melbourne on the morning of the last Saturday in September, 1879. My father missed the train through some misunderstanding re the time-tables, so we had to make the journey as far as Poowong without him. We reached Drouin about 11 a.m., and while we were enquiring for the mail coach to take us to Poowong a mud-bespattered waggonette, drawn by two horses, made its appearance, which we were told was the coach, and we climbed aboard. A cold bleak wind was blowing, with rain coming down in true Gippsland style. We got along fairly well the first few miles, then the road got rapidly worse, and our troubles began. Progress became painfully slow, and slower, till we reached Clifton's "Half-way House," as it was then called, drenched with rain and numbed with the cold. Mrs. Clifton had a good meal ready and a roaring fire going, which was a treat after the hardship of the coach journey; but all too soon the cry, "All aboard!" was heard, and we had to resume our journey. The state of the weather became worse, until quite a hurricane was raging, and trees were being blown over in all directions. The road or track winding through the timber country was a quagmire of mud, in some places axle deep, and, to make matters worse, one of the horses knocked up. The only other passenger, a surveyor, was obliged to get out and walk on ahead. He, however, arrived at Poowong several hours before the coach. Darkness overtook us, and our progress became very slow, and several times was interrupted by trees that had fallen across the track, the driver having to cut them off the track or clear a way round them. When the way was clear he would strike a match, and my mother, who now had the reins, would drive towards the light. When the match would burn out or was blown out by the wind, she would stop until another light was shown, when she would drive forward again, and so on, until we got past the obstruction. This happened several times, and we thought we would never reach Poowong, but at last we did, and at half-past 9 arrived at the post office kept by Mrs. Horsley, who received us very kindly, and soon had us seated by a good fire and an even better meal, after partaking of which we felt much better. Next day, being Sunday, we had a good rest, and on Monday morning, father having arrived, he and mother and I started off on foot, each carrying a bundle, along "pack-track," "Wallaby-track," and often no track at all, till we reached Messrs. Coverdale's place. We found them busy erecting a yard to protect their sheep from the wild dogs (dingoes) at night time, so, after a chat and, what appears to be the usual thing here in Gippsland, "a cup of tea," we pushed on as far as Matthews Bros.' selection (now D. Henry's). There was no one at home,



A FALLEN GIANT 258ft. long, 9ft. in diameter at 30ft. from base.  
(And Father said on the other side of that big log lay our selection).



so we pushed open the door of the hut, and made ourselves at home, and when Mr. Theodore Matthews returned about dark he found us in possession of his premises. However, it was all right. Mr. Matthews was very glad to see us, and made us most heartily welcome. Coming, as we did, from more civilised parts, the log hut and its furniture seemed very quaint. The table, composed of rough slabs of wood, had one of its corners supported by a substantial blackwood stump standing where it grew, two smaller stumps sawn off square at a convenient height, with a slab of wood nailed on top, made a splendid stool of the strictly non-collapsible order, and stumps of various sizes studded the floor space. Mr. Matthews apologised for the stumps by telling us that in cutting down a large bluegum tree about seven feet in diameter and 300 feet high it fell back in the opposite direction to that intended, and fell across the hut and crushed it to a pulp. The result was he had to build this hut in a hurry, and the stumps would be grubbed out as soon as time would permit.

After a few days we started off one morning to visit our selection, about two miles further on. We followed a survey line (now Sanders's lane), running in the direction we wished to go. Through the dense forest we pushed our way—we walked along logs, climbed over logs, crept under logs, crawled through logs, but seldom or never did our feet touch the ground. At last we came to an enormous log. Oh, what a monster! and father said that on the other side of that big log lay our selection. Anxious to view the promised land, we made a desperate effort and clambered on top and had a look, and what do you think we saw?—why, more logs. Were we down-hearted? No! Eager for the fray, we slid down off the log and swung our axes, and in less than an hour our first tree came crashing down, and the battle had begun. That was thirty-eight years ago. But to-day, what a change! what a transformation!

#### RETROSPECT.

When I first came to Gippsland, no seer could foretell,  
That the light-tapping axe rang the forest's deathknell;  
It spread like an ocean, and rolled like a tide  
Whenever King Storm on the tree-tops did ride.

From the ridge to the gully no break could be found,  
And the keenest observer could not see the ground;  
But the axes and fire great havoc have played  
With grim forest-giant and lovely fern-glade.

Ever gone are the gumtrees that covered the hills,  
Ever gone are the tree ferns that sheltered the rills,  
And gone are the dells where I oft loved to roam  
And bring in wild flowers to garland my home.

Never more shall I see the green forest again  
Wave free in the sunshine, droop sullen in rain;  
No more shall I sway to each altering whim  
The laughing, the tearful, the wanton, the prim.

Never more shall I list to the lyre-bird's song  
That boldly he trolled forth, so clear, and so strong,  
Or listen, mazed, as he mocked every bird,  
And mimicked to life every sound that he heard.

Never more shall I wander, awe-struck and subdued,  
While the shades of deep night on the forest did brood,  
And feel, when along those great aisles I have trod,  
I worshipped alone in a temple of God.

But away with these fancies, 'Tis better to-day  
Where the forest encumbered, the children now play  
In meadows bespangled with flowers whose hue  
Is brighter than those that the pioneers knew.

Where the forest delighted, perchance, two or three,  
The present rich meadows fill hundreds with glee.  
Our wives and our children, our homes and our farms  
Are dearer and better than Nature's wild charms.

20/1/1917.

—W. W. Johnstone.



# Recollections and Experiences.

MR. M. HANSEN.



In the year 1880, while working at shipbuilding in Flensburg, I paid a visit to my native village on the west coast of South Jutland, in the province of Slesvig, and while there intimated to my parents that work at the shipyard was likely to be slack, and as there was a steamer nearly ready to sail I would try sailing again. This steamer, the "Protos," was chartered to take a cargo of exhibits from Hamburg to Melbourne for the Exhibition. She was then to take the first cargo of frozen mutton from Melbourne to London. Little did I then dream that in time to come I should be one of those who would be a producer in that industry in after years. We left Melbourne on November 18th, and after a long and very trying voyage arrived in London on January 18th, 1881. It so happened that there had been a heavy storm raging on the English coast during the preceding days, and that no steamers had arrived, hence there was almost a meat famine in London, and this cargo sold at an average price of 14d. per lb. retail. Again we sailed for Melbourne with a general cargo, and arrived there on May 2nd, 1881.

I had a shipmate who had come to Poowong East, and his employer, Mr. P. Anderson, wrote to me offering work. I was not long in gathering up my belongings, and then took train to Drouin on September 11th. By some chance I took the wrong road at a point about seven miles from Drouin, and reached that night no further than the "Half-way House" on the Lang Lang River, then kept by Mr. W. Clifton. Next day was Sunday, and it was raining, but not daunted I set off for Poowong East, via Poowong. On arriving at Poowong about noon I was very pleased to get some refreshment at Mrs. Holmes's. They kept the store there at that time. On the road to Poowong Mr. W. Treadwell caught up to me, and even now he sometimes reminds me of the size of my swag, which certainly looked monstrous and bulky, as it contained, amongst other things, a feather bed and some books. From Poowong I wended my way to the east along McDonald's Track and then down the East Poowong road. Coming to where the Poowong East Hall now stands, I met Mr. Ed. Petersen, whom I recognised as a playmate in Slesvig, although it was some seven years since we had met. He was on his road home from Sunday school, and he helped me to carry my burden, and guided me towards my destination.

My first impression of Poowong East was anything but favourable. Hemmed in on all sides by scrub on a small clearing on what is now known as the Waterfall Estate, and it proved to be an exceptionally wet and cold Spring, so much so that we had a fall of snow a few days after my arrival. The first work performed by two others and myself was digging a piece of land on a steep hillside, where there was sown a crop of oats, but while

digging this land we at the same time grubbed out all tree-stumps so that the land was ready for the plough. In that particular locality it would be difficult to find enough level land to form a tennis court. The hills rise abruptly from the creeks to the top of the hills, and it is not seldom that they rise from 600 to 700 feet above the creek level. No matter where one had to go, it meant climbing except in following a narrow bush track along the creek towards Mr. Byriell's, and in going there the track was nearly always muddy either in Winter or Summer, as it was very narrow, and the sun could not penetrate and dry the surface.

In the beginning of October four of us started to fell scrub. I was new at this, and altogether unaccustomed to the use of the axe. No doubt I made but a poor show, but after a while I got to be more adept and worked very hard at the job till Christmas. Just then the Shire of Buln Buln let a contract for clearing scrub off the Poowong East road from what is called Box's corner to near Staben's. While working on this job I got seriously thinking on the land problem, and sometimes meditated thus: "If I am to work on the land, why not also try to get a piece of land and work for myself." I had a talk on this matter with one or more of my mates on this job, who, by the way, were all selectors, and they certainly did not discourage me in the idea. There was a piece of land close to the Poowong East road which had been forfeited, and for this I lodged my application, and was duly summoned to attend a Land Board at Drouin. There was a rival applicant in the person of Mr. O'Connor, and he got the land and still holds it. I next sent in an application for the land which was ultimately recommended to me, and which I held until December, 1909, when it passed into other hands. When I sent in my application I had funds enough to pay the survey fee, and it was not long before I started to fell some scrub. The first burn over, I sowed this with grass seed and built a hut, expecting next year to reap the first season's grass for seed, and so avoid buying seed for the next land cleared, and perhaps have some seed to sell; but the best laid schemes o' mice and men "aft gang a-gley," and so also with this. Just when the rye grass was beginning to ripen, the caterpillars appeared, and in less than a fortnight there was nothing to see of any kind of grass, where it formerly stood two feet high. They even devoured the foliage of a plot of potatoes. Next season there was over 50 acres of grass to stock, and I invested in some stock at Poowong market, which investment turned out one of the best made by me. Besides doing work on the land it was necessary to keep things going, so I had to go out occasionally and earn some needful cash. Sometimes this was done by working for other selectors and at other times taking contracts from the Shire. Amongst the Shire work was the side-cutting from Byriell's to Staben's, about one mile in length.

One of the first incentives to take up land was to get a home, also to enable me to work for myself and not for anyone else, and thus enjoy the glorious privilege of being independent. A home is surely, and ought to be, a place where one feels there is rest when weary, and peace from the world's strife, and to one's self a spot like none other on earth, even though it be ever so humble. My first abode was indeed humble enough for anyone; it measured about 18 x 14 feet, built of logs and thatched with bark—still it was a home. It was where I could go when I had nowhere else to go; it was where my ideas were centred, where I could work and do as I liked, provided my action did not directly or indirectly bring harm to myself or others. Looking into the future, I confidently hoped to build a better house in later years, which was started in the early part of 1887. It was not, however,

destined to be completed, for while working with another man at picking up away from home, the house caught alight, and, before we could reach home, was destroyed. Since learning to char our stumps I have but little doubt that there must have been some wood smouldering, which eventually set fire to the framework of the building, and then set the whole alight. This catastrophe landed me in a very serious financial predicament, and not being able to carry on I left for Melbourne and sought work there. Little by little I managed to pay off my indebtedness and also got 100 acres more land cleared by contract. This, however, took me till September, 1893. During those six years I was employed at various work in Melbourne, but on the whole it was fairly remunerative, so much so that I deemed it more profitable to let the clearing work by contract than to come and do it myself. At first I got a small rental for the land cleared, but a neighbour came who grazed the land and refused to put up a division fence; in fact, at one time he took in horses to graze and kept them in my paddock, and charged the owner of the horses for the grass.

In September, 1893, I again began working the land myself. There was now about 200 acres of grass, with what I had just sown, although some of the old clearing had grown up with hazel and other scrub. This I set to work to clear and burn first of all. Then I built again a log house and afterwards added a skillion on each side. This house, however, had an iron roof. Then there was fencing and yards and sheds to build, enough to keep me in constant employment and out of mischief, and I did not get many holidays. At first I grazed cattle and sheep and aimed at getting some cows and then go in for dairying. Then, little by little, I managed to get together a small dairy herd, until when the great bushfire came on February 1st, 1898, we turned out 22 cows in the morning and next morning there were not more than 12 alive, and out of 430 sheep only a few over 200 were left which were in good order, and hence were marketed immediately. The remaining cattle I managed to keep alive on a few acres of maize until there was grass again. This fire might have done a certain amount of good in burning some of the logs and other timber off the land, but on the whole it did more damage than anything to those who had their land in fair order. Even assuming that there was 15 - worth of timber burned off each acre, the grass seed required to re-sow would cost 5 - per acre, and the same amount to replace the burned fences, and more to cut down the undergrowth that sprang up after the fire, so that on this basis there was an actual loss. All the buildings and fences were burned, and considerable labour was required to replace these. In my case I placed the new divisional fences so as to divide the ploughable land from that which was not so. Of course, some people laughed at the idea, but the time came when they ceased laughing at it.

The next Spring found me roaming the country in search of stock. For about three weeks I travelled in various parts of Gippsland, and thus again secured what I thought quite enough stock for the land under grass. But the growth in the Spring was so prolific that although most people had stocked up with more cattle than usual, the grass was, in many cases, so long that there would have been ample to mow had this been practicable. That season will not easily be forgotten owing to the tremendous rise in price of all kinds of stock, and hence nearly everybody did remarkably well. This would also have been the case with me had it not been for the fact that a neighbour who had about 200 acres of scrub to burn next to mine, and in burning this set fire to my grass, with the result that nearly all was burnt.

When I approached him and asked that at least he should give me the grass seed to re-sow the burned ground, he politely told me that it was my fault that the grass burned. Being an old man he had sent his sons to clear a firebreak round, particularly on my side, but the fact was they did not do the work, but lay down in the shade of a tree instead, while they were supposed to be working.

Many people were now convinced that dairying was the most profitable pursuit on this land. Most of us were also convinced that the land after being ploughed and laid down in grass again would yield more grass and that of better quality. My aim, therefore, was to get as much of the land ploughed as possible; besides ploughing the land was deemed the most effective method of eradicating bracken fern wherever they had got a good hold. Many of us had neglected to keep these seemingly harmless plants in check, for instead of keeping them down, we devoted nearly all our energies to clearing the forest land. It was perhaps a grave error to destroy all this valuable timber. I am inclined to think that within a very brief period those who have saved a few acres of timber will find that it will be the most valuable crop the land has ever yielded. And some of the forest could, with care, have been saved from destruction, and in a few instances this has been done. Yet most of us deemed it inadvisable to leave even one acre of standing timber. Many of us thought that there was ample timber to last for a generation and more, but alas, the fires killed most of the standing timber, and after a few years those who had only sapling country had not wherewithal to fence their holdings, but had, in some instances after the bushfires in 1898, to cart the needed fencing material from a distance. In odd places the bluegums have sprung up from seeds in the ground, and whoever sees to their preservation will no doubt, ere long, find that even these few will be a blessing. In Summer they will afford shelter from the sun, in the Winter from the stormy blast, and finally when grown up, be useful for whatever purpose the timber is best suited.

In the very beginning it was no mean task to get to our holdings. There were no tracks, only survey lines, and these were leading over hill and dale, up gradients that were only negotiable for goats and such animals. But tracks we had to get, and eventually got them. It cost many a day's work even to get a rough track. The nearest clearing to mine was about a mile, and to that place I cut a track. On this track, which was only wide enough to get a pack horse through, there was about 12 chains of side cutting and two bridges. It was not until 12 years after I had selected the land that a few of my neighbours and self managed to get the Buln Buln Shire Council to make a survey of a road, and three years more before we were enabled to take a vehicle to the place. To get this, I went to Drouin, where the Council met, to every meeting, and if I happened to be absent, then I always had a letter there to remind them of our claim. Up to the time we were able to get a road to our places, we went through neighbour's land on sufferance, and, in some cases, this caused unpleasantness and sometimes hardship. It certainly seems curious on the part of the Lands Department in Melbourne to cause roads to be surveyed which no one could use for that purpose, for roads were surveyed between every second block of land, and in ninety-nine instances out of every hundred these roads were in some places quite impracticable. Of late years, wiser counsels have prevailed in the Lands Department, seeing that they now first survey practicable, easy graded roads, and then survey the land so that all allotments have a frontage to these roads. And this is now done before the land is thrown open for selection, and thus the prospective selector

can see better the location and contour of the land. The roads we used were of the crudest description, and even in Summer had an amount of mud on them, so that travelling was far from pleasant.

There were a few of those who selected in this locality who had a little cash to start their undertaking; others, again, like myself, had practically nothing but our strength. Most of us selected 320 acres or about that area. This was perhaps the gravest mistake of all, as we could not develop this area in a reasonable time, and hence all the unimproved land was in reality an incumbrance in many ways. Had we selected 160 acres or less, we could have developed our holdings in considerably less time, and would have had more chances of enjoying more and better schools, better postal facilities, more social intercourse, with the correspondingly less isolation. In brief, we would have had more civilisation. With smaller holdings we could have enjoyed advantages such as few can now estimate. Still, with all these disadvantages, we struggled on, step by step, towards the goal, with endurance, learning to labour and to wait.

One thing we had to unlearn after the first few clearings were made; at first, we felled the spars only up to 12 inches in diameter, and this left a quantity of spars still standing, which were mostly killed by the fire which burned the scrub. Then, the following season, these shed their dry bark and often also their branches, and on a windy day they would uproot and lie on the ground. All this, or most of it, was done away with by felling the scrub to a greater diameter, and this also gave a greater body of material to burn, and caused a fiercer fire, with the result that the land had a much better seed bed and was altogether better cleared.

The work of clearing the land was very hard, very strenuous, but, like all such work, it made our frugal fare seem good and tasty, and on the whole it was a very healthy mode of living. Young men and boys who worked at this clearing of land seemed to develop and grow strong and hardy, perhaps more so than if they had followed less arduous tasks. In fact, I am inclined to think that young men who grew up under these conditions in these parts will compare favourably in most respects, physically as well as mentally, with men grown up in many other avocations or other places.

In October, 1909, while busy making more land fitted for the plough, for instead of continually cutting ferns it became evident that the plough was the most effective method of eradicating them, an estate agent and a gentleman of the legal profession came one day and paid me a visit. We ended this day by the lawyer buying my place.

Afterwards, I spent about two years on tramp in the United States, Canada and Europe, and on returning here again settled on a very small piece of land in Korumburra. It is only  $3\frac{1}{2}$  acres, but I am firmly convinced that the small holdings are by far the most profitable in comparison with the larger holdings. This also seems to be the prevailing idea in many other parts of the world. As an instance of that, in 1870 the farms in the United States had an average of 270 acres, and in the year 1910 the average was reduced to 131 acres, or rather less than half in 40 years.

In looking back upon the life of a pioneer, I have not much to regret. Many a one has fared worse than I, inasmuch that they came in with something, and after years of struggle left there the worse in health and also in other respects. That the life of pioneering did not by any means bring unmingled joy is certain, yet, after all, it has been my lot to come out of the ordeal with one of life's greatest blessings, namely, good health.

# The Great Southern Railway.

MR. R. J. FULLER.

One of the greatest difficulties that confronted the pioneers of the Poowong and Jeetho district and, indeed, the whole extent of country known as the Strzelecki Ranges was transport.



McDonald's Track was the only surveyed road. The so-called roads, sectional roads, were utterly impracticable. The Land Surveyors cut tracks in various directions to enable them to get their stores of provisions to their camps. These the selectors widened out and improved, and, in many cases, also widened out the survey lines. But these were, for the most part, so hilly that they never could be adapted to vehicular traffic. It soon became evident to the early settlers that better roads would have to be found if they were to make a success of their undertaking, consequently any time that could be spared from the important work of scrub cutting, burning off, or packing stores, seed, etc., was devoted to searching for road routes. It was generally done on wet days when other work was impossible. We generally started off with an oil cape to protect our shoulders, and, commencing near home, worked down the gullies and along the ridges to ascertain the general trend and lay of the country, which, at first, owing to the density of the scrub, seemed to have no sort of order or method in it.

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In this way, we soon got a good idea of the lay of the country in our immediate vicinity, which we gradually extended farther afield, either by actual work or by comparing notes with our neighbours. Some of the older settlers along the Grantville road were very pessimistic as to our getting roads through the hill country for many years to come, speaking, probably, from bitter experience.

I well remember a trip I had with the late Mr. Binding from the Grantville road to Tucker's survey camp on the Bass. I inquired of him in what direction we should probably get a road into our blocks from the Bass. "Oh!" he replied, "you needn't expect to get a road for the next twenty years." I was more hopeful. I argued that a large extent of country with a good climate would not be many years without proper means of communication. But I don't think any of us were sanguine enough to ever think of a railway in those days. I had many conversations with the surveyor-general, Mr. M. Callanan, and surveyor Lardner on the question of roads. The former was very sympathetic, but said, "You must find and blaze the roads, then I will have them surveyed." This we accordingly did.

We blazed a road from Blew's through Fuller's to Poowong, which proved a great improvement on the old tracks. Another was blazed from Hewitt's along Whitelaw's track on to McDonald's Track; still another from Fuller's to the junction with the Sunnyside road at Horner's.



A road bee was formed, and we cut the Jeetho West road from Jas. Wilson's to Horner's, camping on the road works for over a week, but we had to let a contract to finish it.

This is a fair sample of what occurred throughout the district. It was the seventh year before we got a bullock team to cart in our stores, the bulk of which we used in those days to get in once a year.

Up to that time, and for many years afterwards, over most of the district the pack horse was the only means of transport.

The same difficulties in a less degree confronted the pioneers throughout Victoria, and it soon found expression in a demand for railway development. Progress Associations and Railway Leagues were formed all over the State. Roads and railways were the main topics of conversation—railways, especially, were in the air. Our district took up the cry, and Railway Leagues were formed at Poowong and Cruikston, Messrs. Chas. Cook, Caleb Burchett, Mark Gardner, R. J. Murdoch and many others taking an active part.

Rival routes were freely and somewhat acrimoniously discussed in the local press. All energy was at first directed towards Drouin, the general opinion being that we should have to junction with the main Gippsland line.

Flying survey parties were at work all over the State. For a considerable time one or two were engaged between Drouin and McDonald's Track. We regarded McDonald's Track, which fell away steep and abrupt on the south side, as an effectual bar to any connection by rail with the southern portion of the district, and therefore turned our attention in the direction of Dandenong.

The knowledge acquired in our search for roads now stood us in good stead, and gave us a good general idea of a possible route for a railway.

With the larger object in view we redoubled our efforts, and soon became convinced that a good route could be got down the Allsop valley and thence down the Bass to Sunnyside and on to the open country. The Allsop route was the watchword of the southern brigade. It was the one topic of conversation. Some laughed at it, thought it a good joke; others were more serious; all hoped it would prove true.

Mr. James Gibb, the then member for Mornington, took a prominent part in advocating the "Great Southern Line," as it was soon christened. He was glad to have advocates in our district to back him up and strengthen his hands. Railway Leagues were formed all along the line.

Poowong hung on to the Drouin route as long as there was any hope. In the meantime, Mr. Surveyor Montague, in charge of a flying survey party, had started at Dandenong and got as far as Lang Lang, when he shifted camp to the Cherry Tree rises on McDonald's Track. I paid a visit to his camp, and was very courteously received. He informed me he had open instructions as to route, being directed to get a line through the Strzelecki Ranges with no heavier grade than 1 in 40. I at once advocated the Allsop route. After talking the matter over for some time he said, after he had tried McDonald's Track, about which he had received a good deal of information, he would go over the Allsop route with me. His first object was to get through the ranges to show that it was possible to get a practicable route. When the final survey was made, if I could show a better or cheaper

route to construct, he had no doubt it would be adopted. He promised if he got into difficulties by way of McDonald's Track or Bass valley, he would come and see me and go over the All-sop route. I felt confident that I could show a better route than either McDonald's Track or the Bass valley. The former rose too abruptly, and the Bass, although it showed splendid grades for a considerable distance, when it got through Coverdale's, rose very abruptly on to Whitelaw's Track. It was very difficult, too, getting off either McDonald's Track or Whitelaw's Track. The lowest point on Whitelaw's Track, which must be crossed if the Bass route was adopted, was 400 feet higher than a point less than half a mile to the south which would be traversed by the All-sop route. This made it possible to cross from the watershed of the All-sop to Coal or Coalition creeks. Mr. John Lardner, land-surveyor, gave me valuable information re altitudes taken during his road surveys.

Having no actual knowledge of the country beyond Yorath's, I saw the necessity of examining the country beyond. Some of the selectors along the proposed route were not at all encouraging; in fact, they were very pessimistic. "You can't even get a decent road," said one, "yet you think you are going to get a railway."

One of the carriers who on his four horses packed a large part of the stores and grass seed into, and most of the produce out of the southern part of the district, thought the railway agitation a good joke. With what a small measure did they gauge the future possibilities of South Gippsland.

Peter Shingler, on Coal creek, gave me valuable information, and it was arranged that he and I should spend a week investigating the country between his place and the Tarwin.

We started off, and finally found a fairly good route near to the present flourishing town of Leongatha, down the Coal creek valley. A funny incident occurred at the Wild Dog creek. We were making for Surveyor Langford's camp near Palmross's. He was surveying blocks in that vicinity, and we wanted some information from him. We were tired and hungry, and the day was closing in, when we struck a selector who was milking a cow; he directed us to Langford's camp. After a brief interview with Langford, we made our way back again to Phelan's, who kindly offered to give us a shake-down for the night. He was quite out of meat and bread. In those days the butcher and baker did not call round once or twice a week. However, he set to work at once making scones, and about 9 o'clock, when we were enjoying a hearty meal, who should come in but the party who we found milking the cow. He said to Phelan, "They want some meat; they have been travelling all day; they want some meat." Phelan gave us what he had—meat was "off."

This recalls another incident. Elliott and I had been out all day investigating the country between his place and Coal creek, and with difficulty made our way back to his clearing before dark. After a spell we groped our way to his hut, tired and hungry. He, too, was out of bread, but he had some whole wheaten meal, and he set to work and made some scones. About 9 o'clock we made a combination meal, dinner, tea and supper. The scones and butter were most enjoyable; I never enjoyed a meal more in my life, either before or since.

Montague, on proceeding with his survey, found McDonald's Track impracticable. He then proceeded up the Bass. We heard very favourable

reports for a considerable time; then that he had come up against White-law's Track and was blocked; then that he had got through the range by tunnelling; then that he had been instructed to abandon the survey as impracticable; and, finally, that he had struck camp and returned to Lang Lang.

All the people along the line from Dandenong to Lang Lang were very impatient at the delay in getting through the ranges. They were afraid the passage of the Railway Bill through Parliament would be jeopardised. Mr. James Gibb, M.L.A., was also anxious about the delay, and informed me that the Bass route involved heavy banks and expensive tunnelling through the range, which put that route completely out of court.

The coast route which Mr. Montague was now instructed to proceed with would be of no service to our district, and now that the hope of getting a route either by McDonald's Track or the Bass had failed, I hoped to get the railway leagues at Poowong and Cruikston to make common cause with us to have the Allsop route surveyed. With that object I visited the leaders of these leagues, but they refused point blank. They still pinned their faith on either the Drouin, McDonald's Track or Bass routes. I was much disappointed that Mr. Montague did not come and see me, as he said he would, if he failed to get through by McDonald's Track or the Bass; but, no doubt, he had his orders from the Department. The coast route was easy going, and he quickly got as far as the Bass, near Westernport, beyond Grantville. I wrote him at his camp on the Bass and received the following reply:

(Copy.)

Railway Survey Camp,

Bass,

April 21, 1883.

R. Fuller, Esq.

Sir,

Yours containing sketch of country in your district duly to hand. With regard to proposed route, I certainly think the valley of the Bass the best for several reasons, and as it is not considered good enough is evident by the fact that I have been directed to try for some more practicable route, I would point out (what you no doubt know I presume) that I submit plans and sections when an actual survey is made, and the acceptance or rejection of any route from an engineering point of view rests with my chiefs. From a political point of view, you of course know as much, probably more, than I do. The opinion which I expressed to Messrs. Blew and Patterson was certainly the reverse of encouraging as to getting through Pobjoy's and Blew's; and Mr. Blew so understood, whatever Mr. Patterson may have thought. I regret you could not come over to the camp when near Hewitt's, as, outside railway routes, or sinking shop altogether, I am always happy to have a quiet talk with any liberal minded person, and shall remember our chat at Cherry Tree Hill camp for a long time to come. I sincerely hope it will not be the last one, but at present, and probably for some months to come, I will be rather distant for visiting. We are having glorious weather here from my point of view. Wishing you every success in your mercantile task of reclaiming the Jectho forest from its inhospitable condition.

I remain,

Very truly yours,

GEORGE MONTAGUE.

I then wrote Mr. George Darbyshire, engineer in charge of railway surveys, stating that I believed I could show the best route through the ranges by way of the Allsop valley on to the main Strzelecki range: thence following the range for some distance until the head waters of Coal creek were struck, and thence down the Coal creek valley to the Tarwin river. I also stated that Mr. Montague had promised to go over the proposed route with me, but had been withdrawn from the neighbourhood without having done so.

In reply I received the following:

(Copy.)

Railway Department,  
Secretary's Office,  
Melbourne, 11th June, 1883.

Sir,

Adverting to my letter of the 29th ultimo, acknowledging receipt of yours under date 24th idem, suggesting a route for the Great Southern Railway from where it strikes the Bass river to coal creek. I now beg to inform you that instructions have been issued to Mr. Montague, the engineer in charge of a survey party in the neighbourhood, to place himself in communication with you and go over the route indicated by you: he will, if necessary, make a survey of it.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

P. P. LABERTOUCHE,  
Secretary.

R. J. Fuller, Esq.  
Framlingham Park,  
Jeetho.

Mr. Montague came over shortly afterwards, and we spent two days, going over the proposed routes from the Bass via the Allsop valley, crossing the main range at Brind's and Fuller's boundaries, thence along the range, through Pobjoy's, Blew's, Blake's, and Yorath's to the head waters of Coal creek. He took levels all along the line: said it crossed the main range 400 feet lower than where he crossed it on Whitelaw's Track. His levels also corresponded with Mr. Lardner's.

He went away without saying anything definite, but leaving the impression in my mind that he would not report favourably of the route.

After waiting over a week and getting no reply, I determined to go to headquarters. I saw Mr. James Gibb, M.L.A., and requested him to introduce me to Mr. Geo. Darbyshire, which he did. Mr. Darbyshire had the character amongst his officers of being a martinet, and I confess it was with some trepidation that I anticipated the interview.

He received me very gruffly at first, in a manner that said "What do you know about railway routes?" I produced a sketch of the proposed route, and when he saw that it traversed a portion of our selections, he said, "Almost everyone who comes here advocating a pet railway route runs it through his own back yard: how they are to get away from there they don't know." This was a rebuff: but I replied, "That it was very unfortunate, but I did not think

it sufficient reason to prevent me advocating what I felt sure was the best route obtainable through the ranges." He then went into details with me; called for Montague's plans and sections, and put me through a severe cross-examination, evidently testing my information by the actual surveys made. He gradually became more genial and friendly, and wound up by saying that Mr. Montague had to carry the survey he was engaged in to a certain point, and he should then make a flying survey of the Allsop route. I asked if he could not send a younger man with more experience of scrub country, and suggested Mr. W. G. Field. I had previously talked the matter of the survey over with Mr. Callanan, Surveyor-General, and said I was afraid Mr. Montague was not favourable to the route. He then suggested Mr. Field as a first-rate man, who had considerable experience in the Mirboo district, which was also heavy scrub country. Mr. Darbyshire demurred somewhat when I suggested Mr. Field, but said there were so many flying surveys being made that experienced men were difficult to obtain; but he would endeavour to send a surveyor and camp up within a fortnight.

Three weeks had gone by, and I began to be very anxious, when, on a very wet night—it had been raining heavily all day—just at dusk I heard a bullock whip crack, and the driver calling out to his bullocks, "Come here, Boulder; Gee, Strawberry!" It was Mr. Tom Horner with Mr. Field's survey camp. They had come via Hastings and Grantville, where Mr. Horner had taken them in hand and brought them on by bullock team. Every man was wet to the skin. My father and sisters being away, we, fortunately had four vacant rooms available for them to camp in. We had, fortunately, killed a sheep that morning. They soon had a blazing fire and started cooking operations, while others roused their swags out of the waggon, and those that could changed their wet clothes for dry ones. They were all very glad to get to their destination. As soon as the weather cleared Field started his men, erecting his camp alongside our dam, while he and I went over the proposed route from the Bass to Yorath's. I could see he was not very impressed, and he said the country was very rough. Progress was, necessarily, very slow. Owing to the density of the scrub, lines had to be cut in many directions and levels taken, in order to discover the best route. However, in course of time he got a line through with a grade not exceeding 1 in 40 by making a 50ft. cutting through the main Strzelecki range at Brind's north boundary. Mr. W. G. Field, P. Shingler and I afterwards went through along the route we had indicated down the valley of Coal creek as far as the Tarwin. Here also the Engineer got a practicable line, which had the approval of the Engineer-in-Chief and the Commissioners. Engineers were at once put on to make the permanent survey. Mr. W. G. Field had charge of the section from Lang Lang to Brind's, and Mr. Thomas Griffin that from Brind's to Koorooman. Mr. Griffin in making the permanent survey got what he considered a better route down the valley of Coalition creek by crossing the Whitelaw's Track spur at Korumburra. The difficulties the engineers had to contend against in making the trial and permanent surveys will be better understood from the cost of clearing the line three chains wide. Messrs. Falkingham and Sons' contract price for this alone was £600 per mile.

As the survey progressed and favourable reports were circulated, the southern selectors became very jubilant; the pessimists became advocates; and the advocates, enthusiasts. There was a strong agitation in favour of opening up the country by means of railways throughout the Colony. Mr. Duncan Gillies, the then Premier, formulated a railway scheme embracing some 600 miles of line. This did not satisfy members of Parliament. They

waited on him, and he agreed to extend it to 800 miles. Still they were not satisfied. Those beyond the extended lines brought all the pressure they could from their several districts, and, fortunately, they were well supported by the public and the press.

When Mr. Gillies brought forth his scheme before the House, in one night the projected 800 miles was extended to 1600 miles. The Great Southern Line, which was to have terminated at a black stump in Koorooman, near what is now Leongatha, was extended to Port Albert, and so with many other lines throughout the Colony. After events proved that this ambitious scheme was too extended for the then resources of the Colony. There was not sufficient population or capital to develop such an extent of country served by the new lines in so short a time. The railways for a considerable time after construction did not pay. Mr. Richard Speight was careful to point out that this would be the result; but, he said, eventually, no doubt, they would pay. And so it proved. That railway scheme did a vast amount of good in developing both the country and the city of Melbourne. During the last decade the revenue from both passenger and goods traffic has more than doubled. Had fares and freight been reduced to the extent they should have been, there is no doubt that the country would have progressed far more rapidly than it has done, and the deplorable depletion of the country population would not have taken place.

The bill having passed both Houses, it became necessary for us to exert ourselves to get the line constructed as early as possible. To that end we held a meeting at Mr. W. Elliott's, and I was deputed to go to town to invite the Railway Commissioners and our representatives, Mr. James Gibb, M.L.A., and J. C. Mason, M.L.A., to a banquet. I was very graciously received by the Railway Commissioners, and in reply to the invitation Mr. Speight said that they, the Commissioners, were not supposed to attend banquets, but he and his fellow Commissioners would have to inspect the line, and they would take it as a favour if we could accommodate them for a night. On this hint we acted.

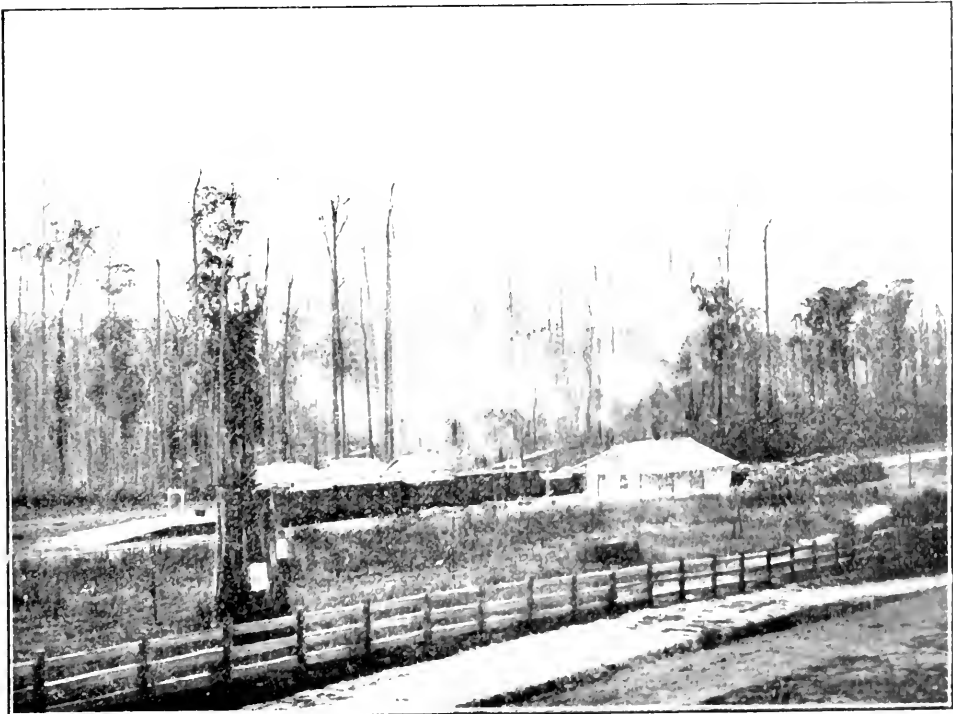
Our object was to get the Commissioners to go through the country and see the deplorable state of our means of transport. We felt sure that this would induce them to construct the Great Southern Line at the earliest possible date.

When I went to town, C. Parsons and, I think, E. K. Herring, rode over to Drouin with me. It was arranged that I should telegraph to them the date fixed upon, should the Commissioners be good enough to accept our invitation to a banquet, so that they could arrange with the late Mr. John Sutcliffe, hotelkeeper at Drouin, to send crockery and cutlery, and also the necessaries which I was commissioned to send from town, out to where Korumburra now stands. The whole district lent a willing hand. Messrs. Yorath Bros. had a good-sized galvanised iron building, which, with the aid of ferns and bunting, we converted into a banquet hall. We were fortunate in having this rough material with which to work. The eventful day was at hand. Mr. R. Speight and Mr. Green, two of the Commissioners (Mr. Ford could not leave the city), accompanied by Mr. Geo. Darbyshire, Engineer-in-Chief, and Messrs. W. G. Field and Geo. Griffin, the surveyors of the line, made their tour of inspection. They spent a night at Loch, where they were entertained at Mr. A. R. Smith's residence. The next day they had dinner at R. J. Fuller's, and then went on, accompanied by a cavalcade of horsemen, to Messrs. Yorath Bros.' residence. There we formed ourselves into a

deputation, introduced by our member, Mr. James Gibb, and requested the Commissioners to have the Great Southern Line constructed at the very earliest date. Mr. Speight was very sympathetic; said we were making a grand country for our children; must have the hearts of lions to tackle it, etc. There was no doubt, he said, that the railway communication was very urgently required, but there were many other parts of the colony that were equally pressing, and their endeavour would be to carry on as many lines as possible *pari passu*. In the evening we entertained all the visitors at a banquet. When all the circumstances are taken into account, we made a very creditable display. Everyone lent a helping hand. Arthur Pobjoy was our chef and head waiter. He had some experience in that direction acquired in civilisation. We all had experience, mostly acquired in camp life, which we did not think good enough for such an occasion, and we therefore deferred to him. Looking back over the intervening thirty years, we can still regard the result with complacency. We then regarded it as a *chef d'oeuvre*. We felt we had made a favourable impression.

In the year 1887 the first contract was let for the construction of the line from Dandenong to Korumburra to Messrs. Falkingham and Sons, and soon afterwards the second section from Korumburra to Welshpool to Mr. O'Keefe.

The latter proved much more energetic than the former, who seemed to us to proceed very leisurely. However, it dragged its slow length along, or so it seemed to our impatience, and, finally, the two sections were opened on the same day.



AFTER MANY YEARS.

We fondly anticipated that the completion of the railway would have greatly enhanced the value of land in South Gippsland, and thereby enabled us to proceed much more rapidly with converting the forest to pasture. But in the meantime the boom had arrived. Vast sums of cheap money had been sent out from England and Germany for investment, which induced extensive speculation in land and buildings. Unfortunately for us, these speculations were mainly confined to the City and suburbs, and a restricted radius of twenty miles or so from Melbourne. Fabulous fortunes were made—on paper! Land was sold mainly on bills extending over some years. As the land rose in value it was sold again, on bills, and so on, many times repeated. Then came the collapse. The first buyer was unable to meet his engagements; the second, who was dependent on the first, perforce also failed, and so on like a pack of cards falling.

We were too far removed to receive much benefit from the boom, but not, unfortunately, too far to feel the effects of the collapse. Landed property became unsaleable. Banks and mortgages foreclosed. Many a struggling selector lost the result of many years of ardent toil and the expenditure of all he possessed. But, as Byron says, "When things get to the worst, they sometimes mend;" salvation was at hand. The advent of the cream separator combined with the refrigerator brought about a revolution. The refrigerator opened up a vast, illimitable market overseas at a remunerative price. The separator, while banishing much of the drudgery of dairying, enabled farmers to milk a larger number of cows and give all their attention to dairying. The weekly cash returns quickly removed the financial strain, and gave Banks and money-lenders confidence. Clearing went on apace again, and everyone yearly extended the area of his pasture, and, consequently, the stock carrying capabilities of his property.

The Credit Foncier Bill was placed on the Statute Book and proved one of the most beneficial Acts ever enacted in the interest of the farmer. The rate of interest was rapidly brought down on all loans from 8 and 9 per cent. to 4 to 6 per cent., and the mortgagees became more liberal in their charges and terms. A rapid advance took place in the value of property. Whereas land was sold as low as £3 per acre during the collapse of the boom, it steadily rose to £18 and £20 per acre. Owing to a continuity of splendid seasons in the north and Mallee country, which has attracted many in that direction, and the bad state of our roads, this price was not fully maintained; but the dry seasons which Australian history tells us we must expect, are bound to recur, and land values in this district will again advance. During thirty-eight years, South Gippsland has known but one disastrous year—1898—the year of the fires. The fluctuation of season is but slight, and steady progress is assured.



# The Coal Industry of South Gippsland.

MR. M. HALFORD.

I am indebted to the following gentlemen for information, and gratefully acknowledge the help of Mr. Reginald Murray, Mr. T. Horsley, Mr. D. McLeod, Mr. J. Hardwick, and Mr. T. J. Coverdale. I am also indebted to the "Powlett Coal Fields and Coal History of Victoria," a pamphlet issued in 1910.



Although coal was discovered in Victoria 26 years before the discovery of gold, the coal deposits have slept, while the gold fields have been the scene of many a wild rush, and were fully developed years before the Victorian coal industry was a real fact.

When the earliest indications of coal were found in South Gippsland, the country was covered with scrub, and there being no roads or tracks, it was seldom visited except just along the coast where the first coal was found.

Such authorities as Selwyn, McCoy and Reginald Murray predicted the likelihood of payable coal deposits existing, and their reports induced various Governments to put down bores from time to time, and also offer rewards for the finding of a payable coal field, but nothing came of their efforts, as all the first attempts at mining were a failure. It was not until the selector arrived and started to clear the country that the discovery of important coal seams was made, which led to the foundation of the present coal industry.

In 1826 the first coal was discovered in Victoria by Wright and Wetherall. About two years before Wright and Wetherall's discovery, Hume and Hovell had led an expedition from Sydney to southern Victoria, skirting Port Phillip, near Geelong, and were much impressed with the quality of the country. Hovell declared it was Westernport they had struck, but Hume disputed it. When they returned to Sydney, Hovell maintained his theory, and his description of the country induced the Governor of New South Wales (Darling) to send a ship to Westernport to take possession with a number of convicts and soldiers under the command of Captain Wright, which were conveyed by H.M.S. Fly (Captain Wetherall). With this expedition went Hovell to show them the country he supposed he had discovered there, which he failed to do. It was on this expedition that Wright and Wetherall discovered coal.

This discovery created but little interest, and no importance was attached to this or to the later discovery by Dr. Anderson of the Rock and Queen veins in the same locality. Dr. Anderson opened up the seams and forwarded a sample of the coal to Sydney in May, 1836. Two years later Captain Cole opened up a small seam near what is now San Remo, and took several tons to Melbourne. In 1847 a coal prospecting association was formed to work the seams at Cape Paterson, but although a few bores were put down, it was



FIRST COAL FROM THE HUMBANNA MINE.

not until 1852 that a serious effort was made to prospect for coal there. This was directly due to a reward of £1000 offered by the Victorian Government in September, 1852, for the discovery of a workable coalfield in Victoria.

Mr. Richard Davis, who went into the Kileunda-Cape Paterson district in 1842, carefully examined the rocks on the coast, and apparently re-discovered the Rock and Queen veins between tide marks in a creek to the west of Cape Paterson. He secured a sample of about 30 lb. weight, which he brought to Melbourne, submitted to Governor Latrobe, and claimed the reward.

To determine whether the seams extended inland Mr. Davis sank a shaft behind the sand dunes at an elevation of about 50 feet above sea level, conditional to the Government paying the cost. In 1858 Mr. Arthur Selwyn, the Government Geologist, examined the shaft and reported:—Coal 3ft. 9in. at 53ft. from surface. Coal (with small partings), 1ft. 8in. at 67ft. 4in. from surface. Total depth of shaft, 95ft. These seams are identical with the Rock and Queen veins, and settled to some extent the fact that the coal deposits on the beach were more than a mere local deposit.

Though Mr. Davis claimed the reward of £1000, it was some years before it was paid, and owing to heavy expenses in the prospecting work undertaken, he only benefited to the extent of about £400."

In 1858 attempts to win payable coal were made at Cape Paterson. The late Mr. Nathaniel Levi was the leading spirit in forming a company to work the coal and ship it to Melbourne; 2000 tons were bagged and delivered in Melbourne and sold for 35/- per ton. The coal had to be bagged and carted to the coast, there being no harbour. Whale boats were used to convey the coal out to larger vessels about a mile out in Bass Strait. An attempt to use a small bay to the east of Cape Paterson was made, and a tramway was built to carry the coal there. The rough gales and seas were too severe on the boats, the port being too exposed, and the company wound up in 1864 after five years' struggling. The company lost heavily, a loss of about £20,000 being incurred. Mr. Levi lost about £7000 in the enterprise.

In 1865 Mr. James Carew found the seam at the Kileunda mine, which the Westernport Coal Co. was subsequently formed to work.

The Government in 1870 offered a bonus of £5000 for the delivery of 5000 tons of coal in Melbourne from a workable mine in Victoria. The company sent 15,000 tons to Melbourne by 1877, and claimed the reward. In 1882 the company, after expending £25,000 on mining operations, contracted to supply the Railway Department with 50,000 tons in not less than 500 ton lots, at 10/- per ton at the pit mouth. When 2000 tons were raised and stacked at the mine, the contract was cancelled owing to the difficulties met with by the company in removing the coal. The company built 8½ miles of light railway 3ft. 6in. gauge, from the mine to the wharf, with coal shoots at San Remo. This cost the company £30,000, and the Government had not paid the reward of £5000. The company then chartered a vessel for a year to convey the coal to Melbourne. The 2000 tons stacked at the mine were re-tailed in Melbourne in 100 and 200 ton lots. The difficulty of keeping the vessel permanently in the trade resulted in a loss on the year's transactions, and the company ceased operations, although for some years afterwards small quantities of coal were won for local requirements.

Hodinott's seam, 3ft. thick, possibly a continuation of the Kileunda seam, was found in 1891. In 1906 the sending of coal from this mine to Melbourne via San Remo was started, and close on 1000 tons were sent in this way.

The Coal Creek seam was first discovered in 1872-3 by James Brown while prospecting. He left Stockyard Creek (Foster) for Anderson's Inlet, thence through the Strzelecki ranges, coming out at Bunyip after a week of semi-starvation. It was while on this journey that he found the Coal Creek seam.

In 1883 the Coal Creek syndicate was formed to prospect for coal in the Korumburra district, and in 1889 the Proprietary Company was formed to work the deposits. The Coal Creek mine proved to be the first profitable coal mine in Victoria. The usual difficulties of a pioneer mine were encountered. On the completion of the Great Southern Railway the company found they were forced to build a tramway from the mine to the Great Southern line, their mine being more than 10 chains from the line, which was outside the limit allowed by the Act for the Government to undertake the work. The company let the contract to build the tramway to Mr. Michael Starr. It cost the company £1357.2.6 up to the time the Government took over the line. The railway to the mine was opened for traffic on the 28th of October, 1892. Under the original manager, Mr. Hardwick, the profits from the mine, after paying for the cost of the tramway and the early cost of clearing, fencing, etc., enabled the company to pay £26,500 in dividends from the opening of the railway to the 31st of October, 1895.

In 1909 the Austral Company was formed, and worked the old Black Diamond mine, originally worked by the Coal Creek Company. The coal from this mine is of excellent quality.

The output from the Coal Creek mine in 1910 reached 10,968 tons.

The Austral mine output in 1909 was 10,631 tons.

The Silkstone mine, which was worked for some years in the Korumburra district, produced 7565 tons in 1907.

The discovery of the Jumbunna seam in 1890 by Mr. T. W. Horsley brought the possibilities of the Victorian coal industry prominently before the public. The coal was brought to the Governor of the Victorian Mint, who pronounced it of first class quality, and it has proved itself the best household coal on the market. The Jumbunna Coal Company was formed in November, 1890, and operations were started in 1894.

The following account of the discovery of the Jumbunna seam and particulars of the mine are supplied by Mr. Horsley:—

"The first discovery of coal in the above district was made by myself in the month of May, 1890, while engaged in sowing grass seed on some newly-cleared land. This proved to be the forerunner of other discoveries in the Outtrim and Korumburra districts.

The discovery did not seem to me to be of much importance at the time, and it was two months later before I did anything to prove the thickness of the seam, which, to my surprise, turned out to be 4ft. 6in. This seam is now known as the Jumbunna seam, and it has been worked by the Jumbunna Coal Co. since 1894, in April of which year the first coal left the mine. I and a

man named Aikman had the honour of hewing the first coal in the district, the tools we used being an axe and a spade, no pick being available.

As to the development of the industry, the different companies engaged in it have had many "ups" and "downs," and have met with varying success, the chief obstacles to progress being the faulty nature of the country and the ever-recurring labour troubles associated with the industry.

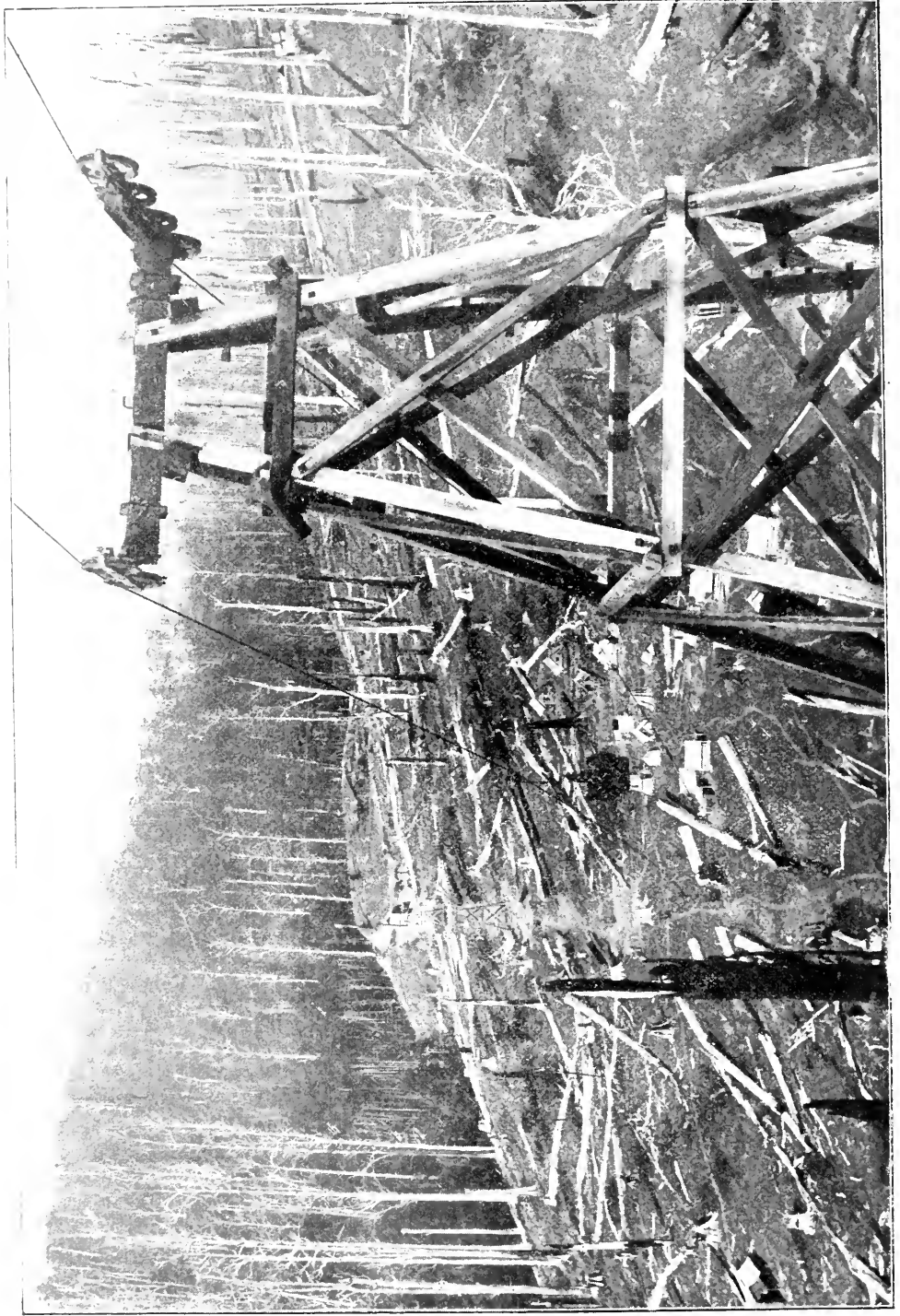
A few facts and figures in connection with the Jumbunna Co., in which I am chiefly interested, will give some idea as to the amount of money circulated, and the value of the industry to the country:—

The company was formed in November, 1890. The total quantity of coal mined to date (March, 1913) is 1,189,081 tons. The amount paid in wages is £518,647. The amount spent in machinery and plant is £63,850. The total amount of dividends paid to date is £36,000. The cost of boring £4405. The greatest number of men employed at one time is 300. The first manager was Mr. Thos. Briggs, and the first tunnel was put in by Mr. John Ridley, who subsequently managed the mine.

When one considers that the above figures refer to one company only, and that there are others that have paid in wages and spent in machinery larger amounts, one must agree with me that the discovery of coal and its development has been one of the chief aids to the progress of our district.

As profitable mining was impossible without railway communication to market the coal, the company approached the Government for railway facilities. The Government agreed to construct a line of railway four miles in length from Kerumburra to a point on the company's property about a mile from the mine and 300 feet above the pit's mouth, on condition that the company buy all the land required and transfer it to the Government, which was done. On the recommendation of the late Mr. H. E. Mais, the consulting engineer to the company, to carry the coal to the railway line, the company constructed an aerial cable line 82 chains in length, costing £2580, and the necessary adjuncts, costing £705 10 4, with a capacity of carrying 260 to 280 tons per day of eight hours. It was built by the Otis Co. The first log of the trestles was laid on the 13th January, 1894, and on May 5th, 1894, the aerial line was opened for traffic. The company conveyed 150 tons of coal per day over the line. The coal travelled in cages suspended from a cable ingeniously going round the trestles supporting it. On a steep portion of the line with a grade of 1 in 5, frequently the cage's grip of the cable were not strong enough, and a cage bolting would often knock off those behind it. This was an endless trouble to the company, and on January 2nd, 1896, when the railway was extended to Outtrim, the aerial line was dismantled."

The date of discovery of the Outtrim coal seam was the 16th October, 1892. At that time the late Mr. M. T. Johnson was leasing Mr. Murdoch McLeod's property. As there were a number of wallabies in the scrub which covered the southern half of the selection, and as the skins were of high commercial value, one of the sons, the late Mr. Arthur Johnson, was setting traps along the edge of the scrub. It was while engaged in this that he discovered an outcrop of coal when crossing a creek. He sank a shaft at a spot a few yards from the creek, which disclosed a seam 1ft. in thickness. A few days later Mr. John Parry and party inspected the seam and pronounced the coal as first class quality. Later on Mr. Murdoch McLeod, who had previously acquired the mineral lease, arranged with Mr. R. B. Stamp, of Collins-street, Melbourne, to form a company called the Outtrim Co., named after



AERIAL TRAMWAY CONVEYING COAL FROM MINE TO RAILWAY.

Mr. Outtrim, the then Minister of Mines. It was subsequently amalgamated with another lease called the Howitt Co., and they went under the name of The Outtrim Howitt Co. After some prospecting by Mr. Dorey, the original manager, a tunnel was opened, and subsequently the main workings established within a few chains of the site of the outcrop. After one or two changes in the management in the early stages, Mr. Daniel Mackenzie assumed the management, which he has retained up to the present time.

To extend the railway line from Jumbunna to the Outtrim mine the Government required a guarantee of £20,000 from the company, which they agreed to, and the line was constructed and opened on January 27th, 1896, when the first truck of coal was sent from the mine, the company having 8000 tons ready to truck away on that date. The largest output from the mine was in 1902, when 114,686 tons were produced.

The Wonthaggi coal field, situated between Kileunda and Cape Paterson, is the most recent coal field to be developed. A site selected by Mr. Stanley Hunter, engineer for boring, on the Powlett flats in 1900 was not operated on until early in 1908, when the drill passed through three distinct seams of coal, the largest being 3ft. in thickness. The bores put down afterwards to test these seams proved that they merged into one, the result being a fine seam 9ft. thick of clean coal free from partings. Owing to shipping and mine strikes in New South Wales, the Victorian Government decided to start a State coal mine, and reserved a large area of the Wonthaggi coal field. The strike in New South Wales compelled the Government to make a hasty start in developing the mine. In sinking for water for one of the drills, 8ft. of coal was passed through at a shallow depth, and advantage was taken of this to start mining operations, which very rapidly developed. Work was started on November 22nd, 1909, and shortly after coal was being brought to the surface. The coal was sent to Inverloch, a distance of nine miles by road; 300 bullocks, 40 horses and a powerful traction engine were used to haul the coal to Inverloch, where it was shipped to Melbourne. Three thousand six hundred tons were sent in this way before railway communication was available; 10,000 tons were also waiting at the mine when the line to the mine was opened. When mining operations commenced the drills then on the field were brought to the shafts and converted into winding and pumping engines, oil supplying the power. This equipment furnished 400 tons per day. With the aid of these outfits four shafts were sunk, and the mines were kept dry while 80,000 tons of coal were hauled to the surface.

Mr. Stanley Hunter, who had charge of developing the State coal mine (with Mr. Mackenzie as acting manager) in its early stages, was responsible for the economical use of this machinery, and too much praise cannot be bestowed on him and all those connected with the early development of the field for the energy and the wholehearted way they worked together to make the enterprise a success. The very severe winters experienced in the early stages of the camp added greatly to the discomforts of camp life and the work that was being undertaken.

When the selectors were invited to take up land in South Gippsland they had all coal rights in regard to the coal that may exist beneath the surface, and it was a hope for many years that they might find a good coal seam in their property. As soon as one of the selectors, Mr. Horsley, found the

Jumbunna seam on his property, the Government, with very short notice, inserted in the Coal Mining Act the following:—

“All minerals, ores and metals, other than gold and silver, in or below the surface of all lands in Victoria not alienated in fee simple from the Crown on or before the first day of March, 1892, shall be and remain the property of the Crown.”

Of recent years the Crown has withheld the issue of coal leases to private companies, which prevents any new development of the coal industry.

On February 17th, 1892, the writer found the Kongwak outcrop of coal. On that date the writer and two brothers first heard of the action of Parliament in taking away the coal rights of the selectors, and at once took steps to take out coal leases on our properties. It was while pegging out my brother's lease, while returning home after having failed to find one of the corner pegs, that I found the outcrop. On the way home I decided to examine a spot at the foot of the hills where a gully joined the Foster creek, for traces of any coal that might be washed down. In the Foster, at the mouth of the gully, I noticed a thin dark line just above the water, which resembled the water stains on the sandstone at that dry time of the year. On walking along a fallen blackwood I was just able to pick off a small piece, which proved to be coal. It was not until the 26th, nine days after, that I examined the locality for further seams. I found traces of coal in the gully, and on looking very carefully I found three more seams, one of which was to be seen outcropping plainly in the Foster. There have been no bores put down to test these outcrops. The largest, 2ft. 9in., I found outcropping ten chains up the gully. Two of the others proved over two feet of broken coal, and one 1ft. 6in. of clean coal. I also found a seam of shale and coal two feet thick. I was able to light the shale with a match. These outcrops are half way in a direct line between the Jumbunna and Powlett fields. The coal resembles more the Wonthaggi coal in quality.





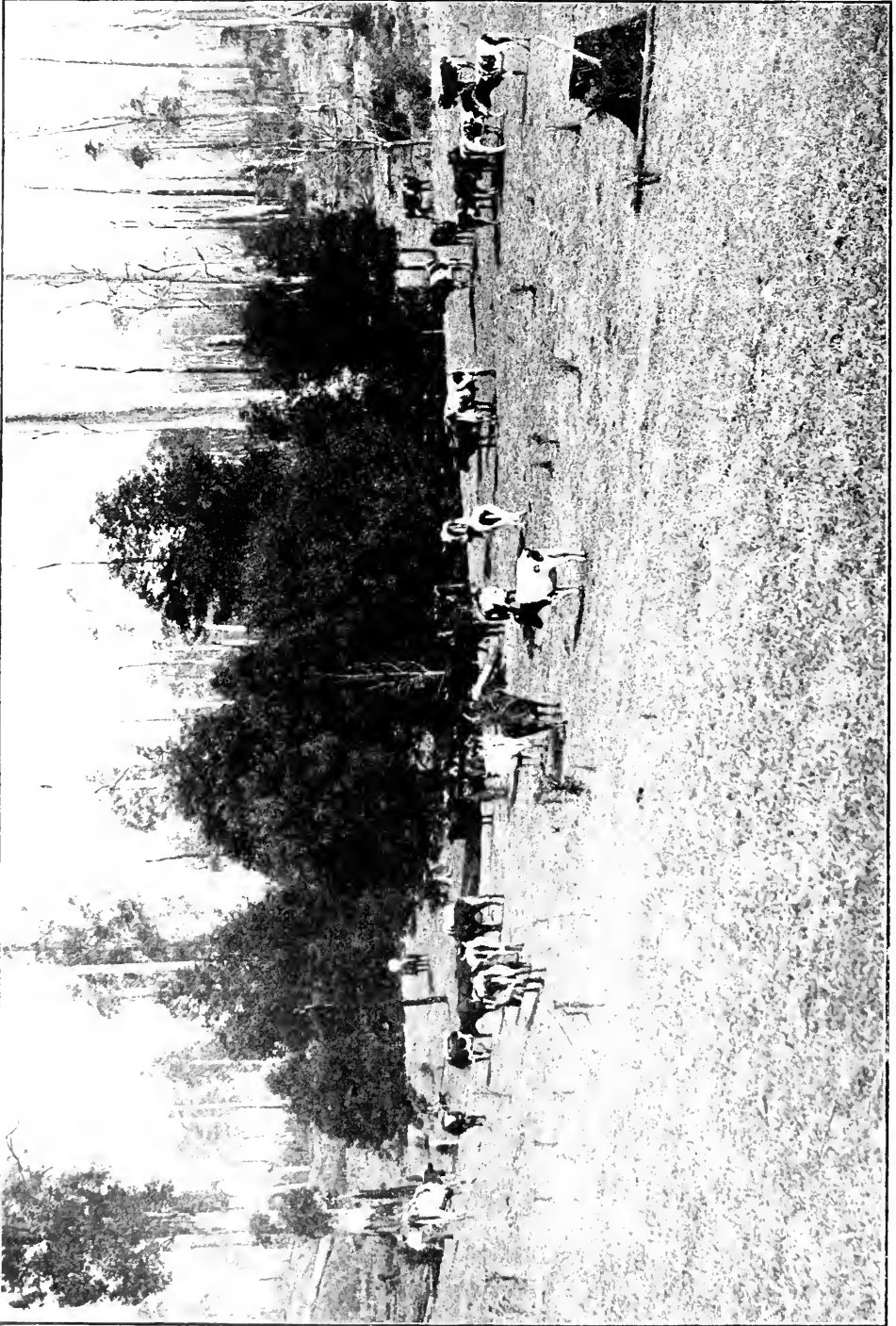
# The Dairying Industry.

## THE COMMITTEE.

Dairying, which has been the main factor in the development of this district, was started about the year 1876, or as soon as the first settlers had cleared enough land to graze a few dairy cows. It was recognised then, as now, that it was *the* farm industry which brought in the quickest cash returns, and for that reason alone many of the early settlers were compelled to take up the industry, and although the returns at that period were by no means remunerative, there was no other use to which the land could be put that would pay better. Cultivation was out of the question on account of the state of the clearings, which were for many years thickly studded with stumps, both large and small, and the ground was littered with logs lying in all directions, in addition to which there were no practicable roads to get produce to market. Fattening sheep and cattle was not a business suited to small clearings, and in the case of sheep want of knowledge on the part of the inexperienced settlers, and the depredations of the dingoes, worked against success. On the larger clearings, however, some did well with cattle and others with sheep.

The rough state of the clearings made it no easy task to collect the cows and bring them into the yards at milking time. The scrub, which afforded the cattle shelter, both during the rough weather of Winter and the heat of Summer, surrounded the clearings, and many an hour was wasted in getting the "milkers" out of the scrub. It was a favourite habit with the cows to hide their calves in the scrub, where they sometimes took days to find, and one could not consider the cow as a "milker" until the calf was safely tied up at the "yard." "Breaking in" heifers under such circumstances was a strenuous and sometimes exciting experience. When they had their calves they seemed to become as wild as if they had never seen human beings, and, on an attempt being made to bring them and their calves into the generally insecure yard, they would make headlong for the scrub, where the calf would "plant," and the mother continue her mad career through everything that came in her way. Often it was impossible to follow her, and she would be allowed to run until she made another appearance on the clearing, when a fresh attempt would be made to get her to the yard.

At first the cows were of no particular breed, a large proportion of them being more suitable for beef than for milk production, yet the yield of butter from many of them was exceptionally good, the soft, rich, succulent grass growing on freshly cleared and ash-strewn land giving results which compare favourably with those of the present day. The milking sheds were of the crudest kind—one or two bails with a bark or shingle roof over them, or perhaps no roof at all, just a bail in a corner of the yard, which, owing to the loose nature of the soil and the heavy rainfall, soon became knee-deep in mud, unless floored with timber, which was a most unusual circumstance. A typical instance was one small dairy where only 10 or 12 cows were milked. The yard was about 15 yards by 12 yards. In the early part of the milking season the mud was more than knee-deep, and when a cow had to be bailed up the milker would walk out on a log that had been hauled into the yard

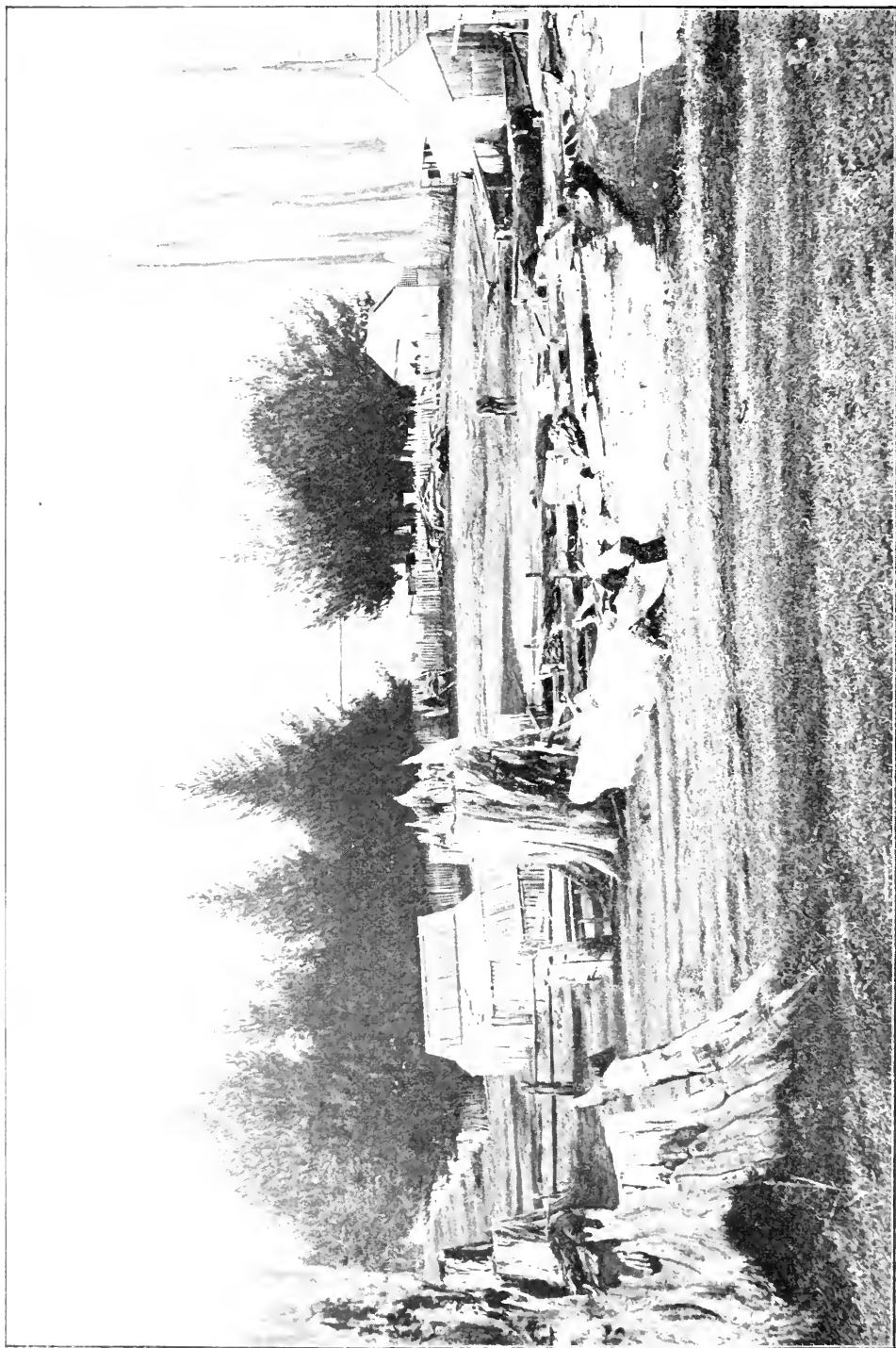


THE EVENING MUSTER.

for the purpose, and with a long pole would poke the cow towards the bail. Having got her bailed up and legroped, a bucket of water was required to wash the udder after the mud had been scraped off with a piece of shingle. It usually appeared as if the cow required was always in the farthest corner of the yard and in the deepest mud, and to get her towards the bail meant disturbing all the other cows in the yard, who would splash round in the mud, while the one wanted tried to dodge round them back into her favourite muddy corner. This stirring round accounted for some at least of the mud in these cow yards, and usually had to be repeated for every cow milked. Under these circumstances milking was slow work. About four cows an hour was as many as one could milk, in contrast with present-day conditions, when a man can milk six or eight cows by hand and up to 20 an hour with milking machines.

In the earlier stages of settlement it was not an easy matter to gauge the carrying capacity of the pastures. In Spring one could hardly put on enough stock to keep the grass down: then, perhaps, in December caterpillars would suddenly make their appearance in myriads on the young grass just about to seed, and in a few days would leave nothing but dead and withered grass behind them. If new ground were cleared and sown each year, the same thing might be repeated, and, after the new grass was destroyed, the caterpillars would spread over the old grass as well. If rain soon followed the grass would recover: but if not, the dairy herd would have to exist through the Summer on short rations. Wallabies, of which there were numbers in the scrub, also found the sweet English grass to their liking, and took a heavy toll from the small clearings. At another stage the Scotch thistles took possession of the paddocks for some years, sometimes completely smothering the grass and growing in such dense masses that tracks had to be cut through them to get stock from one portion of the clearing to another. As conditions became more settled, it was generally recognised that from two to three acres was sufficient to carry a milking cow all the year round. Many dairymen in later years grew crops to supplement the pastures, maize to be cut green and oats for hay being the favourites. This enabled much larger herds to be carried on the same area of ground. Silos have been erected and ensilage tried on many farms, but it has not been an unqualified success on account of the great amount of labour required to handle the crops in a green state, in addition to which it has been found that the climate allows green fodder to be grown all the year round, thus obviating the need for ensilage. Strange to say, want of water in the Summer months was one of the difficulties experienced by many dairymen. The first clearings were, in many cases, on the higher ground, as being more accessible from the early tracks, which usually followed the ridges: and even with the generous rainfall the small creeks would run dry in Summer, necessitating tracks being cut to the more permanent streams, and the cattle taken considerable distances to quench their thirst.

The dairies were mostly made of logs or slabs with bark or shingle roofs. One was made of a framework of round hazel poles with hessian tacked on for walls and roof, with a fly of the same material reaching well over the sides. These dairies were fairly cool in Summer and well ventilated, but were not proof against mice and snakes, both of which were very fond of milk. The snakes were also very fond of mice, and it was noticed that when snakes were about very few mice were to be seen. The snakes were more cleanly than the mice, as they never committed suicide by drowning themselves in the milk, the only evidence of their visits being the removal of part of the cream from some of the dishes. The dairy floors for many years were



AMID THE RELICS OF THE GREAT FOREST.

just the bare earth, and as it was quite impossible to carry milk in and out of the dairy without spilling some, the floor in time became saturated and loaded with germs, although appearing clean on the surface. This gave no end of trouble through turning the milk thick before the cream had time to rise and by making the butter so that it would not keep unless overloaded with salt, much to the annoyance of the dairymaids, who could not account for their failures. The milk, when brought to the dairy, was poured through a strainer into shallow pans, each holding two or three gallons. The cream rose to the surface in about 36 hours, when it was skimmed off with a perforated piece of tin called a hand-skimmer. For a herd of 15 to 20 cows about 60 of these pans were required to set each lot of milk in rotation and allow time for the cream to rise. To accommodate these the dairy would be furnished with a number of strong shelves made of slabs of wood or two round sticks for the pans to rest on. The round sticks were better than the slabs, as they were more easily kept clean. On a cold frosty morning skimming was not an enviable job. It and most dairy work, including washing up, feeding calves, making butter, and in many instances milking cows, was usually done by the women of the family, but there were many bachelor pioneers who did all this work and became expert butter-makers, some of them getting top prices in the Melbourne market for potted butter.

A variety of churns were used for making butter, but the one commonly used was the vertical dash churn, and very tiresome work it was, the butter sometimes taking two hours to come. If it was intended to send the butter to market as "fresh butter," each pound had to be weighed separately, shaped into a roll or print, wrapped in a cloth, and packed in a box. If it was to be marketed as "potted butter," more salt was mixed with it, and it was packed in a small cask. On account of the difficulties of transport, these boxes or casks were not sent away until they were full, which sometimes took two or three weeks. The prices realised varied considerably, according to the condition of the butter when it arrived in Melbourne and the season of the year. In Spring and Summer prices ranged from 4d. to 7d. per lb., and in Winter anything up to 2 6 a pound. In cool weather the butter would reach its destination in good condition, and fair prices would be realised, but in hot weather its condition was sometimes dreadful. On one occasion a whole consignment realised as low as 2d. per lb.—barely enough to pay for the freight. One selector potted his Spring and Summer butter in kerosene tins, on which he soldered the lids, and then put away in cases, which he stored in Melbourne until Winter, when the butter realised good prices. In the early days of settlement many strong flavoured weeds grew in the scrub and came up in the clearings. These the cows ate, and spoilt any chance of making good butter from their produce. Some, like the dogwood, were so strong that the flavour could be tasted in the milk.

Butter was sent from the district by four routes. From the northern part it was carted to Drouin and then on by rail; from the south it was packed to Anderson's Inlet and then went by boat; from the east it went by Mirboo North to Morwell, and then by rail; and from the west it went by boat from Grillith's Point or The Bluff. To get to any of these places it had to be taken on pack horses along the atrocious pack tracks. This method of dairying continued until about 1891, when the cream separator was introduced, and also the system of installing refrigerating machinery on ocean-going steamships, by which method it was found possible to send butter to London and hand it in good condition. These methods revolutionised the

dairy industry, and quickly superseded the old system of setting milk in pans. The Government, in order to encourage the export trade in butter, granted a bonus on all butter of a certain standard that was exported for a period of five years, and paid, during that time, the sum of £135,000. Very little of that money came into this district, as the industry was not well established at the time, but it had a stimulating effect, and factories, mostly co-operative, were established with the object of manufacturing a more uniform quality of butter. In one instance a large cream separator was installed in a factory to treat the milk from the surrounding district, but the hilly nature of the country and the bad roads limited the area of supply, and made the cost of delivering milk and manufacturing the butter so high that this method was found impracticable. It was soon found that the best system to adopt for this district was to separate the milk on the farm and send cream only to the factory. It has been found that butter of the highest quality can be manufactured by this method, though much adverse criticism was launched against it at first. These early factories, like the early settlers, had many difficulties to contend with at their first inception, as they had to evolve a system adapted to a novel set of conditions. One of the chief problems was the quick and regular delivery of their cream supply. At first cream was brought to them in flat-sided tins on pack horses, and after that on sledges. Later bullock and horse waggons were used to bring the cream. Then, as the roads were cleared, the factories carted their supplier's cream on a co-operative principle, and this system has been extended and improved until now, on most roads, cream is collected daily during the Spring and Summer months by waggons drawn by three or four horses.

The first co-operative factory in the district was a cheese factory established at Woodleigh in 1888 by the farmers of the locality. The first directors were Messrs. Nowel (Chairman), Delaney, A. Ward, J. Tulloch, and Belfrage, who was later appointed secretary. Milk was brought to the factory from a radius of two miles on sledges. Later a cream separator and butter-making plant were installed, and cheese-making was abandoned in favour of butter.

The Poowong Co-operative Butter Factory was started in 1892, after enquiries had been made as to the methods of several established factories by a provisional committee, among whom were Messrs. C. R. Mair, R. O. Timms, C. Burchett, T. G. Scott and E. Allchin, with Mr. Chas. Cook, the originator of the movement, as secretary, and later secretary to the company. Mr. Staben was the first chairman of directors, and Mr. Green the first manager, and the first year's output was about four tons of butter a week. Following the example of the established butter factories in the Western district of Victoria, a cream separator was installed, and suppliers brought milk to the factory and took back the skim milk; but it was soon found that this system was not suited to local conditions. The cream separator was disposed of, and only cream received at the factory, necessitating farmers separating the milk on the farms. Great difficulty was experienced in getting cream regularly from the scattered farms, and this company, at the suggestion of Mr. Chas. Cook, was the first to collect cream by waggons belonging to the factory. Strange to say, this system, which is now universal in South Gippsland, was at first opposed by the farmers. The first factory building, a wooden one, was later replaced by a substantial two-storied brick building.

The same year (1892) co-operative butter factories were started at Bena and Moyarra. At Bena the first directors were Messrs. P. Whittet, R. J.

Fuller, J. Brind, W. Chapman, and T. J. Coverdale, with Mr. W. McKenzie McHarg as secretary, and Mr. P. Kenna as manager. The output was at first about three tons of butter a week. After being carried on for some years as a co-operative factory, the business was sold to a proprietary company.

The first directors of the Moyarra Butter Factory were Messrs. W. Elms (chairman), W. Rainbow, C. Parsons, E. Halford, and W. J. Williams, with Mr. A. W. Elms as secretary and Mr. R. T. Archer as manager. There were about twenty suppliers, and cream was mainly delivered by sledges drawn by horses or bullocks. The capacity of the factory was about three tons of butter a week. There was no refrigerator, the only means of cooling cream or butter being an underground cellar, and in hot weather the manager worked at night to take advantage of the cool night air. Owing to changes in the source of cream supply, the company was liquidated in 1896, and from it was formed the Kongwak Co-operative Butter Factory.

The Leongatha Butter and Cheese Factory Co. Ltd. was organised in 1894. The amount of capital subscribed after considerable canvassing was £670, and a start was made on this capital, which proved inadequate, and in a very short time the company was in difficulties, and in order that the business could be carried on the directors gave personal guarantees to the bank.

The first board of directors were Messrs. K. T. S. Ridgeway, J. D. Symons, W. Gostelow, H. McCartin and Searle.

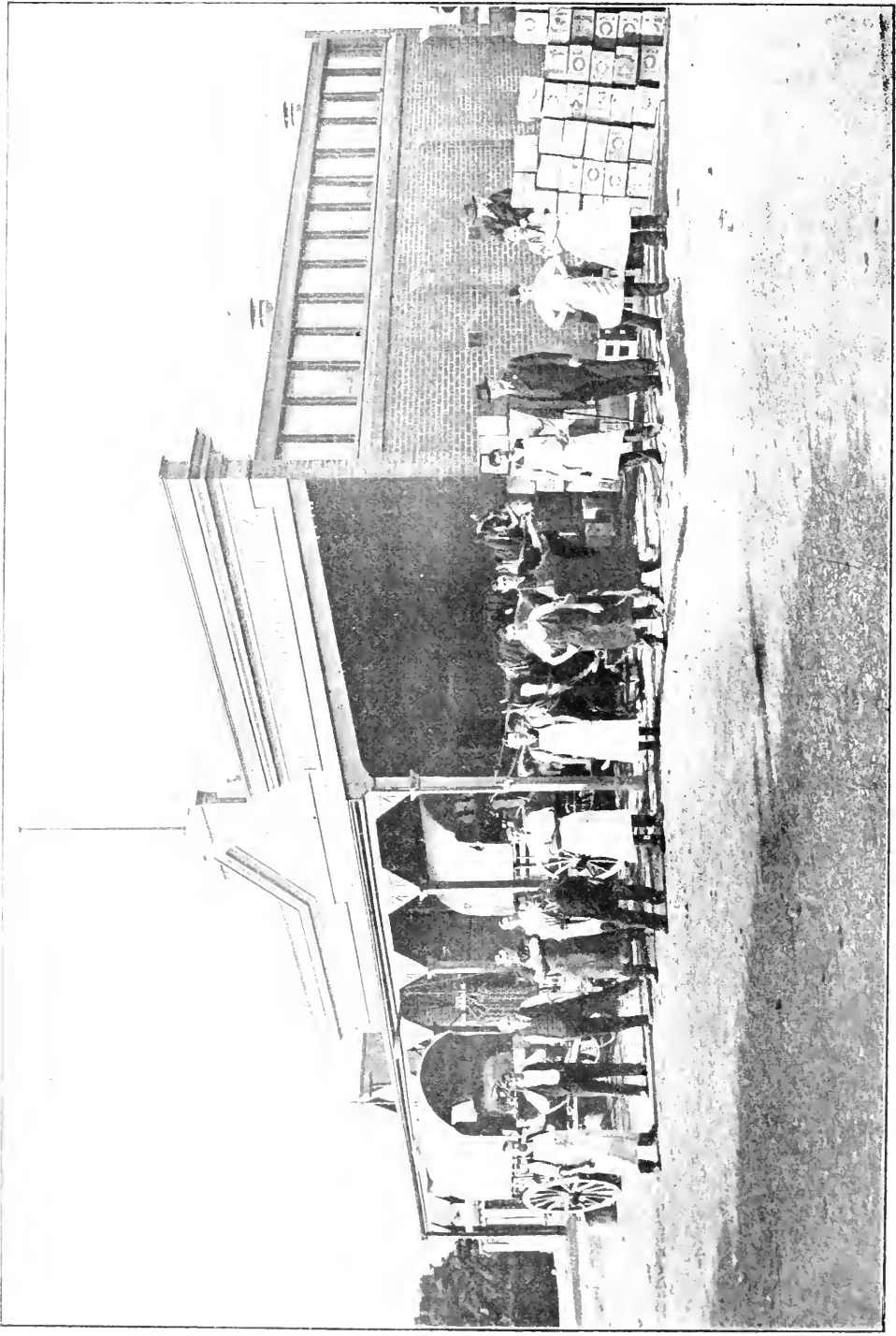
During the first seven years of its existence the company had a hard struggle, the want of good refrigerating machinery causing serious loss, and there were numerous changes in the directorate and management. In 1901 the present manager, Mr. S. C. Wilson, was appointed, alterations were made in the buildings, and up-to-date appliances were installed, and the company put teams on the roads to collect cream. The regular supply of cream enabled the factory to turn out a better quality of butter and pay higher prices for cream. In 1905 the position of the company had improved to such an extent that a new brick factory was built at a cost of £5000, including plant.

In 1908 the company started manufacturing electricity for their own use and the lighting of the town. In 1914 a Batch pasteuriser, the first machine of its kind in Australia, was installed, and proved a great success.

In 1915 a larger refrigerating plant was installed for the purpose of freezing rabbits. In 1916 a desiccator for treating buttermilk was erected, and in 1917 a grain crushing and milling plant was added.

The output of butter for the year ended June 30th, 1918, was 827,631 lbs., which realised £56,160 13 4.

The movement for starting a butter factory at Korumburra originated with the Farmers' Club, the prime mover being Mr. W. S. Newton. It was started in 1900 with a capital of £3000. The first directors were Messrs. H. Sanders, W. J. Newton, J. Bell, J. F. Shepherd, H. P. Cook, E. L. Smith and E. Mulholland, with Mr. G. W. Mitchell as secretary, and Mr. W. J. Wilson as manager.



KORUMBURRA BUTTER FACTORY.



The output for the first half-year was 120 tons of butter, which sold at from 7½d. to 8½d. per lb.

The original wooden building has been replaced by an extensive brick structure, arranged on the gravity system, to save labour, the cream coming in at the high level and the packed butter being loaded on the waggons at the lower level. The machinery comprises the latest refrigerating and pasteurising methods, as well as an efficient butter-making plant. To use the buttermilk from the factory an extensive piggery is worked in conjunction with the factory.

To ensure the regular supply of fresh cream from suppliers, an extensive waggon service has been established, which also delivers stores to suppliers and collects rabbits in Winter for freezing and forwarding to Melbourne. In addition, an egg-collecting service is worked, and a co-operative store established for the benefit of the company's shareholders.

The output of butter for the year ended June 30th, 1918, was 1,762,453 lbs., which realised the sum of £119,970 4 9.

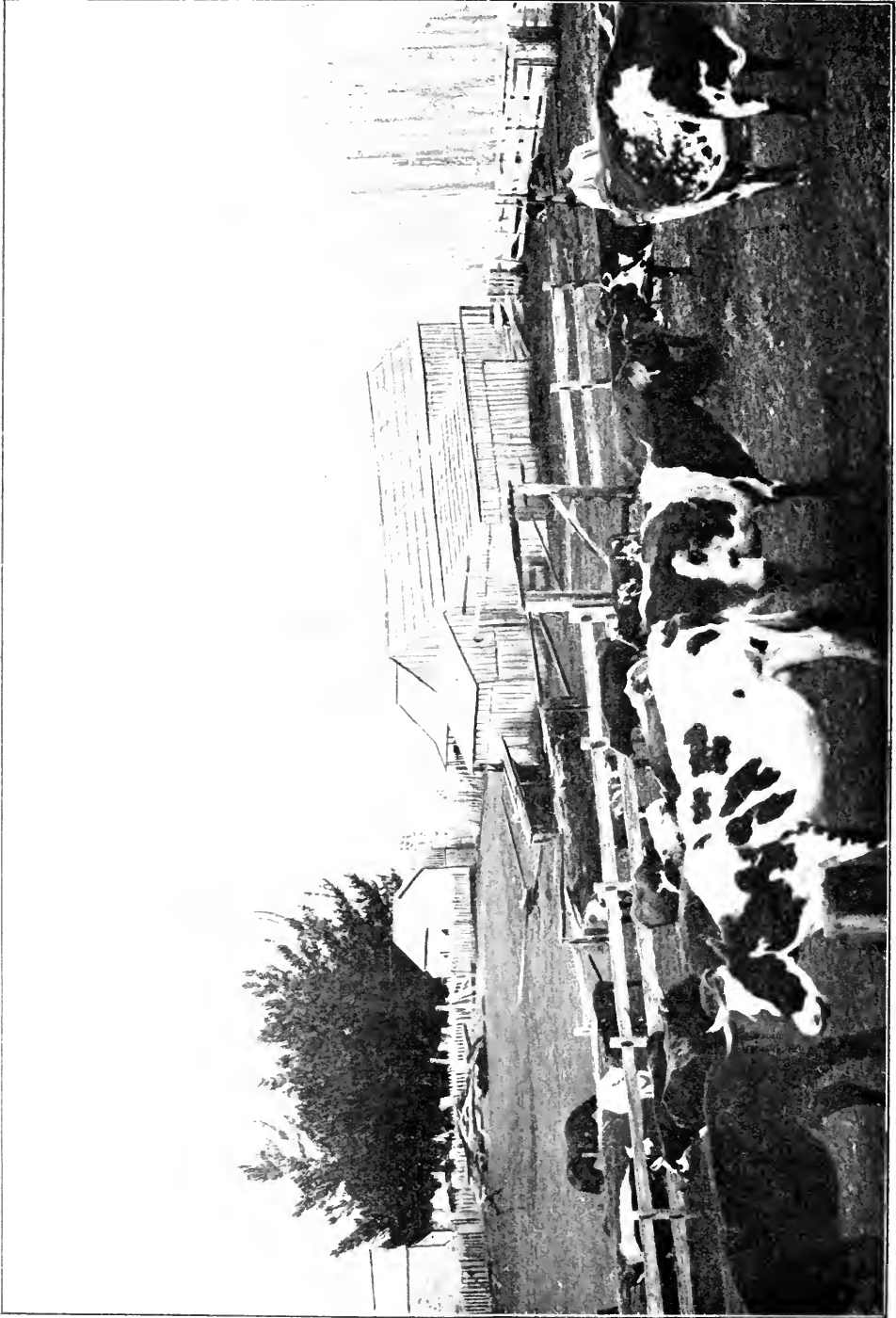
In addition to the above, several other co-operative butter factories have been established in the district in more recent years, and there are also many factories owned by Melbourne firms which compete with the co-operative companies for the farmers' cream.

The warm skim milk from the separator was used to feed calves, sometimes with the addition of oil or meal foods to replace the fat removed by the separators through skimming, and on this diet calves thrive well. In the early days of settlement all the calves that could be reared were required to stock up the ever-increasing areas of pasture. Later, when the country had become cleared, it became a problem with dairymen to know what to do with their calves, as they could not be reared at a profit. Some killed all but a few of the best heifers, which were kept to replace defective or old cows. Others sent their calves to Melbourne to be sold as veal, and the milk was fed to pigs. The state of the seasons in the north has a great influence on this branch of the industry, as when good seasons occur, there is always a strong demand for calves at remunerative prices.

As the industry progressed, a noticeable improvement in the breed of cows became evident. First, pure bred bulls were introduced; then some of the more progressive settlers started breeding pure bred dairy cattle, Jerseys, or, as they were at first miscalled, Alderneys, were the first in favour. Then Ayrshires were tried, and some favoured a cross between the two breeds. A few tried a milking strain of Shorthorn, but they have not met with much favour. To-day the Ayrshire, Jersey and Shorthorn crosses are in most favour, with the Ayrshire predominating.

The breeding of pure bred Berkshire and Yorkshire pigs has been taken up by some enthusiastic breeders with great success, with the result that in these lines this district stands pre-eminent, and pure stock from local farms is in demand throughout the Commonwealth.

Cheese is also made in several private dairies, and the quality is excellent, although the quantity is not large. One maker has taken no less than 12 first prizes in local shows, first at the Royal Agricultural Show at Melbourne on two occasions; first at Warrnambool, the home of cheese making; and the gold medal at the Franco-British Exhibition in 1908. The



MILKING TIME.

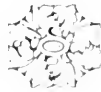
first cheese factory in the district was that of Mr. Mark Gardner at Poowong, who sent the product by road to Drouin almost as soon as that route was opened.

During recent years the supply of milk to Melbourne is another branch of the industry that has developed. By cooling milk on the farm it is found that it can be delivered by rail in as good condition as that produced close to the city.

Before the introduction of the separator, from 25 to 30 cows was the usual limit of a dairy herd, but now, with up-to-date machinery and methods, dairies of from 60 to 80 cows are by no means uncommon, and occasionally over 100 cows are milked in one herd.

The introduction of milking machines marked another step in the history of dairying. At first many of the machines were failures, but they seemed destined to fill such an important part by making dairymen independent to a great extent of outside labour, with its worries during the flush of the season, that they have been persevered with, and with the introduction of many improvements, have come to a stage when they are looked on as part of the equipment of any dairy milking from 40 to 50 cows and upwards.

Since the factory system of dairying has become established in the Commonwealth, a rapidly developed and prosperous export trade has sprung up, and now there is probably no industry in the country that gives constant employment to such a large number of persons. It stands firmly on its feet, needs no protection to bolster it up, and has almost unlimited possibilities of expansion. It seems destined to be one of Gippsland's most permanent and reliable industries, in conjunction with a system of mixed farming, including the growing of potatoes, onions, and, perhaps sugar-beet and flax, as money making crops.



# Spring-time Milking.

MR. W. MOORE.

When the first faint rays of morning  
Through the frosty windows peep,  
When our limbs are stiff and weary,  
And our eyelids long for sleep,  
When the calves and kookaburras  
Make a most unearthly din,  
Nipper Teddy rides on "Bellman"  
Out to bring the milkers in.  
He hears the distant lowing,  
He sets the "neddy" going,  
And is quickly down the hillside.  
To the tree-fern bridge below.  
His dog bounds past him, flashing.  
Madly barking, madly dashing,  
As his active strong nerves tingle,  
And he feels his young blood flow.

They go down by tracklets winding  
To the gorge in snaky turns,  
And they find the cattle feeding  
Among the orangewood and ferns,  
And it's there the fallen timber  
And the clustered bracken make  
From the storm and wind a shelter  
From the sleet and rain a break.  
The ryegrass and the clover,  
With dew besprinkled over,  
Make a fragrance like to incense  
Floating on the morning air.  
So Teddy sets them running  
From coverts, warm and cunning,  
From their couch of ferns so cosy,  
And from their leafy lair.

Soon he gets them all together,  
And at last they're homeward bound.  
And the music of their lowing  
Fills the misty vales around.  
And along the siding tracklets,  
Like a phantom herd they wind.  
A spectral dog and horseman  
Rounding stragglers up behind.  
The ringing voice of Teddy,  
"Rouse them up"—"Rowdy—Steady."  
And the echo from the hillsides  
Every sound it answers plain.  
Over the tree-fern bridges,  
Long tracklets to the ridges,  
They will spread and bunch and scatter,  
String and bunch and spread again.

Past the orchard, through the sliprails,  
 They go tramping slowly on,  
 And their coats, like satin, gleaming  
 In the early rising sun;  
 In the shed they bail-up gladly,  
 For none better know than they,  
 The scent coming from the silo,  
 Or the rustle of the hay.  
 Each rhythmic milkstroke singing  
 Into the milk-pail ringing,  
 Is, in cadence, low and tuneful,  
 To the separator's hum.  
 This programme in the morning,  
 Repeated in the evening  
 By the ambidextrous milkers  
 Makes the snowy white froth come.

While the white mists yet are clinging  
 To the gullies down below,  
 On the hills the gums are gleaming  
 In the morning's sunny glow,  
 While, from down among the blackwoods,  
 Comes the jay's shrill note, so clear,  
 And the magpie pipes and warbles  
 In the dogwood standing near.  
 We hear the lyre-bird singing,  
 His notes so clearly ringing;  
 He can mimic to perfection  
 Every song the song-birds sing;  
 And, while morn's golden changes  
 Play round the purple ranges,  
 We are busy, busy, milking,  
 Here in Gippsland in the Spring.



"While the white mists yet are clinging  
 To the gullies down below,

On the hills the gums are gleaming  
 In the morning's sunny glow."

# Recollections and Experiences.

MR. J. A. BLACK.



In the year 1880 Messrs. Elliott, Irving and Toomey, of Ballarat, and my father, who lived at Meredith, made up a party to go and see the Gippsland forest. They took tram to Pakenham, and then ballast train to Moe, the main Gippsland railway being then in course of construction. From Moe horses were procured to take them to Gallagher's camp at Mirboo. They were shown land by Mr. Gallagher in the parish of Mardan, about five miles from where Mirboo North now is, and there they selected a block of land each. Later on, Mr. Irving and my father inspected some land in the parish of Mirboo, about five miles from the present site of Boolarra, and there they selected again, abandoning the land at Mardan, after having paid the survey fees. Our block was No. 60, and contained only 280 acres, as my father had previously selected 40 acres at Meredith.

In the following year (1881) my father and I came out to clear a site to build on. My father travelled to Morwell by train, while I, with two Mr. Irvings, came by road with a mob of cattle. We arrived at Morwell in seven days, and paddocked the cattle. The Morwell township was 16 miles from our selection, and as it was the most convenient place to get our provisions, we got a fairly large supply, which, with our tools and camp outfit, was taken by bullock waggon to within one mile of the selection, and from there everything had to be carried on our backs along a narrow track and up some very steep hills. Our meat supply we had to carry from Mirboo along nine miles of very rough pack track. At that time the township was about one mile east of the present site. Brennan's hotel and store, Bensley's hotel and store and Howlett and Allen's butcher's shop were the only business places there then. The track was so bad that it was more convenient to travel the sixteen miles to Morwell for our provisions. Everything had to be brought in on our backs for the first year or two until we got our first grass and could keep a horse, when we could ride to the store, and lead the horse back with the provisions on a pack saddle. Later on, when more people arrived in the district, the storekeeper would deliver the provisions at the selection by pack horses: one man driving three or four horses would supply a number of selectors along the track.

Having pitched our camp and cleared the site for our first house, or "hut," as we then called it, our next job was to find the material to build it with. That, however, was in great abundance right on the spot. Slabs, nine feet long and twelve inches wide, were split out of blackwoods, and with these slabs a fairly comfortable hut was built. Then scrub cutting commenced.

Most people would have cut the scrub first, and built the house after the burn, but we were new to the work of clearing this country, and had to learn by experience. The scrub was principally heavy musk with spreading branches. These branches had to be lopped off to get the scrub to lie on the ground. Five acres were cut in this way, and then we cut and stacked in heaps another five acres and burnt it off, which was very slow work. Everything up to two feet in diameter was cleared off this five acres, on which we sowed grass seed, and then returned to our home at Meredith. Six months later, Meredith was left for our new home in the forest: the whole family, father, mother, two sisters and two brothers (I, the eldest, was just sixteen years old), travelling by road all the way in two spring carts. We were two weeks on the road when we arrived at Mr. Collyer's selection, about two miles from our destination. From there a track had to be cleared through the scrub, Messrs. Collier, Morrow and two Irvings assisting in the work, and two days later, after a lot of trouble, we all arrived safely at our new home, a little hut in a small clearing, with a high wall of thick scrub all around, and great blackbutts towering above the scrub up to 300 feet high; one of which we measured was 66 feet around the base.

Although it was the beginning of Winter and everything wet and damp, it was not cold, and we youngsters thought it was a splendid place to live in. During our absence the grass had sprung up, and there was enough feed for the two horses we brought with us. Our first work was to clear about three acres of all small timber and logs, and burn it off, which was no small contract at this season of the year. We sowed oats on this plot without ploughing it, just simply chipping the surface of the ground over with a hoe. The oats grew splendidly and was one of the first crops grown in the district. When ripe it was cut and thrashed by hand, and a plot of potatoes also gave good returns. The soil in this locality is very good, principally deep chocolate with patches of grey soil. There are also small patches of coarse sand, which, in later years, came in useful for road making.

The River Morwell formed the east boundary of our land, and a large creek ran through the southern portion, emptying itself into the river. There were also a number of permanent springs trickling out of the sides of the hills, so we were well provided with water. The large timber was nearly all blackbutt, which grew to a tremendous size, and was very free to split, well suited for palings, a great quantity of which have been sent away from this district. In the barrel of one of these large trees that had fallen and been hollowed out by fire, four men made a very good camp, having plenty of room inside to make their beds crosswise. In another large log lived a man and his two sons for a considerable time. They divided it into two rooms, using one as a kitchen, and the other as a bedroom. Not many blue gums were to be seen: there were some very nice blackwoods, varying in size from three feet down, and up to one hundred feet in height. Their timber being valuable, most of it has been sent away to the sawmills to be eventually used for furniture and cabinet making, whilst a large quantity has been split into staves. Amongst the smaller trees and shrubs the musk was the most numerous. Very few hazels were to be found here, but there were any amount of tree ferns. Of these there were two kinds, the male and female, or king and queen ferns. They were the ornaments of the forest, and grew up to three feet in diameter, and twenty to thirty feet high. The barrel of the queen fern was soft and peaty on the outside, and the heart or pith was white and cheese-like, and was eaten readily by possums, and is often used as bait to catch them. It was nothing unusual to see a man with an axe on his shoulder

and a number of pigs following him to a patch of ferns, where he would cut some down and split them open, and the pigs would then scoop out the heart and thrive on it.

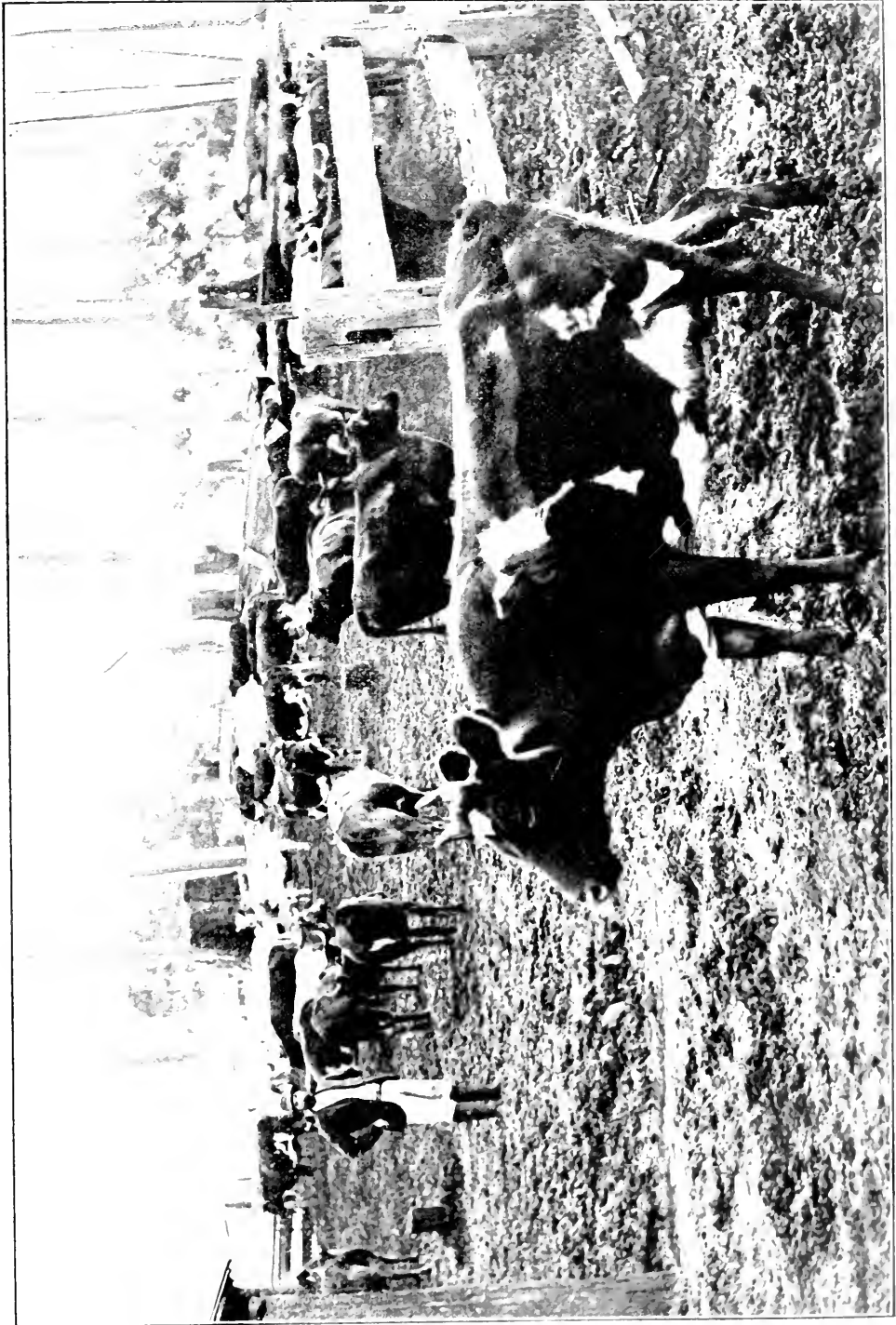
Pittosporum, dogwood and sassafras were to be seen scattered through the scrub: the latter grew mostly along the creeks and in moist places. The bark and leaves are said to possess medicinal qualities, and, being bitter, were used as a tonic. Blanketwoods were fairly numerous, and the few hazel that were to be found grew to a diameter of twelve inches. On some of the neighbouring selections the scrub was mostly hazel, and so dense that one could hardly make his way through it. The rope-like supplejack often reached to the topmost branches of the smaller trees, where it spread itself out, and in Springtime was a beautiful sight, its flowers forming a white, sheet-like covering over the tops of the trees. It is very strong, and has often been found entwined round a small hazel so tightly that the hazel has grown out of shape, and when relieved of the supplejack had a corkscrew-like appearance. On account of the denseness of this scrub, it was very easy to get lost unless one had a compass, or was an experienced bushman. On one occasion a Mr. Morrow, a new chum just out from the old country, came to visit his brother, and one Sunday afternoon went to see what the scrub was like, and lost himself, but was found next day, little the worse for his experience.

In the scrub there were large numbers of wallabies, paddymelons, innocent looking monkey bears, black mountain possums, and packs of dingoes or wild dogs. Some of the latter seemed to be half-bred Newfoundland, black and white in colour, and on account of their ravages we could not keep sheep, or other small animals, such as calves and pigs, unless they were well protected in dog-proof enclosures.

Among those of the earlier settlers who were here before we came were Messrs. Campbell Bros., Inglis Bros., Nicol and Alernshaw, of Mardan, and Messrs. Penaluna, Rout, Bensley, and Napier, of Mirboo.

Farming as we were accustomed to at Meredith would not pay here, there being no roads, and the hills so steep that produce could not be carted away; and to husband our small capital, it was necessary to go out and work for neighbours, to get the wherewithal to keep the pot boiling, and for that reason our own scrub had to be cut in small patches. Our next clearing was another ten acres. We tried to have all scrub cut by the end of September, taking down everything up to two feet in diameter, and as close to the ground as we could conveniently work, except the ferns, which we cut as high as possible and then lopped their heads off about six inches from the top. If this were not done, they would continue growing and spoil the burn. In picking up after the burn, it was useless to pack the ferns along with the timber, as they would spoil the fires and give a lot of trouble. We found the best way was to cut them into lengths and stack them on end and leave them until the following Summer, when they would burn readily. We found the month of May the best time to sow the grass seed. The amount usually sown was about 20lbs. of cocksfoot, 3lbs. of rye-grass, and 1lb. of clover, but very often only the 20lbs. of cocksfoot was sown. In the second year after we arrived, the railway to Boolarra was opened, and later on to Mirboo North. Townships sprang up around both these stations, and from then on the population increased fast. We were able to get plenty of work and were able to cut our own scrub in larger areas, until all was cleared and under grass, and later, we bought another block of 190 acres adjoining on the south. Dairying was the only





A DAIRY HERD

use this country was fit for in the early days. The milk was set in pails and skimmed in the old way, then churned and made up into half pounds by hand, packed in boxes and taken by sledge to the railway station at Boolarra, where it was consigned to the auction room in Melbourne. Although we had the spring cart, the hills and track were so steep and rough that vehicular traffic was impossible, and for some years after the railway was opened the sledge and the pack horse were the only means of transport. At first our butter used to realise 1 6 to 2 - per pound in Winter.

When butter factories first came into existence, creameries sprang up in all directions. One was established near our selection, and we were able to take our milk to it every morning, bringing the skim milk back to feed calves and pigs. The price for butter came down to 7d. or 8d. per pound, and a few years later the dairymen began to get separators and take their cream to the nearest factory. Then the creameries were removed, and now that the roads have improved, the factories send carts round and collect the cream.

A seam of black coal was found, and worked for a time, about half a mile west of Boolarra, but was too small to be payable. About a mile to the east of the township there is a very extensive seam of brown coal. A company was formed to work it, a railway laid down and machinery erected, but a short time afterwards the machinery and line were removed, and to-day the coal remains undeveloped. I have no doubt that at some future time it will be of considerable value to the State.



# Recollections and Experiences.

MR. D. McLEOD.

In any retrospect of early pioneering days, I feel disposed first to honour the memory of my respected friend, Mr. M. W. Elliott, now of Korumburra, but who was the original owner of the land now known as Parry's.



In the earliest days the residents of Jeetho and Jumbunna contributed a small annual sum to the late Mr. L. C. Holmes, of Arawata (then living near the Bass Bridge, Poowong), for the weekly delivery of their mails from Poowong. This duty was usually performed by one of Mr. Holmes's sons on a Sunday. Mr. Elliott was the furthest point south to which the delivery was made, and as Mr. Elliott kept open house to his friends further south, his place became a popular Sunday afternoon resort. Here the comparatively old residents and the new arrivals met and discussed their previous week's work and their future prospects. Here, also, were projected public schemes, many of which

were afterwards realised, and all had the enthusiastic support of Mr. Elliott.

In September, 1882, I made my first acquaintance with the district, and as the roads were at their worst at that season of the year, it took two days' strenuous travelling to reach Jumbunna East from Melbourne. One Saturday morning I took the 7.15 a.m. train from Melbourne to Dromin. After an early dinner at Dromin, I boarded Mr. Sid Watt's coach and we started for Poowong about 11 o'clock. Although raining most of the day, and the coach was in many places axle deep in mud, I was landed without incident at the Poowong post office about sundown. At that time Mrs. Horsley kept the post office at her own home, and also kept an accommodation house, chiefly for the convenience of residents "down South," as Jeetho and Jumbunna districts were then popularly called. Mrs. Horsley and family had earned the reputation of providing first class fare in a most hospitable manner. In my case the reception was especially cordial, as I was meeting future neighbours as well as making new friends, as we had applied for land adjoining that of Horsley Bros., in Jumbunna East.

The following morning (Sunday) I was provided with a saddle horse by Mr. Holmes. Young "Ted" Holmes accompanied me, riding one horse with the "Down South" mails in front, and driving a pack horse loaded with a miscellaneous assortment of articles, which he distributed with the mails in boxes placed at side tracks, or at the edges of clearings through which we passed.

The track as far as Mr. E. C. Holmes' (now Wombalano) was cleared of trees and logs to a width of about 20 feet, and was tolerably good. The balance of the track was just wide enough to take a pack horse, and was one

streak of mud of varying depth from end to end, with the exception of a few clearings through which we passed. The track to Mr. E. C. Holmes' had recently been cleared by the Shire Council. We were situated in the Buln Buln Shire, the headquarters of which were at Drouin, while the south boundary extended to the Powlett river.

Although the district had been settled for some years, no work had been done further south than that just mentioned, and the settlers complained that their rates were being spent in the formation of the Drouin streets.

Beyond Holmes' all the track cutting had been done by the pioneers at their own expense, and it often became necessary to cut a track around or through a fallen tree, and at times to cut a parallel track some distance, where the original one had become impassable by depth of mud. About dark we reached the homestead of Mr. Elliott, where those living south were congregated, awaiting the arrival of their mails. I was here met by my brother Murdoch, who had arrived some time previously, and had established a camp. Here I also met Messrs. J. Glew, E. K. Herring and A. W. Elms: the first-named a resident of some four years standing, and the two latter the most recent arrivals, who had just completed their course at the Dookie Agricultural College, and who afterwards became actively identified with the progress of the district. We completed the journey on foot in the company of Messrs. Glew, Herring and Elms as far as Glew's. There I was surprised to find a serviceable, five-roomed brick house, neatly furnished, and with a corrugated iron roof, built some three years previously. The bricks had been made on the place from ground sandstone, and the iron, lime and cement and fittings had been carted to Poowong, and carried out from there by pack horses at a total cost of £15 to £20 per ton. This was still the ruling rate for delivery of groceries and goods.

After a short stay at Mr. Glew's, we continued our journey to the camp, about half a mile further into the scrub. The morning after my arrival we went exploring through the scrub in quest of a suitable place to commence scrub cutting. We travelled south until we came to a steep fall in the country southwards, and there on the edge of the hill we considered by the lay of the country that we should be within sight of the ocean. I climbed a blackwood spar while my brother cut a narrow strip of scrub down the side of the hill, until the ocean was plainly visible. Here we decided to make our first clearing. A few days scrub cutting afterwards revealed a magnificent panorama of sea and landscape. The place we first opened up is the identical spot upon which the original house (now Golding's) stands.

With a few hints from practical men, we soon became adepts in the art of scrub cutting, and found the work very interesting, if of a somewhat arduous and dangerous nature. It was impossible, on account of the entanglements of supplejack, to fall each spar individually, and in any case that would be too slow a process. The chief art, combining speed with economy of labour, lay in not cutting the spar completely through, but in notching it on each side and leaving sufficient wood to support it, and at the same time weaken it sufficiently to break completely off when it was desired to make a fall, which was done by cutting a large spar through and falling it upon the notched area. An adept cutter might secure a fall of a chain in width by several chains in length. This had the advantage of falling it all in the one direction, thereby facilitating a good burn, combined with convenience in picking up. A good scrub cutter

also required to be an expert in the use of his legs, using them to brush aside tussocks of swordgrass while delivering the blow, as the serrated edges of the swordgrass cut like a knife if they came in contact with the hand, especially in wet weather.

As the cartage was so expensive via Poowong, we decided to open up communication with Anderson's Inlet and get our goods via that port. Accordingly, about the beginning of November, 1882, those interested commenced to cut a track, starting at the southern end of Glew's clearing, and cleared everything to a width of 15 to 20 feet. Mr. Glew was represented by a man, and Messrs. Herring, Elms, Parsons, my brother and I worked personally. After about five weeks' work we reached the Powlett river. The site of the first bridge across the river was determined by the position of two blackbutt spars which were in a convenient position to fall across the stream to the opposite bank and which did duty as stringers; the third was drawn from some little distance by our united efforts. These we covered with split blackwood spars as a decking. Once across the river, it was a matter of only a day or two to connect with the existing track from the foot of the hills to the Inlet. After Christmas we all purchased our season's stores in Melbourne, and had them brought round by boat to Anderson's Inlet. We contracted with Mr. Archie Bee to deliver the goods by bullock waggon. On his first trip he reached the foot of the hills with a considerable load without trouble, but unwisely attempted to bring the full load up the hills. When clearing the track, we were compelled to go straight up and down the hills, as it was impossible to utilise the hillside and secure the easier grade, made practicable later on by side cuttings. Before he reached the top of the first hill, the load had beaten the team, and brought them to the bottom again at the great risk of breaking the necks of the polers. We tried to induce Mr. Bee to divide the load and come up with half, but his first failure had so disheartened him that he declined to make another attempt with the waggon. Mr. Glew then made a strong sledge which was used for the next few years, before an attempt was again made to ascend with a heavy, loaded vehicle.

After the pioneers burned off their first lot of scrub, all kinds of dwellings were erected: some in the spar country made log huts; others among good splitting timber built with slabs or palings, while others who wanted something more pretentious erected pitsaws and cut the necessary weatherboards, flooring and studs by hand.

In 1882, our hut was the furthest south. Messrs. Elms, Herring and Parsons were residing temporarily at Mr. Glew's, while Messrs. Horsley Bros had not yet come to reside on their land. We had occasional visits from prospective settlers, and a portion of our time was occupied in exploring the scrub and showing visitors suitable blocks. Distance was calculated by time. We calculated to walk an average of a mile in 60 to 80 minutes, according to the nature of the country, with additional time added for wiregrass or unusual obstacles. On one occasion a party from Lancefield arrived, including Messrs. W. McKenzie McHarg, John Gannon, Cutter, and Fitzgerald. We put in several days exploring the scrub to the west and south, with the result that Messrs. John Gannon and Wm. McKenzie McHarg returned later on and selected blocks. On that occasion an amusing midnight incident occurred. At that time we were camped in the scrub, surrounded by large trees. The hut was built of blackwood spars placed on end with a bark roof, and as the bark had become curled, it was neither rain nor animal proof. During the evening a discussion arose as to the probability of a particular

tree falling on the hut should it be uprooted by a gale which was then strongly blowing. At that time the paddymelons and possums were both numerous and bold, and used to come around at night and pick up scraps of food thrown out. Some of our visitors slept on the floor, with their heads under the table. During the night I heard a great commotion, and on looking up saw one of the party holding a lighted match while Mr. Gannon was in the act of assisting a possum through a hole in the roof with a long handled shovel. It appears the possum had been prowling around in search of sugar or other dainties, and had dislodged a large vegetable marrow which lay on a shelf. The marrow came crashing down upon the table over the heads of the visitors and caused the alarm. In discussing the matter the following day, one of the party said he thought "his time had come," as he was confident it was the big tree crashing through the roof on top of us.

On the first of August, 1883, the Postal Department granted a weekly mail service as far as our place, and in November of the same year this was made a tri-weekly service. Mr. L. C. Holmes by a petition was instrumental in securing this service. Mr. Holmes had provided himself with two copies of the petition, one neatly drawn out in the orthodox style for transmission to the Postmaster-General; the other was penned in his own facetious style, and concluded, "We have the honor to be, You old fossil, Your obedient servants," which he presented to those who enjoyed a joke. Mr. Holmes was working "down South" at the time, and when he had secured the necessary signatures, sent the papers on to Poowong with instructions to his wife to procure an official envelope and enclose the properly drawn out petition with the list of signatures to the Postmaster-General. Mr. Holmes received a shock when he returned home on Saturday night to find that Mrs. Holmes had mistaken his instructions, and enclosed both copies of the petition. He breathed more freely, however, the following Saturday when he found the irregular copy of the petition had been returned without comment, but with a red ink line drawn through "You old fossil." The following week our petition was granted. When the tri-weekly mail was established, Mr. Jas. Dixon, store-keeper of Poowong, secured the contract, and Mr. "Ted" Dixon, then a recent arrival from the "Old Country," had charge of the delivery for the first three years. At the beginning of 1884 a Post Office was established, and I had the honour of being the first postmaster. After a lapse of two or three years the office was removed to the residence of Mr. A. W. Elms, and was shortly afterwards named "Moyarra." It was subsequently removed to the residence of Mr. Wm. Elms. The service was afterwards extended to Kongwak, and later on became a daily service. At the time of the transfer of the Post Office to Mr. A. W. Elms, a loosebag service was extended to Mr. Gillespie's old store. After the opening of the Outtrim coal mine, this was transferred to his new premises in Main street and became a Post Office. After a time, postal matters became of sufficient importance to warrant a separate building, and the office was removed a few doors up the street. It was subsequently transferred to Hoarey's buildings, where it was raised to the status of a Staff Office.

During the first few years we could only produce crops that could walk to market, and, as far as sheep were concerned, the tracks were only passable from December to March. One great drawback to the keeping of sheep was the prevalence of footrot, owing to the compulsory yarding at night, as a protection against the ravages of dingoes which infested the scrub, and, in addition, the market fluctuated to a point below anything possible

since the introduction of freezing for export. Our first consignment of fat sheep to Messrs. Pearson, Rowe, Smith & Co., of Melbourne, in March, 1885 (I think), realised an average of 10.3 per head for a lot of crossbred ewes averaging about 70lbs. weight, with a five months' growth of wool. The highest average for the day for ewes was 10.6 for a line from Mr. Neil Black, Mt. Noorat.

Cattle had, also, their disadvantages on account of the prevalence of pleuro-pneumonia, especially in bullocks imported from New South Wales, our chief source of supply before the general introduction of dairying in Victoria. The Department of Agriculture at that time was prepared to supply a quantity of lymph sufficient to do 100 head of cattle for a guinea, but most people preferred to allow the disease to develop in one of their own herd and secure fresh lymph, as they considered that supplied by the Department was too often ineffective, and attended with considerable risk. On one occasion, a resident forwarded a guinea to the Department with a request for a supply of lymph; about a tablespoonful came to hand, with a leaflet giving full instructions for the vaccination of children. As there was not sufficient lymph to inoculate half the herd, and as the colour suggested calf lymph and there were no children in the district to vaccinate, it was considered safer to throw it out, and await the development of the disease in a beast. It was not always certain that a supply of lymph could be secured from a beast apparently in the proper stage. I once saw the late Mr. Thos. Scott, of Poowong, who was an expert at the work, kill two bullocks in succession without getting a suitable supply of lymph. The first beast slaughtered was badly infected with tuberculosis, as well as pleuro, and was passed over. The next one had one lung in such an advanced stage that the virulence of the lymph would probably have killed off the entire herd, while the other lung was so slightly affected that no lymph could be obtained. This was an exceptional case, however, as, usually, if one lung was too far advanced the other would be in a proper stage.

In the early days, we used sometimes to exchange labour with one another in cases where extra hands were required, and were often entertained, and sometimes misled, by the mimicry of the lyre bird. On one occasion Mr. Herring and I were assisting Mr. Parsons (whose selection was furthest west at that time) to place in position the logs of his first log hut, and were suddenly surprised to hear the sound of a couple of axes in the scrub to the westward. Our first surmise was that some of the settlers or land-seekers from West Jumbanna were making their way through. We were aware that the Messrs. Scott Bros., Sheepway and others had come in from the Glenalvie side, and were not far distant, although we had not approached one another through the scrub. Eventually, we concluded it was our friend, the lyre bird, up to some of his mimicry tricks again. Several times during the day we heard him mimic our axes, saw and various other sounds.

The bird and insect life of the forest was a source of genuine enjoyment to the pioneer, who, while he inevitably, though reluctantly, destroyed it with the destruction of the forest, enjoyed the rich strains of harmony to which he awoke in the early morning; or with which the air seemed to vibrate in the calm of a Spring or a Summer evening, when all inanimate nature seemed at repose. These, with the destruction of the scrub, have disappeared completely and permanently, only to remain a memory of things that have been, in common with many other associations of pioneer life.

# Recollections and Experiences

MR. A. W. ELMS.



I received my first ideas of Gippsland from the weekly newspapers, shortly after the Brandy Creek country had been settled, and the Poowong country just opened up. Glowing accounts were given of the fertility of the soil and the luxuriant growth of grass and crops. Mention was also made of the dense scrub, and clearing and burning it, also of pack tracks and mud; and the general idea I got was that Gippsland was a flat country covered with a dense scrub something like fi-tree. I could not imagine at that time that mud and hills could exist together.

In June, 1882, I travelled by train to Drouin, and took coach from there to Poowong. There were two stout horses in the coach, and we ploughed through a sea of red mud to Clifton's, where we changed horses and then started off again. About four or five miles from Poowong one of the wheels came off the coach, and the driver, the well-known Sid. Watts, and I rode the horses and carried the mails to Poowong, reaching the Post Office (Horsley's), between seven and eight o'clock. Luckily, there were no other passengers in the coach, or I do not know how the horses would have been distributed. It felt very queer to ride along in the dark, through a strange country, and to hear the horses' feet going flop, flop in the deep mud.

After the mail was sorted and distributed to those waiting I started off with Mr. L. C. Holmes, who carried a lantern, to walk to Mr. Chas. Cook's place on the Bass, where I stayed the night. As the track we took went straight down the hill from Poowong to the Bass, all my ideas of Gippsland being a flat country were shattered.

Next morning I rode with the mailman (Holmes) to Elliott's, and Messrs. T. and W. Horsley accompanied us, but, knowing the conditions of the country better than I did, they walked, and got on just as fast as we did on the horses. A cart track had been cut for a couple of miles out of Poowong, but after that there was only a pack track.

Imagine a track about four feet wide winding through the scrub, with mud nearly up to a horse's knees on the level parts, and with ridges and holes like a cowyard on the slopes, with logs here and there, which the horses had to scramble over, and broken into crabholes occasionally, and you will have some slight idea of what a pack track is like. A rider had to be always on the alert, or his horse would brush his legs against the trees on either side of the track, for the horses seemed to have a notion that they could avoid some of the mud by squeezing along the edge, and would often nearly fall down in



making the attempt. Each settler had cut his own track to his own clearing from that of his next neighbour, and so it zig-zagged from one house to another all the way down. The better houses were made of palings, others were of logs, but at Glew's there was a brick house with iron roof. (Mr. Glew has told the story of the building of it in another paper.)

On the way down we met Messrs. McLeod Bros. and E. K. Herring, who were returning after pegging out their selections. I stayed several days with Mr. Glew. The next day he and I accompanied the Horsley brothers, when they pegged out the block on which the Jumburra Coal Mine is now worked, and the day following I pegged out my own block. As judging the land in its original state was almost an impossibility to one not acquainted with the district, the usual procedure was to peg out the first vacant block and take one's chance as to what it proved on being developed. At that time, the block where J. Cormack now is was reserved for a township, and all the land east and south of where Korumburra now is, with the exception of E. L. Smith's and P. Shingler's allotments, was reserved from selection, and reserved for coal mining purposes.

Surveying was very expensive, as all the sight lines had to be cut through the scrub, in many cases saplings up to 18 inches in diameter being cut down to get a line. All journeys through scrub were done by compass, or by blazing marks on trees, but the latter was a tedious process, and only used when a line for a track was required. Without a compass one would get no idea of direction, and would almost certainly get lost.

Soon after my arrival in the district, the question of road communication with the coast arose, and Herring and I went by compass out to the plains, and, looking back for the most promising-looking ridge, made our way back by it. As it seemed suitable for a track, all interested worked together, and after some weeks of work, opened up a sledge track from Glew's down the ridge where Outtrim now is, and out to the plains. We made a substantial bridge over the Powlett River, almost exactly where the present bridge is, and were fortunate enough to avoid the swamps both above and below that site. After this, our goods came by schooner or ketch to Anderson's Inlet, thence to the foot of the hills by bullock waggon, and then by sledge or pack-horse to the various settlers' homes. There was at that time no jetty at Inverloch, and all stores had to be landed by a rowing boat, and placed in a small shed on the beach. Prior to this track being made, a track had been opened by Glew and others through Spring's, and where "Ryeburn" is now, but it went through a bad swamp, and was not so direct as the new road.

After survey, the next business was to get some scrub cut in order to burn it in the Summer, and sow grass seed on the ashes in the Autumn. Then one usually built a hut of some sort, generally of logs with the cracks filled with fern stems or mud. Our history for the next few years was simply a record of cutting scrub and getting land under grass. As we were a bachelor community, we often found it convenient to work with one another turn about. During this time much of our accommodation and living was very rough and primitive. Clearing and sowing grass was the main idea in everyone's mind, and present comfort was sacrificed for future prospects, which seemed bright to us at that time.

One hut I lived in, while helping a neighbour to cut his scrub, was built in a space cut out of the hazel scrub just large enough for the hut, and was made of hazel stems put in a trench as close together as possible.



TYPICAL DWELLING OF THE EARLY PIONEERS.

It was lined with hessian tacked on the walls, and had a roof of galvanised iron, which we carried on our heads along a surveyor's line down a steep hill and across a gully, from the nearest pack-track about half a mile away. When the scrub was ready to burn, the iron, hessian, stores, bedding, etc., were buried, and then dug up again after the "burn." As the scrub grew right around the hut, it was delightful to lie in the bunk on a bright Sunday morning in Spring or early Summer and watch and listen to the birds that would come right up to the doorway. But on wild wet nights the bunk was the only comfortable spot, for the wind blew through the chinks and hessian, so that one side of us would shiver, although the other side might be almost roasted by the fire. We found great difficulty in getting dry firewood in such a place. Nearly everything that was not green was too rotten and soaked with water to burn well, but we found that green hazel stems would start a fire after being cut for a few days and stood near the fire overnight, and with the fire once started, we could always keep it going with green hazel split into small pieces.

Cooking was a great trial, both to the temper and digestion. We begrudged the time taken by it from our work. Advantage was taken of wet days to get ahead as far as possible with a supply of bread and cooked meat, but when a spell of fine weather came, the evening was usually devoted to preparing food for the next day. Bread was the greatest trouble. The sponge was generally set in the morning, and given all day to rise, and after work was anxiously inspected to see the result. Often it would get cold through the day, and not rise at all. Then perhaps it would be warmed up before the fire and given another hour or two to rise. This

would mean baking until 10 or 11 o'clock at night. I have often put the bread on in the camp oven to bake at night, and got into my bunk with the intention of reading until it was time to take it off, with the result that on waking up I would find it morning, and the lamp burnt out and the bread sodden with the steam that could not escape.

Though the district seemed to offer little inducement to the blacks of the more open coastal district to venture into it, yet we have evidence in the shape of their stone tomahawks, which have been found in many places, that they did make excursions into the scrub country. These would probably take place after the country had been swept by fire and before the scrub had time to grow again. I have found several stone tomahawks on my selection, and also traces of the blacks in a still more curious manner. About 1885 I ring-barked a patch of trees, and afterwards cut some of them down to clear a place to build a hut. Some years afterwards, probably about 1895, I wanted some shingles, and started to saw lengths for splitting out of these trees as far up the barrel as it was clear of branches, probably about 80 feet from the ground, and where the tree was about three feet in diameter. As I worked I noticed that outside a certain place the grain of the wood ran differently to that inside, and I found marks in the wood at the place where the flaw occurred. Eventually, I recognised them from their shape and position as footholds made to climb the tree. They were stirrup shaped, above five inches in height and breadth, and from three-quarters of an inch to an inch in depth, and the tomahawk marks were quite distinct, apparently preserved by the sap filling them up as the tree grew. The marks were spaced just where a man would cut them when climbing, and were about seven inches in from the outside of the log. I kept a slab of wood with two marks on it as a curiosity, but unfortunately it got burnt in the bush fires of 1898.

Poowong was our post-office, and from there we paid for a weekly delivery of our mails to Elliott's, where the whole district gathered on Sunday afternoons to get the mail and exchange experiences. One night I left there about dusk to get to Parsons', where I was staying. The first part of the track was easy to find, as the sound and feel of the mud told one where he was, but the last portion was a survey line through a wire-grass flat, where the scrub was thin, and many logs lay about. Here in the dark I spent about an hour trying to find the track, which wound in and out of the logs, and I had just about made up my mind to spend the night in the scrub, without any matches to light a fire, when I got on the right track, and was able, by feeling on the ground for the cut stumps, to reach my destination.

Sunday was often spent in exploring. Distance was judged by time; we usually reckoned an hour's travelling as a mile in the scrub. On one occasion three of us started from Parsons', and travelled west until we struck the Foster Creek, then followed it down to the flats, then struck south-east until we reached the plains where we could get a good view of the hills; then striking north we reached McLeod's selection, where we stayed the night. This "pleasure trip" occupied thirteen hours of hard travelling. On another occasion, two of us set out to find our nearest neighbours to the west, as we knew settlers had come into the district from the Grantville side. After travelling for some hours, and not finding any sign of settlement, we were about to return when we heard very faintly the lowing of a cow in the distance. This induced us to continue our journey, and in course

of time we reached the clearing of the late Frank Scott, thus making our first acquaintance with our western neighbours.

In those days the weather seemed to be nearly always wet. If it was not actually raining, a drizzle would take its place, with the result that the usual thing when scrub-cutting was to be more or less wet through all day. If one started out in the morning with dry clothing, which was not always the case, travelling to work through the undergrowth would saturate one up to the waist, and the first cut at the moisture-laden scrub would drench the rest of the body. Then at lunch one would put a coat over the shoulders to keep the cold wind off the wet shirt, and the meal would be eaten while walking about to avoid getting too cold. Everything was too wet to make a fire or to provide a comfortable seat. On very wet days, when any prospect of work was hopeless, we got some amusement out of watching the satin birds and jays that used to come round the huts looking for scraps. They came in flocks of a dozen or more, and got very tame.

The pack-tracks barely dried up in the Summer, and later, when we got dray roads, we never expected them to dry before Xmas., and they began to get muddy again in March or April. I have been obliged to leave a flock of sheep all night in the scrub along the West Jeetho road in Xmas. week, owing to the mud being so bad that we could not get them to travel half a mile in a couple of hours.

Drouin was the municipal headquarters, and our first trouble was to get roads surveyed, after which we gradually got the pack-tracks converted into roads suitable for vehicles. This was a slow process, and even after the road was cleared the necessary width, there was no guarantee that one could get anything to pull a vehicle along or through it. I have packed cream to Korumburra, and also taken it by sledge, owing to the road being impassable for anything on wheels, and this after the railway was opened for traffic.

In the course of time an agitation was started to get a railway line made from Dandenong to Port Albert, and eventually this was passed by Parliament. The survey took some years to complete, owing to the very difficult nature of the country and the dense vegetation. When it was finished, and the route decided, a Parliamentary party travelled through the district, and were entertained at a banquet in Yorath's barn. This was the first public function of any importance held in the district, and was a great success, and very creditable to the settlers who carried it out in the face of great difficulties. The crockery was carted from Drouin to Poowong, and packed from there. Tables, benches and decorations were made by the residents, and the cooking was done very nicely by a man working in the district.

An old log hut of mine was the first place where regular church services were held in the Moyarra district, and it was also the first school-house. The average attendance at first was only about 5, but increased later on to 12 or 13.

The first sport in the district was cricket, which was started as soon as the district was properly settled, and matches were played by the local club with Poowong and North Poowong on one side and Wonthaggi on the other. It afforded a welcome change from our rather monotonous lives. Later, when the railway was made, clubs were formed at Loch and Bena, in addition to those mentioned above, and considerable interest was taken in

the game. A handsome trophy, given for competition among the district clubs, by the Hall family as a memento of a son who died of snakebite, was won after spirited competition by the Moyarra Cricket Club.

With the coming of the railway and improvement of road facilities, dairying was taken up by many, who had hitherto been able to do nothing but grazing. Cream separators had just been introduced into the colony, and soon the hum of these machines was to be heard on most of the farms. The first in our locality was a 35-gallon horizontal De Laval machine on Mr. C. Parson's farm, and it was as much a curiosity to us then as it would be to the young people on the farms now, who have only seen the later types. At first we all sent cream to Melbourne, but as this was not satisfactory, owing to difficulties of transit and inadequate returns, the question of starting a local factory was considered. The first proposal was a cheese factory, but eventually it was decided to make butter. As cream could be delivered to greater distances than milk, we next took up the idea of a district factory on the railway line, and arranged a meeting at Korumburra, to which delegates from other districts were invited to discuss the proposal. District jealousy prevented this scheme being carried out, and eventually the Moyarra Co-op. Butter Factory was established by the farmers in that locality. This was carried on successfully for some years, and gave the dairymen much better returns for their cream than they had got hitherto. Mr. R. T. Archer, the manager, worked under great disadvantages, but got good results. Sometimes, owing to the scarcity of good water, butter was made without washing at all. The factory had no refrigerator, and in very hot weather ice was sometimes got from Melbourne to cool the cream and butter. As settlement extended south and west, the factory found itself on the edge instead of in the centre of its supply, and eventually the company was dissolved, and a new factory established at Kongwak.

The next step in the progress of the district was the development of the Jumbunna and Outtrim Coal Mines, and the extension of the railway to Outtrim from Korumburra. This had the effect of bringing a large population into the district and the establishment of the townships of Jumbunna and Outtrim. The roads had meanwhile been surveyed and cleared, and although they were very bad at times, still for the greater part of the year they were fit for vehicles. The original surveys were in many cases found to be impracticable; for instance, the first survey of the Outtrim road climbed straight up the ridge and over the top of Mount Misery; and heavy expenses were incurred in purchasing deviations.

The next item of importance in our history was the bush fire of 1898. It swept the greater part of the district, destroyed many homesteads, as well as a great part of the fencing, and burnt the grass so severely that much had to be re-sown. Of course, a certain amount of good was done by burning up logs and rubbish, but it meant a heavy loss to a lot of farmers, who were just getting their farms into order.

From that time the history of the district has been one of steady advancement towards being one of the foremost dairying districts in the State, and although there is still work to be done, yet with railways and metalled roads being constructed, the story of the pioneers may be said to be finished.

# Recollections and Experiences.

MR. J. WESTERN.



In December of 1882, less than four months after landing in Australia, my brother and I came to South Gippsland looking for suitable land to select. We had just returned from a tour through the north-west beyond Donald and Charlton, but the season there being very dry, and the outlook so uninviting to those used to the green fields of England, we decided to see what the much-talked of province of South Gippsland had to offer. Arriving at Poowong, we were at once charmed by the lavish profusion of Nature on every hand. The English grasses and clovers that we saw here for the first time in Australia were flourishing in luxuriant riot in the small clearings, clearly proving the suitability of the district to their growth, and the thistle, that excellent judge of soil and climate, was literally hanging over the fences, so enormous was their growth in the virgin soil. We were captivated.

We had not expected to see anything like this, and at once made up our minds to settle here. Making for the nearest point where land was available, we went through the farce of "pegging-out." This was in the parish of Korumburra, about 10 miles from Poowong. We were piloted by Mr. John Salmon, also a recent arrival from the West of England, and who had taken up a block in the same locality, and was waiting for a burn before going out to live. I shall never forget my first impressions of this great forest as we went on that day. The trees towered up till their tops seemed lost in space. The dense jungle of scrub underneath, and here and there fern gullies of exquisite beauty, and over it all there reigned a strange and oppressive stillness, broken only by the notes of the lyre-bird or grunt of the monkey-bear. In after years, when we had been brought to fully realise the stupendous task undertaken in reducing this forest, one is amazed at the light-hearted way it was entered upon. Never in any part of the world have I seen a forest of such magnificent proportions—tier after tier of growth from tangle of wiregrass and swordgrass to fern-tree and scrub, and on to towering gumtree, giving a perpetual twilight by day and black darkness at night. But, in spite of the difficulties that were so obvious, and the knowledge of our inexperience in bushcraft, we felt that what others could do we surely could also learn to do. A party of surveyors, in charge of Mr. Munro, were at work surveying land that had been lately applied for, so we got our applications in to the Lands Department, and soon after New Year, 1883, our land was marked out, and we set to work at once cutting scrub for a fire that season. Unused to axe work, our hands blistered frightfully. The moist heat and want of a breath of wind was very trying to new-chum axemen, but we were young and resolute, and soon had about 10 acres ready to fire. We built a small hut of fern logs, and over it stretched a calico sheet for a roof, and on this laid green fern

fronds to keep the place cool, and for our beds we had that "midnight agony" known as bag stretchers. For a table a sheet of bark, while a length of fern log made a substantial seat. As one looks back to those early days, and thinks of it all—the hard work and scanty fare, the isolation, the very limited capital at our disposal, and the prospect of no returns for two years—one is amazed at his own daring. It was good that we could not then see the full extent of the problem before us, with its long years of hard toil. Instead of anxiety for the future, there was always a spirit of cheerful optimism about the early settlers. We counted the steps to affluence by the years that it would take to cut all the scrub; the disappointments of bad burns, caterpillars, second growth, low prices of stock, etc., were then not dreamed of.

We were the pioneers of this locality—our little clearing a salient pushed out into the "Never-never." Our nearest neighbours were five miles back on Whitelaw's Track. We were linked to them by a tiny ribbon of track through the forest, but soon others began to come and take up residence on their land, and within a year a rush for land set in that soon absorbed all the available country eastward as far as Mirboo. That first Autumn, after picking-up and sowing our clearing, we built a small two-roomed house of the usual bush type, the materials all having to be split from trees in the forest and carried on our shoulders. The first night we occupied it we had a full house: a party of five or six men, from Kerang district, looking for land, piloted by Mr. T. J. Coverdale, reached our clearing at sunset, and, of course, stayed the night. It taxed the capacity of our establishment to the utmost to accommodate them.

The whole of the first Winter was spent at scrub-cutting, and with a little help we got a fine stretch cut. It was most interesting to watch day by day as the scrub was felled, the gradual unfolding of the ground plan of your farm, for one had but little idea of its topography while it was in scrub. Early in the Spring we had a visit from Mr. John Lardner, who was engaged in surveying a road from Anderson's Inlet northwards to where Leongatha now stands, and on to the ridge between the Ruby and Wilkur creeks, which ran east and west. He was carrying his survey along this ridge, now known as the Fairbank road, and having heard of our clearing, had come through the scrub in search of it, intending to make it the site of his next camp as he pushed his way west. We gave him a warm welcome, for the prospect of company was a very delightful one; and so for about four months his party camped with us. He continued west till his survey junctioned with Whitelaw's Track, then surveyed another road along the ridge south of the Ruby Creek, which passed through our clearing, joining his first survey again near Leongatha. The road surveyor's task was a most difficult one. He had to feel his way along laboriously through the dense scrub, often finding himself out on a spur instead of being on the main ridge which he was trying to follow. It was almost impossible to properly locate the road till the scrub was cleared away, when many alterations had to be made.

Though it was an abnormally wet Summer, we got some fine weather in February, and near the end of the month scored a very good burn. What a great fire it seemed to our new chum eyes, and how it seemed to lick up the great tangle of scrub. One cannot easily forget the joy and excitement of for the first time scampering across that 100-acre clearing. Hot-foot, indeed! for we were all over it while the ground was still covered with the burning embers and the air full of smoke. What a change two hours of fire had

wrought! We were forest dwellers no longer, and we could understand to some extent the transports of Stanley's Africans when they emerged from the Congo forests to the plains.

In the Autumn of that year, when the ivy and cress that used to spring up on the burns began to grow, we bought our first sheep. We were very proud of that little flock, and it made us feel that we had at last touched the first rung of the ladder; but before a month had passed we were disturbed one night by the howling of dingoes, and we knew that was not a very healthy sound for the sheep. Next morning we found dead and dying sheep everywhere, for the dingo kills for the love of killing. We gathered together what was left and brought them near the house, and while we were having a bit of lunch and sorrowfully discussing what we should do with them, they found the little track that led from the clearing through the forest, and along which we had brought them in, and were gone. Though they only had a little start of us, we did not overtake them till they had gone four miles, and we found them held up by a leg on Whitelaw's Track. We sold them to a neighbour out there, and that ended our first venture in sheep; and though keenly disappointed, it did not prevent us from buying again the next season, and this time with much profit.

We spent the whole of the following year picking up our burn, and very dirty and laborious work it was: but, in spite of the grime and labour, there was always a joy in it, as each day's labour showed a new area cleared of charred logs and made ready for grass. The Spring saw us with about 100 acres of well-cleared land, which we stocked up with cattle bought at Cranbourne, and though we kept our grass fairly short by borrowing cattle from other settlers, the caterpillars found us out and swept off all our grass, which compelled us to put our cattle out to graze. Nice rains came on soon after and gave us feed again, and we bought some very nice ewes and weaners near Werribee, the ewes costing 4/- and the weaners 3/- each.

In these earliest days, isolated as we were from each other, it was a very easy matter to lose count of the days, and very lively arguments would often take place as to what day it was. Most of us in those days kept the Sabbath by a change of occupation. It sometimes happened that some settler, having lost count of the days, Sunday found him at his usual work. About the year 1885 the Church of England missionary at Poowong commenced a Sunday morning service once a fortnight at the house of Mr. and Mrs. D. R. Clerk, and many of the neighbours used to gather to it. The memory of those early day services is a very pleasant one, and they were very much appreciated. The music for the hymns and chants was very creditably supplied by Mrs. Clerk on an accordion that possessed a capacity for very loud and florid music, a gift it was very fond of making the most of if it had the chance, but Mrs. Clerk knew how to keep it in hand: and while the service progressed the dinner simmered cheerfully over the fire in a big camp oven, filling the room with an incense that appealed to the material rather than the spiritual side of the worshipper, especially after a ride through the crisp forest air, that always seemed to leave one ready for a meal.

No account of the early days would be complete without reference being made to the boundless and unfailing hospitality of the bush people, and in those days of slow and difficult travel it was very greatly appreciated. Old memories suggest many names that call for special mention, but there are two that were very outstanding in this locality. I refer to Mr. and Mrs. Olsen, of Poowong East, and Mr. and Mrs. Langham, of Ivy Hill.





#### CHURCH, SCHOOL, AND PUBLIC HALL.

Situated on Mr. Clemson's land on the Boolarra Foster Road; inside diameter, 26ft. It held 50 people, with room to spare, and was used as a church for some years, the first preacher being Mr. Jas. J. Laundry. It was burnt in the Great Fire, 1898.

In spite of the dangerous nature of the work of scrub cutting, especially in spar or sapling scrub, there were wonderfully few accidents. There were a few, and occasionally a man got killed or seriously hurt. An accident happened to my brother one day when working alone. It was caused by a tall, dry spar—always very treacherous members of the great bush family—striking another tree in its fall and breaking in two and doubling back fell across him. He lay stunned for some time, and after coming to, he managed to reach a neighbour's house. As it was evident he had received serious injury, I decided next morning to take him to the Alfred Hospital in Melbourne, as no medical assistance was obtainable nearer than Dromin or Warragul. The neighbours assisted to make a sledge long enough for the patient to lie at full length, and made as easy and comfortable as possible with mattress and rugs, and, with a stout horse in front, I set off to traverse the 30 miles of mud that lay between us and Dromin. The first evening we reached the house of Mr. Olsen, of Poowong East, where we were put up for the night. The patient by this time was very weak and had to be carried from the sledge to the house. Refreshed with the rest, we continued on in the morning, and reached Dromin in time to catch the evening train for Melbourne. It was a dreadful journey for the patient, and no easy one for the driver, who had to walk the whole way, mostly through deep mud, for the season was late Winter. The injuries proved to be a fractured collar-bone and nose and serious injury to the spine, but after a few weeks in the hospital he was able to return home again. The hardships of the early settlers were generally very cheerfully borne and made

light of, and it was this spirit that greatly helped them to win through. Almost all were under the handicap of insufficient capital, for the task proved far greater than most had anticipated, and the returns for many years were very poor and often very low when bad markets were met with. One of our neighbours, with seven young children, turned his attention to dairying, and as the custom was then, the butter was salted and put into casks, and at the end of the season taken to Melbourne in the waggon for sale, and stores for the ensuing Winter brought back. This entailed a journey of about 140 miles. On this occasion the market was glutted with butter, and salted was practically unsaleable. After much trouble a purchaser was found at 2d. a pound for the season's output. But by sheer pluck and industry he won through to prosperity.

1898 will always be remembered by Gippslanders as the year of the great fire. Our Spring was a very bountiful one, but the early Summer became very dry, and with the abundance of long, dry grass and the enormous quantity of dry timber everywhere, the danger of fires soon became apparent. Soon after New Year, serious outbreaks occurred in many places, but cool changes in the weather enabled them to be got under to all appearance, but there were smouldering logs everywhere, ready to be fanned into flame by the first strong wind. That Summer was marked by periods of strong east winds that dried and withered everything till it was like tinder. January 31st saw the position becoming very acute, fierce fires everywhere, and a strong wind blowing, but no one anticipated the great disaster that was so close upon them. February 1st, the day we all remember as "Red Tuesday," dawned, and soon gave promise of being a "scorcher." It was very hot, with a furious east wind. That morning at my farm we were trying to hold in check a fire some distance from the house. When I chanced to look towards home, and saw great volumes of smoke rolling across just beyond, we knew that our efforts to check its progress were useless, except to try to save the house and building. We raced home and found the fire sweeping across the paddocks at a great rate, and in a short time it spread all around us, and we were surrounded. We fell back on the Indian's device of fighting fire with fire. We managed to make that one little spot tenable. The grass fire rushed by and was soon out, but every tree in its course was fired and was soon a mass of flame, and as they were standing very thickly and were about 250 feet in height, it soon became a real inferno. The smoke was blinding, the air was full of sparks, great tongues of fire were shooting from the burning trees. These soon began to fall down with a thundering crash, smashing into fragments, and continued to burn where they lay, and in the midst of this inferno, on about three acres of clear ground, with no chance of escape or hope of help from outside, we held our little fort. Often the buildings caught fire, but we were ever on the alert, and were it not for the iron roofs on which the sparks fell in an unavailing shower, nothing could have been saved. We had many anxious thoughts for the stock, and wondered how much would be left alive, for nothing could live where the timber had been heaviest, but we knew there were places fairly free of timber that would afford sanctuary to such stock as got there. As the day wore on, our anxiety for the stock gave place to gravely anxious fears for the lives of our neighbours, as it soon became plain that this was no merely local fire, but one of perhaps enormous area. The sky began to take on an aspect so dreadful and threatening that it made one almost afraid. Its colour was a strange shade of purple, tinged with blood. Everything was so strange and weird that words fail to describe it. It was almost dark at

four o'clock. The air was full of a dense smoke, and the sparks were as thick as the flakes of a heavy snowstorm. Flames burned blue instead of red, and the great tongues of flame had no illuminating power. It was a new experience of fires, even to Gippslanders, who had had so much to do with fire, and the thought was raised many times that dreadful afternoon and evening, "I wonder what the news will be in the morning." As night fell the scene was indescribably weird, the trees that still stood were picked out in fire from the ground to the topmost branches, the ground was covered with fire, and all the while there was a continual crash of falling trees that told of the destruction that was going on. It was a magnificent spectacle, but for the time it seemed as if the result of all our hard work of many years was going up in smoke, and one was not in the mood to fully appreciate the unspeakable grandeur of the scene. Next morning, what a change met our eyes! Instead of the forest of dry trees, there were great, clear spaces. The forest had largely disappeared, and through the murky atmosphere one could see the homesteads of neighbours half a mile away that we had never been able to see before, and then the smoking ruins of what one had been pleased to call a farm now swept of grass and fencing. It took no prophet to discover the beginnings of a more prosperous future, as much of the timber which had before seemed to be the work of generations to clear had vanished in the night. I hurried around to see how the stock had fared, and found, to my surprise, that they had mostly escaped to the places that were more lightly timbered. A few sheep lay about, dead, while others showed the marks of fire. I came to one spot where a number of rams used to camp in the cool of a hollow log. This had disappeared, and a row of charred bones marked the spot, while four that had managed to get out of the log lay dead alongside. In another paddock 40 fat bullocks had escaped through a man who was hurrying to his camp pulling down a fence and allowing them to escape out of a bad corner, where every one must have perished had the fire caught them there. Everywhere, fences and grass were swept as well as timber and scrub, and grimy desolation reigned over all.

Soon we began to get news from the outside, the almost unvarying tale of homesteads burnt and destruction of stock. In the Strzelecki district there was scarcely a house left, but fortunately no lives were lost, though many had narrow escapes. That afternoon I rode round to see how the neighbours had fared. At the first place of call they had saved the house after a heroic fight, but all other buildings had been burnt. Here were three families whose houses had been burned. There were five women among these refugees, and not one of them had a hat. The clothes they wore was all they had saved. One had driven over that morning to visit her old home. The buggy was burned as it stood in the yard, and she said, "The only thing that was saved from father's house was a teaspoon that my baby was playing with." We were a sorrowful looking company; all were nearly blind with the smoke, some quite so, and those who had lost their houses and cattle were greatly discouraged. One of these had lost 3<sup>2</sup> out of 40 cows, nearly all their sheep and pigs. Another neighbour 50 out of 60 cows and much other stock, and some of the sons who stayed to combat the fire had to get down the well to save their lives. As news from other districts came to hand we learned how widespread had been the ruin. Almost the whole of Gippsland had been swept, as well as other provinces, and so dense was the smoke around the coast that shipping was delayed for days. Homesteads by the hundred had been laid in ruins, many of them new and well appointed, and, together with the heavy losses in stock, fencing, etc., and

the season's profit, made a very disastrous year for Gippsland. At one place a family escaped from their burning homestead and made for shelter to a neighbour's place. After being there for a short time, this homestead was also surrounded by the ever-spreading fire and burnt, and the two families rode on together to another neighbour's place, where they found shelter. Supper was prepared, and just as they were about to sit down the alarm was given: the house was already on fire in the roof, set alight by sparks blown from a distance, and, like the others, this house too was soon in ashes, and the three families now moved on together to a small cottage where lived an old couple, who gave them what shelter they could.

The people of Victoria gave generously to a fund for the relief of those who had lost everything, but most of the settlers preferred to face the task without assistance in this way, and, aided by the splendid season that followed, together with the cleaner and larger areas of pasture now available, the sorrows of '98 were soon forgotten.

In these later days of well cleared and well stocked farms and comfortable homes dotting the landscape, and of roads that are fast being macadamised, one cannot but feel a pride in the past, and we smile at the memories of the hard road that has led us up to the present. There is a feeling of thankfulness that it has not to be gone over again: but as one looks out on the present and sees what has been wrought in one generation, there is a sense of satisfaction, and we say, "It was worth while," for around us we see one of the most prosperous districts in the State.



# Recollections and Experiences.

MR. G. MATHESON.

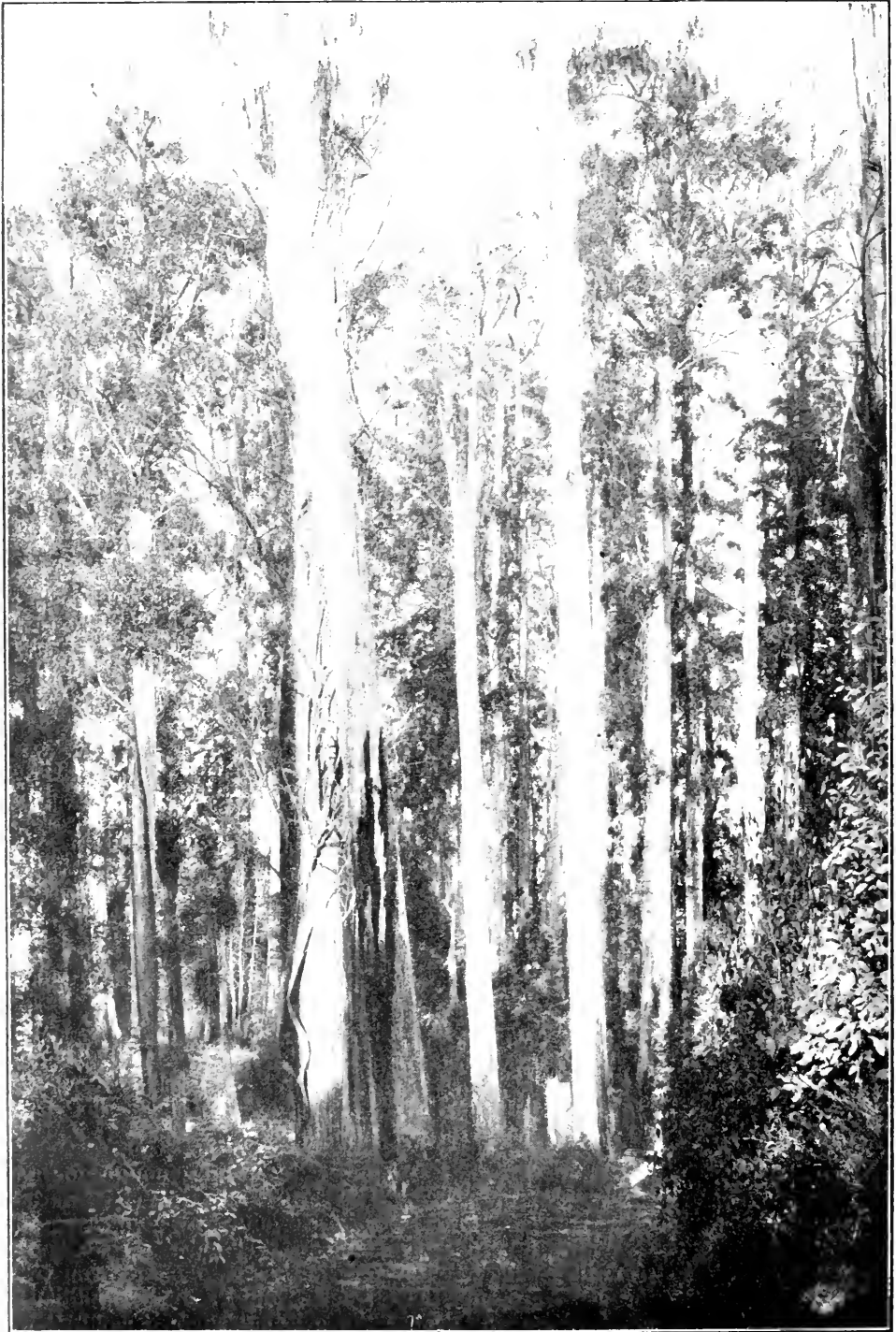


In 1883 I was living on my father's farm at Clarendon, on the Ballarat to Geelong road, and being on the look-out for a place of my own, I decided to go and see what Gippsland was like. I had read articles in the papers praising the land and the climate, stating that it was the garden of Victoria, a land flowing with milk and honey, etc.; and in reading over advertisements I saw there were several farms along the Main Gippsland line for sale, and went out to see some of them. They were not suitable for me, and I was told that there was no land anywhere near the line open for selection, and was returning disappointed when I met the late Mr. Charles Blew, of Whitelaw, in the train between Melbourne and Ballarat. He informed me that there was land open for selection out his way, and if I cared to go and look at it could stay at his place and go out and see it from there. I thanked him and he gave me his address.

When I reached home I found Messrs. William and Henry Rainbow were about to take a trip to Gippsland to see the country. I suggested they should see the land that Mr. Blew had described to me. When they returned they told me that they were so satisfied with what they had seen that they had selected blocks of 320 acres each. Then Messrs. Joseph and James Rainbow and I went out and selected a block each for ourselves and one for Miss Rainbow. Later on Mr. W. J. Williams came out and selected his block. Miss Rainbow's block, Mr. W. Rainbow's and my own were in the parish of Jumbunna East, the others in the parish of Kongwak, but all seven blocks were adjoining.

As soon as the land was recommended to us by the Land Board, Messrs. William and James Rainbow and myself came out to cut our first scrub. Our tents, tools and provisions were taken in a dray from Drouin as far as Mr. Blew's selection; from there we carried them on our backs along a pack track to Mr. A. Elm's selection, about seven miles, and before we could proceed further had to cut a pack track about a mile and a half to where we proposed pitching our camp on the north-east corner of this block, No. 52, parish of Jumbunna East.

A pack track is a way cut through the forest, just wide enough for a horse to pass along with a pack on his back. The scrub and small trees were cut close to the ground, but large standing trees were avoided by going round them. Sometimes large logs could not be avoided in this way; then a gap would be cut out of them just wide enough for the horse to pass through. The earth being soft and always damp, these tracks would soon be puddled up into mud, and as the mud became deeper the original surface would be lowered and the stumps of the trees that had been cut would project above the



A BIT OF THE FOREST.

mud for six or eight inches, making a very difficult pathway for either man or horse to negotiate. There was no possibility of avoiding the mud, as the scrub was far too dense to allow one to walk off the track. Our pack track finished, and a space of about ten or twelve yards square cleared on which to pitch our tents, we proceeded to make ourselves as comfortable as possible under the circumstances. Then we had time to look about and contemplate the work that lay before us, "scrub cutting," as it was called; timber falling would be a more correct description of the work. I have heard it said that this forest is one of the densest and heaviest in the world, and, standing here in it, one can easily believe it true. Just where we were camped there were very few large trees; saplings predominated, in many cases over 200 to the acre, their long, bare limbless trunks up to 150 feet high, and the largest not more than three feet in diameter at the base; and in between the saplings every foot of space was taken up with a large variety of smaller trees, shrubs, ferns, etc., all combining to make such a dense and tangled growth that a man could not walk about in it. We never ventured more than a few chains away from our camp without a compass in our pocket for fear of getting lost, for without a compass it would be impossible to walk in anything like a straight course. Sometimes we would be on our hands and knees creeping under some obstacle, at other times scrambling or tearing our way through swordgrass, wiregrass and other creepers; then, again, we would be walking along logs many feet up from the ground. The immensity of this forest, the great variety of trees, shrubs, creepers, ferns, etc., the absence of wind, and the subdued light on account of the density of the foliage overhead, all combined to strike one with awe and amazement at the grandeur of it all. No doubt the quality of the soil and the climate accounts for this vast growth of vegetation. The soil is of a rich, grey loamy nature, with clay subsoil, from two to four feet deep, with loose, rotten sandstone underneath, and over the surface of the soil lies from four to six inches of decayed vegetable mould, the result of fallen bark, leaves, etc. The rainfall is about forty inches in the year, and as the sun and wind cannot penetrate to the earth, the surface was always warm and moist, which all goes to account for the great height of the trees and the density of the forest, each tree vying with the other to get a glimpse of the sun and light. The country is very hilly, and although the hills are not very high, they are in some places very steep. There was no possibility of getting an extensive view of the landscape until after the scrub was cut. There were two varieties of saplings, the blue gum and the black butt, and they grew separate from one another. The blue gums were the most numerous and grew on the hills and high ground, while the blackbutts grew in the gullies and on the flats. The timber of these saplings would have been of value and very useful for many purposes if it had been possible to preserve them. We tried to save about sixty acres of them on this selection, but subsequent fires were so fierce that they were scorched up and died. There was a large area of sapling country in this locality; it is supposed that a fire swept through the forests many years ago and destroyed all the timber, and that these saplings and all this scrub grew up since. The saplings were all about the same height, and have grown up so closely that they have not been able to throw out any branches, their barrels being just bare spars with a few short limbs or branches on top. Between the saplings grew blackwood and wattle trees, but they appeared to be struggling for existence; long barrels 50 or 60 feet high and a few branches on top; very different to the blackwood and wattle we were acquainted with in other parts of the State. Among the scrub trees the hazel is the most numerous. It grew to a height of about 30 feet, was naturally straight, the

wood white and very hard when dry, the bark thin and beautifully mottled in some cases. It had soft green leaves, very much like the leaves of the English hazel, but it did not bear nuts, yet it was one of the loveliest trees in the forest.

The musk tree is very plentiful and ranks next to the hazel in that respect, and like it, is found everywhere on the hills as well as in the gullies; it grew to a height of twenty feet with crooked stems and very brittle, the leaves broad, green above and silvery-white underneath, and, when bruised, emitted a strong, pleasant, musk-like odour.

The blanket-leaf tree was brittle, very sappy, and extremely heavy, and, consequently, very bad to burn; its leaves grew in bunches, were narrow and about eight inches long, green above and white and woolly underneath.

The pittosporum, called native orange from its leaves having a resemblance to the cultured variety, was very ornamental where it had room to grow. It had a glossy, green leaf and sweet-scented flowers; its seed pods were round and about the size of marbles, and in colour and shape resembled miniature oranges.

The Christmas tree was a close growing tree about ten feet high; it came out in flower in December and was simply covered with a mass of small white bells and looked very pretty. The supplejack is a creeper; very often it could be seen high up among the branches of the trees, often binding several treetops together, its long, rope-like stems reaching the ground without any support from the trunks of the trees. It was a conundrum how it got up so high, in many cases eighty feet, for it cannot climb. It is supposed that when the trees were seedlings the supplejack clung to the small branches and was carried up with the trees as they grew. Their ropelike stems were very strong, and would require the strength of a horse to break one the size of your finger. The flowers were star shaped and grew in such profusion that from the ground they appeared to be one white mass, but on examination were found to be small star-shaped flowers; then the seed pods opened, and from them came out a mass of thread-like, soft, white, fluffy substance which was, if anything, more profuse than the flowers, and looked almost as pretty. There was another variety which had a pink and white bell-shaped flower with a chocolate coloured centre, which was even more beautiful than the other, but did not have the fluffy seed pods.

Among the ferns the tree fern was the admiration of everyone. They grew to perfection in the scrub, principally in the gullies, where they were to be seen in all sizes up to thirty feet high, like so many umbrellas held one over the other. The young, tender, curly topped fronds were of a most delicate green, rising vertically from the centre, surrounded by older and more developed fronds six or eight feet long, spreading out horizontally in graceful curves, and of a deeper tint of green, whilst the dry fronds of previous years' growth in all shades from brown to light grey, hung stiff and lifeless close to the trunk. There were several varieties of small ferns to be found in the scrub, also a great variety of moss in all shades of green, which looked very pretty.

The sword and wire grasses were among the worst obstacles the scrub cutter had to contend with. The swordgrass grew in bunches with blades about an inch wide and up to eight feet long, very rank, with edges like the teeth of a fine saw, and many a nasty cut we got from them. The wiregrass



grew in tangled masses, its long, jointed stems in many cases over ten feet long, had a file-like surface. Being so long and fine, it could not stand up by itself, but matted and tangled itself over everything within its reach.

This Gippsland scrub or forest presented a formidable undertaking to the early pioneers who took in hand the work of carving their homes out of it. All the work had to be done with the axe, and as the timber to be cut was nearly all green, a very fine, keen edge could be used; so the first thing to do was to prepare our axes to destroy as much of this beautiful forest as we could in the next two months. Soon after we started work Mr. Williams came out and pitched his tent in our camp, intending to cut scrub on his own block, walking there and back morning and evening, but after the first day he decided that it was not safe for a man to work by himself in such a forest, so he arranged to work with us and we could repay him by so much work another time. We found the best place to start work was in a gully, and to fall a strip about two chains wide along and parallel with the gully. Of course, the first trees could not fall to the ground, but would lean against those standing in front of them, bending them over a little. Then the next cut would fall against these, and so on until the weight was too much for those standing in front, and they would break, allowing most of the cut trees to come to the ground. Having secured an opening, this strip would be cut all the way up the gully, falling everything the same way as the gully. This task requires a considerable amount of method, and was attended with many dangers. It was all right as long as the trees fell the way we wanted them, that is, away from us, but often one would fall back into the standing scrub, and, leaning against other standing trees, would bend them in the opposite direction to which we wanted them to fall. Then we would require to be very careful in cutting a way past them until we had a clear space for them to fall into; then we would go back and let them down. This work was, sometimes, too dangerous, and these leaning trees were often left unless another tree could be felled across them to break them down. Having got our strip cut up the gully, we would then go back to the starting point and open out another strip at right angles to the gully and fall the scrub the same way as the hill sloped and into the gully. Being novices at the work we had much to learn, but soon found that the best, quickest and safest way was to fall the scrub in batches; that is, nick everything on both sides, leaving sufficient uncut wood to keep the trees standing, the nick on the back being a little higher than the one in front. This nicking would be continued to the top of the hill, when a tree would be selected by each man, and these cut so as to fall into others, which in turn fell into those in front of them, and the whole four or five chains would come to the ground with a tremendous crash. We would then go down into the gully and repeat the process, following out that method all through until the work was finished. In falling the timber in batches this way, it would all fall in the same direction and pack closer to the ground and, consequently, be in the best position for burning; and as we became more expert with the axe, this work, although dangerous, became very exciting. As the trees grew so closely together and were often bound together at their tops with supplejack, it was very seldom that one failed to come down. It often took longer to clear a space to swing the axe than it did to chop the tree; there was swordgrass, wiregrass, small bushes and twigs to be cleared away before we could get at the sapling to fell it. Fortunately, none of our party met with any accident during our first attempt at scrub cutting. The swordgrass was, I think, our worst enemy; our hands bore ample evidence of its cutting qualities. Nearly every year during

scrub cutting there would be accidents, some of them very serious; they were always dreaded on account of the very great difficulty of conveying a wounded man out of the scrub to a place where he could get proper attention.

We all had most ravenous appetites; whether it was caused by the nature of the work, the change of climate, or what, we had no means of finding out, and all would have been well if we had had plenty of good, wholesome, well cooked food; but this was our weak point. We only had bread, meat and rice to cook, and we managed to cook the rice fairly well, as it only required boiling in water until soft; but we could only get meat at odd times, and it was always going bad; there were swarms of red blowflies, and they would sometimes have the meat before it reached the camp, and we had nothing in the camp that would protect the meat from them. Our worst trouble was with the bread. Before we left home we were given full particulars, and all the ingredients to make both bread and yeast were packed in our provision box. We had often seen our women-folk making bread, and the operations seemed so simple that we thought any man could do it. We intended to get our flour and a camp oven at the store at Poowong as we came through, but just at that time they were out of camp ovens, but had some on the way and would send one out to us by pack horse as soon as they arrived. Poowong was our nearest store, about sixteen miles from our camp, and goods for all the camps were sent out by pack horse, but it was three weeks before our oven reached the camp, and then one of our party had to go half way up the track for it. One of our party said he knew how to make a damper in the ashes, so a large fire was made to get the ashes. A damper is flour and water mixed into a stiff dough, placed in hot ashes and left there until cooked. We had some difficulty in getting hot ashes, they seemed to cool so quickly; after the damper was placed in them a fire had to be kept burning over the ashes to keep them hot. As soon as the damper had a nice brown crust it was taken from the ashes, but when turned over was found to be more damp and soft than when it was placed in the ashes; that, of course, should not be. Something was radically wrong, and, while we were trying to think what it might be, the fire nearly went out, and while we were relighting it we saw steam rising from the ground: that explained all: the fire was drawing moisture up from the ground and through the damper. We came to the conclusion that it was impossible to cook a damper under those conditions, but so that this one should not be wasted, it was put in the fire again, this time upside down, and the other side browned, and when taken out was found to be all crust, and so hard that we had to use an axe to cut it. We next tried to cook Johnnie cakes in the frying pan, which was only about eight inches in diameter. Perhaps the reader may not know what a Johnnie cake is: it is made by mixing flour, water and baking powder together, flattening it out to about one inch thick, and if properly made will be two inches thick when cooked. When our oven came we expected to have some yeast bread, but were disappointed. The yeast would not work and the bread was a damper little better than the one cooked in the ashes: but with the oven we could have larger Johnnie cakes, and make them quicker, because with a lid on the oven we could cook both sides at once. A lot of time was taken up with the cooking, but we managed to cut forty acres of scrub, twenty on Wm. Rainbow's block, and twenty on this block, before Christmas, when we decided to go home for the harvest, intending to return after the New Year to fire the cut scrub, but were unable to get back before March, when we got our first burn. We selected a day when a strong north wind was blowing, although very little wind reached the edge of the cut scrub on account of the green standing

timber. We fired it all along the north side: it burned slowly until it got well alight, and three or four chains away from the edge. Then it commenced to roar and burn most fiercely, throwing up a dense volume of thick, black smoke into the sky, and very soon the whole was ablaze, the flames reaching over a hundred feet high. After the fire passed over, the ground was covered with the long, black trunks of the spars lying so closely that you could walk all over the clearing on them by stepping from one to the other, but the smaller trees and shrubs had all disappeared. Besides the spars there were a number of logs, trunks of large trees which had been lying on the ground before the scrub was cut. These were only blackened by the fire.

Before commencing the work of clearing the land of all these spars, we had to pitch another camp. After pitching our tents we proceeded to erect a chock and log hut with a shingle roof, which we found very much more comfortable than our first camp, besides giving us better facilities for cooking.

The work of clearing the land of what was left after the burn was called "picking up," but before anything could be picked up, these spar trunks had all to be cut into short lengths, and even then most of them were too heavy to be picked up. These were rolled together on skids with levers, and it was no easy matter to get them together on account of the stumps that were standing all over the ground, and the uneven nature of the ground made the work of handling these logs very awkward. The largest logs were placed in the bottom of the heaps and smaller and lighter ones on top, and when a number of heaps were made, a fire was put in them. We found it best to light the heaps on the top and let the fire burn down. We generally lit the heaps in the afternoon, then after tea in the evening we would go round them and poke them together with levers: if the heaps were well made and attended to in this way, very little would be left by morning, only odd pieces which would again be put together, or the remains of two or three fires made into one; and so on until all was consumed. Hollows in the ground and gullies were taken advantage of in making heaps, which would sometimes be two or three chains long and six or eight feet high. The logs in heaps so made would, as they burned, roll to the centre, and would not require so much attention after. Picking up was hard, rough work, and only strong men could stand it: the charcoal on the logs when wet would wear the skin off the hands until they bled; the smoke and heat of the fires was very enervating and severe on the eyes. This work went on all through the Winter, then next year it was the same work over again: scrub cutting in the Spring and Summer, and picking up and burning off in Winter. The grass seed was sown in the early Winter or Autumn, after the soil had got a good soaking with rain, and very often before all the picking up was finished. After our first grass seed was sown we built another log hut, but this time on this block. The previous one was on Wm. Rainbow's block. Then Mrs. Matheson came out, and we lived in this log hut for six years.

Our first lot of cattle were driven by road from Clarendon, and as some of them were not very strong when they reached Gippsland, through the scarcity of feed along the road, we had some difficulty in getting them along the pack track, the mud being knee-deep most of the way.

The following year I managed to get another twenty acres of scrub cut and under grass, making forty acres in all; then my further progress was stopped for want of funds. The little money I had saved up before coming out here was all spent, and as there was no possible chance of getting accommodation

at the bank, I had to go and work for others at scrub cutting, picking up, clearing, or anything that I could get to do; but as I was not built for heavy work, it was very little that I could earn in that way. In the Spring and Summer we milked six or seven cows, and Mrs. Matheson made butter, which was sent to Anderson's Inlet by pack horse, and from there to Melbourne by boat. At that time the market value of butter was from fourpence to sevenpence per pound, and after freight, commission and other charges were deducted, very little came back for all our labour; of course, it never paid us for a fraction of the work we had to do.

Butter making then was very different to what it is now. Our dairy was a frame of timber, about ten by twelve feet, covered with hessian. The milk was put into shallow pans and left until the cream rose to the top—about three days—when it was taken off and churned into butter in a dash churn, that is, a deep, narrow tub, the lid of which had a hole in its centre for the handle of the dash to work up and down in. It was very trying to work the dash up and down when the cream became stiff, sometimes for three quarters of an hour at a time. After the butter was made, it was packed into small casks holding 56 or 100 lbs. each and then sent to market. What was earned in that way and the little I earned was just barely enough for our needs. There seemed no possible chance to get any more scrub cut, and when our prospects were so bad that they could not get any worse, tenders were called for carrying the mails between here and Poowong, and my tender was accepted for three years, three trips a week at ten shillings a trip. A trip in the Winter months would take from seven in the morning till midnight; in Summer months it took about four hours less, and as I had to keep two horses, the reader will see that I was not overpaid; but thirty shillings a week was more than I could earn working for wages; it was enough to keep the wolf from the door, and we were thankful for that much.

Just about that time work was commenced on the Great Southern railway line, and a large number of men were employed on it, and I was able to make a little money carrying parcels, and, later, when the roads were cleared, I could, in the Summer time, drive a trap and carry passengers. When the three years expired the contract was renewed for another two years or until the line was opened to Korumburra. During the last three years of the contract I was able to earn good money on the road, which enabled me to have some more scrub cut by contract each year, until we had half the selection cleared and under grass and stocked with cattle. From then right up to the present we have not had any financial worries. We were able to milk more cows, the price for butter improved a little, and we purchased a cream separator, steam engine and boiler, a churn, butter worker and printer, and erected a good dairy.

After the railway to Korumburra was opened, the coal mine there commenced operations, and later the Outtrim and Jumburra mines started, all of which brought a large population into the district, and we were able to sell all our butter locally; and after the export of butter began, prices rose, and have been good ever since.

By the year 1894 all our selection was under grass, and as those selectors round us were making good progress with their work, it was not long after when all the scrub between here and Korumburra was cleared off the land; thus the great forest was subdued and a new province was added to Victoria. The district is well adapted for dairying, and within a radius of twenty

miles there are seven butter factories, one of which, last year, made considerably over eight hundred tons of butter.

Although we made good progress considering the amount of work we had to do, we had some serious setbacks or misfortunes. In the year 1898, when the whole of South Gippsland was devastated by bush fires, we lost all our grass and fencing, thirty-five milking cows and all the calves and pigs. We managed to save our dwelling house and outbuildings, but our losses that year amounted to over five hundred pounds.

In the year 1907 Mrs. Matheson passed away in the prime of her life, and at a time when we were just beginning to see some return for our labour, leaving a family of five sons and six daughters, all of whom, with one exception, were born here.

We had another setback in 1912, when our dairy, work-shops, butter and cheese plants, refrigerator, two steam engines and the whole of the season's make of cheese was destroyed by fire. That loss amounted to over one thousand pounds.

Before closing this account of our early experiences, I would like to mention the names of the late Mr. and Mrs. Archie Kennedy, of Poowong, and the late Mr. and Mrs. Charles Blew, of Whitelaw, on account of the many kindnesses we received from them, and the hospitality extended to us when we first came out here; their homes were always open to us when travelling in and out from our clearing.



# Recollections and Experiences.

MR. R. N. SCOTT.



We got our land from the Government in October, 1883, and my brother and I left our farm at Ballarat on April 18, 1884, and fixed our tent in Gippsland on April 26, 1884. We drove in a covered waggon, bringing a lad with us, coming through Bacchus Marsh, and across the Pentland Hills, camping out by the way. We travelled through Melbourne, Dandenong, Cranbourne and "The Frenchman's," a well-known bog in old times, to Grantville. Then we drove up to Mr. Goding's residence, a distance of about eight miles from Greentville, leaving the waggon there and packing our goods the rest of the way. Our next halt was at Mr. Clarke's, where we were hospitably entertained, before tackling the very rough pack track that was our only road that Winter. We reached Messrs. White and Sheepway's without mishap, and were most kindly treated by them. At that time they were living in a tent. From there we had to carve

our way through the forest as best we could for about a mile to our own selections, where my father had sent an old shipmate named McEwan, who was an excellent bushman, and proved of great assistance to us lads. The conditions being new, we rather enjoyed it, and McEwan was a jolly, goodnatured Scotchman, who looked on the bright side of everything, and we spent many a jolly evening round the camp fire listening to his stories.

We started scrub cutting, and got on splendidly. The horses had to be taken back to Mr. Clarke's, a distance of eight miles, to be grazed, being the nearest grass land in the district. So, whenever we wanted to bring provisions in, we had to go to Clarke's for the pack horse, bring in our load, and return the horse. It was not always handy to get the horse, and once, when we had a 100 lb. firkin of butter sent from the farm at Ballarat, we carried it up, Chinaman fashion, swinging it between us on a stick for a distance of about seven miles, with the pack track up to our knees in mud. We got our meat from Mr. Clarke in those days, and after we had carried it up, it was sometimes not too appetising. An enterprising neighbour of Mr. Clarke journeyed up one day, and made us an offer of a wallaby at half price, 1½d. per pound, but after mature deliberation, we decided to stick to the beef.

There was no Post Office nearer than Fern Hill, a distance of about 17 miles, where, unless there was a chance of a neighbour going, we had to walk for our mail every week.

Our lad, unfortunately, met with an accident; his axe slipped while cutting scrub, severing one of his toes. We managed to stop the bleeding, and

carried him to the camp, got a horse to take him out, and sent him to the Melbourne Hospital.

We broke up camp and returned to Ballarat after finishing the scrub, letting the burning and picking up, but, being a wet Summer, the contractor, unfortunately, missed the burn, throwing us a year back. The following Summer, December, 1885, the scrub caught fire from Mr. Sheepway's burn, and he wrote and told us we had a good burn. We started for Gippsland again, picked up, sowed down and fenced the burn.

In the following Spring (September, 1886) we brought our first instalment of stock down, driving a hundred poddies from Ballarat. We built a two-roomed log hut which served us for a home for some time, and did for a kitchen later on. Afterwards, we had some timber sawn by pitsaw on the spot, and had a two-roomed cottage built. In those days everything had to be packed in on horseback, and it can be quite understood how awkward it was to pack furniture. Anything breakable had to be carried the latter part of the journey. It is easily imagined how pleased we were to get our first vehicle in, after packing for so many years.

When the cottage was finished, my sisters took turn about to come down and keep house, and we soon got quite comfortable. My eldest sister, Annie, arriving in March, 1887, was the first woman to come on our selections; in fact, the first to come to our part of the country.

The neighbours were sociable and friendly, and as more tracks were made passable, we were able to do some visiting, and as the conditions were then, we depended on each other for companionship. There was a feeling of good-fellowship amongst the early settlers, bound together by the difficult nature of the country, and one was ready to help the other always in an emergency, which lessened the load and made burdens easier to bear.

We planted a garden, and the fruit trees came on apace. We had apple trees bearing four years after planting, and any quantity of flowers.

We spent no end of time looking for roads, and it was very hard, the forest being so dense, to find the best grades. Mr. Sheepway and I were the first to find the road along the ridge from Sheepway's to Joseph Thomson's. Also, my brother and I were the first to find the road along the ridge to Bena, from our selections to Binnie's, then known as Frazer's. Every year scrub was cut, and more country opened up, and we divided our time between the farm at Ballarat and Gippsland, until 1890. We found it rather difficult to work both places so far apart, so, after consultation with my father, decided to let the farm, and all come to Gippsland to live.

Up to this time this was no man's land, and we had not paid any rates, but in the following year, 1891, the Poowong and Jeetho Shire was constituted, and I happened to be one of the first councillors returned, Mr. Gillespie being returned at the same time, and ever since we have known what it is to pay rates.

We had cleared a good portion of my father's block, and we found there were better building sites there, more level country for cultivation, gardens, etc., so made our home where we are now living.

As we used the road to Kongwak, Jumbunna and Korumburra most and began to attend the Moyarra church, we seemed to get away from the

people on the other side, but met many nice neighbours in the Kongwak and Jumbunna districts, with whom we have been friendly ever since.

Most of the scrub cutting and picking up was done by contract; in fact, we had no day labour in those days, and anything that could not be let by contract we did ourselves. We got a good burn on my father's block in 1891, and being a large piece, put an advertisement in one of the Melbourne papers, for pickers up. All sorts of men came, some good and others quite useless. We used to fix them up with provisions, show them the picking up, let a contract to them, and when we returned in a few days to see how they were getting on, find they had decamped, lock, stock and barrel. We had heavy rains that year, which made it rather difficult for new chums. Amongst them were two men who had seen better days. One of them devoted a good deal of time to nature studies, and brought us lyre bird tails, etc. The other said he had come for the good of his health, and to be near the eucalyptus trees, which he reckoned had a great virtue, and always kept some of the branches hanging about his tent, and the leaves under his pillow, so they could not reasonably expect to get much work done.

Considering the rough nature of the country, we had very few accidents, but there were two men killed while cutting scrub, one while sitting at lunch, and one by a falling spar, and there were several minor accidents, while clearing in the early days.

Every Gippslander remembers the disastrous fires in 1898. It was a very dry year, and we heard how the people were suffering in the Strzelecki and Peowong districts. The fire was raging then in January, and we little thought it would come to us, but it very soon did. The fire caught in the scrub first, and we watched it night and day, trying to keep it off the grass. We had some very good men at the time, fine, trustworthy fellows, who took their turn at the night watch, and worked as if the place belonged to them. But all our efforts were unavailing, and on the 8th of February, 1898, a fierce hot north wind, blowing sparks, leaves and pieces of bark in a furious gale, brought the fire right over the place. We mustered the sheep, and brought them to the home paddocks, and also a good number of the cattle. We then gave our attention to the homestead; there were 26 men round it, and after a fierce fight with the fire, we managed to save it. We were aided by a piece of scrub being burnt to the north-west of us, about a fortnight before, which formed a break. Next morning, after the fire, we found 53 bullocks roasted; many others also were blinded, and it was pitiable to see the poor brutes. All the fencing was burnt, and the horses, working bullocks and milking cows could practically get anywhere they pleased that Winter. We had to cart chaff for them, and managed to save the horses, but lost all our working bullocks. The face of Nature was changed to a big black wilderness. Many of our neighbours to the north were burnt out: seven houses in Kilcunda-road were totally destroyed. It was then we first found the benefit of the plains land for Winter grazing. It was pegged out, and taken up quickly after fire year. We turned our cattle down there, and got them nearly all back when we went to muster in the Spring.

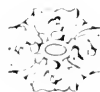
I have omitted to mention anything about the Blackwood district. For some years after we came here it was simply a reserve for timber. In



the year 1890 the Government decided to open it for selection in small areas of about a hundred acres. It is a well known fact how successful the selectors were on those small holdings, thus proving how suitable this hill country is for closer settlement. They wisely surveyed the roads previous to selection. Had this been done in our case, we would have had metal roads to-day, as large sums of money have been spent in purchasing deviations.

The year previous to our coming to Gippsland, the late Mr. Edwards and family selected in the Glenalvie district, at that time known as Jumbunna, and it was through them that we heard of this good land being available for selection. Mr. Edwards was one of the first to open up the tracks in that district. Mrs. Walker was the first woman to arrive in Glenalvie, to be followed shortly afterwards by the Misses Edwards.

I have dealt with some of our earlier experiences in Gippsland, as everyone knows about the later period.



# Recollections and Experiences

MR. W. J. WILLIAMS.



In the year 1877 the writer, with three others, left the Ballarat district for South Gippsland in search of land to select. On reaching Melbourne, we shouldered our swags, made our way down Bourke-street, and secured our passages in the coach for Oakleigh. From there we took train to Morwell, which we reached about 11 p.m., and made for a new boarding-house, conducted by Mr. Collier. There we were quickly supplied with a good meal, after which we were shown to our rooms, and although I have spent many nights in better quarters, I have seldom slept more soundly than I did on that occasion.

In the morning, after receiving full directions, we started for Gallagher's camp, at Mirboo North. About midway Mr. Bair had established a wayside inn or boarding-house, where we partook of a good dinner, had a rest and a chat with our host, and started again for our destination, which we reached just before sunset. After a night's rest in one of the half-dozen or so of tents provided, we rose in the morning to begin the great event and object of our journey.

At the camp we met several men, one a cook, who kept allcomers supplied with meals; the others were guides for land hunters. So far, we had all brought our swags, containing a blanket, rug, some spare items of clothing, and a good oilskin overcoat. We caused some merriment to our guide when he saw us preparing to take our belongings with us on our journey into the scrub. After a good amount of discussion, we decided to take our oilskins, though our guide advised otherwise, and in proof of his arguments told us he would wear flannel shirt, pants, boots and hat (am not sure about socks). Perhaps I should have mentioned that Gallagher's camp was established especially for the business of showing selectors available land. The charge was £1 a day, or £10, if one pegged out a block. This charge included provisions. After several days in the scrub, we returned to camp, not at all favourably impressed with what we had seen, and satisfied to let those who would bury themselves in the scrub and big trees of that part, but we would not.

Several amusing incidents occurred during this trip. A lad of about the same age as the writer was in the party, and while passing through a particularly rough bit of country, after some hours of walking, which had entirely knocked-up our young friend, we came to a very large log. He made several fruitless attempts to mount it, falling back each time, then he made an extra effort which landed him on top. The log was very slippery, and before he could obtain a grip, he started head foremost down the other side, to the amusement of us all who had got safely over. One night five



HEAVY SAPLING COUNTRY CLEARED OF SCRUB AND UNDER GRASS

of us slept in a 6 x 8 tent, pitched with posts and ridge pole on a fairly steep place. After putting a lot of tree-fern leaves on the floor to lie on, we went to bed, all lying cross-ways of the tent. Owing to the slope of the ground, it was not long till the one who lay at the back end was doubled around the post which carried the ridge-pole, by the weight of the other four gradually working down the hill. This soon became unbearable, and when he could stand it no longer, he got out and lay down at the top. Then the next one passed through a similar experience with the post, and he got out and lay down at the top. When each had had their turn at the post several times, and the fern leaves were getting very hard, most of us gave up the attempt to sleep in disgust, and finished the night by the fire.

After bidding farewell to our friends at the camp, we walked back to Morwell, and then went by train to our homes, to tell some tall yarns about supplejack, wiregrass, and big trees, many of which grew, according to our estimate, up to 350 feet high, and one giant which was four-sided near the ground, and which we stepped, measured seven yards on each of three sides and five on the other.

Again, about the beginning of 1882, the writer had another attack of land fever, and went again to Mirboo, and was taken this time by R. Steward out Mardan way, through J. Smith and Sons' and Watt and Sons' land, which had just been surveyed, and thence to where the Ruby railway station now stands. This time also I returned home without selecting, after I had also inspected a good deal of land in the Trafalgar district. The heavy timber frightened me, but about a month afterwards, having given the matter very careful consideration, I decided to make application for a block of land we had seen at Ruby. I paid the survey fee of £15, and after waiting about six months got word from the Lands Department to apply for a refund, as the land had been previously applied for by one Cummins, who was a member of our party when we inspected the land.

The next year, 1883, in the month of April, I started with several of my neighbours for this part of Gippsland. A few that I knew had seen the country, were favourably impressed, and were applying for blocks. We came by train to Drouin, and then had the choice of a fearfully rough coach ride to Poowong, or walk. If you chose the former, you paid 7/6 at the starting end, with the chances about 3 to 2 against your being carried through to your destination; if you walked, you reached your destination in about the same time, but not quite so tired.

When we reached where Jumbunna railway station now stands, a young man engaged there scrub-cutting undertook to act as our guide, and show us land further south or south-west, available for selection. We went through the farce of driving in several pegs, and on our arrival back at Melbourne, put in our applications. The writer's application was for a block west of James Rainbow's, in the Parish of Kongwak. In due time I received notice from the Lands Department to pay £27/10/- as survey fee. This amount to me seemed very large, and made terrible inroads into my stock of cash. However, I was pleased with the prospect of getting the land, and exercised my full right to growl at the Government and all the departmental sharks, and decided to put up with what I could not prevent.

In the month of October I received notice to attend a land-board at Drouin, but before doing so, paid another visit, with my father and one

of the Messrs. Rainbow, to the land, walked on the survey line around the outer boundary of the seven blocks that had been applied for by our party, and was well pleased, that is, with the land, not with the walk, which was one of the hardest and worst I have ever done. After inspection, we attended the land-board at Drouin, and were successful in our application.

I then returned to Ballarat, and at once set about making preparation to return to the land, and begin cutting scrub. Some of our party had just pitched their camp about 400 yards from the present Moyarra post office when I landed, in the first week of November. I left my blankets, etc., at Poowong, to come on in due course, per Mr. Jas. Dixon, storekeeper, of that place, so had to put in my first night without bed clothes. My friends kindly offered to share with me, but I declined, saying I could put in the night quite easily by the fire. A large damper was prepared, and buried in the ashes and coals of the fire, and after giving me the necessary instructions, my mates retired to bed, and I began what proved to be a very long night. I wrote several letters, one to a young lady friend, who afterwards consented to share my misfortunes, as well as my fortunes, for life, and is at this moment sitting by my side, after a little over 32 years of married life, during which time she has done her full share, and more. Just here it might not be out of place to refer a little to a woman's lot in Gippsland in the early days. It was dull and lonely in the extreme; she seldom, if ever, left her home, or saw one of her own sex. A man's business and work often took him out on the tracks, where he would meet others and compare notes, and come back feeling brighter and realising the truth of those words written so long ago: "As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend."

I had come over from Ballarat with the determination to face the scrub alone, and cut some scrub, if only a few acres, so that I might have a little grass for the following year; but, after finding my way along survey lines to my block, my heart failed me. I turned back and joined my friends in their camp, and worked with them till Xmas., on the understanding that they would work with me the following cutting season.

Scrub-cutting, although dangerous work, was to me very fascinating. Though I had never done exactly similar work, I was not new to hard work, and the days and weeks to Xmas fairly flew by, and our gang of new-chum scrub-cutters became proficient, not only at the scrub, but at bread-making, cooking dampers, pancakes, stews, rice, etc., etc.

Then, through dragging through the scrub, swordgrass and wiregrass, our pantaloons all wore through at the front of the legs. The writer put large pieces of bag over the holes, but this proved a failure, for in a few days it had frayed out, and was a mass of strings, and the rent, if it was not made worse, was certainly not made much better. One of my mates had a brilliant idea. He cut the trouser legs off, and sewed them on back to front. This, too, had drawbacks, as there was no room for the knees, and a lot of slack at the back where it could not be used; however, we were all very happy.

The next year, instead of cutting scrub myself, I let a contract to Messrs. Kennedy Bros., of Poowong, to cut and pick up 50 acres of scrub up to 15 inches in diameter, at 35/- an acre. This contract was duly carried out, and after burning, a mixture of English grasses and clovers was sown about the month of May. In November, the grass was from one to three

feet high, and we then sent over a mob of cattle from the Ballarat district, which all did remarkably well. One, which I particularly remember, a two-year-old heifer, reared a vealer that year, and we afterwards milked her in our dairy for 13 consecutive seasons; then she had a dead calf, making a total of 15 calves. After this we fattened her, and sent her to Newmarket, where she made £7/2/6, which, compared to present prices, would be equal to £20 now. It is my opinion that this cow, in the 13 seasons I milked her, made 4000 lbs. of butter.

Now, I must go back again in my story to the time when I built my first house, in March, 1886. With the help of three others, I began a two-roomed log house, constructed of the straight spars over 15 inches in diameter, which had been left standing on the clearing. These we cut into lengths of 27 feet and 15 feet. They were crossed at the corners, and let into each other till the logs touched: a row of logs across the centre, let in the same as those at the corners, made a substantial partition. All the walls were carried up solidly till the tops of the doors and windows were reached, when openings were cut out to the width required; then the building was carried up as before till the required height of the walls was reached, about 8 feet. The roof was constructed of split rafters, and I had purchased 4 x 1½ oregon for purlins and 8 feet iron to cover same. The materials mentioned above, with some 6 x 7½ T. and G. flooring boards, gave me my first practical experience in packing. All the above material was packed through a narrow track about 5 feet wide for three miles, the iron in 8 feet and the boards in 12 feet lengths. When the load had been put on, the horse would be sent into the narrow bush track, and the driver, by holding the boards at the back, could steer the front ends clear of the trees. The work was not pleasant either to man or horse, yet practically everything was carried in that way during the early months of settlement.

The road question was one of our greatest troubles, many miles having to be cut by the settlers themselves. For several years I did not know to which Shire I belonged, finally discovering that I was almost on the extreme boundaries of the Philip Island and the Buln Buln Shires, which meant getting no attention from either. However, some years later, the new Shire of Poowong and Jeetho was formed, having its centre first at Jeetho, and later at Korumburra, and from that time forward things rapidly improved; nevertheless, South Gippsland has been noted for its bad roads until quite recent years, and, looking back to the beginning, I can say, without hesitation, that packing and carting was the worst work we ever had in those days.

During the first 12 months of residence here, our work was very varied and of an entirely new character to me. I worked at building sheds, grubbing and fencing garden and land for cultivation during the day, and lining and papering house, and making furniture every evening till well on to midnight, working always 15 to 16 hours out of the 24; yet the days flew by, the only one that dragged being Sunday.

We began to milk a few cows the first Summer, about 4 or 5, setting the milk in dishes, and when the butter was made, putting it down into casks, which had to be packed either to Poowong, and then sent to Melbourne via Drouin, or to Inverloch, to be shipped by boat to the same market. On one occasion, I took 5 casks of butter to Inverloch, where they were taken on board, and the boat sailed up to the Lower Tarwin, where the captain

had a farm. The boat was anchored there for several months with my butter on board, but I knew nothing of this at the time, and waited anxiously for our returns, for so much depended on that cheque. However, after some four or five months, when I would have gladly sold my chances in that transaction for £5, the mail brought me a letter, with my butter returns, and a cheque for £14; and I can assure you I never had a more pleasant surprise.

When returning to Ballarat for the second load of my belongings, which I carted over in a dray, I took a cask of butter to Melbourne for one of my neighbours, and delivered it at the store of one of the agents, who certainly had things very much in their own hands. The net returns to dairymen were very small, ranging from 2d. to 6d. per lb. in the Summer, and reaching as high as 2/- in the Winter, when we had none. South Gippsland dairymen can certainly claim to have brought the industry here from the bottom rung of the ladder to its present very creditable position.

About the year 1889 or 1890 we bought our first separator, a 35-gallon horizontal. From that time forward the work, especially of our women folk, was very much lightened, and the quality of the butter greatly improved. About this time also, a small butter factory was established in the district, and although, when compared with factories of the present day, it might be considered a very second-rate affair, it entirely revolutionised the industry. There are many things in connection with the early history of our factory that I clearly remember, but one thing I remember with some feelings of regret, viz., being the successful tenderer for the purchase of buttermilk from the factory for 12 months, at 3-4d. per 100 gallons, with 3 miles of unmade Yankee-grubbed road to cart it over, and feeding it to pigs, which when fattened to 150 lbs. weight were worth 40/- to 50/-. This will give the reader some idea of the financial result of the deal.

Another experience I well remember in the early days was a deal in store bullocks at £4 a head. After feeding them for some months, I sent a truck to Melbourne, losing one on the way, and the balance of the truck netted just £4 a head. After keeping the balance for 18 months, I sold them at £5/5/-, less commission. This was about on a par with other branches of industry: nothing seemed plentiful but hard work, mud and scrub; incomes were very small, but our health was good and our wants few. Few of the settlers had wives, but those who had, always found them at home, consequently shopping days were few and far between. We generally purchased a year's provisions at a time, and they were brought in via Inverloch or Drouin. It often happened at Inverloch that the boat was 3 to 6 weeks behind time, often causing several trips of enquiry, and not infrequently goods went astray. This annual getting in of supplies was an important event, and by the time everything was unpacked, examined and put aside again, always meant work till midnight, but produced a very comfortable feeling nevertheless.

Each year as it passed by saw many changes and improvements in the district, but probably nothing worked so great a change as the advent of the railway, when it reached Korumburra, and settlers were able to deliver their produce there, and obtain the necessaries for carrying on the farm. Many of our greatest difficulties were over, but one great difficulty always was with us—bad roads. Till quite recently no Winter ever passed without some portion of the road to our town being impassable, or nearly so. The soft

nature of the soil, coupled with over 40 inches of rainfall, steep gradients, and a Council, not overflush with money, made the road trouble a very real one indeed, and made the Winter season in Gippsland often very trying; but always when one felt one could not stand it any longer, the change into Spring, with the luxuriant growth of rich grasses covering the hills as far as the eye could reach with a beautiful verdure, caused the dullness and trials of the Winter to pass quickly from the mind for at least a season.

Our country was what is generally known as big spar country. It cost from 20/- to 25/- an acre to cut down, and anywhere from £3 to £5/10/- to pick up and burn off, and for one piece the writer paid £7/10/- an acre. Although most of our timber was of the spar or medium sized tree type, occasionally very large trees indeed were found. On a piece of land which I rented for some years, now owned by Mr. Armstrong, was a very large hollow log, into which a three-year-old bullock walked and crawled a distance of fully 30 feet, being lost for 18 days, when a man who happened to be passing heard it call out. Word was brought to me, and we cut a hole in the side of the log big enough to take the bullock out. He was lifted on to his feet, and after a few moments was able to stand, after which his first act was to charge his rescuers. That log with the hole cut in its side lay there for many years, but has since been destroyed.

Most of our energies in the early days were directed towards destroying timber. It is now scarce enough on most holdings, but it was not, generally speaking, of a character worth saving, even had it been possible to do so, being young, sappy, and of short duration, especially when put into the ground.

Wallabies, opossums, dingoes, native bears and lyre birds, all of which were very plentiful, are now almost extinct, while many birds and animals not then seen are plentiful now.

The year 1898—bushfire year—will long be remembered, many of the settlers losing practically everything they possessed except the land; nevertheless, they were soon going again, the old pioneering characteristics standing them in good stead in this second beginning. People with well improved properties lost heavily through the fires, while properties which had been badly handled were improved.

Few people in Gippsland have become rich, while very few who have really tried have failed; many are comfortable and well satisfied, while few would care to go through all the early experiences again for the same remuneration, and it is very doubtful if Australia contains at the present time a sufficient number of men and women who would be willing to undertake the task.

Dairying, which naturally began in a very small way, has become the principal and by far the most profitable industry of our district; good dairy herds are to be found on almost every farm, comfortable and commodious sheds have been erected, in many cases milking machines have been installed, and other modern conveniences, making the occupation of dairying much more attractive than under the old methods.



# Recollections and Experiences.

MR. W. RAINBOW.



About February, 1883, we heard there was some good scrub land open for selection, south from Poowong, in the parish of Jumbunna East; so in April of the same year my brother Harry and I left Buninyong to go and inspect and select if good land was available. We were directed to take train to Drouin, thence by coach to Poowong and tramp the rest of the way. We arrived at Drouin all right, but only to find all seats taken on the coach, so we made enquiries to see if there was any other way of getting to Poowong, but found we would have to wait a couple of days or walk the distance, which some folks said was not very far; a lot of people walked out; it was about 16 or 18 miles. We started next morning to tramp out, and were told there was a half-way house which we would be able to reach by dinner time; so we trudged gaily along, not seeing anyone on the road till we reckoned we were getting near the half-way house, when we met a bullock team, and asked the driver how far it was to Clifton's. He said we were just about half way there. We felt as if we had travelled ten miles and would like some dinner. We noticed tracks turn off into the forest, some bridle tracks and others of vehicles, and we wondered what the folks were doing in there. When we got on a bit of a rise and looked back we would see the blue smoke curling up through the tops of the trees from some settler's home, and at other times we would hear the ring of the axe away in the distance.

We arrived at the half-way house at last, only to find dinner over, and all we could get was some bread and cheese. Being thankful for anything, we took that, and set out again, wondering when we were going to see any good land. We came to Lang Lang River, and we saw a few tall gum trees, and the land seemed a bit better, but it soon got poor again, but in about a couple of hours we reached the scrub land and giant gum trees, and knew we were nearing Poowong. We arrived there and went to Mrs. Horsley's, where we had been told we would get a good meal, and we were not disappointed. We received every attention then and many times after when travelling through; the only trouble was they could not put us up for the night. Some of the land surveyors had tea with us and offered to pilot us as far as Mr. C. Blew's, which was our destination; so we left Poowong, and had not got far before it got dark. There was no moon, but one of our guides had a lantern, and with this we got along fairly well.

Coming to Mr. Fuller's clearing we went through a piece of newly-burned scrub—a bad burn at that—and our guides told us to

be sure and keep on our feet, for if we fell on one of the hazel stumps we would be staked. They were very sharp on one edge, and we were told that was owing to the way they cut the hazel scrub. I think the next clearing was Pobjoy's, and then we arrived at Mr. Blew's, where we received every kindness and stayed for the night and rested the next day. On the following day, Saturday, Mr. Blew showed us down to Mr. Glew's clearing, where his two sons and P. Neilsen were picking up and burning off, and we stayed at their camp over Sunday. They went home on the Saturday night, and left us in possession. We had their bunks to sleep on and all the eatables that were left, and they told us to make ourselves at home, as they would not be back till Monday morning; but they returned on Sunday night, and we had to turn out and make ourselves as comfortable as we could on the floor, which consisted of round hazel sticks. I can tell you we did not sleep much that night. On Monday morning we got our first lessons how to make and bake scones in a frying-pan; one of them cooking them and the rest of us eating the scones as fast as cooked. They had a novel way of turning them—just threw them up and caught them on the other side. When we had finished breakfast it was decided that Peter Neilsen should show us the land open for selection; so we started out, and he told us that Messrs. Elms, Parsons, McLeod and himself were the last ones to apply for land, and we would have to take the next blocks.

We went along a pack track for a time and then into the scrub; we scrambled for some time, and then he told us we were about as far as Elms' block would come and we had better peg the next one; so we both put in pegs, but whether it was on the land we applied for or not I could not say. We could see the open country down below from one point where we stood; so next day we travelled down to see what it was like, and he showed us some chocolate soil which we thought was pretty good, but there was no extent of it, as we soon got from one side to the other and got into some scrub which he called "prickly moses," and nearly got lost in it. Our guide climbed a tree to see the nearest way out. I may here say it was growing so thickly that we had to tramp it down to make a track out. It was a fairly warm day, and we were just about knocked out when we got out of it. We then made for the camp, and on our way came across McLeod Bros.' hut and went in and had a feed of damper and butter, the only thing eatable in the camp. They were all away cutting scrub or picking up on Spring's selection. We got back to the camp tired out, and left for Drouin next morning.

We thought while we were so far we might as well go out to Mirboo; we had been in that district once before, so we went on to Morwell and then out to Mr. Black's selection on the Morwell River, where we received every kindness. They showed us some land open for selection, but we thought it too steep, so went on further south through Mirboo and on to Marden to Mr. John Smith's, and from there to the surveyor's camp. We passed over some splendid land, but it was all selected, and the surveyors advised us not to apply for land there, as we would most likely be pushed out on to poor country. So we started for home again, going by a different road, and reaching Trafalgar railway station the same day. We saw some splendid timber on the way, which was being split into broad palings, and carted to the railway by bullock teams.

When we got to Melbourne, we put in our application for the blocks at Jumbunna East, and after waiting till the following November we got it

recommended by a Land Board held at Drouin. We then wanted to see what the land was like. Mr. W. J. Williams, his father and I came down and walked right round about eight selections, which were all good land except a few acres on the south end of two blocks. The next thing to do was to get some scrub cut. Mr. Matheson, my brother Jim and I came down with tents, axes and cooking utensils to make a start. We got all the information we could about cutting scrub, which was to start at the lower end of gullies and cut a strip along both sides, and then fall it from either side, according to which side the wind favoured us; but I may here say that the wind used to come up along the places opened up, and blow the scrub back on us at times.

We got our camp fixed, and the next thing was to see about something to eat. We had no bread, as there were no shops on the road this side of Drouin, and all being amateurs at cooking we did not get on very well for a start. We had no oven, but had been told to dig a round hole in the ground and pack wood over it and make a big fire and burn it down to ashes in this colonial oven, and then put our bread in to bake, cover it over with ashes and pile on some more wood and leave it until cooked. The first part we carried out, but I am afraid if we had waited until the cooking part was finished we would have gone pretty hungry. In about two hours we decided it ought to be cooked and took it out, but to our dismay only the top was brown and underneath was just as we put it in; the water had soaked into the oven and spoiled the loaf. Nothing daunted, we ate what appeared to be cooked and placed the rest in the oven again, piled on more wood two or three times and then went to bed, dead beat, leaving the loaf to bake as best it might, which it did with a vengeance, for on taking it out next morning it was so hard that we could not cut it with a knife, but had to chop it in pieces with a tomahawk, and soak it in our tea before we could eat it. After this we baked scones in the frying pan, which were much better, and when we ran short we always had plenty of rice and treacle to fall back on.

A little while after Mr. W. J. Williams joined us, and he said, "Why not make a damper?" He was sure he could, so we let him try, and it turned out much better than our first loaf. He was going down to his selection to cut some scrub, and on the Monday following he went away in high spirits to blaze a track and clear a place to camp; but when he returned at night he was, what you would call, "very much down in the mouth." He said he arrived there all right, but he did not think a white man had ever set his foot there before, and did not think he would camp down there; so he stayed with us and helped us to cut our scrub. The cooking was the worst item with us; having no oven to bake bread, we got very tired of damper and scones. I almost forgot; we had an oven, but it was about seven miles up the track, and after waiting about four weeks for the pack man to bring it along we decided to go for it. Borrowing a horse from Mr. A. Elms, our nearest neighbour, I went to get it. As I was not much of a jockey, and the horse being given to running away, I did not know how to get the oven down home. I first thought of walking and carrying the oven and leading the horse, as she would not let me carry it on the saddle, but I soon got tired of that, so I took the lid off, hung the oven on my head, carried the lid in one hand, and after some narrow escapes with the oven and myself I got home safely. Needless to say, we got on better with our baking after that.

We cut about forty acres of scrub and then went back home for Xmas. We did not return until the first week in March, and everybody told us we would not get a burn, but about the 3rd or 4th of March a heavy wind blew,

and we fired the scrub and got a good burn. We then built a log hut, and started picking up, using a horse to pull the big logs together and picking up the smaller pieces ourselves and piling them in heaps to burn. We worked at this until May, and then sowed it with grass seed, using cocksfoot and ryegrass and red and white clover, and then went on and finished the picking up. In the Spring we had a splendid lot of grass, and we brought some cattle from Ballarat to stock it.

My brothers each got 50 acres of scrub cut the following year, as did also Mr. Williams, and got a bad burn. I believe if anyone had come along next morning and said, "Here is £50 for your block and what is done on it," I would have gone, never to return, for I don't believe there is anything more disheartening than a bad burn.

After trying to burn the patches we decided to get what we could picked up and burned off; so we tried to let it by contract, but it was some time before anyone came to do the work, and then they would only clear up to a certain size, leaving the big heavy logs lying on the ground. We got our grass seed by boat to Inverloch this time, and carted it to the foot of the hills below where Outtrim now is, or McLeod's Hill, as it was then called, and brought it home on pack horses. I well remember coming up McLeod's Hill one day with some packs, when one of the old horses broke through the surface into a billabong, and the more he struggled to get out the further he got in, until he was caught by the two bags of grass seed, and there was nothing to be seen of him but his head. We thought if we took the bags off he would disappear altogether, so we decided to try and get a spade and dig him out, but while away looking for the spade he struggled and plunged about and got his head turned down hill; so we took the bags off, and he then broke the ground away in front of him and struggled out.

We sowed the grass seed this time before the picking up was done. The grass came away well, and then we had to get more stock to keep it down, as caterpillars were a great pest in the early days, and there were no starlings about then to clear them off.

As my sister had selected, she had to come and reside somewhere near the block, so we set about building a larger house. We built it with slabs and iron, and being only amateurs did not get on too well, especially with the papering. I could not describe the first two or three pieces we put on the ceiling, or floor I should say, as that was where it fell in one wet mass. I think all new chums had the same trouble with papering, but we eventually got it finished, and were quite proud of our work. My sister came down, and I may say that after this things went on smoother, especially in the cooking line. We now had to think about getting the wherewithal to carry on; so we decided to milk a few cows and make butter, which we could send to town. We started with about half a dozen cows, and got up to twelve, from which we made over 120 lbs. of butter per week. I do not think the quantity could be surpassed in these days of modern machinery. We set our milk in pans in those days, no separators being about, skimmed the cream off, and churned it into butter, which we put into small barrels or firkins. I well remember the first lot we sent away; we took it to the Inlet to send away by boat, but when we got there the boat had not arrived, so the caretaker of the shed told us to place it in the shed and he would see it was sent away when the boat arrived.

There was no cool storage in those days, at least not at the Inlet, where the only building was of iron. Judge of our surprise about a fortnight later to learn that our butter was still in this "cool room," and that the boat would not be there for at least a couple of days; so we took some more down and got the boat this time, and got the butter away, which arrived in Melbourne safely; but word came back that most of it was in a liquid condition; but bad and all as it was, we received from 1/- to 1/1 per lb. for it. I do not think town folks were so hard to please in those days. The following season we milked more cows and had more butter; we tried sending it away fresh, but as soon as the hot weather set in we had to fall back on the barrels again, and sent it away later on. But the returns were not so good this time, as it only realised 4d. per lb., and as this was not a payable price we turned to keeping a few sheep; but we soon found this was no better than butter, as the dingoes got amongst them and killed as many as eight or nine in a night, so they soon ate up all the profits. We fattened a few bullocks and got along as best we could.

I forgot to mention earlier that we got our letters once a week when we came down first. If I remember rightly, Mr. W. H. C. Holmes was the first mailman, carrying a loose-bag to McLeod's; then Mr. James Dixon got the contract to carry the mail. Mr. T. Horsley was the next contractor, and then Mr. G. Matheson, who carried it until the railway was opened to Korumburra.

While the railway line was being constructed, we could sell almost anything in the way of butter, eggs, potatoes and vegetables, but did not always get paid for them. We then started dairying again, and about this time Mr. Parsons brought the first separator into the district. It was a bit of a novelty, being nothing like our separators of to-day. The noise it made resembled a threshing machine at work, and when close to it you could not hear what anyone said when speaking to you.

Some little time after this a move was made to start a co-operative butter factory, and we got the company floated and built the factory on Mr. W. Elms' property at Moyarra, Mr. Archer being appointed manager and butter-maker. From this on separators came into the district fast, nearly everybody getting one; and for every settler dairying before this fully a dozen others started. I may state here that most of the cream supply came from the Kongwak side on sledges and pack horses, the roads being too bad for vehicles. We did not get very high prices for our butter, but they were much better than before.

About this time I was away from Gippsland for two years, and while I was away coal was discovered on Mr. T. Horsley's selection, which caused some excitement amongst the settlers. A good seam of coal was found, and a company was formed to mine and market the coal, and is still working to this day. A little later coal was found on Mr. M. McLeod's land, where the Outtrim Coal Co. is still working. A lot of mining speculators came about and pegged out most of the land close at hand, and applied for mining leases. As my selection joined McLeod's on the west side, one of the speculators applied for a lease and formed a company to work the coal under the name of the Howitt Co., and to compensate me for any damage done offered me a royalty on all coal won; but when they went to the Mines Department with the agreement the Minister of Mines would not grant them a lease with the royalty clause in it. So they had to arrange with me in some other way, and after negotiating for some time one of the directors bought me out, and

I may say that transaction put me on my feet financially. I then had to look about for another home, and there being plenty of places for sale at the time I travelled about a bit, but saw nothing I liked better than around Moyarra, and as Mr. John Gannon's selection was for sale I decided to purchase it. We then built a house and moved from the old home in September, 1897, and had only just got settled when in the year 1898 we had the big fires which burned around the district for about six weeks and finished up on what is known as "Red Tuesday," when everywhere around for miles was black and desolate. We were more fortunate than some of our neighbours, as we did not get any of our buildings burned, but only lost some fencing and a few head of cattle. Our old homestead, from which we had only moved a few months, was burned to the ground; only one little log hut, a few fruit trees and a brick chimney were left to mark the spot. The fire gave most of the settlers a hard knock at the time, but after a year or two things began to improve again, and we have seen many fine homesteads spring up in place of the old ones which were destroyed by the fire.

We, like others, had our trials and sorrows, but on the whole, rough and all as it was at first, we have had a very happy time.



# A Fiery Summer.

MR. A. W. ELMS.

The months of January and February, 1898, will never be forgotten by the pioneers of South Gippsland. It was a time of trial, loss, and mental strain such as the district never experienced before, and which, it is hoped, will never occur again.

The Summer of 1897-98 was dry and hot, the Melbourne Observatory records showing that high temperatures were registered right through from early in November, as the following figures show:—

	Deg.		Deg.		Deg.
Nov. 10 . . . . .	91.7	Dec. 22 . . . . .	96.1	Jan. 11 . . . . .	109.2
.. 11 . . . . .	92.3	.. 26 . . . . .	91.7	.. 12 . . . . .	105.5
.. 15 . . . . .	91.5	.. 27 . . . . .	104.3	.. 18 . . . . .	91.1
.. 16 . . . . .	91.9	.. 29 . . . . .	101.6	.. 24 . . . . .	98.5
.. 19 . . . . .	99.0	.. 30 . . . . .	107.0	.. 28 . . . . .	100.5
Dec. 1 . . . . .	101.9	.. 31 . . . . .	98.4	.. 29 . . . . .	106.7
.. 7 . . . . .	90.9	Jan. 7 . . . . .	101.7	.. 30 . . . . .	102.3
.. 12 . . . . .	92.8	.. 10 . . . . .	92.5	.. 31 . . . . .	100.0
.. 16 . . . . .	107.0				

No rain fell from Jan. 1st to Jan. 22nd, when a slight fall of 28 points was recorded, and for the whole month the record was only 30 points—practically nothing in the face of this continuous heat. From the beginning of the year there were reports from various parts of the State of bush fires, which in ordinary years would be thought serious enough, but they were soon eclipsed and almost forgotten in view of what occurred later.

On January 13th the newspapers came out with large headings—"Great Heat Wave—Highest Record for 16 Years—109.5 in the Shade." This heat, following on the dryness caused by the hot early Summer, started serious fires all through Gippsland. On the following day, the headings were still more startling: "Bushfires in Gippsland—Serious Devastation—Settlers Burnt Out—Midday Darkness." Reports of serious fires came in from places as far apart as Yarram, Moe, Warragul, Leongatha, Korumburra and Morwell, and special reporters were sent to the various centres. Warragul and Thorpdale were the districts that suffered most at this time, and the reports sent in were most appalling. The fires continued to rage until January 22nd, when there was a lull in the high temperature, and a few points of rain fell, but not enough to moisten the parched ground. Towards the end of the month the heat increased again, and on Monday, January 31st, the papers report: "Hot Weather—Two More Scorching Days—Temperatures: Friday, 100.5; Saturday, 106.7; Sunday, 102.3—Bush Fires Again Raging." On the following Wednesday the headings state: "Another Hot Day—A Record Established—No Change in Sight"; and then they state: "The archives of the observatory record no previous occasion on which the sun has beaten down in such relentless fury as it has done since the close of last week. For four days in succession the temperature exceeded the century,



RIPE FOR A FOREST FIRE.



and on the fifth day it only missed it by three-tenths of an inch. The record is broken, not only for duration of extreme heat, but also in the matter of a generally hot January." This fierce heat occasioned further outbreaks of the bush fires all over Gippsland, and, day by day, heartrending accounts were published of the sufferings of the settlers, losses of stock, and general devastation. From Drouin to Yarram, a distance of 70 miles in one direction, and from Leongatha to Neerim, about 40 miles in another, hardly a settler escaped wholly without loss. The fires continued with unabated fury until February 12th, when some rain fell and checked their severity, after which the fires gradually subsided as the Autumn came on.

To realise the fires, one must understand what the scrub was and the process of clearing it. There were three layers of vegetation: first, the giant trees and saplings rising to a height of 150 to 200 feet, with their leafy branches forming a screen for the sunlight. Underneath, in the partial shade, grew a second tier, consisting of blackwoods, hazels, wattles, etc., reaching to a height of 20 to 80 feet, and, under those again, grew smaller shrubs, such as the musk, ferns, swordgrass and a tangle of small undergrowth, with fallen timber lying through it in all directions. The process of clearing consists in felling the smaller vegetation and ringbarking or sap-ringing the larger trees, to kill them, and get the leaves and bark to fall, before burning off the scrub. In the Summer, on the hottest day available, and, if possible, with a strong wind blowing, the fallen scrub is set on fire, and if the burn is a good one, the fire burns up all leaves and small timber, leaving only the large saplings to be picked up and burnt off. In the earlier stages of pioneering these scrub burns could be fired without any danger of the fire spreading, as the surrounding green scrub checked the fire in a very short distance; but as the clearings extended and the trees left standing got dry and wind-cracked the danger increased. But a good burn meant so much to the settler, and, being accustomed to a moist Summer climate, where often a year's work was practically lost through rain preventing the fallen scrub being burnt at all, the settlers usually took advantage of a good opportunity for a burn, and risked the danger of burning out themselves as well as their neighbours. Once started, there was no control over the fire, which might burn for weeks in trees and hollow logs, ready to spread afresh with wind or hot weather. Given favourable conditions, the flames rush up the stems of the tall trees with a roar that can be heard a mile away, with sheets of flame 20 to 30 feet high, and dense volumes of smoke rising hundreds of feet. Making its own draught, it rushes through the trees, starting fresh fires hundreds of yards ahead with the ashes and burning fragments it showers in advance. When it has passed, it leaves behind it a forest of charred and smoking timber blazing from top to bottom, and showering sparks and ashes over everything, while the ground is littered with blazing logs from the trees, which are continually falling with a noise like thunder. To one behind it and disinterested, it is a magnificent spectacle: the roaring fire, constantly changing its form and brightness, the flames reaching up and then subsiding, the vast columns of smoke, ever changing in outline and colour, lit up by the glow beneath, the trees and logs, all aglow and quivering with heat and flame, and sending showers of sparks like fiery serpents through the air, while trees and branches continually falling like fiery avalanches, with a noise like thunder, and sending up as they reach the ground further columns of smoke, ashes and flame, all combine to make a spectacle that, once seen, could never be forgotten.

The settlers, whose houses were built in the midst of the gigantic trees, and whose only means of escape was a track cut through the bush and liable at any time to be closed by falling trees, had no means of escape. The fire was both around and above them, and, once it started travelling through the tree tops there was no possibility of coping with it. Live stock had to take their chance, and the only hope for the settler and his family was to shelter in a cultivation paddock, a waterhole or the excavation made by an uprooted tree. Many had run short of water during the long dry Summer, and then nothing could be done but watch the flames consume everything. The air was heated like a furnace, and the blinding and suffocating smoke prevented one getting any idea of what was occurring a short distance away. In some cases the fire rushed on the settlers without any warning, while others were burnt out after days, or even weeks, of anxious watching, dreading the heat of each succeeding day, and the wind, that generally increased as the sun got power, and then died away as evening came on, and looking round each night to tell by the glare in the sky in which direction the fires were spreading. Then, as the fire came closer, a desperate fight, sometimes lasting day and night, would take place, with the hope that, if the fire were delayed, a change of wind or weather would remove the danger. In most cases, however, the fire eventually prevailed, and the worn-out and half-blinded settler could do little more than look after his own safety and that of his family. Many acts of heroism were performed, in riding through the burning bush to help neighbours, and in removing invalids or elderly people to a place of safety. In many cases, people sacrificed their own homes in a, very often, vain attempt to save a friend's place. Some removed furniture from houses to cultivation paddocks, in the hope of saving it, if the house were burnt. Sometimes the furniture was burnt and the house saved. In other cases both were burnt. The live stock suffered severely. Driven by smoke and flame, cattle, horses, and sheep travelled until penned up in the corner of a paddock; then the flames would surround them, and, bewildered by smoke and flame, they perished. Fowls, dogs and pigs around the homesteads were, as a rule, too dazed to attempt to escape.

When the fires had, at length, passed over, Gippsland was left a blackened waste, littered with fallen timber, practically destitute of houses, fences, grass or fodder, and with burnt bodies of stock, lying, sometimes singly, and at other times in scores, where the fire had overtaken them. Hundreds of livestock of all descriptions were wandering about: some blind, others with hides or wool burnt, others again with hoofs nearly burnt off. In the worst cases a merciful bullet put an end to their sufferings.

It speaks highly for the courage of the Gippsland settlers that, without any hesitation, they set to work at once to repair the damage done by this overwhelming disaster. Missing stock had to be rounded up, temporary fences erected, and a shelter of some kind made, to last until a house could be built. As soon as possible, all stock fit for market were sent off, others were taken away for grass and fodder purchased to keep others alive. Luckily, a mild Winter followed, and the grass growing well after the Autumn rains relieved the situation.

The confidence the people had in the district was shown by the good houses and substantial improvements made to replace those destroyed. Those living in towns did not escape without anxiety and loss. Some towns were threatened time after time by fires coming from different directions as the wind changed, and other towns were almost totally destroyed. The great

scarcity of water throughout the district increased the difficulty of saving property, and added to the sufferings of all. Water in overground tanks was so impregnated with smoke as to be almost unfit to drink.

A record of the districts affected day by day, and a few typical instances taken from the newspapers of the time, will help to convey an idea of the magnitude and intensity of the disaster. It would be impossible to give a detailed account of it, and the incidents given must be taken as typical of hundreds of similar cases.

The year 1897 closed with several days of intense heat, and the New Year was ushered in by reports of extensive fires in the Morwell, Leongatha, Bena and Foster districts. Within the next few days there was a lull in the outbreaks, but a fresh burst of heat succeeded, and Drouin, Warragul, Neerim and Korumburra report disastrous fires, and many settlers burnt out.

Jan. 13th.—Fires at Yarram, Warragul, Moe, Leongatha, Korumburra and Morwell. At Traralgon the day recalled Black Thursday. At Stratford the lamps had to be lit at 3 o'clock, and the fowls went to roost, thinking night had come. The town of Yarram was encircled with flames. Loch reports: "Thousands of acres of grass and miles of fencing have been destroyed by the fires this week."

Jan. 14th.—Fires at Warragul, Thorpdale, Morwell, Foster; Neerim township destroyed, only a fowlhouse being left standing. Thorpdale reports: "Thirty-three houses destroyed." Morwell states over 20 houses, two sawmills, haystacks, outbuildings, cattle, pigs, etc., destroyed. Foster, Jindivick and Traralgon all report many settlers burnt out.

Jan. 17th.—Korumburra, Foster, Kongwak report extensive fires. Warragul states that incessant vigilance is required to save the town. Thorpdale states that: "With probably three exceptions, every settler has had his fences, hay and grass swept away, and a portion of his milking herd killed. In riding past the farms one can see the cattle wandering over the potato paddocks trying to find a few stalks that had previously escaped their observation, or they are fretting among the orchards trying to reach the branches not already eaten off. Farmers are too dazed with the suddenness and completeness of the calamity which has befallen them to have devised, up to the present, any means of saving the remnant of their stock. Selectors who are so fortunate as to have their homesteads still standing have some of their burnt-out neighbours camping with them, and those unfortunate people, when spoken to, can only talk of the gratitude they feel in having saved their children. People who have not lost everything regard themselves as lucky. On every hand there is nothing but black ruin, grim and hopeless. A month ago there was no more prosperous and contented dairying district in Victoria. To-day there is nothing but want and misery. Except for the tall, gaunt tree-stems, charred from root to crown, the face of the country for miles round has been swept so clean that one would think a blade of grass had never grown on it. Of the homesteads only the chimneys remain, like tombstones in a cemetery. Here and there lie the frizzled up bodies of once valuable cattle, pigs and poultry. At one homestead may be seen all that is left of a horse and dray. The poor beast had been yoked up to assist the family flight when the fire came. As the heat came down on it the horse had jumped forward into the fence to which it had been secured, and there it was held fast until its life was burnt out, and the tyres and bolts are all that is left of the dray. At another place a poor collie dog was left

on the chain, having been overlooked by the family in its flight, and, when I passed that way, all that was left of the faithful creature was barely sufficient to indicate its breed. At Jindivick, one settler, after fighting the fire for three weeks, and beating it back on two occasions, after doing considerable damage, was overpowered by the fire, which swept off the dwelling house and other buildings."

Jan. 18th.—Meetings held in Melbourne to provide relief funds for burnt-out settlers. The Government sending tents for the homeless.

Jan. 19th.—Fresh outbreaks at Warragul and Drouin. A man is reported to have had to run four miles before reaching a place of safety.

Jan. 20th.—Fires at Warragul, Neerim, Leongatha and Inverloch. The town of Korumburra threatened, and nearly all the roads impassable through smoke, heat and falling trees.

Jan. 22nd.—A slight fall of rain, 28 points, the first for the month.

Jan. 31st.—Bush fires again raging. The town of Leongatha in danger, 100 men watching. Outbreak at Warragul. More scorching days: Friday, 100.5; Saturday, 106.7; Sunday, 102.3.

Feb. 1st.—Great heat wave. Another oppressive day. Fires at Drouin, Traralgon, Walballa and Warragul. Dense haze on the coast. Difficulties of navigation. "The smoke of bush fires was most unpleasantly manifested along the Victorian coast on Sunday evening, but yesterday morning it became so dense that the movements of shipping were at an absolute standstill. Reports from Cape Schanck and Queenscliff stated that a number of steamships were continually blowing their whistles, but whether they were inward or outward bound could not be distinguished. Fog signals were continuously sent up all day by the Gellibrand lightship as a guide to vessels. As illustrating the density of the smoke, two vessels took nearly seven hours to make the distance from the heads to Hobson's Bay, which usually occupies about 2½ hours." More destruction is reported from Yarram. Korumburra states the country between there and Outtrim is ablaze, and travellers could not ride along the roads.

Feb. 2nd.—Warragul and Drouin again menaced. The Leongatha Labour Colony practically destroyed. Sheds, machinery and crops burnt: 100 pigs roasted alive. Jumbunna in danger. The streets full of furniture removed from the houses. Water taken by train from Korumburra. Settlers removing their families into the township for safety. Korumburra reports that at 4 o'clock it was impossible to see 10 yards; all business places had lights burning at that hour. No one ever remembers seeing anything approaching the fires of to-day. Farmers are sending into the town for men to go out and try and save their homesteads. Many of them have not had their clothes off for three or four days. Warragul reports the town in imminent danger. South Warragul residents are hemmed in with fire. Drouin is in a semi-circle of fire, and the whole country is ablaze. Many homes are destroyed.

Feb. 3rd.—At Warragul, business was entirely suspended. At North Poowong fighting the fire was hopeless; personal safety was all one could think of. Ten houses were destroyed. One family took refuge for the night in a waterhole, up to their necks in water. Others took refuge in a depression of the ground caused by a tree aprooting, and covered themselves with

wet sacks, which they resoaked from time to time. Some were blinded with smoke and glare, and had to be led about next morning with their faces scorched and blistered with the heat. The Danish settlement at Poowong East, an old established community, was also burnt right out. Within a distance of seven miles along McDonald's Track 20 settlers were burnt out of house and everything they possessed. Other serious fires were reported from Poowong, Neerin, S., Leongatha and Mardan. The movements of shipping were paralysed on account of the smoke. Korumburra reports: "South Gippsland is red eyed and heartbroken. There is not a man, woman or child in the whole forest country who is not, more or less, blinded by the smoke, and there are hundreds who are homeless. As the day wears on, they are coming from the back country into the town, and more pitiable spectacles could scarcely be imagined. With eyes bandaged, hands burned, clothes torn and dirt grimed, they straggle in, and though there are kindly welcomes from the townsfolk, there is that in their faces which tells of Tuesday's tragic experiences."

Feb. 4th.—Warragul states: "Heartrending is the only word which can adequately describe the terrible situation of those unfortunate people who have been subjected to the full blast of the fearful bushfire in this neighbourhood. One after another the settlers, burnt out of house and home, wend their way into the township to relate their tales of suffering and woe. Not only women and children, but strong men, weep at the recital of their terrible experiences. One instance is related of a man and his wife and nine children. The fire came down on the house, and, utterly unable to cope with the flames, they concluded their only chance of saving their lives was to flee to a house about half a mile away. Placing the younger children on a horse, they led them through the bush, while the house, outbuildings and stacks they had left were reduced to ashes. They had scarcely time to recover from their fright when they saw the fire bearing down on their host's property. Becoming alarmed, and seeing they would be unable to stem the fierce onslaught of the fire, the two families joined issue, and decided to retreat still further. Securing another horse, the additional children were mounted on it, and the composite party fled for their lives to another neighbour's house about a mile further on. The journey through the heat was terrible, the children crying with fright and the pain and suffocation caused by the blinding smoke. At last the miserable wayfarers thought they were safe and sank down to get a little rest, when with relentless fury the fire pursued them again, sweeping through the trees and undergrowth, and roaring like a tornado. Before the children could be gathered together and remounted on the horses the fire was on them. A frightful scene ensued, the women, fighting desperately for their families, stripped off their skirts to beat out the rushing fire and save their children from being burnt to death, and at length, after a desperate struggle, in which many of them received severe burns, they succeeded in getting most of the children mounted and once more on the retreat. Worn out and nearly fainting with their fearful experiences, the band of refugees then made for the house of another farmer, and after an arduous journey they reached the place, more dead than alive. It seems almost incredible, but they had no sooner explained the situation than their relentless enemy closed in on them again. Driven to distraction, the four families, containing now 24 young children, mounted on horses, again set forth on a perilous journey, and, after suffering indescribable hardship from the fierce heat and driving smoke, ultimately reached another homestead, where at length they were allowed to rest. The persecuting fires, veering in their course with a change of wind, passed by, leaving the house, now sheltering

over 35 refugees, unmolested. At another place, at a State school cut off by the fire in the afternoon, 20 children sheltered all night in the hole excavated by an uprooted tree, until rescued next morning by their anxious parents. At Poowong, buggies, pianos, tables and furniture were stacked on the bare road to give them a chance of escape. From there to Alambee, a distance of 15 miles, 34 families have been burnt out. Many of them had been up night and day, expecting an attack, which, when it did come, ran like gunpowder, and the position of all human beings in its course was one of extreme peril. Some took refuge in green potato crops. In one case, some horses, whose instinct in the hour of danger taught them to keep with human beings, sheltered behind a picket fence, and the family sheltered under their bodies from the rain of sparks and cinders. In another case some dogs took shelter beneath a barn, and nothing was left but their charred skeletons."

Drouin reports: "All through the district cattle are roaming through different owners' maize plots, and there are no fences complete on any farms. Cowsheds and barns are burnt, and no grass is to be seen. Men are sleeping at night on bags, in the green maize plots, and everyone is semi-blind, and apparently stupefied with the disaster. Invalids, elderly and delicate persons have had a terrible time, being carried in some instances on stretchers, and in others on sledges to a place of safety."

Korumburra reports: "The damage done in South Gippsland cannot easily be estimated, and absolutely the only gratifying feature is that the pluck of the people still stands the strain. Here in Korumburra, with fire raging all round, and the town covered with a mantle of smoke which is almost suffocating, the kind-hearted people are housing and feeding scores of families, whose only property in the world, after years of battling with the virgin forest, are a few remnants of clothing. People who walk the paved streets or ride in trams or trains cannot appreciate the terrible calamity which has befallen this province. There are those who say that the clearing which Nature has herself undertaken will be invaluable. To the country at large, doubtless it will mean much, and it would mean more if no stock or homesteads had been destroyed. But, to those who suddenly find themselves at the age of 50, 60 or 70 years set back worse than when they commenced 20 years ago, there is nothing in the fire but the direst misfortune. Instances are given of families sheltered under blankets with water poured over them, and of others sheltering in wells to save their lives. A case is mentioned of six horses being crushed by a falling tree, 50 cows being destroyed in one place, and 100 sheep in another, horses wandering about with manes and tails burnt off, and scorched all over."

Warragul reports: "Fifty homesteads have been destroyed in the Strzelecki ranges, and thousands of acres of grass destroyed. One settler had 100 head of dairy cattle roasted. Families were driven from burning houses into maize crops, where the smoke would have suffocated them but for the precaution of lying flat on the ground to breathe, while men beat out the flames as they crept up. At Allambee, it is stated, the whole of the country is bestrewn with the carcasses of roasted cattle and sheep, and the stench is something abominable. Four young children came into a township with a message, 'If you please, mother says will you take care of us to-night, as she expects to be burnt out before morning.'"

Leongatha reports similar tales of distress, families spending the night on ground the fire had passed over.

Neerim describes the country as a sight of desolation, and open for 20 miles, pigs, cattle, horses and fowls lying dead around every homestead.

Loch reports 10 or 12 homesteads burnt to the ground, and adds: "It is pitiable to see the farmers dragging themselves (I cannot call it walking) into the township, almost blind with the heat and smoke, and otherwise worn out. Those who had escaped the fire were burying valuables and removing furniture, recognising that anything was possible with such fierce fires."

Feb. 5th.—Korumburra again threatened. A fire engine and hose sent from Melbourne. One settler, who was brought in quite blind, relates how seven women and 17 children were put under blankets kept saturated with water by men for hours until the fiercest of the fire had passed. The men had about 20 yards to go for water, but the flames and smoke were so terrible that men fainted time after time while running the gauntlet.

Feb. 9th.—Foster in flames; dwelling houses and two churches burnt; the whole town threatened. Jumburra again attacked, and 11 houses burnt.

Feb. 10th.—Foster reports enormous damage done, about 30 houses destroyed, and great losses of stock. Korumburra reports fires at Kongwak, houses burnt, and stock roasted.

Feb. 12th.—Foster gives further details of the swiftness of the fire. At one homestead it came up while milking was in progress. In the hurry and confusion the cows were not released from the bails, and eight were roasted.

The same day rain set in, and gave a check to the fires, and allowed the unfortunate Gippsland settlers an opportunity to gather their scattered herds together. After this time, although there were other outbreaks of fire in different localities, they were mild in comparison with those which preceded them. The Winter following was a busy time, as so much fencing had to be replaced, and many of the grass paddocks resown.

Assistance was given to a few of the more needy by a relief fund, and the Government advanced some money for the purchase of grass seed and fencing wire, to be repaid over a long period; but it was only a drop in the ocean, and the majority of the pioneers practically took up their burdens afresh and showed their confidence in the district by replacing their burnt homesteads with others of the most comfortable and substantial character.



## A Lightning Muster.

MR. J. LANGHAM.



Early in the year 1903 a simmering of discontent prevailed amongst the Victorian railway employees, more especially the engine-drivers and firemen; and during the first week of May matters gradually assumed a more serious aspect until a general strike was threatened. The Melbourne stock and station agents, recognising the serious effect which a strike would have on the weekly meat supply, watched the development closely, and on the Friday sent telegrams to their clients and country agents to the effect that the Railway men's executive had decided to call them out at midnight on Friday, May 8th. This meant that there would be no train service for the conveyance of stock to Newmarket for the following week's supply, and a consequent meat famine in Melbourne unless immediate steps were taken to prevent it, for the great bulk of the live stock supply comes by rail. The time was too short for long distance cattle to travel in for Wednesday's market, so

that all the supplies had to be drawn from paddocks within about 70 miles of Melbourne. With commendable promptness the stock agents immediately sent out wires to their clients and local representatives within that radius informing them of the situation and urging them to forward all the cattle they possibly could for the next market.

At that time I was Gippsland agent for Messrs. Theo. H. Parker & Co., Stock Agents, Melbourne, and happened to be attending the usual sale at Korumburra when a telegram reached me from the firm to the effect that the strike would take place that night, and they wanted me to try to get a mob of cattle together for the market on the following Wednesday, as there would be a shortage. Mr. W. S. Sanders, local agent for Francis Ross & Co., also received a telegram to the same effect. The news rapidly spread among the cattlemen, and a hurried consultation took place between Mr. Sanders and myself, the upshot of which was that we decided to act conjointly in getting together as many cattle as possible, and travel in charge of them ourselves. As the time usually taken in travelling fat cattle from Poowong to Melbourne was four days, it was necessary to start from Poowong the following morning (Saturday), and it was now Friday afternoon, so that all arrangements had to be made and the cattle mustered, drafted and branded in the meantime. It will be understood what a difficult task we had before us, as with only a few hours of daylight to do it in we had to arrange everything for the road as well as get together a mob of cattle sufficiently large to be of value under the circumstances. As Korumburra is a day's travel further than Poowong, the project seemed to be almost hopeless. However, the cause that brought the trouble about made us determined to see the matter through, and the



graziers were equally determined to do their best to get the stock together, so all parties left the sale early and hurried home to muster the cattle before dark. Many had to travel their stock half the night so as to get into a good position for making an early start next morning, and by 10 o'clock on Saturday we had mustered, tar branded, and taken delivery of 220 head of fat cattle at Poowong, a feat which went a long way to show what farmers and graziers can do when necessity arises. Some of the stock had travelled from Rubv, a distance of 12 to 14 miles beyond Poowong.

Among the owners who responded so well were Messrs. W. Livingstone, (Ruby); J. Western (Kardella); Ritchie Bros. (Arawatta); Anderson Bros.; Ross Bros.; W. Langham, sen. (Cruikston and Poowong); Langham Bros.; D. Henry; Sanders Bros. (Korumburra); T. J. Coverdale (Bena); Fordyce Bros. (Loch). Messrs. Jno. Cooke and Thos. Houlihan of Poowong had a mob of 300 head on the road in front of us, whilst another lot from Messrs. Kinnle, R. N. and F. J. Scott, J. Edwards and Halford Bros., in charge of Mr. H. Collins, was travelling from Glenalvie; all striking the main Melbourne road at Tobin Yallock (Lang Lang), and arriving there on the Saturday about dark. It was a difficult matter to get accommodation paddocks, as there were 1250 head of fat cattle camped there. When it is remembered that little more than twenty-four hours before all these cattle had been scattered over about 300 square miles of country, that they had been mustered, drafted out, branded and delivered at a point, in some cases thirty miles from their paddocks, without the loss of a beast, and that in rough country, I think this "lightning muster" may stand as a record, even in these days of rapid "mobilisation."

The second day's (Sunday) stage from Lang Lang nearly to Cranbourne was a long one after the forced travel of the day before, and nearly everybody we met on the road enquired of us as to how we got the cattle together in the time, etc. On Monday we had to ride back about four miles from Cranbourne to muster a 300-acre rough paddock in the rain: this we did, and had the cattle at the gate ready to count out at daylight, so as to give us a good start and get first on the road for water and feed, having breakfast in turns at Cranbourne as we came through. I crippled my horse in a rabbit burrow, but that made no difference, as everyone was so willing to help that I was offered several horses to see me through. Monday being sale day at Cranbourne, people on the road to the sale would stop us and ask questions about the muster, and we were just as anxious to hear news of the strike. We paid one man 6d. for the "Argus," and saw in it that 2000 head of cattle were coming forward for the week's supply, and a telegram to Messrs. Theo. H. Parker and Co. from their Gippsland agent, sent from Poowong, stated that about 1200 head were on the road from there, due at Lang Lang on Saturday night. Monday night we camped at Dandenong. Tuesday morning we left Dandenong, and all along the road, especially towards evening, as we approached Caulfield, and it became generally known through the papers that cattle were coming by road for the weekly supply, we were besieged by interested people, and if we had been so inclined, the menfolk would have treated us so well that the cattle might never have reached their destination, but have become a wandering nuisance about the common. The ladies would have us as guests at afternoon tea, but being shy young men from the bush, we felt it more judicious to remain with the mob, promising to call in on our way back. We were little heroes for the time, "bringing food for the masses."

Tuesday night saw all the yard accommodation at Caulfield taxed to its utmost capacity with cattle, while we drovers and the men who were sent out

to meet us from Newmarket and help steady the mob through the city, numbering about 20 all told, enjoyed our evening meal and swapped yarns over a glass of Heywood's best or had a quiet nap in a corner, our horses feeding and resting, ready for the night's journey. At midnight we resaddled our weary horses and started our bellowing, nervous mob on their last march. We traversed the Dandenong road, crossed the Windsor Bridge, went along Wellington Street to the St. Kilda Road, crossed Princes Bridge into Swanston Street, where the flickering lights had a bad effect on the mob, making them very excited and anxious to break away. We travelled along Swanston Street as far as Victoria Street, where we crossed into Elizabeth Street, and on to the Racecourse Road, and landed our charges safely at Newmarket yards at about 5 a.m.

We had about an hour before daylight to stretch our weary limbs on the floor of the office, in which was a fire. At daylight we started to draft off the different lots, and as Francis, Ross & Co. had first sale, and we (Theo. H. Parker & Co.) had second, there was no time to lose. All the drafting was done in our lane, and the cattle for Messrs. Francis, Ross & Co. were then taken to their lane, and they had to class them to the best advantage for the sale. In addition to this drafting we had to class and also to draft Messrs. Cooke & Houlahan's bullocks. After the sale we left Newmarket for Dandenong, stopping at Caulfield for tea, and reaching Dandenong about 9 p.m., thirty-nine hours without a rest since leaving there. Thursday morning we left Dandenong to get back to Korumburra in time to get another lot ready for the following market. And so we played our little part in the history of the "Big Railway Strike."



# The Pastoral Industry.

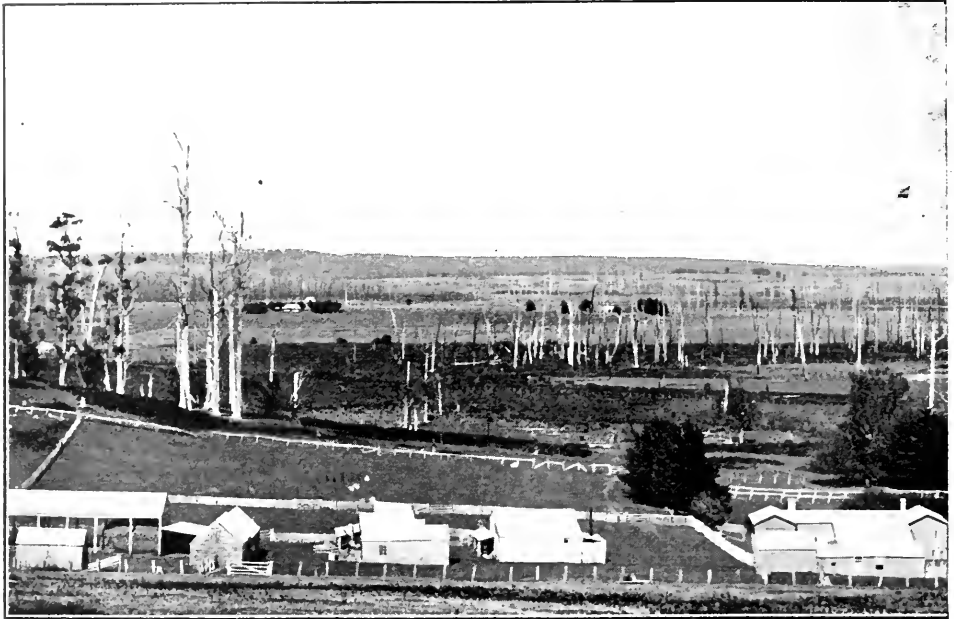
MR. J. WESTERN.

Carlyle says: "The man who makes two blades of grass to grow where only one grew before is a benefactor to his race." The Gippsland pioneers discovered a great province lying waste and useless—the haunt of the dingo and wallaby—almost uncanny in the strange stillness that lay upon it: and by dint of years of the most strenuous toil turned it into a land of rich pastures and comfortable homes—changing the silent wilderness into one of the richest and most populous provinces of the State.

Having a climate and rainfall suited to the growth of English grasses, the burns or clearings were soon transformed from an appearance of grimy desolation to smiling pasture, and the hardy pioneer began at once to have visions of wealth, but his joy was generally short-lived, though it encouraged him greatly while it lasted, and he soon found to his sorrow that Nature resented his coming, and steadily and persistently resisted him at every turn. She had been in possession so long, had clothed the hills and valleys with life in a hundred forms, and laid her schemes with matchless beauty and order. Man's intelligence department was seriously at fault if he thought she would make an easy surrender to him. But in those early days he certainly thought so, as he came into the forest shaking his puny axe threateningly with an almost jaunty self-assurance.

Long years afterwards, when he was bent and toil-worn and wiser, he admitted that, victor though he was, the struggle had been such as he had never dreamed of. During the first Spring, when the cattle bought at Cranbourne—then the nearest market—had begun to get sleek and fat, the settler debated with himself and his neighbours whether he would be able to get them off by Christmas, and fatten a second draft, and so double the profits of the season. Then the caterpillars came, and in one short week settled the matter for him by stripping his paddock of every vestige of grass, and compelling him to sell or put his cattle out somewhere to graze until the Autumn rains came to bring on a fresh growth of grass. As this insect pest never molested the thistles, these flourished amazingly meanwhile and scattered their seeds everywhere: and the following year, instead of insects, there were thistles so high and dense that tracks had to be cut through them to enable a few hardy sheep or cattle to get a somewhat precarious living, for of grass there was but little.

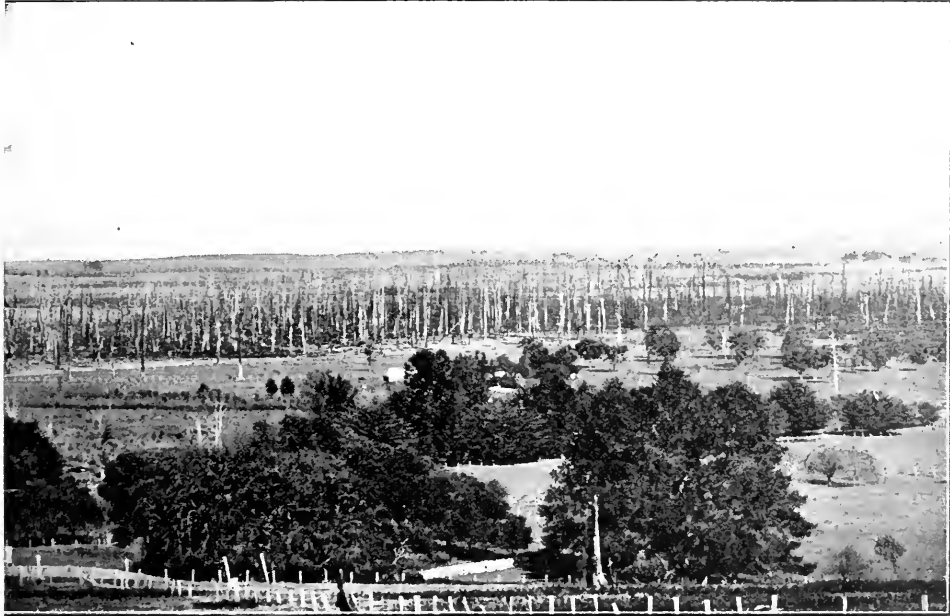
The thistle pest generally lasted two or three years, until the land seemed to be weary of thistles and wanted a change; and by this time the old forest life was ready to re-assert itself again in young growth of all the original trees and plants: and the work of getting rid of this second growth was often a very costly one. Then the dry timber began to fall, branches from the trees, often the tree itself, then the tall spars that were thought to be too big to be felled with the scrub: first by ones and twos, then whole platoons of them would be blown over by the gales that often raged, and the ground would become so covered up with timber that it often lay for many years before the settler had time to burn it off: his



RICH PASTORAL

time being taken up with cutting new areas of scrub, fencing, etc. Long before this the settler had fully realised the kind of thing he had to face; but he was undaunted, and carried on the fight, and for many a long year did it last. Then it seemed as though Nature saw that man had really come to stay, and would not be driven out; so she seemed to turn and become his friend. The various pests spent themselves, or were successfully dealt with. She helped to clear the timber, with a very generous hand, her myriad forces working silently and persistently day and night; she called up her winged legions to extirpate the caterpillar and grasshopper pests. The rains came with regularity, and made the seasons sure; other districts often lay stricken with drought, but never once since the beginning of settlement has South Gippsland failed in rainfall; and the tide of prosperity set in, slow and laborious, but sure. Every year saw large areas of scrub cleared and turned into pasture; the stock every year improving in numbers and quality, and gradually the district became very favourably known to the city butchers for the excellent quality of its fat stock.

Early in the '90's, just as the bulk of the scrub had been cleared, began the long series of dry years in the North that culminated in the disastrous drought year of 1902, and during this period the good prices prevailing for fat stock gave the pioneers a splendid lift, that began to show itself at once in the general and rapid improvement of the district and the steady rise in land values. It is quite safe to say that between the years 1894 and 1904 land values increased by an average of at least £1 per acre per year, values that have been well maintained since, except where neglect has been shown. Not only was the reputation of South Gippsland for fat stock established during this time, but, aided by the co-operative system of butter-



COUNTRY.

making and the export trade, dairying became well established, and the district began to produce large quantities of high-class butter; and it is to this industry that the district owes much of its progress.

The carrying capacity of the pastures of South Gippsland, with its rich soil and generous rainfall, is well known; nor has it seriously declined with the gradually lessened rainfall caused by the destruction of the forest, and what may have been lost in quantity has been made up in quality, except in cases where continuous overstocking has ruined the sole of grass.

Cocksfoot and rye-grass are the principal grasses sown, together with white, red, and alsike clovers; but the clovers do not stand close feeding with sheep, and gradually disappear. Those who have sown crested dogstail, a hardy English grass of excellent quality and sturdy habit, have found their pastures greatly improved by it. Other clovers of the trefoil variety have made their appearance during the last few years, especially in paddocks where sheep have been kept, and this has helped to maintain the excellence of the pastures.

The grazier generally allows three acres to a fattening bullock or dairy cow, and this is found to be ample in a good paddock. The fattening qualities of these pastures is not perhaps so high as the native grasses in many of the best districts of Australia, where a sheep may be made prime fat in a month or six weeks, the rapid fattening qualities of the grass being suited to the shortness of the season. The strength of the Gippslander's position lies in the fact that his season is sure, and the fattening period lasts from Spring to Autumn, and the carrying capacity of the country is from two to three sheep to the acre, according to the season of the year. From the earliest days

many settlers gave their attention to sheep, and generally found them to be more profitable than cattle, and that they improved the quality of the pasture. The hardier English breeds do the best, and for breeding ewes the Lincoln or Leicester merino cross have been found the most suitable, and these crossed again with Shropshire or Border-Leicester produce a splendid type of lambs, well suited to the requirements of the Melbourne or export trade. The Romney sheep have also been tried, and this splendid breed that has done so much for New Zealand has proved to be pre-eminently suited to our moist climate. They are a hardy, quick-thriving sheep, possessing a good constitution and strong sound feet, a most important point in their favour, and are well worthy of a much larger place in the estimation of Gippsland flockowners.

A special feature of South Gippsland sheep is their rapid development, and this was more marked in the early days, before the pastures became to some extent "sheep sick" by stocking continuously with sheep. At that time it was no very rare thing to see a lamb 8 or 9 months old turning the scale at 70 lbs. dressed. Before the grazier began to understand the possibilities of his new district he often made many mistakes, and one of them was to get his land "sheep sick" by stocking continuously with sheep only, but as he went on he found that by subdividing his land into convenient paddocks, and careful management, sheep may be always profitably kept, though a certain number of cattle in conjunction is the better plan.

With the clearing away of charred logs and timber that used to give the wool a shabby appearance, Gippsland wools have come rapidly to the front. It is always found to be sound in staple and well grown, and while its heavy condition always tends to keep the price per lb. down, the nett result per head is highly satisfactory to the grower.

But greater than the trade in sheep has been that of fat cattle, and every week for about seven months of the year, hundreds of fine cattle are trucked to the Melbourne markets for sale. Large numbers of store cattle are bought in other districts, the cooler or mountain preferred, and cattle from those parts start to thrive at once and always do exceedingly well. Those from hotter parts take some time to get acclimatised, and often valuable time is lost through this. Queensland cattle especially often take two years to get the quality the hardy mountain cattle would reach in four or five months.

For many years store bullocks have become increasingly scarce, and the large mobs of well-bred beef cattle that were a feature of the special Spring sales are now very rarely seen. So much attention has of late years been given to dairying and the breeding of dairy cattle, that the beef breeds have become rather neglected and reduced in numbers, and in addition to this, dairymen have found it unprofitable to rear calves other than a few heifers to keep up their herds, causing a serious shortage of beef cattle in the southern States: but no doubt the greatly increased prices will soon bring forward the required number. The present outlook not only for Gippsland, but for the whole of Australia, points to higher and steadier prices for beef and mutton, than has ruled in past years, when prime cattle were often sold at 15 - per cwt. of beef, and even down to 10 -, and fat sheep and lambs from 10 - each and upwards. The ever increasing export demand, and from countries also that were once in competition with Australia, has put a new value on Australia's meat, and to-day the prospect

was never brighter for the pastoralist, except for the cloud that lies on the political horizon that portends ever-increasing taxation.

Hitherto the bad state of the roads prevented any serious attempt at cultivation except for produce required for home consumption, but of late, with the gradual improvement of our thoroughfares, has come the increasing area given to potato and onion growing. The soil and climate are well suited to these crops, and heavy yields can always be depended on if well farmed. No manures are required, the land being rich in plant food, and six or seven tons per acre of marketable potatoes is an average yield. Onions often return as high as 10 or 12 tons to the acre, and there is every prospect of our district becoming one of the largest growers of these products: and it is cultivation that will put the finishing touches to the pioneer's work. Hitherto the grazier has been satisfied to keep his land cleared of fallen timber, leaving the beauty of the landscape marred by dead trees and bracken, but the ploughman must have his field cleared of all timber, and the rough surface levelled down, and when he has done his work, and the land is once more sown to grass, the bracken has disappeared, and instead of the rough and uneven surface, there is a fine even sward that reminds one of the grassy hills and valleys of glorious Devon.



# Recollections and Experiences.

MR. J. RAINBOW.



I well remember our first trip to South Gippsland in the eighties: how we went from Buninyong to Drouin, and then walked from there to Poowong. How rough I thought the country was, but it surprised me more when I arrived at the abode of Mr. John Glew. It then struck me what a wilderness I had got into. The place was called Jumbunna East. We had been told to enquire for a man named Mr. Peter Nielsen, who was picking up some burnt timber. Mr. Glew directed us to the camp, about a quarter of a mile distant. Then commenced a journey over logs, etc., to the camp, and another to where Peter Nielsen was working with three other men. We made ourselves known, and got permission to camp with them for the night. We were permitted to sleep in their kitchen, which was a 10 x 12 tent. The table was made of four hazel sticks driven into the ground and some split slabs of blackbutt nailed on the top. Chairs

consisted of four forked sticks with other straight pieces laid in the forks. These chairs had to be pulled up to enable us to make our beds, which were constructed as follows:—Two hazel stumps and a sheep-skin for mattress, sheets and pillows. We had, however, taken with us a blanket each. Of course, I happened to be the one to have to lie on the two hazel stumps, one under my shoulder and the other under my hip. If you compare this with the joys of a kapok mattress, you will see I did not have a very comfortable bed to lie upon that night. I might add we were all up at daylight. Next morning, my brother and a friend, Mr. George Matheson, started out to view the country that was open for selection, Peter Nielsen going with them as guide, which occupied nearly all day. At night we had the same room, but I might say that the hazel stumps had been removed, as they were quite unnecessary for a good night's rest. This was the best accommodation we could get. Of course, "beggars can't be choosers." Next day we made a start for Drouin: we got as far as Mr. Blew's by dinner time, and on arriving at Poowong we stopped all night at Horsley's, and had a comfortable night's rest, and next morning we were up after daylight, and walked to Drouin, and taking train the following morning reached Buninyong and home at half-past five in the evening.

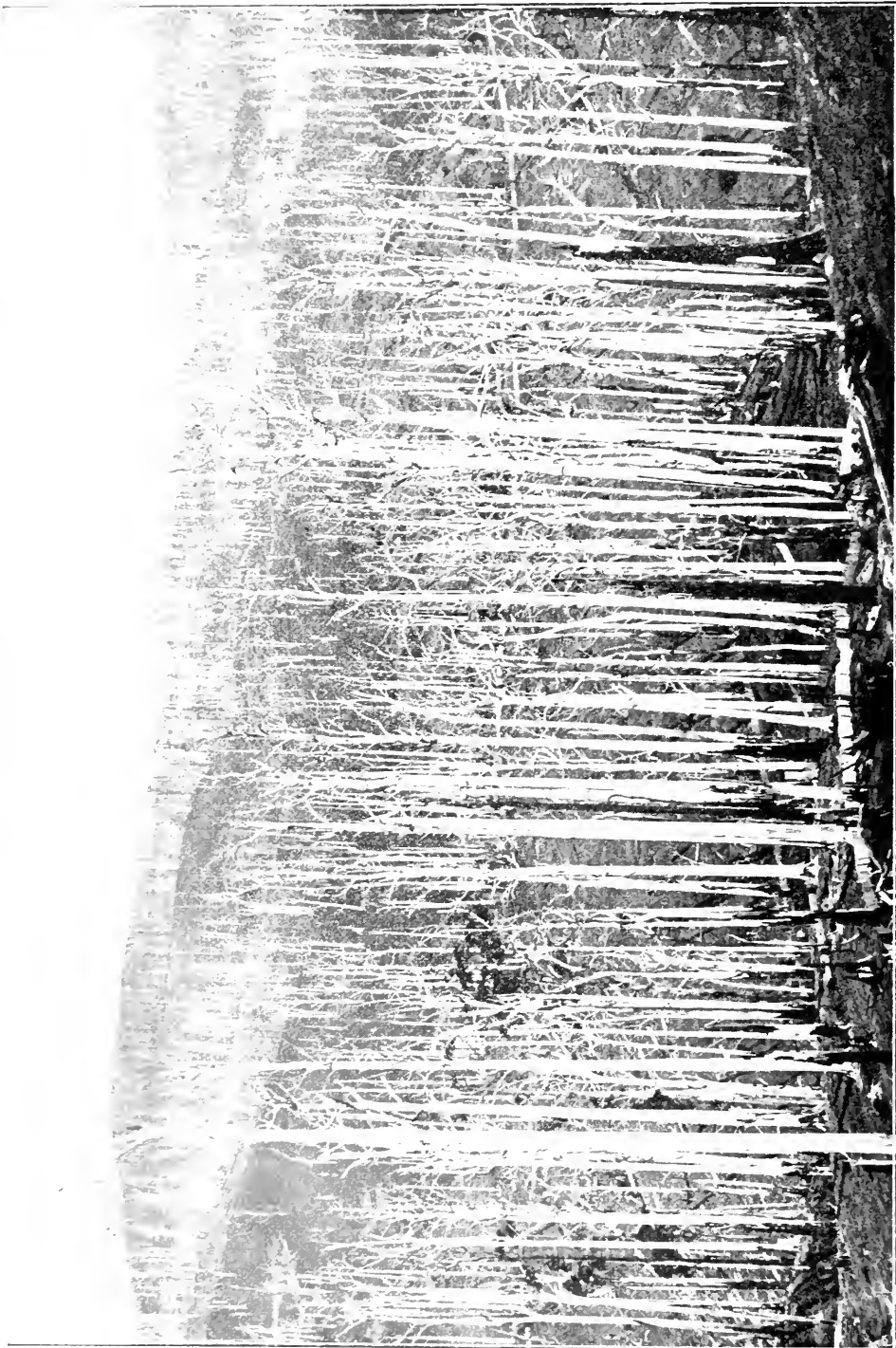
When passing through Melbourne, we lodged our application at the Lands Office. We had now to wait for a call from the Government to attend the Land Board, which was to be held at Drouin. This, however, was not long in coming; there being no opposition, the land was recommended to us, and on the day after we set out with the tents and axes we had purchased and arrived in Poowong in time for dinner, after which we made a start for Mr. Blew's, where we had tea, and also slept there that night. Mr. and Mrs. Blew and



family made us very welcome, not only that night, but on many other occasions, for which kindness we were very thankful.

This part of Gippsland in those days boasted no macadamised roads. Waggon, drays, buggies and motor-cars were all embodied in the one thing—the pack horse. The railways we had then were muddy pack tracks, in which horses sank up to their knees. Next day we left Mr. Blew's en route for Mr. John Glew's, and, after having dinner there, we arrived at Mr. Arthur Elms', where we spent the night. Next morning my brother and George Matheson started out for the purpose of cutting a pack track to enable us to get our provisions etc., down to our blocks, where we wished to start clearing. But they had got only about half-way down when it became night. I, in the meantime, was helping Mr. Elms to cut some of his scrub, this being my first experience in scrub cutting. The following day George Matheson and I went down to finish the pack track while my brother went to Poowong for provisions and to order more to be brought down. This was the beginning of our batching experience.

After pitching our tents, we set to work to make the beds in the bedroom, consisting of four forked sticks driven into the ground for bedposts and a frame made of hazel, across which were stretched bags. In the kitchen the furniture was just as elaborate. For a table, four stakes were driven into the ground, two sticks were nailed on these, and the "boards," consisting of split blue gum slabs, were nailed on to these side-pieces. I suppose you would like to know what our chairs were like. Well, two forked sticks were driven into the ground on either side of the table, and pieces of round hazel laid in the forks. Of course, we had to have a candlestick. We got a thick piece of wood, and drove three nails into it to hold the candle. This completed the furniture in our kitchen tent; necessity compelled us to manufacture all our furniture locally. The utensils were as follows:—1 bucket, 2 billies, a frying pan, and a camp oven. Before the latter arrived we tried our hand at making a damper. After burning a waggon load of wood and producing what we thought was sufficient heat to bake a damper, we put one in for a few hours. The reader must not suppose we had a wiggon and went out into the forest to bring in a load of wood; that would be impossible, and quite unnecessary, as it was lying in unlimited quantities in all directions, within a few yards of our camp. When we thought the damper was done, we pulled it out, and was surprised to find that it was baked only an inch through on the top, while the bottom was "damper" than when we placed it in the fire. Being resolved, however, to make it more perfect, we put it back in the fire, and left it there all night. The next morning it was covered with ashes, and a tomahawk had to be requisitioned to cut it, but having had only a light supper the night before, we ate the lot. The next was a vast improvement, and lasted only one day. On the fourth day we made one that was almost perfect. Next we had a trial of pancakes, my brother making them while the two of us ate them as fast as he cooked them. However, it was not long before he said, "Look here, one of you fellows come here and cook them while I have a feed." This sort of thing continued for several days; then we tried our hand at scones making, the oven consisting of a frying pan about eight inches in diameter. This also lasted for several days—not the scones; we required several of them each day, and like the rest of the cooking, improved at each lesson. The only thing we had to spread on our scones, etc., was black treacle. We had no butter or jam until some time afterwards.



VERY HILLY AND HEAVILY TIMBERED COUNTRY, CLEARED OF SCRUB AND TENDER GRASS.

We had now to build a chimney, which consisted of some big pieces of wood stood upright in the ground, and about 7 feet in height. Soil was built up at the back for a height of 3 feet. The iron bar on which to hang our boiler, camp-oven, frying pan and kettle (which consisted of a billy can) was a round piece of wood. This chimney smoked so much that we had to build another one. This time the bricks were of the same make, but the chimney was attached to the kitchen. We now began to feel the benefit of the fire and some smoke. When it rained we could sit in the kitchen, and not get wet. We now had to get our "linoleum" and "brit-sels" for the bedroom and kitchen. These consisted of some sheets of bark stripped from the spars. They were the best we could get until we got some sacks. We now commenced to try our hand at bread making in the camp oven. We got the dough mixed up all right, but we did not know how hot to make the oven. One said one thing and one another, and at last it was decided to take the advice of the other one. So the oven was made red hot and the dough put in. We had bad fortune, however, as it turned out like the first damper, baked only half-way through. As you may well suppose, it was thrown out to the pigs (which were goannas) and the poultry, namely, the satin birds and the jays, who used to visit us, but they were not kind enough to leave us any eggs for tea. One of the neighbouring selectors was our butcher. Of course, he had a freezing chamber in the shape of a pickle tub, which was out of order sometimes. When this happened we had to give some of our meat to the pigs. These "pigs" used to climb the trees and sleep in the branches and not in beds of pea straw. They did not do any squealing.

We now started scrub cutting, and after working some days at this were joined by Mr. Williams, and when he set up his tent and furnished it, there was quite a little Buninyong settlement. The first season's scrub cutting being over, we set out for Buninyong to spend our Christmas holidays. My brother and Mr. Matheson returned first, in order to attend to the burning off, so that grass seed might be sown and cattle put on the land. Picking up now commenced, but before it was in full swing a house was built. It consisted of one room (kitchen and bedroom all in one). Then our visitors commenced coming. These were, first, little black ants, and, secondly, rats. You might think that it would be an easy matter to deal with the ants. First we hung the bags containing those things ants are fond of from the rafters, but they came down the rope. Then we stood the bag on a block of wood in the middle of a dish of water. The rats, of course, attacked the flour and bread, and we found that the only remedy was to get a cat. I brought one with me from Buninyong. I often think of two young ladies who were in the coach with me on that trip between Drouin and Poowong. One asked me what I had in my box. When I said, "A cat," they said, "Poor cat," and all at once the coach went into a deep hole and threw them forward. Then as the coach went back I went forward nearly into their laps. This is an instance showing the bad state of the roads in those days. After dining at Poowong, I walked to Jumbunna East, arriving there with the cat just before dark. On arriving at the camp, the cat soon started on the rats. In order to give an idea of their number, I may say that one night we killed 30. From this account you can see that pioneering in those early days had its drawbacks, and one had to forego many of the comforts of civilisation. It was not all beer and skittles being a Pioneer Selector.

The reader, however, must not suppose that there was no entertainment or anything to amuse or interest us in this great bush. There was, for in it was a most extensive menagerie and aviary.

It was very interesting to walk through this great bush and observe the habits of the various animals and birds, and note the various kinds of trees, shrubs, ferns, creepers, mosses, etc., which grew in such profusive luxuriance everywhere; from small ferns and moss at your feet to creepers reaching to the tops of the trees, the tallest of which were the bluegums and the blackbutts, one hundred and fifty feet high, and as close together as they could grow. Their trunks were very straight, and would do well for ships' masts or piles. The next in height were the blackwoods and wattles, about 50 or 60 feet high. These woods are useful for cabinet making, being very pretty in the grain and taking a beautiful polish. Their blossoms in the Springtime were very attractive. Then came the hazel, its leaves a dull green with veins deeply marked, and the musk with leaves bright green on the upper surface and silvery underneath, with a rather pleasant musk scent. The flowers of both these shrubs were not very attractive, but they helped to make variety. The blanket-leaf was not a graceful tree, its special feature being its long narrow leaves, which grew in bunches. The under-surface of the leaves was white and fluffy, and its yellow flowers, though not very pretty, gave out a strong but not unpleasant smell. The pittosporum was the prettiest tree in the bush, its leaves a glossy green, and its flowers sweet scented. The supple-jack was a creeper, and a most beautiful sight when in bloom. It was to be seen among the branches of the highest trees as well as creeping over the tops of the lower ones. The majestic umbrella was a large kind of fern, which grew to a height of about 30 or 40 feet, and its great leaves 8 or 9 feet long spreading out in graceful curves from the top was very pretty indeed, especially when a number of them were seen together. There were a number of smaller ferns and shrubs whose names I do not know, but those mentioned will show the reader that the collection was fairly large. Two other growths that must not be forgotten are the wire-grass and sword-grass; the former grew in matted clusters, and the latter in large tussocks. Both were dreaded by bushmen for their scratching and cutting habits.

In this great bush were to be seen dingoes, bears, wallabies, wombats, kangaroo-rats, opossums, squirrels, tiger-cats, iguanas, platypus, mice, rats, lizards, snakes, etc.; also king, lory, and greenleek parrots, black and white cockatoos, jays, grey and white magpies, lyre-birds, satin-birds, redbreasts, tomtits, wagtails, woodpeckers, galahs, thrushes, Derwent and laughing jackasses, kingfishers, eagle, and sparrow hawks, mopokes, etc. This menagerie and aviary was open for our inspection and entertainment free of charge on any day or night of the week.

At the first break of day the laughing jackasses would open with their great laughing song—"the bushman's alarm clock"; they seemed to have no end of jokes to laugh at. Then the other birds would begin to sing and play. The lyre-bird was the most amusing; his clear musical notes could be heard all day long mimicking and mocking every other bird in the bush, and a very pleasant time could be spent listening to him and watching him dance. The jay could be heard vaunting out his "two and two are four; two and two are four." The harmonious thrush, the parrots, and the galahs took their parts, and every now and again the monkey-bear would growl out his two bass notes.

This play would continue all through the day, when there would be an interval, after which the animals would come on the stage, and keep the play going with short intervals all through the night. The dingoes and

bears acted the heavy parts to the accompaniment of the 'possums, squirrels, and mopokes. When you hear the weird and piercing shriek of the she-bear, or the blood-curdling howls of a pack of dingoes for the first time, a creepy feeling seems to force itself upon you, and if you happen to be riding along a pack-track on an inky dark night, that feeling is increased tenfold. I have often heard them while lying awake at night, and the feeling produced was quite thrilling enough for me. Sometimes this performance would be accompanied by a chorus from the nasal organs of my companions in camp; on one side of me was a baritone, on the other a tenor, and in the next tent was a bass; but I would rather listen to the 'possum, squirrel, and mopoke, for the "time" was "common," all sixes and sevens, the "notes" were "flat" and "sharp" alternatively; no notice was taken of "rest bars," and it was only "natural" that I should feel "crochety." I never used to enjoy those night-plays, and was always glad when they were over.



# Recollections and Experiences.

MR. W. McKENZIE McHARG.

About the year 1883 I packed my portmanteau, left my parents' home, and made a direct line for Lancefield railway station. There I booked to Melbourne, and from there to Drouin, where I met some old acquaintances, who piloted me through to Poowong, and from there to Jumbunna East, the parish in which I selected a half section of maiden scrub land. I was present at the "progress" meeting held in the district which changed the postal name from Jumbunna East to Moyarra.



It was at my house that the first meeting of the Korumburra to Anderson's Inlet Railway League took place, and it was decided at that meeting to ask Mr. M. W. Elliott to convene a public meeting, which was advertised in the Drouin papers to be held at Mr. A. W. Elms' house. The meeting was largely attended, and it was decided to send a deputation to the Minister of Railways and ask for a survey through Jumbunna to the coast. I had the honour of being in that deputation, and the late Mr. W. Elms was the spokesman for us; his remarks were supported by the late Dr. L. L. Smith, Messrs. F. C. Mason and A. C. Groom, M's.L.A., and Jas. Buchanan, M.L.C. The request was granted, and a survey party sent up, and, I believe, found an easy grade.

Just about the same time coal was found in Mr. Thomas Horsley's selection at Outtrim, and the trend of public thought was turned towards the new coalfield. The railway soon followed, but when it got to Jumbunna, instead of it going south-west from there to Moyarra, it turned south-east to the Jumbunna and Outtrim coalfields, which is perhaps modern history.

When I first came to Poowong, there was no township there, and the road leading south came to a full stop after about two miles; then it was only a pack track from clearing to clearing right on to Mr. McLeod's, now known as Mount Misery, Outtrim. These were the days of hardships and trials for the pioneers, who were mostly young men of good education and from good families. The mode of transit in those days was horseback, and provisions were packed from Grantville, Lang Lang, Poowong and Drouin. It was a daily occurrence to see strings of pack-horses, heavily laden with all kinds of merchandise, grass seed, iron for roofing, and, in some cases, children. On one occasion I beheld the gruesome sight of a pack-horse laden with a coffin, containing the dead body of a man on one side, and a log of wood on the near side to balance, while it was being conveyed to Bena, and then by cart to Poowong.

Flocke's Camp was quite an institution in the early days of this district. The proprietor or boss was a clever young German, named Frank Flocke, who had a good command of English, and was an accomplished linguist.

He was actually a contractor for clearing the scrub, and would undertake contracts worth from £50 to £1000. He would recruit his employees in Melbourne from runaway sailors or foreigners, mostly Swedes and Danes, who could not speak English. These he employed at a low wage, and kept them till they knew the language, when he would say they were no longer any good to him. Flocke's Camp had a great attraction to many because with such a number of men employed he had to keep a string of pack-horses going and coming for supplies, so his camp was a kind of wild bush store, where you could buy anything from a pair of stockman's moles to a glass of "three star raspberry and water," if you did not care for anything stronger—no excise officer to be feared in the scrub. Sunday was pay day, and numbers of people turned up; those who had been paid met those who were to be paid, and much harmless merriment took place, principally horse-riding. It was Flocke's custom to keep a number of horses on the different clearings in the district. These horses were rounded up on Sunday, and sold to his men at prices ranging from £5 to £10, according to the amount of money they had to draw, or the amount of business knowledge the fellow had for a deal. He would also be supplied with a saddle and bridle. In a number of cases the men were unable to work out the debt: they took £2 or £3, and gave in the horse, saddle and bridle, and cleared out with the knowledge that all they got for their work was experience as axemen, and a knowledge of language, so perhaps their loss was made good by their accomplishments. Well, I have seen some amusing sights when the foreign "tars" were saddling up on Sunday afternoons. I had charge at that time of Messrs. Spring Bros. and Clancy's selections, and Flocke had a £1000 job from Mr. John Spring. The horses were rounded up in our yards, and the saddling began, and so did the fun, for none of them could ride. One young German, about 6ft. in height, and as lithe as a whip-handle, was "skiting" all the week in "pidgin" English that he would ride any horse on the place. Well, Sunday came round, and a thoroughbred mare, called "Sauer-kraut," bred by Mr. A. Pobjoy, by Timothy, who ran second to Briseis for the Melbourne Cup, was selected to test the riding capacities of this young German. He could ride a bit and was no "mug" on a horse, but "Sauer-kraut" was a bit of a Mallee whirlwind at that time. However, she was saddled up, and we were all assembled. She gave a few swinging bucks and threw him. He was none the worse; the ground was soft and the grass was high. She was caught, and he lined up mournfully a second time, and mounted. She bucked again and threw him. He sprang to his feet, and with a look of despair on his face, yelled out: "No more vill I seet on the — horse." She was caught again, and this time a lad about seventeen, named Tommy Joyce, who could ride with the best, took charge of "Sauer-kraut," and whether her previous bucks had tired her, or whether she knew Tommy was her master, she did not buck, but pranced away among the rest for their Sunday afternoon's ride.

"Where every prospect pleases."

No matter in which direction I looked, all was most astonishing and bewildering forest. The majestic tall trees of the extensive eucalyptus family, with their clean cut poles towered aloft into the clear blue sky. They were surrounded with a wealth of beautiful undergrowth, in which blackwood, musk, bazel, and blanketwood mingled with the magnificent tree ferns; the tints of their various foliage blending in complete harmony with the bloom of the supplejack, clematis, musk, Christmas-tree and other flowering shrubs. The song of the lyre-bird and other native choristers rising from the secluded gullies made delightful melody. The senses were charmed with

delicious perfume of flowering shrubs, and in the midst of such a harmonious scene of beauty I forgot for the time the stern necessity of my presence in this enchanting Eden. But, alas, to-day there only remains but the vivid recollection of it all.

In the foregoing I have endeavoured to convey an idea of the beautiful, but now the other side of the picture is presented. Just imagine being caught in a storm at night on one of the pack-tracks leading "south," as this place (Korumburra, Moyarra, Jumbunna, and Bena) was then called. You had left Poowong cattle sale-yards in threatening weather, hurrying along through the mud and slush. The wind is blowing furiously, the track getting darker and darker till at last a murky darkness, which you can almost feel, has set in, and which brings with it a solitary feeling of loneliness that is appalling. The rain begins to fall, the wind increases its violence. Blended with the uproar of the storm are the weird and lonely calls of the mopoke and other nocturnal birds, while the hoarse croak of the mountain possum, the dull thudding of the wallaby as he jumps away, the almost human like cry of the koala, native or monkey bear, the pure bred dingoo's piercing and disconcerting howl complete the eerie chorus, which is occasionally overwhelmed by the thundering roar of some mighty monarch of the scrub hurled from his high estate, and uprooted by the violence of the storm, crashing through sapling and sucker, and bringing one or two of his neighbours with him, he lies broken and splintered. It gives you the "creeps." The perilous thought rises in the mind at once. Is the track blocked? Will I get home to-night to relieve the fears of the dear ones who are keeping anxious vigil? But favoured by Providence, your track is clear and the welcome clank of the stirrup irons announces your arrival. The faithful collie, the occupant's only companion, springs from the hearth, and barks a joyous welcome. You are relieved to enter the log cabin, where mutual greetings, warmth and pleasure relax the tension of the awful journey.

The road from the present Jumbunna township, which was formerly Mr. J. Glew's selection, towards Anderson's Inlet, was 16 feet wide, and went over the top of the hill, now known as Mount Misery; and through the present Outtrim township, which had been selected by Dr. Birney. From Jumbunna to Mrs. J. Olden's selection, the whole length of the road 16 feet wide was completed by the settlers in about six weeks' time without any grant or aid or other municipal assistance. At Mrs. Olden's, a bridge was thrown across the Powlett River. It was a very substantial structure, and did duty for several years, notwithstanding that the sharp axes of the settlers were the only tools used in its construction, and not a nail or a spike was driven in it.

About the same time Mr. M. McLeod, who has left the district, and Mr. P. Shingler, of Pound Creek, who then owned a selection where the present township of Silkstone now is, had a most trying and dangerous expedition. They tried to find a track across to Leongatha through the present Ryeburn estate below Outtrim. In those days part of the land which now comprises the estate was open plain, but in others was covered by a dense growth of tea-tree, prickly mimosa (prickly moses). The open patches could be plainly seen from Mount Misery. They expected to penetrate the intervening patches of scrub on horseback and reach their destination without difficulty. When setting out upon such undertakings as these, no one neglected to provide himself with a pocket compass, and on this occasion it proved the salvation of the two honoured and respected members of the community. After battling all day, it became apparent that they could not reach Leongatha, but were fagged out and lost in the dense undergrowth of the swamps.



As their friends did not expect them back till next day, their absence at night caused no uneasiness, but they had a trying time in the cold watches of the night. Next morning their struggle began again. Finding that their horses were more encumbrance than assistance, they unloaded and abandoned them. With the aid of the compass, they fought their way on foot through the scrub back to the camp, and arrived more dead than alive. The horses were never heard of again, and it was concluded that they had perished in some of the swamps or morasses that existed between Ryeburn and Mr. McNaughton's land. The big drain in the Ryeburn Estate now accounts for the disappearance of this morass. On another occasion a pack-horse broke away from Mr. Peter Nielsen on the plains and galloped into the scrub, entering the swamp in Mr. P. Shingler's holding, and was lost for ever.

There is very little to write about the Catholic Church in the early days of this district, as the spiritual needs of the adherents were attended to either at Drouin or Warragul. Mass was first celebrated at Bena about the year 1887, and at Mr. Eccles', "Hazel Dean," about the same year. Then after that at Moyarra and at Bena at varying periods till the line was opened. Mass was then celebrated regularly at the Mechanics' Hall, Korumburra. A movement was soon started to build St. Joseph's Church, Korumburra, which was completed soon after the railway line was through. Outtrim followed, and the Loch church was built also, the clergyman coming from Dandenong for the first few years, when Korumburra was formed into a parish and a parish priest was appointed. A notable instance of the difficulties that Catholics had to put up with in early days is demonstrated by the following narrative. A young man was fatally injured when road clearing at Moyarra, by a limb of a tree falling on his head. He was not killed outright, but lingered for a week. It was necessary to have a priest to give the man Holy Church fortification, and, the case being urgent, a horseman was despatched to Warragul on a stormy September night. The priest, a young man, was sick in bed with a cold, but he got up and started for Moyarra, arriving there at daylight. He administered the consolations of the Church to the dying man, and returned to Warragul, went to bed, and was dead himself in about three days. His heroic self-sacrifice was the admiration of all creeds and classes. I forget the priest's name, but I met him at Moyarra on that notable morning.

# Recollections and Experiences.

MR. R. CORNALL.



Land settlement first took place around Kardella in the years 1882 and 1883. The original settlers in that district were Messrs. Duncan Clerk, A. McK. Salmon, Thos. Nicholson, Geo. and John Western, M. Holland, John Brydon, James Brydon, A. Gardiner, William and John Twyford, Percy Williams, Hugh Ross, Thomas Rowe, George McKay, John and Stephen Ritchie, Robert Cornall, and Miss J. Mackay. Most of those mentioned, or their families, are still on the farms.

Looking round the district now, it is hard to realise the difficulties which the pioneers had to contend with. Owing to the dense scrub and overhead timber the tracks were in a particularly bad state during the earlier years, and I remember distinctly that it was the usual thing for roads or tracks to be bad as late as November, and by the end of March they were bad again: as a result, the pack-horse was the only means of transport, and with flour at 30 - a bag, and packing at 4 6 per load, it made living very expensive.

Travelling in those days was also a serious matter, as it was generally a case of walking, or at best riding a horse at a walking pace, as it was not possible to get wheels along any of the tracks. In one case I know of, a selector brought his wife in on horseback and the family in boxes strapped on a pack-horse. Letters came to Kardella partly from Drouin and partly from Mirboo North. Those for the west portion of Kardella district came through Drouin and the eastern portion through Mirboo North.

With the tracks as they were at that time the social side of life was almost totally neglected, and this was particularly hard on our women folk, for while the men had to go out sometimes on business or for provisions, the women folk spent most of their time about the home and on the clearing, which was completely shut in by an apparently solid wall of green timber. I think it is only one who actually saw the trials which our women folk went through who can fully appreciate their bravery and fortitude in the way they bore up against the deadly silence and solitude of the big bush.

In case of accident, which, owing to the nature of the work, was rather frequent, the difficulty of getting a patient out to civilisation was something to be remembered, especially by the patient. Some of the idea of transport may be obtained from the fact that a resident of the one-chain road, Mr. George Western, was injured by a falling spar, and it was decided to send him to Drouin. We started from Twyford's house (now Mr. J. J. Hutton's) at noon on Wednesday with two horses hooked to a sledge on which was laid a mattress, and on that the patient lay covered with a tent sheet to keep

the mud from splashing on him. Before a mile and a half had been travelled it was found that the horses could not proceed owing to the boggy nature of the track, and two of the party, Messrs. T. Lancy and F. Nicholson, rode back for bullocks. They made good time, too, for before we had gone another mile and a half, they overtook us with the bullocks in the yoke, which were then hooked to the sledge, and George then floated over the mud with greater ease, as the team went more steadily. East Poowong was reached that night. Next morning a buggy was procured, and we arrived at Drouin at 3 p.m., and the Melbourne train was caught at 5 p.m., and the Melbourne Hospital reached at 11.30 that night (Thursday). I am pleased to say that the patient came back all right.

For the first few years the Winter's work was scrub-cutting, worth £1 per acre, and the Summer work was picking up and burning off after the burn—often a very expensive matter—and if a selector was unfortunate enough to get a bad burn, the picking up was a very heavy task. Fencing and building occupied any time that could be spared; a bark hut was generally the domicile for the first year or so, then came paling, or slab buildings with shingle roofs.

Great heart was put into the selectors when it became known that the Great Southern Railway was likely to pass fairly close to the district, and when, in 1884, the late Mr. W. G. Field, C.E., ran what was known as the flying survey along Coalition Creek, hope beat high, as those who were farthest out from civilisation would be in front, and when Mr. Griffin, C.E., ran the permanent survey in 1886 and 1887, expectation reached high-water mark. The difficulty of the work will be partly understood when it is stated that Griffin's party took nearly two years to get the survey line from Korumburra to Leongatha.

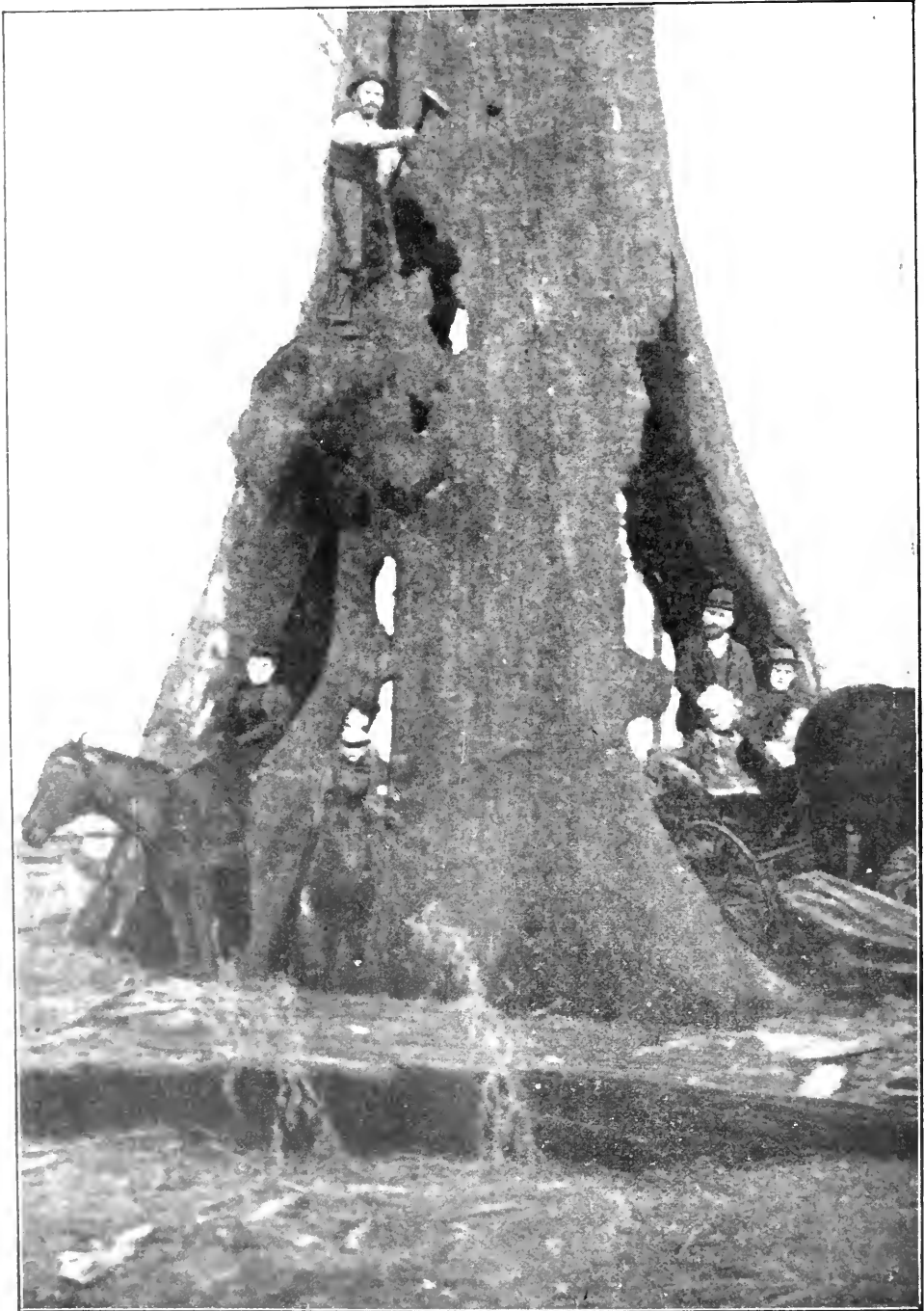
Anything grown here in those days that could not walk out on its own feet had to be sent to Melbourne by way of Drouin by bullock waggon; needless to say, very little produce, except butter, was sent out that way.

In 1884 my brother Jim and I cut a mile and a half of track to get into our clearing, as we had only a blazed track before that. In 1886 (I think), a post-office was opened at Mr. John Brydon's, on the one-chain road; and we cut a track to it; in 1888, when the railway line was in process of making, we cut another track towards where Korumburra now is, as we were told by Mr. Griffin that a station was to be made there; altogether we cut about six miles of track through the scrub.

The first Korumburra church was built by a working bee of the settlers, organised by Mr. James Smith, home missionary, in 1886, whose circuit extended from Waratah Bay to Poowong. The church was built on land owned by Mr. George Lancy (now owned by Mr. John Western), as at that time the one-chain road was the centre.

In 1890 we were told that a station would be made at Kardella if a road could be got to connect the station with the one-chain road; so a party of about ten members set to work to find and blaze the present road from Walter Brydon's to Kardella, and as the road was satisfactory to the Department the station was established.

In 1891 the first sawmill plant was put down by Messrs. W. Egan and G. Parr, on the north side of the railway line at Kardella.



OLD TRACK THROUGH BIG TREE "FAIRBANK."

In November, 1891, the railway line was opened for traffic, and the Kardella post office was established at the station, which was intended by the Commissioners to be called "Brydon," but the name was changed to Kardella, which means opossum. As the railway was opened to Korumburra about two years before it was opened to Kardella, the name of the post office at Mr. John Brydon's was changed from Korumburra (which it originally held, from the name of the Parish, and which was originally established on McDonald's Track under the name of Korumburra) to Glentress; and when the Kardella post-office was established the Glentress post-office was closed.

On March 5th, 1892, Inspector Dennant, of the Education Department, visited Kardella, at the invitation of a number of residents, with a view to arrange for the establishment of a school, and a meeting of parents was held in the station house, where the Inspector told us that we would have a much better chance of obtaining a school if there was a building available; therefore, the residents bestirred themselves, and the result of their energies was the Kardella Hall, which was finished in 1893, and the school was opened in the building under the charge of Mr. Flude, who was succeeded after a few months by Mr. Robert Patterson, as head teacher, whose roll contained the names of nearly 100 scholars.

When the railway line was opened, sawmills were started, and population increased round the railway station, mostly consisting of sawmill hands, timber-splitters, horse and bullock drivers, etc.

The first storekeeper in Kardella was Mr. Geo. Roughhead, who opened in February, 1892, and sold out his business to Mr. Alfred Gawler about March, 1893; he, in turn, sold out to Mr. G. H. Murray about March, 1894.

The saw-mill owners in and about Kardella were Messrs. Egan and Parr, McColl Bros., H. H. Herman, W. Richards, and A. Arbuthnot.

I have no means of ascertaining the number of trucks of timber that were sent away every month, but it will be easily understood that it was very large, and that with the number of hands employed on the mills, and the splitters in the bush, the township presented a lively appearance.

The village settlements were established in 1893-4.

The following is an extract from a store bill of November, 1889:

One bag of flour (200 lbs.) . . . . .	£1	11	0
70 lbs. sugar, 3½d. per lb. . . . .	1	1	11
One case kerosene . . . . .	1	0	0
10 lbs. tea at 1s. 8d. per lb. . . . .	0	16	8

A pack-horse load of two cwt. was charged at 1s. 6d.

# Recollections and Experiences.

MR. E. SHEEPWAY.



The second week in July, thirty years ago this Winter, my old and esteemed friend, Mr. Joseph White, Senr., and myself came by coach from Dandenong to Grantville to peg out land in what is now called the Krowera district, and found everything very rough and expensive. We were supposed to stick our pegs in the four corners of the blocks we were applying for, but they were not surveyed, and the scrub was impenetrable, so we stuck them all in at Mr. Walker's place, about a mile above the Bass bridge, where there was quite a collection of pegs, sticking all in a group. When we crossed the Bass River our guide said, "Now we are in the land flowing with milk and honey." We could not see any about then, but the milk has flowed there pretty considerable since.

We came back in the following November to get some scrub cut. We started with four men from Grantville, and camped at a settler's about half way, and slept on his verandah, and had fried wallaby for breakfast—it did not go down too well.

We had to pay our guide £5 for each block that we took up, and he was supposed to pilot us on to it, but the blocks not being surveyed, and no track in, we started and cut a pack-track through the standing scrub for three or four miles, and started cutting the scrub, on the chance that we were on the right blocks, and when it was surveyed we had made no mistake.

Being strange and new chums, we got men that could only cut scrub in front of a long beer in the "pub" at Grantville, and, of course, progress was very slow, but we managed to get down about 40 acres.

I went over to see Mr. L. Stewart, Senr., and had a look at his clearing, and it was a mass of standing bare poles. He had, I think, cut to nine inches in diameter, so we decided to cut to eighteen inches. I am afraid to say what that 40 acres cost us. Supplies were very difficult to get in. At first everything was 1½d. per lb. to pack in from the Bass bridge, no matter what it was, but later on we got it to 1d. per lb., at which it stood for some considerable time. Butcher's meat was the worst to get. In a camp of six men we had to put up with sheep 18 lbs. the carcase, and nearly as old as the youngest of our party: that sort that you can read the newspaper through. The beef we got was very little better. An enterprising young fellow in the neighbourhood wanted to supply the camp with wallaby at 1½ per lb. We asked him if he could not throw in a bear or two, or an iguana for a change, but whether the price was too high, or our stomachs were too particular—it is so many years ago that I forget—but anyhow his offer was declined with thanks.

The only place we could get stores from was Grantville, and if the boat got wind-jammed (which was often the case) you had to wait until she did get in before you could get all the stores you wanted, for the store-keeper was bound to be out of some of them.

The track in here was very bad for several years. One day I and another man were riding in when we came upon a man (I think he worked for Mr. R. N. Scott) lying in a spot called the Glue-pot. He had one arm on the bottom, to keep his head from going under, and the other outstretched above his head, with a bottle of brandy clasped in his hand, and was calling out, "One more drink before I die." But, unfortunately, he had not drawn the cork before he took the header. We rescued the bottle and then the man—both recovered.

Cocksfoot seed was  $5\frac{1}{2}$ d. per lb. in Melbourne, then boat freight to Grantville, then bullock waggon to Goding's shed, after which it had to be packed at 1d. per lb. on the ground. We sowed 11 lbs. of ryegrass, 9 lbs. of cocksfoot, and 2 lbs. of white clover per acre.

The first year we sowed 40 acres, and the second year 250 acres. I have seen grass that was sown in the Autumn up and in seed in the first week in August, that was when the clearing was surrounded with scrub; the seasons are quite different now to what they were then. After the first year, neighbours came in all round us, but it was some time before we saw who our neighbours were on the north side, as we had nothing but a survey line to go by, but in time Mr. R. N. Scott and myself blazed and opened a track going north, and that now is our main road to the railway station.

Chock-and-log fences were erected mostly then, as taking the logs off the land helped to clear it, and they made a very fair fence for a few years until wire could be got on to the ground.



# Recollections and Experiences

MR. F. P. ELMS.



My first introduction to this part of Gippsland was in the year 1885, and though not able to pose as an old pioneer of the first rank, I have seen the country transformed from a virgin forest to its present condition of prosperity and productivity. The cause of our family's selection of land here was through my brother Arthur, having studied at Dookie Agricultural College, and wishing to start on his own account, was told of the splendid virgin forest land at Poowong by the late Dr. Elmes, of Berwick, a friend of my father's. The doctor was public vaccinator of the district, and used to make periodical trips to Cranbourne, and thence as far as Poowong, and thus spied out the promised land. After a trip down here to inspect for himself, my brother, and also my father, selected two blocks in Jumbunna East, on one of which I now reside. I was too young to select at that time. My brother's block had a small clearing, about 20 acres, of grass

land when I came here first.

I left Beaconsfield by the morning train, and arriving at Drouin, took Watt's coach to Poowong, arriving there at 6.30 p.m. It was in the month of February, 1885, and the dust was several inches deep on the coach road. Being met by my brother with a horse, we rode down the South Track. First we rode through the cleared country near Poowong for about two miles, and then entered the forest in a track just wide enough to avoid the trees and hazels, but very rough, just as the mud of last Winter had dried in huge mounds. Logs had just a gap cut in them, and the horses had to jump or step across what was left. Stumps had, of course, been left in the ground, and the roots being laid bare by the traffic, made travelling rougher still, and consequently very slow. The tracks kept to the ridges instead of running along the sidings, and when at the end of the ridge it dropped steeply to the creeks below; these had either to be jumped or a rough little bridge of a few hazel sticks laid on two beams would span it. Here and there we entered the clearings of the selectors en route, and following a bridle track winding across them among the stumps and logs, would again enter the scrub track, and so on till we got to Mr. John Glew's homestead, "Cora Lynn," at the present site of Jumbunna. This was a very advanced selection at that period, owing to the pluck and push of the owner. He had a fairly large area under grass, was running sheep, and had a brick house to reside in. This house, also a log dairy with shingle roof, still stands as a landmark, and was remarkable in its history. The lime, roofing iron, doors, windows, etc., were brought on pack-horses from Grantville, and the brickmakers, who made the bricks on the ground, came down from Brunswick, where Mr. Glew's father had brick kilns.



In giving my impressions of the country on my first sight of it, I must mention the condition of Poowong at that time. Although high Summer and dry everywhere else, here was green grass in abundance, cocks-foot, mostly with clover and a little rye-grass; the cocks-foot taking naturally to the loose soil and bearing out its characteristic quality of growing among the greatest mixture of debris and branches, and holding its own. Scotch thistles abounded in plenty, especially on the roadside. The selectors cleared their land, erected a log fence on their roadside boundary, and sowed grass to that fence. Out on the road where the cleansing fires had burnt the ground bare, except the fallen saplings and logs, the thistles grew thick and high as one's head on horseback. Where the seed came from was a mystery. Shedding their seed and down, the latter lay on the ground like snow, a foot or more deep, and in the heat would ignite like powder if lit. Any patches of burnt ground not sown at once with grass-seed would become covered with these thistles.

The immense trees, dead a few years now, towered skywards, and by their numbers blocked the distant view, except where by chance a gap occurred to allow a peep out beyond. The scene from Poowong, which is on a high elevation, towards the South and East was over the forest, and the day I arrived there, being a good burning day, columns of smoke in various places told of the selectors taking advantage to clear the patches of scrub cut during the Winter, and lying till now to dry. The town of Poowong consisted of the public-house, store, post-office, blacksmith's and other buildings in the one street, and behind and beyond, the grass paddocks green and luxuriant, hastily fenced, and full of standing and fallen trees, amongst which grazed the cattle, full and contented in this land of plenty. The arrival of the mail coach was, of course, the event of the day, and the various passengers being met by their respective parties and making preparations for their ride through the pack-tracks, made the town busy, and added to the sign of prosperity and hopefulness of the place. This was the day on which the stores were delivered on the South Track, and when I and my brother were half way down we were overtaken in Mr. Blew's clearing by Mr. E. Dixon, whose brother, Mr. Jas. Dixon, kept the Poowong store. The first we knew was the crack of a whip in the track in the scrub behind us, and presently appeared at full trot a string of five pack-horses, laden on each side with bags and boxes, and topped up with the same by means of straps, which, in the hands of an expert packer, was truly a work of art, when one considers the balancing and security of all kinds of goods of various sorts and sizes and shapes, to be held firmly on a trotting or cantering horse, with many a bump by the overhanging hazels. The boss of the team, riding a good pony, loosebag slung on his back, and freely using the whip on the jogging team in front, made the tail-ender keep up to the leader, who forged ahead, the others following him in single file. These goods were for the selectors en route, and, as the huts were reached, the various packs were taken off, to the relief of the nag, and most probably to the joy of the cook of the camp.

After staying over night with our friends, the Glews, my brother and I next morning took our way to our destination, entering the scrub again on the hill to the South of where the Jumbunna township now is, and in an hour were at the hut on my brother's clearing. The only selectors South of here at this time were Messrs. C. Parsons, George Matheson, and Rainbow Bros. Beyond was practically unknown land. McLeod Bros., to the East, had their hut on their dividing line on the top of Mount Misery, and there kept the Jumbunna East Post Office. My brother had about 20 acres in grass

and a hut built of logs, with a shingle roof; the water supply being a barrel from which the overflow ran into a 6 feet hole in the ground. The advent of the neighbouring selectors was kept up continuously from this time. The furthest out clearing or hut was made the rendezvous for the time being by the newly arrived selector till his hut was erected, and his clearing started. The work of clearing pack-tracks also commanded attention, sometimes parties of six or so working together to hasten it on; a certain number of days' work being given by one, and later on returned by his neighbour. In this way greater power was available in rolling logs out of the way, besides being more sociable for the members in their work.

The work on the selections from now on was the effort to obtain clearing and grass, at the same time adding to the comfort where possible by adding more buildings and yards for the working of the place. About this time the small paddocks, although growing great abundance of English grass, were stocked heavily, the few cattle, the necessary horses, and the predacious wallabies being a great tax on them. The cattle fared well, however, by being able to take to the scrub when they wished, and could live there altogether on the wire-grass, sword-grass and leaves of small trees. When selectors cleared the scrub to an adjoining clearing, a log fence was put up between, and it gave a forward settled appearance to the place. Some tried sheep on these new areas, but the dingoes and footrot proved that they were not suitable stock to put on at that stage.

The living of the pioneers was rough, as can be easily imagined when it is understood that only the pack-saddle could bring in our goods, and it was surprising what things could be packed. Horses, though flighty at first, settled down to the work after a few trips, and got so used to the noise and rattle of their loads that I have seen animals that could be trusted to pack crockery with safety, not only by being led, but driven. The training usually began by putting flour, potatoes or some unbreakable material on, and after a deal of bumping against trees to the distress of the poor nags, who nearly got knocked off their feet, they would learn to measure the distance themselves and avoid a tree for their own sakes. It was very tempting to the pack-horse to get out of the mud in the middle of the track and climb along the drier edge, but even his dull brain soon realised it was better to walk in the mire than to be hurled almost off his feet by the pack bumping something. I have seen a pack-horse going ahead with a pack try to take a short cut between some hazels, and going in between them found out that the pack could not go through, back out and take the proper track again. It was considered that 200 lbs., a bag of flour, was a fair load for a horse, and although it may seem strange, it was a fact that the lighter horses, owing to their activity in the rough tracks, would do better work than the heavy ones. Very fat horses were practically useless for safe packing, the poor ones with a good "keel" would be more reliable, and have less risk from an uneven load slipping round. Among the many curious articles packed in this way were sheets of iron, building timber, small tanks, and an harmonium, which last was balanced by a keg of treacle. I once went to Anderson's Inlet for a pack of fruit trees, which are now growing in "Torwood" orchard, and brought forth the censure of some residents there when I balanced it with its equal weight of sand, about 40 lbs. They considered it cruelty to animals to cart sand up that way. I could not divide the well-packed bundle of trees, as it would have dried their roots if I had opened it.

The daily fare of the hut was meagre and simple. No butter meant, of necessity, either jam or treacle, and the 100 lb. keg of

treacle was to be found in most of the pioneers' camps. Bread making by amateurs may better be imagined than described. If the batch proved a "sod," well, there was nothing else, it had to be eaten. The soda bread or scone had to be the only form used by those in making a start in camping, but as this would not agree with the system long, recourse was had to the yeast bread as soon as it could be done. Meat was obtained from someone who had killed a beast, and was taken in 50 lb. lots and put in the brine barrel. According to the season—hot or cold—would depend how much fresh meat could be hung, the rest was pickled, and that sometimes went a bit "off," but had to be gone through. A good appetite acquired after four or five hours' axe-work easily overcame any squeamishness as to tainted meat. Tomato sauce also came to the rescue and drowned the smell while the appetite was being appeased.

Cooking was done at night, or, perhaps, on a day too wet to work outside. After a hard day's picking-up or scrub-cutting, one man would go home half-an-hour ahead, and have the fire lit, and by the time the others were home have the billy boiling, potatoes (if any) peeled and on, or rice or dumplings done, ready for tea, when every one was washed. Then, after washing up, roll up sleeves, set bread, make more yeast, read a bit, and off to the bunk, which was two flour bags stretched on poles and set on forks, blueys on top, and so to sleep.

Sunday morning was a very domestic time as a rule, mending clothes, extra cooking and cleaning up generally took place, and then perhaps for Sunday's dinner one's best clothes might go on, just to feel clean once more. In the afternoon one would either be visited or would visit some other selector and discuss local topics, arrange plans for next week's road making or bridge making "bee," exchange papers, etc., etc., winding up with a strike at cricket more often.

Later on as the women-folk came to the rescue, things took a more hopeful and comfortable aspect. The hours of work could be extended in the clearing instead of attending to household duties. The milch cow was requisitioned, the fare was more refined and palatable, the kitchen and flower garden began to demand the attention they properly deserved, and sociability took the place of unbroken drudgery. The snow-white tablecloth and other dainty embellishments in the home made the man turn from the roughness of batching and give a thought to the comforts of sociability and civilisation.

Just as Summer heat came on the great rankness of the new grass on the burns and the moisture of the small clearings gave rise to the scourge of caterpillars, and for years this sort of thing went on regularly until the grass got established. In the meantime it fared badly with the stock, and many a selector had to sell them owing to his grass being laid waste, and frequently had to re-sow it. Paddocks destroyed by caterpillars presented a particularly repugnant appearance. The grubs destroyed more than they ate. They nipped the shoots off at the roots, with the result that the withered grass lay about in rotting heaps as if it had been poisoned.

In time the clearing extended and the question arose how to turn the grass into money. Sheep were out of the question, on account of dingoes and footrot. Fattening had its drawbacks; we sent off fat cattle to Poowong, the nearest market then, and only got £2 10s. for them. We had thus to turn our attention to dairying. On all the selections now the cow-shed and yard was to be seen, starting with a few cows. The difficulty of yarding and

breaking in heifers used to the scrub was great: sometimes they would plant their calves for a week in the bush.

At first the slab wall and shingle roof made the best dairy, where the milk was set in dishes. The churn and butter-worker, and at last the cask, saw the butter fit for market. Kegs of 56 lbs. capacity took some time to fill, and it is surprising the good quality of the butter on the whole, considering that it was put in layer after layer as it was made. These kegs were packed one on each side of a horse, either to Anderson's Inlet and then per boat, or to Poowong and then carted thence to Drouin, and so to the city. The speculation on the price was great. Some of it would sell down to 4d. per lb., to our dismay. Any in the Winter time would perhaps go to 1s. 6d. or 1s. 9d., which would pay well, but, as a rule, the quantity of this was small. This butter was made very salt, to keep it, and it would be re-worked in the city, and sold retail as fresh butter. This kind of dairying went on till the railway came to Korumburra, when we were able to take our cream there, and it was sent per rail to firms in the city and made up into butter. When the tracks, which improved later on, got very boggy we had to pack the cream, two cans, one on each side of the horse, to Korumburra. The cream separator was introduced when dairying had come to this stage. The first machine was brought into the district by Mr. C. Parsons, a horizontal Le Laval, and was the object of much interest and speculation by neighbouring dairymen. Improvements quickly developed, and the upright machines of various makes soon cast these old types to the scrap heap. Later on the residents of Moyarra decided to start a butter factory on their own account, and a small plant was erected on this property, capable of turning out four tons per week. It was successful, although handicapped for want of modern refrigerating appliances. Mr. R. T. Archer, now senior dairy expert to the Department of Agriculture, managed it, and by his skill and energy made first-class butter, notwithstanding all disabilities. In hot weather he adopted the plan of working all night instead of in the heat of the day-time, and by many similar expedients, coupled with great resourcefulness and painstaking care, gained a reputation for the Moyarra brand of butter. Owing to the farmers to the North of the factory giving up dairying as the coal townships came into being, this factory was not central, and was moved to Kongwak, where it now flourishes.

The dairying industry was the means, in those days, of bad roads and poor communications, of saving many of the selectors from abandoning their properties. With the opening up of the country came the necessity for better roads. The first tracks were cut simply as bridle tracks, but later they had to be widened for dray work, and our goods, for a time, before the railway came, were brought from Anderson's Inlet, 13 miles away. A road was cut for drays right over the ridge of McLeod's Hill, now Mount Misery, the sides being too steep to negotiate. Then a winding track was made across the plains to avoid the swamps, to the Inlet, where the ketches brought the goods. This meant a two days' trip, one day to take the dray down and return to the foot of the hills with the load, and the next, and worst, up and over the hills and home. All the roads had to be made along the ridges then, but later on, and even up to the present, the work of getting a grade by running along the sides of the hills is going on. At first no money was available from the shires, the farmers had to clear their own roads; later the shires came to the rescue. The condition of the roads was almost hopeless. The sun or wind never got in to dry up the mud, and the earth was simply vegetable mould, having no grit or firmness. However, as time has

gone by, the wind and rain have washed away the mould, and to-day the firmness of the roads surprises the pioneer who saw them 25 years ago.

The discovery of coal in Mr. Horsley's, where to-day the Jumbunna mine is, marked an epoch which pushed this locality on. The seam had been found by some men while burning a stack of logs in a gully where it was exposed, and they smelt the coal fumes. Later on the seam was opened out, and an open air banquet was held to commemorate the event. The railway line was constructed as far as Jumbunna township, and an aerial tramway was constructed, which was an endless wire rope, travelling on poles and trestles, to which iron buckets, holding about 5 cwt. of coal, were attached, but this plan failed. Later on the railway line passed on to Outtrim, where another seam had been discovered, and was worked under the name of the Outtrim, Howitt and British Consolidated Coal Mine, and its township accordingly followed. This company, whose lease extended under this property, purchased 35 acres of land for a horse paddock, where, at a week-end, as many as 80 ponies and horses were run to give them a blow of fresh air, out of the mine, after the week's work. Since then the townships of Outtrim and Jumbunna have waxed and waned. In the former town the crowds at one time, on a Saturday night, were such that pedestrians had to walk in the roadway. Before the railway was completed to Outtrim from Jumbunna, the Outtrim Coal Company, to put their coal before the public, sent it by waggons of all sorts to Jumbunna terminus, the road being a continuous stream of teams all day. Big sums were earned by the carriers, also the miners; the graziers, too, reaped a harvest grazing bullocks and horses.

Building and planning our homestead was one of the many matters that lay uppermost in our minds as the clearing went on. My brother had built a comfortable house on his block, and for a period my father, mother, sisters, and I lived there. Meanwhile, another abode was planned, and eventually a weatherboard house was erected on my father's block, called "Torwood." The orchard was first fenced and planted, and then came the house. The railway was then being made from Loch onwards. The sawmill at Whitelaw, Tyson's, supplied the hardwood, and the rest came from the city. In the building we employed a Norwegian ship's carpenter, who, although not a thoroughly experienced house builder, suited the occasion. At that time there were numbers of these men, and Russian Finns and Germans, runaway sailors from ships in port, and giants they were, not afraid of work or roughing it.

In 1896 I applied for and selected an area of swamp land on the Powlett River, covered with tea-tree, and in Winter with water. The task of clearing this was totally different to that on the hills, and it took more time to get a sole of grass there. At certain times in a late Summer this newly cleared land got opened by cracks, and myriads of crickets bred in the cracks and devoured everything. Ultimately it got out of this stage, and where it is drained is slowly developing into good grazing land.

Perhaps the most memorable event in the years of residence here was the 1898 bush fires. New Year's Day was the first of the outbreaks here. It occurred a mile away, from some unknown cause. As the dry weather continued, grass, etc., became drier and fires burned out many places before our turn came. All the time heat and dry winds had made tinder of everything, and water was scarce. In the distance fires burned, and every change of wind sent them back and forward, keeping us in suspense. Things got so serious that we moved our cream separator and implements out into the yard, and

even removed our clothes and valuables out of the house, placing them in a heap in a close cropped paddock, covered by a tarpaulin, which we kept wet. The day of fire came. We fought it and saved house and all around it, but grass and fences went. Then, desolation and a general mix-up of cattle; every man's cattle were in his neighbour's paddocks, just for a change, and had to remain so till temporary fences were erected. The rain did not come till the beginning of April, too late, and starvation faced the herds. We sent most of ours to the plains, but a great many were lost, and they were too weak to do any good in the Spring. The only benefit the fires did was to sweep many paddocks clean of timber that would otherwise have taken years to clear.

Among the many experiences one cannot help remembering, is the feeling of helplessness that surrounded us in taking ourselves so far back with such poor means of communication with the outside world. The nearest railway station was Drouin, 35 miles off, 15 of which had to be done on horseback or on foot, the remaining 20 by rough coach road. How we longed for the coming of the railway line which crept slowly forward in its construction, and I can well remember the joy we felt on first hearing the whistle of the advanced contractor's engine or the blasting of the rocks in the cuttings; we felt that the link with the city was being forged. Then, before the regular traffic was commenced, we used to mount the trucks on the ballast trains and get down the line to meet the regular service at different points as it was taken over by the Government.

When properly opened, the trip to town took four or five hours, instead of a full day's hard travel, as before. It also expedited our mail service, so that we got it at noon daily, whereas the first mail was once a week, and had to be sent for on Sunday. The second stage was a tri-weekly service, carried by Horsley Bros. from Poowong after the arrival of the coach from Drouin. Later still it was brought by Mr. Matheson, who was the first to run a vehicle. This was a rough trip, for the coach from Drouin would often break down or get stuck, and the mails would often arrive at Poowong at dark or after; our mailman having then to traverse the lonely 15 mile track and its dangers in darkness all the way, arriving at our place (the Moyarra Post Office for a number of years) at 11 or 12 o'clock at night; and had, after this, a further journey of three miles to his home. A change in the name of the local post-office became necessary about the year 1890. It originally bore the name of Jumbunna East, being the name of the Parish. As there was also a Parish and post-office of Jumbunna, much inconvenience occurred through our mails going there by mistake. A meeting of residents was held at my brother's house and the name of an aboriginal chief, "Moyarra," taken from a poem, was chosen.

On the discovery of coal on Horsley's land and the formation of a company to work it, the directors called the mine Jumbunna. This led to ambiguity again, and the original Jumbunna residents changed the name of their post-office to Glenalvie. The town in connection with the coal mine naturally adopted the name of the mine, which it now bears.

In church matters, though our population was of small importance, the district was always well served, the clergymen and readers pushing their way bravely to carry the good tidings even into the forest.

The Education Department established a school on January 14th, 1890, in a log house of three rooms on my brother's place, starting with a roll

of eight pupils. Mr. Bailey, a new arrival of only a week from Ireland, being the first teacher. This building comprised residence, schoolroom (on week days), church (on Sunday), and meeting house when required.

And so the district progressed. While the settlers began to reap some profit from their hardly-won land they were able to spend some, if not all, in improvements. Paddocks were securely fenced, light timber and logs burned off, permanent water supplies made, land prepared for the plough, comfortable homesteads and sheds built, and shelter belts and orchards planted. Roads were being cleared of timber and stumps and formations and drains made to keep the water off and give a firm bottom to carry the increasing traffic. The first bit of formation in these parts was a side cutting on the main South road, just abreast of where the railway station is in Jumbunna.

The continued rise in land values forms an interesting study. All land was £1 per acre from the Government. With the forest on it and no roads for access, its value was a minus quantity. Nevertheless, it might be safely stated that £2 10s. to £4 10s. per acre would be an average estimate for partly cleared blocks about the year 1890. A large area was cut up into small lots of about 100 acres in area near Bena, and sold at these prices. In five or six years' time cleared land ranged about £6 to £9. From then on double figures were the rule, and, according to location and improvements, reached the £20 values. At present, that is a common price for hill country, and on the flat values reach £30 per acre.

With the passing of the forest, the climate has altered its character. The shelter of the scrub caused a humidity in the atmosphere that is entirely absent now, while the hard, dry winds that sweep the hills now were unknown. Before the clearings lost the protecting belts of scrub the grass assumed a luxuriance and succulence all through the Summer, and a bright green colour, as if a continual spring existed, while now it regularly dries off and the hills present a brown dried-up appearance every Summer. Some pessimists predicted that this country would be worthless when the timber was removed, also that the shallowness of the soil would prove no good for grazing purposes; but that such is not the case is proved by the records of the immense amount of produce sent from the railway stations. During the nine months of the 1914-15 drought this part of the State has proved its worth in the way it carried, besides its own stock, the thousands of cattle, horses and sheep sent from the North. While doing this, and holding its own, it came to the rescue of the city milk supply, while the Western district failed, and lost 60 per cent. of its dairy cattle from starvation. Potatoes, onions, supplies of butter and trucks of fat pigs were sent away in great quantities, while in the abnormal scarcity of beef and mutton Gippsland supplied a large proportion of the best quality of fats in the Newmarket yards.

This rich, wealth-producing province of Victoria is the gift of the pioneers to their country; opened up, cleared, and developed to its present state by their own efforts, without the assistance or monetary aid of the Government.

# Recollections and Experiences.

MR. J. HALFORD.



Like most of the early settlers in South Gippsland, my brother and self secured our blocks beyond the last settler. The dates of the settlement of pioneers can be traced in this way. In our case no selecting had been allowed for some time on account of coal reservations, and the farthest selection South was the Messrs. Rainbow and Williams, but in 1885 land was again thrown open for selection. It was through Mr. A. W. Elms that we got to know of Kongwak. He had already settled in Jumbunna East, and his hospitality (as of all the early pioneers) was proverbial and exceedingly helpful. It is one thing the pioneers of this part of the State may well be praised for. There were no hotels or accommodation places for miles around, but these early settlers gave, and gave of their best, and without their help many an incoming settler would have been greatly handicapped. With my brother, Mr. E. C. N. Halford,

on the 8th of January, 1885, we first saw the Jumbunna East country, and stayed at Mr. A. W. Elms' for the night. We got a lot of information, and then went on to Mr. Nation's, of Leongatha, passing through the property of Mr. P. Shingler, where we had dinner, and were shown the coal in Coal Creek, near Korumburra, never dreaming at the time of the development of this industry in the near future. We saw land at Leongatha that pleased us, and thought we had settled on our choice. Later, however, we applied for the Kongwak blocks, and on September 1st, 1885, went to fully inspect them, ere the Land Board met.

The trip was, indeed, for town lads, one of interest and venture. We went to Frankston by rail, arriving at 8.45 a.m.; coached to Hastings, leaving at 9 and arriving at 10.15, the fare being 4s. The little steamer took us to Cowes, which was reached at 12.30, tickets 3s. 6d. From there to Griffith's Point (now San Remo), also 3s. 6d. With a pack each we walked to Kileunda and stayed at Carew's Hotel, which has since been burned down, but it stood right against the sea on a high cliff, and the sound of the roar of the sea kept us from sleeping, as it was a wild night. We walked to Muldoon's and got there at 3 p.m., wading through miles of water, one time having to strip completely and hold our clothes high up. My diary has, "100 yards water as high as up to the armpits, 300 yards to the loin, 300 knees, 366 ankles off and on; slushy and swampy flats." The kindness of the Muldoon family is always remembered, and for miles around they formed a centre from which hospitality flowed. We left there at 8 a.m. and walked round the plains twelve miles, and then up hill through the rich land, on a track of slush and mud, and got to Mr. A. W. Elms' homestead at 4.45 p.m. From there we inspected



the blocks, Mr. A. W. Elms guiding us. Diary says, "Went round our boundaries, blocks splendid, were  $7\frac{1}{2}$  hours out, rough, scrambling, very tired and footsore." The Land Board met on October 16th, and we were granted our blocks.

On November 4th, 1885, we left our home to make a new home in the then wilds of South Gippsland. We took tools, blankets and tents with us. Mr. E. C. N. Halford and I went via Drouin. The coach journey to Poowong was rough, and the fare charged was 7s. 6d. The half-way house then was "Clifton's," where we had dinner, reaching Poowong at 5 p.m., taking 7 hours to do the trip, with  $2\frac{1}{2}$  hours' wait at Clifton's counted in. We stayed at Mrs. Horsley's—a splendid manageress and exceedingly attentive to travellers' wants. We had ordered our stores previously from Mr. Dixon's store, and were glad to hear they had been forwarded. We secured a pack-horse from Mr. Horsley, and took on our belongings right to Jumbunna East, now Moyarra, and stayed at Mr. Elms'. The track had only just been widened and opened out to Mr. D. McLeod's, and on this main road for about ten years the great trees still stood and the roads were left unformed. We packed over our stores after cutting a pack track. This packing was a nightmare to me, and the pack of odds and ends somehow shifted, and in one of the trips I had a fearful struggle with it and the horse, which evidently knew I was a new chum.

We pitched our tent in the middle of virgin scrub, and the night sounds of the wind high in the trees and lower in the sword-grass, the "thump, thump" of numerous wallaby and paddy-melon, and the "burr" of the opossum made sleeping difficult at first, and weird. All sounds seemed to gather in intensity in the bush. We soon got at the first essential in clearing, and by practice learnt the mystery of scrub-cutting. Water was our chief trouble, as we had pitched our tent some distance from the Foster River, which flowed through two of our blocks. My brother's hand, after a time, got jarred by the axe work, and Christmas saw us back at our parents' home. On January 20th, 1886, we returned to the block to be ready for the burning of about 17 acres of scrub. After the burn, which was a poor one, we built our hut. The shingles for the roof had been split while waiting for the burn, and with the aid of Mr. A. W. Elms, we soon had a more comfortable camp. The picking up and sowing with grass seed followed in due course. We got through a great deal of work, being young and full of hope, and the incubus of eight hours was non-existent. The young grass grew rapidly, and attracted the attention and appetite of hundreds of wallaby and paddy melons, so that during the Winter we got very little good from the place. Years afterwards a disease broke out among these marsupials, and when I left the district in 1904 they were rarely seen, and never on the clearings.

On November 2nd, 1886, Mr. C. D. Tulloch came to see his block, and soon after became our neighbour. In the same month our mother paid us a visit. In writing of her, my remarks will apply also to all the women folk, who faced the solitude, privations, and work on the selections of the early times. I met my mother at Poowong; already she had the previous day's journey of rail to Drouin and then the wearisome coach, and now she had to face a long, tedious ride of 18 miles to our bush home, through a mud road, every step of the horse taken in a foot of mud, and at a walking pace. When I look back I realise, in even that one instance, something of what women cheerfully bore for love.

On January 17th, 1887, my brother, Mr. E. M. Halford, arrived, and we worked the three selections in partnership for some years. We had all gone

away for Christmas holidays, and on returning found two single blankets and a clothesbrush stolen. The thief must have given a shock to three-quarters of a bag of flour, for during our absence of three weeks it had gone musty. My diary says, "Got up at 4.45 a.m. and caught Mr. Rainbow, who was going to Whittet's store at Bena, and got him to pack down some flour for us." These little things are mentioned to show a pioneer's troubles and activities.

With Messrs. Williams and Rainbow, we cut a dray track, and later on our survey was followed by the Government surveyors for most of the way. Road finding and making is in a pioneer's category, and on May 6th, Mr. Cecil Parsons came and stayed the night preparatory to exploring the country to try and find a way through our property South to Anderson's Inlet (now Inverloch). Mr. E. Halford and Mr. Lardner had tried a way Easterly, and found a tea-tree morass, and, therefore, impracticable. On the next day, May 7th, they kept near the Foster River, and found a good road. Mr. E. Halford wrote to Mr. Callanan, the District Surveyor, who later on sent a strong staff of surveyors down and surveyed a road. When this was being done the neighbours all joined together, and cut a dray-track, and they and the surveyors in two days (about November 11th, 1887) built a bridge over the Powlett River, south of Mr. C. D. Tulloch's. At this bridge-making, while splitting planks, a wedge that I had double-banked flew up and all but stunned me, hitting me on the nose, and leaving a black eye for a time. The next day (November 15th, 1887) I rode with Mr. Lardner, and with him blazed a road by compass direct to Anderson's Inlet, and later on this route was finally selected. As my injury had become painful I went to Melbourne to my brother, who was then a surgeon at the Melbourne Hospital. He healed me, and then, as I knew most of the young medicos, brought me (black eye and all) into their private room, and my explanation of the case they pretended not to receive, but accounted for it in another manner, and said they hoped the other fellow got it worse than I did.

Nine months later (August 2nd, 1888), my brothers and I built the first bridge over the Foster, at about the spot where the present Kongwak bridge now stands. Owing to floods, several bridges had to be constructed before the present bridge was built above the flood waters.

Mr. E. M. Halford and I cut on January 30th, 1888, a dray track from the Powlett at Kongwak to the Buffalo swamp, near Wonthaggi, and later on the track was finished to Anderson's Inlet.

On January 31st, 1888, my father paid his first visit to us, driving from Grantville, via Kileunda, along the Buffalo track. In a little over two years we had got a good start, and roads opened out in two directions, north and south. It was some years afterwards that roads to Outtrim and Glenalvie were dealt with. Good health, long hours, hard labour, with occasional holidays and cricket days to brighten our duties, were our portion. Sometimes our hands got jarred, all suffered at various times from this; of accidents there were few, mostly axe wounds. But one case I remember of a man cutting scrub for a contractor named Murray on McHarg's selection. At 5.30 p.m. Mr. Murray came for me. When I arrived at the tent the bottom of the bunk was soaked in blood; the man had bled for 3½ hours, and they did not know what to do. I treated the wound, and sat up all night and watched every hour to see if bleeding had started again. It was a most serious case, and for months the man was treated in the Melbourne Hospital.

The task of getting him away was very arduous. A rough bush track, hardly cleared at all, through virgin scrub, made it, with the big size of the patient, great toil. We carried him on the bunk made of poles and bags, in relays of three-quarter of a mile to the clearing. Messrs. Parsons, J. Gladstone, Will White, G. Matheson, Murray, his three mates, and myself, assisted, and we needed all this help. Mr. John Gammon was waiting for us with his buggy, and a pair of horses, and, like a good Samaritan, took him to Poowong. The weather was bad, and the flies had got into the wound, and it was a wonder the man survived; he had cut the main artery of the foot, and without attention would have bled to death. When I got back home I was knocked up by the strain, mentally and physically. This happened on November 12th, 1886.

In the years to 1890 new settlers felt a financial strain; there were no near markets; Poowong was 18 miles away. The nearest railway station was Drouin. It was customary for droves of cows and vealers to be taken there; the vealers trucked to Melbourne, and the cows driven back. The butter industry gradually developed, but in the 80's there was no frozen trade, and only a poor return was possible. Where privation, struggle, and self-denial was found in one generation, the present generation now reaps where they have not sowed. Land values may be now high and dear, but the South Gippsland farms were made by much self-sacrificing energy, and the good work for all time done by the pioneers will, I trust, lead this and the coming generations to do and give their best for those who follow them.



# Recollections and Experiences.

MRS. W. J. WILLIAMS.



About the second of June, 1886, I bade farewell to my parents and friends in the Ballarat district, and started on the first stage of my journey to South Gippsland, where my husband had preceded me. My first baby was then seven weeks' old. I travelled to Melbourne with Miss Rainbow, who was going to Gippsland also. We stayed in Melbourne that night, and went as far as Drouin the next day, staying the night there. The following morning we started for Poowong in the coach, which carried the mails, etc., for the South. One could not easily forget that trip: it was bump, bump, with an occasional lurch to right or left as the wheels dropped into a rut or went over a root or piece of timber that was thrown down to stop the wheels going too deep. The roof of the coach was very low, and unless one could hold on with both hands, one's head suffered considerably. I was at a disadvantage through having to hold my baby with one arm. As we

progressed my fellow passengers consoled me with the fact that it was worse further on, and we might have to get out and walk. That prospect was anything but cheering, as the horses were then kneedeep in mud. However, we did not need to get out and walk, but only to endure a few more hard raps that threatened to break our skulls. At last we reached Mr. Kennedy's residence, where we were welcomed by one of the kindest families it has ever been my lot to meet. My husband had arranged to meet us there, and was greatly concerned at the effect the journey had on me, and was worried lest I would not be able to proceed the next day. However, after tea, a good night's rest, and a hearty breakfast next morning, we started off for Jumbunna East, about 19 miles distant. It was a great undertaking, as we had to ride on horseback all the way, and it was my first experience of the kind. We could not go out of a walk, so I was able to sit on. My husband carried the baby on his left arm, with a large shawl tied over his right shoulder, forming a sling or hammock for arm and baby.

About 2 o'clock we reached Mr. Blew's place at Whitelaw, and received every kindness from them. After about an hour's rest we had to mount horses again and push on, as the days were short, and we had a long way to go. As we advanced the road got narrower and more difficult, and instead of riding two or three abreast, we had to go in single file. We reached Mr. Rainbow's place at Jumbunna East about sunset, very tired and thankful to get to bed that night. I stayed with our friends for about a week or ten days, as my log cabin was not ready for me. At the end of that time we again mounted our horses to proceed to Kongwak, our proper destination. We plunged into a very narrow bridle track, where we could touch the trees on either side, and could not see the sky in some places, so dense was the scrub.

Our horses had to scramble over logs and through mud knee deep nearly all the way. Occasionally we had to duck our heads to avoid overhanging branches. At last we came to what was supposed to be a clearing on top of a very high hill, from which we could look down on the tops of the trees all round, except the narrow ridge where we came out, and on a ledge some 200 feet below my husband pointed to what appeared to be some galvanised iron on top of a pile of logs, and said, "There is your home." At first I could not speak, and my eyes filled with tears. That one spot of iron, in the midst of a sea of logs and stumps, looked so desolate that my heart failed me for the moment. However, after scrambling over logs, etc., we managed to get to the cabin, which, on closer inspection, proved to be logs piled one on top of the other in choek and log fashion, except that the cuts were deeper to allow the logs to lie more closely. There was a large fireplace, made of wood outside, and lined with stones and mud. There were also windows and a door, but it was not easy to get inside, as there was a huge stump in the doorway. My husband had brought down some flooring boards on horseback, and had made a table of what was left over, after flooring the two rooms, so I settled the baby on the table, and prepared the refreshments my friend had so kindly packed for us, after which we were kept busy preparing for the first night in our new home.

As the logs did not touch each other in places, there was plenty of ventilation, and the wind blew our hair about during the night. Next day we cut strips of tree ferns and put them in the crevices on the inside, and at night we started to line the rooms with hessian and paper. We got on very well with the hessian, but it was not so with the paper. Before we could get the second piece ready the first was blown on to the floor, so we had to stop and get more ferns, and pack them in well from the outside. That done, we had no further trouble, and our cabin began to look comfortable. The next work was to make some furniture out of a few pine boards and blackwood logs. The latter required a lot of chopping and planing to get it to the size required. We made a sofa, cot, and two easy chairs, which, when covered with cretonne, looked very nice and comfortable. All this kind of work had to be done at night, as there was fencing, clearing, etc., to be done in the daytime.

When we had a little enclosure made, we thought we ought to have a pig. As our friends had one for sale my husband went one morning on our one draught horse to get the pig. About noon I could hear in the distance some awful squealing, which drew nearer as I listened. By and by he appeared sitting on the horse with a good-sized pig in a bag in front of him, struggling and squealing at a great rate. Of course, we laughed at getting him home and off the horse, but there came a time when we did not feel like laughing at him.

We decided to try fishing in the river, which flowed at the bottom of our clearing, and invited our friends to come with us. We fixed the day, and I made great preparations, baking, roasting, etc., for the feast. Our friends arrived at the time appointed, and after having a cup of tea, with light refreshments, and a promise of a substantial meal on our return, we started for the river. After scrambling over logs, etc., we got there, and stayed for an hour or two, but the fish were either not there or would not bite. We started for home feeling very tired and hungry, to find on our arrival that the pig had been there before us, and had destroyed what he could not eat. I kept the bread, cakes, etc., in a large boiler, and the meat in a tin or box outside the

door, as there was not too much room inside. The pig had got out and enjoyed himself, but I had to do some baking ere we could have anything to eat.

If we ran short of provisions, it meant a 19-mile ride, leading a pack-horse all the way. My husband had always to make an early start, and then could not get home till very late. On one occasion he could not get home till half-past eleven at night, so I was alone except for the baby. At times I felt very frightened, and on one occasion seeing a man whom I did not recognise coming down the hill towards the house, I pulled down the window blind and shut the door. I did not like doing it, as the poor man may have been hungry, or wanting work, but my nerves got the better of me. Another day a large iguana came close to the door, and being quite alone again I tried to drive it off, but it would just turn round and follow me back again. At last, after a more daring effort on my part, it ran a few feet up a large tree close by. I felt sure it would come back again, so I got the gun, which had been left loaded, and rested it on the fence. I was shaking too much to hold it as I had seen others do. I took a very careful aim at its head, and was surprised and delighted to see it drop quite dead. When I told my husband what I had done, he only laughed till he saw it, and even then it was hard for him to believe that I had shot it, as I had been too frightened before to hold a gun: evidently the greater fear cured me.

All night the dingoes would set up a most dismal howl that made one's blood run cold, and the roar and screams of the bears would echo through the forest, but when the day broke the singing of the birds and the sweet smell of the different shrubs would make one forget the fears of the night before, and thank God for the beauties of nature. Oh! how I used to love the early mornings, when everything awoke to new life: I would just stand and feast on the beauty and glory of it all. There was a spot down by the river which I never tired of looking at, the tall tree ferns, with their graceful spreading plumes, the bracken, swordgrass, clematis, maiden-hair fern, and Xmas trees, etc., made a picture impossible for me to describe.



A BEAUTY SPOT IN THE GREAT FOREST.

The Sundays always seemed long for the first 12 months: we would read till tired, and then go out and sit on a log or stump, and build castles in the air. It was too rough to go for a walk, and with so much to be done we almost longed for Monday to come, so that we could be at it again.

As time went by we could hear what seemed to be thunder in the distance, but it was in reality the noise made by scrub falling as it was cut. One day when up the track, my husband saw what appeared to be a break in the tops of the trees to the North: so, the following Sunday we climbed to the top of the hill, and, behold! there was a gap in the scrub. Some one was clearing, and each week the gap grew larger. Then, in other directions, the same thing would occur, and the following February or March, we would see clouds of smoke. Each year the clearings grew larger, and the smoke more intense, and as the years passed, the great walls of scrub were cut down, and bands of men could be seen chopping the logs up after the fire had passed over them. Then, the welcome news would be passed round that there was a woman on that or the other clearing, and we did not feel so altogether alone. It was comforting to know that, if trouble came, there was a woman to be got, even if it took two or three hours to bring her. It was not uncommon to have one of the axemen brought in to have a bandage or two put on. My husband came limping in one day with a piece of leather, a piece of sock, and a piece of his big toe in his hand: fortunately, they were not big pieces. The axe had slipped and cut his boot, taking the three pieces off as clean as if cut with a razor.

As we could bring so little with us, we had not even a piece of tin to make into a shovel for putting the burning coals on the camp-oven, so I had to use a piece of pine board cut like a spade, and dip it in water every time I used it. We brought a new spade and shovel with us, but using them in the fire would spoil them for outside work.

I have reason to believe I was the first white woman to come to Kongwak, and my second son was the first child born there. While I write, he is on the battlefield in France, fighting for his King and Country, with, I trust, the same courage and tenacity his father showed when trying to make a home in the forest of South Gippsland.

# Recollections and Personal Experiences of the Great Fires of February, 1898.

MR. T. J. COVERDALE.

The disasters caused by these fires were confined principally to South Gippsland, and covered an area of about a thousand square miles; lying between the Main Gippsland line and the coast; and Westernport Bay and Mirboo; and occurred principally on the 1st February, 1898, locally known as "Red Tuesday."

It might be as well to take a glance at the conditions existing at the time over the greater part of this area, so as to better understand the circumstances of the event. A great deal of the country had been cleared of the original scrub fifteen or twenty years before, leaving a forest of large dry trees, many of them 150 to 200 feet in height. These studded the clearings thickly, and the sapwood on them had become so rotten and dry that they were ready to burst into a blaze at the touch of a spark. Round the butts of these giant relics of a great forest the dry grass lay thick and deep over most of the country, for the Spring had been a good one, though the Summer was unusually dry. The grass alone would have been a sufficient menace, but when it was thickly studded with trees, up the dry sapwood of which the fire ran as if they had been sprinkled with kerosene, any attempt to beat a fire was hopeless. The wind tore the blazing sapwood from the burning trees, and, scattering it far and wide, lighted the grass and other trees in rapid succession, till the whole country was alight for miles, and every old clearing a perfect inferno of fire.

The difficulty of saving stock or buildings under these circumstances can be imagined, and the wonder is, not that so many stock were lost, but that so many were saved. Some brought their cattle up about the homestead, where the grass was shorter, and the big trees had been felled for some distance round; others, like myself, got them out on to a "new burn," that is, a piece of land on which cut scrub has been recently burnt. But in most cases there was little time to muster, and round about the homesteads was often the hottest place, when the buildings caught fire, which they generally did. The older settlements along McDonald's Track, and in East Poowong, suffered most, and their losses in buildings, stock, fencing, and grass were very heavy. At one place in that district, where there was a patch containing a few acres of the original scrub that had been left standing on the adjoining portion of two holdings, 120 head of cattle were destroyed in a few minutes in one lot. A creek ran through the piece of scrub, and, driven before the fire coming from the North, the cattle rushed down to their watering places. Meanwhile the wind carried the sparks right over the gully, and lighted the hills on the opposite side. Then presently the scrub in the gully caught alight at the lower end, and the fire sweeping through it left the cattle lying in heaps dead. Against a fallen tree in the creek eight big bullocks lay piled on one another. In a hole lower down, twelve more lay dead. In another hole ten stood together in the water, but they had reached it over hot ashes, and burning charcoal, and their hoofs dropped off



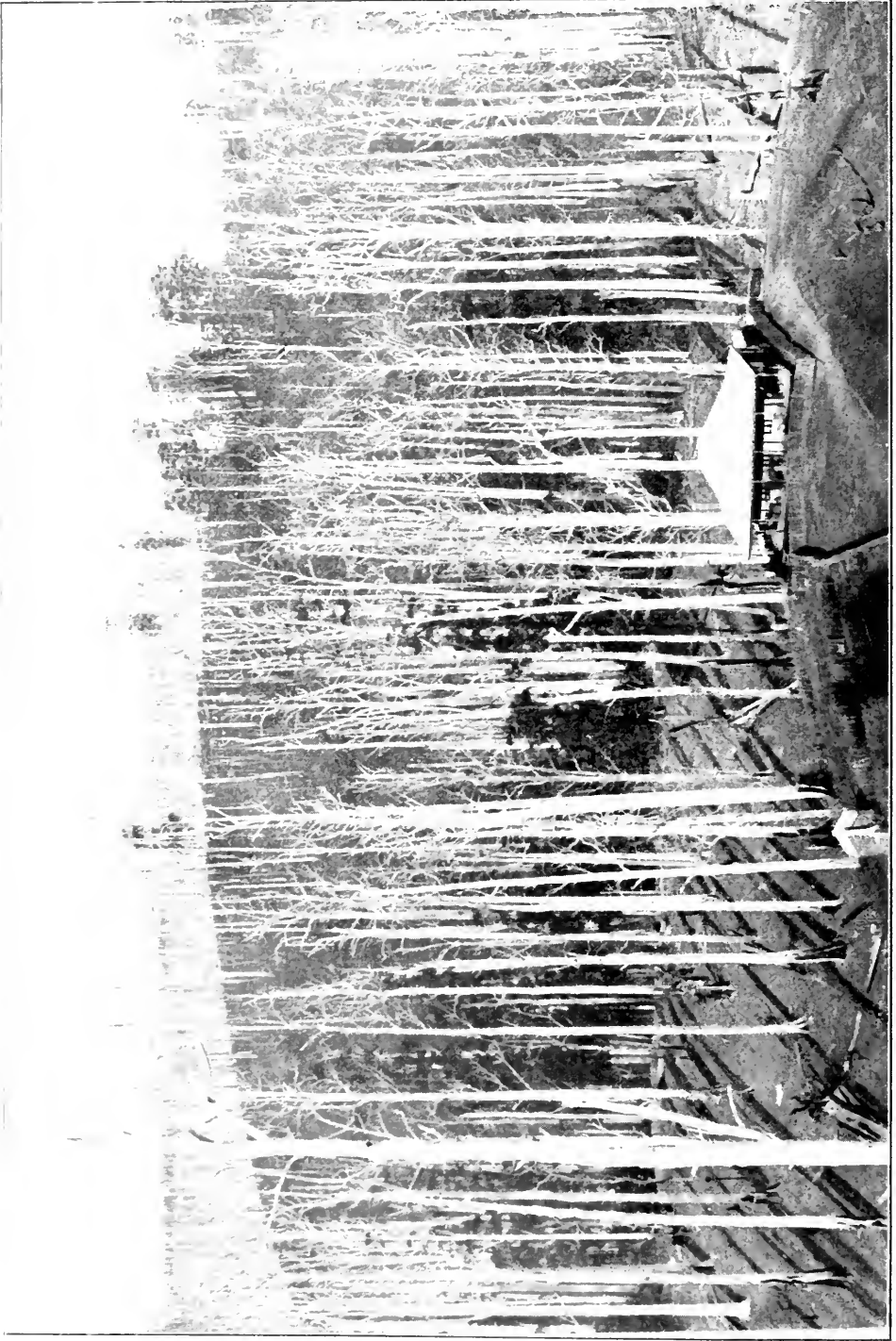
as soon as they came out of the water. All up the gully they were lying in heaps—three or four together—some barely scorched, but all dead; suffocated by the smoke and heat. Others were smashed up and charred where burning trees had fallen on them. On some of the clearings dead sheep were lying in scores behind the charred stumps of the big trees to which they had run for shelter. Some had gone into hollow logs, where they had been used to camp out of the heat of the sun, and perished there. But volumes rather than pages would be required to tell the story of that terrible week.

It must not be supposed that all the homesteads destroyed were burnt on "Red Tuesday," nor that those burnt on that day were destroyed at one fell swoop: some of them were, but in most cases there had been a long battle with little fires before the main body of the fire came up. And then the final struggle began. Faster and faster the rain of burning sapwood and sparks fell on grass, fences, and buildings, starting fires in all directions; till at last the unfortunate people rushing from point to point to put out fresh outbreaks, blinded by the smoke and utterly exhausted, could do no more, and the victorious fire swept all before it. Amidst the burning homesteads and outbuildings, and surrounded by the blazing forest, sending showers of sparks and burning charcoal over everything, it was all they could do in many cases to save their own lives. Some got down underground tanks, while others threw water over each other to keep their clothes from being burnt off them. One man made his children lie on the ground, and covering them with a blanket threw water over them. Sparks flew into every crevice, and started fires in most unlikely places. One family placed a quantity of clothing and valuables in an iron tank when they saw it was hopeless trying to save the house: a spark blew in through a small hole, and burnt the lot. A man took all the saddles and harness out of the burning stable, and putting them on a clear place threw some water over them; but when he went for them again there was nothing but the ironwork left, so intense was the heat.

Many domestic animals also perished, dogs, cats and fowls falling victims. Even the hares sometimes failed to save themselves; and I remember seeing a big snake that had evidently received his last call in a very angry frame of mind: the fire had apparently come on him as he lay coiled—probably asleep—and stung him into savage activity. He had shot up his head in the midst of his coils in the usual attitude of battle, with flattened head and neck and stiffened muscles, ready to strike, and so he had died; and so he remained till decay overcame the rigidity of the muscles stiffened in his last vengeful purpose.

In some cases where wider clearings had been made, and the big timber felled to a greater distance around the homestead, a successful fight was put up, especially if there was plenty of help available; but under less favourable circumstances the fight was hopeless.

Although "Red Tuesday" was by far the most disastrous day, some escaped on that day to fall victims later on. Such was my own fate. Anticipating a big bush fire that year from the existence of the conditions already mentioned, and from the fact that there were 100 acres of cut scrub lying ready to burn alongside of me, I determined to clear off all the stock I possibly could, and I had just got a lot of the sheep away, when the scrub referred to caught fire accidentally. That was about a fortnight before the big fires, and I thought it was a case with us then; but the day was cool, and the wind favourable, with a little dampness in the morning, so that it did me



ILLUSTRATING PERIL OF HOMESTEADS IN THE BIG FIRE.

little harm beyond lighting a few trees on the place, and giving us a fortnight's hard work looking after them, and what I had dreaded for weeks proved really my salvation later on, for it was on to this "burn" we just managed to get the stock in time to save them, when my own place was swept by fire three days after "Red Tuesday."

On "Red Tuesday" we had been down to Bena, trucking some bullocks; the day was not particularly hot, but a strong North-East wind was blowing, and everything was very dry. Several others were trucking also, and we had been busy for about an hour helping each other truck, and not noticing the weather, when some one remarked, "How dark it is getting, there is going to be a storm." But on looking intently into the dark masses of cloud overhead, we discovered them to be immense volumes of smoke rolling before a high wind from the North-East, and darkening the whole sky from horizon to zenith. We knew then that something tragic was happening in the North-East. We knew also that the fire was a long way off, as there was no smoke low down in our neighbourhood. But everyone got a scare, and we lost no time in getting to the horses and making for home. When the man and I got back, we could see no fire, but we could hear the hum of it a long way off, and the darkness was increasing, although it was only about 3 o'clock in the afternoon; so I decided to muster the stock and run them out on the "burn"—the land before referred to, on which the scrub had recently been burnt. By five o'clock we had got them together; it was too dark to count them, so taking it for granted they were all there, we hustled them out on the burn—sheep and cattle together.

Almost the only light now was the red glare of the distant fire reflected on the canopy of smoke overhead, and to look upwards was like looking up into a great dome of burnished copper, that glowed and paled alternately under the influence of the wind on the distant masses of flame. There seemed to be some unusual quality in the atmosphere that changed the appearance of flame and of burning embers. Flame burned with a steely blue light, and embers looked like glowing pieces of silver. This we noticed in passing a few trees and stumps still alight on the burn, and when striking matches. The wind had now gone down, and there was no sound but the hum of the fire like the sound of breakers on the coast a long way off. This, with the red canopy overhead, and the altered appearance of everything in the strange light, gave a weirdness to the night not easily forgotten. Riding to the top of a hill from which we could get a view Eastward, up the valley of the Bass, we caught our first view of the fire. A far-blown spark, carried along in some upper current, had lit a patch of cut scrub far up the valley, and the strange looking flame appeared to be flowing over it. It looked like a lake of molten silver, with tongues of it running up the dry trees like silver snakes. We did not stay to admire it, but rode home to prepare for the enemy.

But our Waterloo was not yet. The dampness of the evening was beginning to fall, and the wind had gone down a good deal; and the timber was not so dry where the fire was. So that by the time it reached us it had steadied down, and by working all night we were able to check it for the time. But on the Friday following the wind changed to the North-West, bringing the big fire that had done all the damage about Poowong, up the valley of the Bass to us. We had been battling since about 4 o'clock in the morning with a fire on an adjoining property on the West; and the Tuesday's fire on the South-East was also beginning to revive. About 12 o'clock we could hear the roar of the big fire, and I knew it was a case this

time, and the only thing to be done was to get the stock out of the road, if possible; though I was afraid we had left it too late. Sending one of the men after the horses, I called up the other three to the house and told them what I proposed to do; which was, for two of us to go after the stock, and the others to defend the house and buildings.

After considering the possibilities of an underground tank as a place of retreat if the worst should happen, they agreed to stand by the homestead as long as possible. So placing a bottle of whisky on the table, and telling them not to let it get burnt, I grabbed a billy and some tucker in case of a long campaign, and Murray—the other man—and myself rode off as hard as we could to get the cattle and sheep together and out on the “burn.” We had no time to spare, for the stock had all returned to their run since the Tuesday, and there were still 190 head of cattle and 400 sheep on the place. Fortunately it was about the time of day when the cattle were down about the watering places along the Bass. But the sheep were scattered all over their own paddock behind trees and in hollow stumps out of the heat. The Bass runs roughly East to West across my property for about a mile. To the South, where the cattle were, the ground rises gently from flats along the creek. To the North a range rises to a height of about 300 feet, and on top of this were the sheep. Adjoining on the East, but only on the North side of the creek, was the “burn”—the only place of safety.

Sending Murray after the cattle, I went after the sheep myself, and rousing them out of hollow stumps and from behind trees, where they had been sheltering from the sun, I got them together and on the go for the “burn.” But it was fearfully hot, and it was tedious work forcing the sheep through the long grass and the thistles, and the dog was knocked up. I got them within about ten chains of the burn when they stuck up under some green trees, so I left them there for a spell, and went back to help Murray with the cattle. He had got them all mustered, and about half of them over to the North side of the creek, but it was a bad crossing place, and before the tail of them was over, the head of the mob was well up the range and stringing along Westward in the wrong direction towards the fire. I went ahead to turn them, and in doing so rode over a spur on the range and came in sight of the fire away down the valley of the Bass to the North-West. My hair nearly stood on end; I did not expect to see the fire so close; it was only about half a mile away, and came rolling over the dry sedge grass, wire grass and undergrowth in great red billows—a perfect torrent of flame. I did not wait for a second look, but doubling the cattle back on the others that Murray had now got over the creek, we hustled them along the face of the range as hard as we could go, the fire roaring behind all the while.

Up till then the wind had been rather in our favour, but now it changed, and blowing directly on to us from the fire, the burning stuff soon began to fall around us and on us, burning little holes in our hats and clothes; fortunately both we and the horses were too wet with perspiration to burn very freely. Occasionally a spark would fall on a bullock, making him switch his tail and rush forward. But things soon began to look serious; sparks were lighting the grass around and among the cattle, little black patches appearing suddenly without apparent cause and spreading fast. We were passing among a number of heaps of wood not burnt off the previous year, and these began to take fire and blaze. The cattle did not like it, and neither did we. “By

"G—d, boss," said Murray, "I reckon if we're here much longer we'll snuff out." But we stuck to them till we got them through the heaps and close to the burn: then I left him and went after the sheep, but without much hope of saving them. They were just where I had left them, standing with their heads down and their mouths open, panting: and the grass was alight about three chains away from them. I never expected to get them out, but determined to have a try for it. The big timber was not alight round them yet and there was no fire between them and the burn. But they were bad to shift, and the dog was played out: he could only wobble round the sheep. He tried to bark, but could only produce a hoarse grunt, and they took very little notice of him. At last I got them on to the burn, with not a moment to spare, for the grass fire was right on the horse's heels. Then the main body of the fire came up with a roar through the dry timber, and I had still to keep going on the burn to get away from the heat of it. Leaving the sheep in safety, I was just going down the burn parallel with the fire to see how Murray was getting on, as I could not see him from where I was, when he came up over the hill and informed me that he had got all the cattle out on to the burn and driven them well back into safety, and the whole country behind them was ablaze. And so we saved them.

We could do nothing more now — this was the finish: and the place was swept from end to end. So we took the saddles off our steaming horses and sat down on a log at a safe distance watching the fire. It was a grand sight: the country out of which we had just brought the sheep and cattle was now a howling furnace fanned by a hurricane, and the noise was terrific; we had to shout to hear each other speak. Every great tree was a roaring pillar of fire from which red banners of flame streamed out to leeward. The cause of the fire being so strong here was that it was a patch of very heavy dry timber which had never had a fire through it since it was killed twenty years before.

A hundred acres of green scrub adjoining on the North also caught fire, burning fiercely and sending up great masses of black smoke, covering the sky. We had plenty of time to survey the sight, for we were marooned there for the next five or six hours, being unable to get back through the burning timber. Murray had stuck to the billy and tucker strapped securely on the saddle, through all the tribulation, and they came in handy now. We had had nothing to eat since early morning, and very little then, as commissariat arrangements had been upset lately: so we thought we might as well have a snack as it was now night. He found some water on the burn and boiled the billy, but we could eat very little—only drink tea. After things cooled down a bit we made another attempt about nine o'clock to get back to the homestead, as I was anxious about the men. By dodging about where the timber was a bit thinner we got within cooee of the house, which we could not see for smoke, though the fires made it light enough, and giving a cooee we were relieved to hear it answered from the homestead; then making a dash for it we were soon exchanging experiences with the defenders. By dint of hard work with the beaters and plenty of water they had managed to "keep the flag flying," though they had had a particularly hot time of it, and their thoughts had often turned to the underground tank. A firebreak round the house and the burning off of rubbish some time before had helped them considerably to make good the defence.

That night the hills were a magnificent sight: every tree was alight for miles, and the ground was strewn with fallen fragments burning and glowing

in the darkness. But we were in no mood to admire it, thinking of the unfortunate animals: for there was not a blade of grass left. We turned the horses we had been riding all day into the garden, where there was a little green stuff and rubbish, also a bed of carrots, which after a while they learnt to yank out of the loose ground with their hoofs and teeth. The sparks were still flying thick from the burning trees all round, and we had to stand watch and watch that night and for several nights for fear of accidents. Our bedding, spare clothes and valuables had all been buried in the garden long before; but a shakedown on a bag under a tree was good enough for such hot nights and much safer than inside.

Next morning, what a scene of desolation. Gone were the great white trees we had looked on for years; gone were the fences and yards, and gone too was every blade of grass. Nothing to be seen but black stumps, black ground, and great black logs smouldering in all directions; while low down over everything hung the smoke, smarting the eyes and obscuring the distant hills. Truly it was a desolate prospect, accentuated as it was by the starving cattle wandering to and fro looking for something to eat. My first thought was for them, and I went to Bena first thing in the morning to order trucks for those fit for market and fodder for the rest. But I could only get five cattle trucks, as there had been a rush on owing to the fires on Tuesday, and I could not get any sheep trucks for the following market on such short notice. Next Tuesday we got a lot of the bullocks away, and after a time the hay arrived for the others. In the meantime, I don't know how they lived. Before the fire there was a great number of big green thistles on the ground, they had been too sappy to burn, but the fire had left them brown and dead. These the stock soon discovered were eatable, and before long cleared them all off into the roots. There was also some pencilwood scrub on the flats that the fire had killed; this the cattle broke down, eating the dead leaves and small twigs on it. In the damper places in the flats also were the charred butts of the sedge grass and tussocks, which the sheep worried till they were literally black in the face, and looked like a mob of well-bred Shrops.

One way or another the stock managed to pull through until I sent some of them to market, others to grass out of the district. But it was a great loss, of course, having to sell them in glutted markets and before they were fit to go. A great many people sent the stock they had saved to the bayonet grass plains near the coast, but the feed was not suitable and the place was overstocked, and a lot of them died. I sent mine to Lang Lang and they did fairly well. All I lost in the fire itself was one bullock, killed by a burning limb falling on him, and a few sheep; but I lost a lot of sheep afterwards through straying, as there were no fences for miles. The Government supplied fodder gratis or at a very cheap rate, but most of the settlers were too independent to avail themselves of it and purchased their own.

When the disaster became known in Melbourne large quantities of clothing were generously sent up from the city, as many of the settlers had lost everything except what they stood up in. There were very few that required more than the most temporary assistance, but the promptitude of the city people was very commendable. Most of the articles sent up were useful, but some were of rather doubtful service in the back blocks. Fashionable life was represented by several evening dresses and a few dress suits. And one sturdy scrubcutter was seen doing the "block" in a top hat and claw-hammer coat surmounting a pair of old moleskins with "bowyang" trimmings. A consignment of straw mattresses left carelessly overnight on

a verandah in the township was much appreciated by a lot of starving cows wandering to and fro seeking what they might devour.

After the fire came the reckoning of the cost. No doubt it had done some good in clearing up a lot of old logs and undergrowth, and in burning down and burning away thousands of big trees. But against this it had destroyed much of the grass which, being all artificial, had to be re-sown in many cases; if not re-sown the pasture gets patchy and weedy. It had also strewn the ground with great logs, causing a lot of heavy and expensive clearing. Then houses and outbuildings had to be rebuilt, fencing and yards re-erected, stock replaced and orchards replanted. Dogwood also came up very thickly on the burnt ground after the fires, especially where there were no sheep, costing a lot of money to clear it. Fortunately for burning off operations, the following Autumn and Winter were unusually dry and the timber burnt well. But the dry weather was bad for the newly sown seed, and for the grass roots scorched by the fire, and the grass came late.

About July and August the people began to bring back what was left of their cattle from the plains and elsewhere, and the country began to recover. It was not until years afterwards, however, that the scars caused by the fire were thoroughly healed; that the properties were all re-cleared, re-sown and re-fenced and the homesteads all rebuilt. The removal of so much of the dead forest quite changed the appearance of the country in many places; new landscapes appeared, with views of green hills and valleys previously unsuspected. But by the settlers themselves that strenuous week in February, 1898, will never be forgotten. The long battle with the fires in the heat and the smoke, the anxiety and the crushing disaster in the end, with its consequent worries, aged many of them more than years of hard work, and laid in some the seeds of ill-health; one common complaint was ophthalmia caused by the heat and smoke endured while working at the fires, and which sometimes ended in permanently impaired sight. It was a cruel setback to them after all the years of struggling and tardy prospects of success, but the men who had cleared the great forest of South Gippsland were not to be daunted, even by such a disaster. They fought on gamely in spite of the odds, and soon the prosperity of the country, that seemed to have been wiped out by the fires, rose again, Phoenix-like, from the ashes, and has continued unchecked ever since.

The years have rolled by since then, each bringing its changes and its sensations, but "The year of the Great Fires" still stands as one from which to date events in the memories of the pioneers.

# Australia Phoenix.

MISS F. FINN.

O'er the quiet scrub and the towering gums,  
A peaceful hush like slumber comes;  
The cottonwood flowers of dazzling white  
Cover the branches like stars in the night,  
The supplejack flings his mantle of fluff,  
Like a fairy's cloak o'er the branches rough,  
And the soft green moss spreads its kindly veil  
On tall trees fallen o'er hill and dale,  
Where the yellow wealth of the wattle tree  
Billows like waves in a golden sea.

Here, parrots glitter in red and green,  
The jay with feathers of sober sheen,  
The laughing jackass, the whip bird bright,  
Wheel and whirl in their joyous flight,  
The jewelled lizard with scampering feet,  
Takes no heed of the noonday heat,  
The Kangaroo and wallaby pass  
Taking their toll of the luscious grass,  
There Nature scatters with lavish hand  
Her wealth of treasure through all the land.

A swagman passing along the way  
Boiling his "billy" one Summer's day  
With careless hand his camp fire scatters,  
He had had his meal, and nought else matters,  
A puff of wind, a spark, a flicker,  
A reddening glow o'er the sticks runs quicker:  
A few dry leaves, like a powder train,  
Swiftly carries the creeping flame,  
Some rotting branches, a sapless tree,  
An upward spring—and the fire-fiend's free.

Higher and higher his red arms grasp,  
Tighter is drawn their burning clasp;  
From tree to tree the red flame goes,  
Searing the grass that beneath them grows:  
Yet wider those blazing arms stretch forth  
Eastward and Westward, to South and North,  
Till all the land, like a funeral pyre,  
Is a blazing furnace of liquid fire,  
Wide flung are the blood red gates of hell,  
And dancing devils the red tide swell.



Like a far-off whisper of coming ill  
 The hearts of God's creatures with terror fill,  
 The lyre-bird starts in the shadows dim,  
 And the jackass' laugh has an echo grim,  
 The parrots fly with frightened shriek,  
 And the wallaby leaps o'er the reddening creek:  
 The snake and possum go side by side,  
 Blind fear, to their flight, the only guide,  
 The fire-fiend comes, with his red arms spread,  
 Gathers them living, and leaves them dead.

The whole wide land, that has glowed with life,  
 Laughed with brightness, and throbbed with strife,  
 Lies charred and blackened, as formless things  
 To which no semblance of life now clings:  
 Nor bird, nor beast, nor thing that crawls,  
 No sound on the deathly silence falls,  
 And Autumn's fingers are powerless quite  
 To soften destruction's awful blight,  
 And Winter comes with its cold and rain,  
 But brings no help in its bitter train.

The slow weeks pass on their weary way,  
 Till, suddenly, one brightening day  
 A green flush spreads o'er the waking earth,  
 The fresh grass springs in its bright new birth,  
 The radiant sun and the soft Spring air  
 Bring forth all manner of verdure rare:  
 The settler now, with hardy toil,  
 Clears and prepares the fruitful soil,  
 And the stricken land, that had useless lain,  
 Is ready for cattle or golden grain.

Florence Finn.

# A Review.

MR. R. S. B. YOUNG.

For several years, while in its first stages of development, the forest country of South Gippsland, into which the writer made his debut as a Bank Manager twenty-three years ago, was an insatiable absorber of capital, which, either in the form of savings accumulated elsewhere by the new settlers, or money borrowed, had to be laid out in clearing and sowing down some portion of the area selected, then covered with an almost impenetrable growth of scrub thickly studded with giant trees, a few of whose skeletons still stand here and there to tell the tale of the wonderful transformation effected by the combined efforts of those lion-hearted pioneers, and the operations of nature. Under the adverse—indeed, almost impossible—conditions which they had then to face, the improvements made were necessarily crude and rough; but this preliminary scratching of the surface was sufficient to demonstrate beyond all doubt that there was a marvellous fertility in the soil, and gave the intrepid selector fresh heart to persevere in what must often have seemed to him a heart-breaking struggle.

The next stage was that in which the settler, after a few years of unremitting toil and hardships in the form of almost impassable tracks for bringing in the bare necessaries of life, severe Winter climate, and all but complete isolation from the advantages and comforts of civilisation, had got some portion of his area into something like productive condition, but, owing to difficulty of transport and the poor and often unpayable returns derived from sale of the few products then marketable, was faced with the cruel outlook of barely being able to "make both ends meet," to say nothing of providing for interest on the money borrowed, and sunk for the time being in an unprofitable undertaking. As a result of such a combination of adverse circumstances it was not to be wondered at that in many cases the settler, through no fault of his own, would have to abandon the struggle and go out of his holding with little or nothing; so far as this world's goods are concerned; but infinitely richer in all that goes to the making of character, developed in thus "bravely battling 'gainst fearful odds." All honor to those who thus "fell by the way"; and, although it sometimes happened in such cases that in one's capacity as Banker, stern duty compelled treatment that seemed the reverse of kind, the writer can say, at any rate, he has known what it is to feel acutely, if not to always express, that "sorrow in another's trouble" which even the stony heart of a money-lender can be moved by in such circumstances as these. But dropping sentiment, and resuming the subject of financial progress, it seems to the writer that failure was very frequently due to the fact that the selector, often without any previous experience on the land, spent most, if not all of his available capital in attempting to clear and keep clean the greater portion of his holding, instead of concentrating his efforts in the more thorough and less costly improvement of a smaller area. To such unfortunates, heavy interest payments, second growth of scrub, and inability to profitably market their produce, proved too strong a combination of troubles, and perforce they "went under." For such, one can only feel intensely sorry that an unkind fate prevented them



THE PRELIMINARY SCRATCHING OF THE SURFACE

from holding on to their land until the dawn of better times, soon afterwards ushered in by the establishment of Butter Factories. It is no exaggeration to say of the South Gippsland hill country that the situation was saved, and a new province added to Victoria by the cow, "the lady who pays the rent," to whom the late Sir Thomas Bent used to say "he always took off his hat"—and well he might—for no one knew better than he the value to the State of this important industry.

Land values then rose commensurately with the increased productive capacity of this ideal dairying country; and the settlers' title-deeds, at which money-lenders had previously looked askance, became a first-class security, eagerly sought after by financial institutions; and that era of solid and abiding prosperity set in from which the district has "never looked back."

Of course the improvement of roads, the development of the coal industry, followed as it was by branch lines of railway and formation of new townships, all were important factors in the growth of the district, but beyond all doubt its financial stability became permanently assured when the Home-separator and the refrigerator made dairying a profitable industry.

The writer concludes this brief sketch with the hope, as indeed it is his firm belief, that this prosperity may be lasting; for success was never more deserved than by "that legion never listed" of brave men, and women, too, who have pioneered and conquered this country, the hardships and struggles incidental to which can only be appreciated by those who, as he did, saw the great scrub land in its undeveloped state.



# Recollections and Experiences.

MR. A. McLEAN.



I arrived in Gippsland in the month of September, 1886, with my brother-in-law, Gavin Pollock. On arriving at Grantville by coach, we were met by Mr. Biggar and one of his sons, who put our luggage on pack-horses. This was the first time I had ever seen a pack saddle. We started for Mr. Biggar's place, walking after the pack-horses along the bridle-track up to our knees in mud at times. Darkness overtook us before we reached our destination, and all we could do was to follow the sound of the horses splashing through the mud. After travelling through the mud for several hours, we reached Mr. Biggar's homestead at Woodleigh. Next day Mr. Biggar and my brother-in-law started out to find our selections, their only guide through the dense scrub and undergrowth being survey lines, a compass, and a plan. After some difficulty, they located the selections, and returned to Mr. Biggar's.

After a few days' rest, Mr. Biggar brought us out again, and we pitched our tent on Mr. F. Renzow's selection. He had got about twenty acres of scrub cut and burnt. There being no road, all the travelling had to be done along survey-lines and bridle tracks, and sometimes through the scrub. My brother-in-law and I commenced cutting scrub on his selection, paying Mr. Renzow so much per day to show us how to go about it, as neither of us had any idea of the work. We cut about 20 acres between us and got a burn, after which the grass seed was sown. The seed was purchased in Melbourne, brought to Drouin by rail, and carted from there to the Red Store (Bena), and then packed from there, the distance from rail being about 30 miles. The second year we cut about 20 acres on my own selection, and while cutting this scrub I met Messrs. Matheson, Parsons, W. Rainbow and one of his brothers, who had heard us cutting scrub, and came to see the newcomers. They showed us all they knew about scrub-cutting, and invited us over to see them. We had no serious accidents during the scrub-cutting, the few we did have being confined to a cut foot and a cut toe. The first stock we brought to Gippsland consisted of a truck of cattle and a horse purchased in the Clunes district, and trucked to Drouin. We cut scrub year about on the two selections, and brought cattle from Clunes as we got grass for them. My brother-in-law and I made the first bridge over the Foster Creek. We felled two spars about twelve inches in diameter across the stream, placing them as close to one another as we could, and laid ferns across the spars as decking. Then, smaller spars were laid on the ends of the ferns to keep them in place, and a light hand rail was placed on one side, the ends resting in the forks of two uprights driven into the banks. A rough wing was made at each end of the bridge, to act as a guide when driving cattle across it. Although this bridge was only about two feet wide, it was used by everybody for riding, packing and driving stock. At first

we would dismount and lead our horses across, but later on, becoming familiar with the danger, we would remain in the saddle while crossing.

In the year 1889 my brother-in-law was killed by a log rolling over him. His remains were taken to Chines for interment. We had to carry him out along the bridle track to Mr. Linehan's before we could be met by a conveyance to take the body to Drouin. After his death, I came back to Gippsland, and worked on my own selection, living in a tent for four years by myself. I then built a hut, and my wife came to Gippsland. The railway line being open no further than Nyora, she had to ride in from there. Soon after, we started dairying, milking about 12 cows and selling the butter to men working in the district. I have lived on the selection ever since my first clearing, and done clearing at different times, until now there are only a few acres of scrub left, to give one an idea of what the scrub was like.



# Recollections and Experiences.

MISS C. ELMS.

Over twenty years ago I went to keep house for my brother who had taken up a selection in what is now known as the Moyarra district, and although everything was very primitive and rough, and at times very lonely, I think I spent some of the happiest years of my life there.

It was Winter time when I first went there, travelling to Drouin by train and then by coach to Poowong, and that coach journey will always remain like a nightmare in my memory. I had never realised what bad roads could be like until then. It took six or seven hours to travel the 20 miles, ploughing through deep mud and lurching in and out of holes, making one think of a rough sea voyage. Once a branch got entangled in a wheel and a long delay was caused by sending for an axe to chop it out. We stopped at the half-way hotel for some time, and it was a weary wait in the little parlour with nothing to look at but some queer looking pictures tilted at a remarkable angle. It was quite dark before we got to Poowong and I was very glad to see my brother, who had come to meet me and was riding along the road to see why the coach was so late.

We stayed the night at Poowong and next morning started for home. It was a bright frosty morning, and, as we rode along, the frost and ice crackled under the horses' hoofs. Our progress was slow on account of the muddy tracks and having to lead a heavily laden pack horse, and it must have taken fully six hours to go the fifteen miles. It was a ride full of new experiences for me. There were deep crabholes to steer clear of, and logs to step over, some so large that they had been half-chopped through to enable the horse to get over easily, and every now and then when the horse pulled its hoof out of the mud there would be a noise like a pistol shot made by the suction.

When I could take my eyes off watching the progress of my steed I was charmed by the beauty of the surrounding scrub and the songs of the birds, especially the beautiful clear note of the lyrebird, which I had not heard before.

The three-roomed log hut that my brother had built looked quite picturesque in the small green clearing encircled with scrub, and when I look back I cannot help wondering how he managed to make such a comfortable little home with so few appliances and very little assistance. The only wood he bought was a little softwood for doors and table. He split shingles for the roof and verandah and slabs for the floor. The house was lined and papered and looked very cosy with the large fireplace built of stones and mud, where huge log fires burned day and night in the Winter.

As everything had to be packed on horseback in those days there was not a superfluity of furniture. Everything was home-made except the chairs, which were brought down in pieces, and then glued together, but the unevenness of the slab floors often made the legs come loose and fall off.

The only means of baking was in a camp oven, but everything cooked in it was excellent. I have never tasted sweeter bread or scones. It was hot work, though, lifting the oven about and shovelling the hot ashes on the lid with a long handled shovel, and reminded one of a stoker.

Before I arrived my brother had not troubled to milk a cow, and of course when he first started to clear the scrub there was no grass to feed one, so his fare was salt meat, bread, rice, treacle and tea without milk, so it seemed quite a luxury to have plenty of milk, cream and butter. My first butter was churned in the milk bucket with a large home-made wooden spoon. Later on we built a small dairy and used to put the butter into casks to send away, for at that time butter factories and separators were not even thought of.

We did not possess an iron tank, and all the water had to be drawn up in a billy or bucket out of a waterhole swarming with the larvae of mosquitoes. The billy sometimes slipped out of our hands and went to the bottom and had to be fished up with a long pole with a hook of wire on the end of it. I possessed one small tub and one flat iron for laundry purposes, and, needless to say, there were not many white shirts or collars to do up. One bachelor said he did his ironing with a pannikin of hot water. The worst time for washing was when picking up was in progress. Then the clothes were hard to get clean and the men came from their work looking more like black than white men, owing to handling the charred and blackened logs which they stacked together to burn. It was quite a sight to see them all blazing at night, and the usual custom was to go round last thing before going to bed to put them together so as to burn out completely.

Our only timepiece once got out of order and we had to guess the time by the shadows of the verandah posts when it was sunny, but on dull days we had no idea of the time and no doubt had meals at very unusual hours; but it did not really matter at what time we got up or went to bed. Sometimes a selector who had not been off his place for some days would lose count of the days even, and find he had been working on Sunday by mistake when he went for his mail.

We soon got a nice garden round our little home, and found that flowers and vegetables grew most luxuriantly. Some parsnips measured more than 2 feet 6 inches to the end of the root, and a turnip would do for two or three dinners. I used to admire a flower called fire-weed which, like many other plants, grew after a fire had swept through the scrub and germinated the seeds. I transplanted one into the garden, and it improved so much with cultivation that it was quite an ornament, and everyone admired it, although they could not help being amused to see it grow there. Then I had both ornamental and useful creepers on the verandah. Supplejack grew at one end and the white starry flower looked lovely in the Spring, and when going to seed the balls of silk fluff were almost as pretty. At the other end of the verandah a hop vine flourished and I dried the hops to make yeast.

Before the scrub was cut down we were so sheltered that the wind did not seem to blow as it does now, and the rain was of a more drizzly, foggy nature, and would often last for days. Sometimes we were weatherbound for nearly a week, and the house seemed like an island in a sea of mud, and in order to get about with comfort we had wooden gangways about the paths and to the wood stack.

When the rain was so persistent the men had to give up outside work and pass the time doing carpentry jobs, reading, playing chess or playing



the violin. We often had two or three friends staying with us while they looked out for land to peg out, and it was astonishing the number of people that small house could accommodate. Often we had to resort to making up beds on the floor.

Sometimes I would not see a woman for weeks when I was too busy to go visiting, for my time was fully occupied with housework, gardening, mending and reading. We were fortunate in having a good supply of books, as several selectors combined and got a parcel of books every two or three months and exchanged them with one another. Then I had history and Shakespeare to resort to when the other books were read.

A favourite instrument of many of the neighbors was the violin. It was easily carried about and the solitude was favourable for practising. One bachelor was the happy possessor of a small harmonium which had been packed on horseback. When the roads were good enough for sledge traffic we got our American organ sent via Inverloch, and then had many pleasant musical evenings, for there were some good singers among the young men living near us, and they would come to practise their songs when they were going to sing at the cricket concerts sometimes held at Poowong and Powlett. I went to two concerts at Powlett and played their accompaniments, and when galloping across the plains and seeing no houses or life except an occasional wallaby, would have been surprised to have had a glimpse into the future and see large towns growing up and thousands of miners getting out the coal from seams that lay unsuspected beneath our feet. We usually had a concert and ball at the Powlett hotel on Friday night, and a cricket match on the following day, when the ladies of the district provided afternoon tea under some very fine blackwood trees that grew on the cricket ground. The Jumbunna cricketers were quite famous, and were usually victorious. They used to practise often on a Saturday afternoon on a cricket pitch at our place, and very often I gave them afternoon tea, and I have a remembrance of how my arm ached pouring out tea for so many on a warm afternoon out of our large tin teapot.

Soon after I came to Jumbunna we took over the Post Office from McLeod's, who had it first, and that of course brought more life about, and there was the little excitement of receiving and sending off the mails which came twice a week at first, then three times, and gradually grew to a daily mail. The name of our district was often confused with Jumbunna West, and letters were frequently missent, causing delay, so the residents had a meeting and decided to get the name changed to Moyarra, the name of an Australian chief, and afterwards Jumbunna West was changed to Glenalvie. The name Kongwak is spelt on the early maps as Kongwah, which sounds more like a native name. The first time I went there was to visit two friends who had just taken up a selection and were living in a tent in a clearing not much larger than a large room. I rode and my brother walked ahead lifting up branches and clearing obstacles off the track so that the horse could get along. It was so very steep in places that I am sure the track must have gone down the very steep gully in what used to be Mr. Jas. Rainbow's.

When the Summer came there was more pleasure going about, and I used to love riding along the pretty tracks looking like beautiful avenues with the supplejacks' lovely blossom wreathing and festooning the trees, and when the wattles were in flower their golden blooms looked like a patch of sunlight amidst the darker foliage.

Generally where the mud was deepest the tree ferns used to grow most luxuriantly. In some places I have ridden under their fronds meeting overhead across the track. Where now are streets and houses in Jumbunna, there used to be a specially fine grove of tree ferns where I have walked when visiting Mrs. Glew, who lived in a brick house which is still standing, and was built of bricks made in the vicinity, and seemed quite a mansion at that time.

There were most beautiful mosses in the scrub; the trunks of some of the tree ferns were covered with one kind like a tiny fern, and another was like a miniature palm tree; others resembled green velvet and others seaweed. The fungi were of all colours and curious shapes, and with the mosses transformed an old decaying log into quite a thing of beauty.

Those who have not seen Gippsland in the early days cannot possibly realise what it was like and how it had to be cleared inch by inch, and what hardships and privations the early settlers have endured. When I think of the density of the scrub it is a wonder to me that the pioneers did not often get lost. I have only heard of one or two having that experience. I suppose they carried compasses or had a good knowledge of locality, which I have not, unfortunately. One afternoon I took a friend for a walk in the scrub to show her a glorious mass of tree ferns and blackwoods in a gully that we admired very much, and which my brother tried to reserve as a beauty spot, but the ruthless fires swept through it all when burning other scrub. When we turned to come back, as I thought, and get out of the scrub, we found, to our dismay, that we were in quite a strange clearing. It was a small place that had been cleared and left for some reason, and was quite in an opposite direction to which I intended to go. Fortunately I had heard of this place and we were able to find our way home after a long walk.

Another time my brother and I had been to spend the evening at a neighbour's about half a mile away, and when coming back through the scrub



FERNS.

we got off the track and had to carefully retrace our steps, and with the aid of a lantern got on the right track, or we might have had to wander about for hours, if not all night. A very good substitute for a lantern, which was often used, was a candle fixed in the neck of a bottle with the bottom knocked off.

I often spent long days quite alone when my brother had to go to Poowong or Inverloch, our nearest townships, both about 15 miles away, or when he was some distance away scrubcutting, which was dangerous work, as there was always a chance of the axe slipping or the scrub falling the wrong way; but on the whole there were comparatively few accidents. One day he cut his toe and came home with his boot nearly full of blood, and I had to bandage it as well as I could. A knowledge of first-aid would have been very useful where there was no doctor available. Poowong was visited at intervals by one living at Berwick, about 50 miles distant.

One scrubcutter severed an artery in his leg, and fortunately for him a selector, who had some knowledge of surgery, tied it together and saved him from bleeding to death. Then he was carried for miles on a stretcher along the rough track and sent on to the hospital, where he recovered.

The time we needed a doctor most was when my father was visiting us, and while watching a tree being cut down was knocked down by a large branch, which swerved and fell on his leg. We thought it must be broken, and there was no one who knew how to set a limb. However, after several weeks' rest he was able to ride to Poowong, and went to a doctor in Melbourne, who put it in plaster, but we always had a doubt whether it was necessary.

I have heard my brother talk of the time he helped to clear the track over McLeod's hill to Inverloch, and how surprised and delighted they were when the scrub fell and they got a glimpse of the beautiful view over the plains to the Inlet and Southern Ocean. Inverloch was quite a flourishing little town then, as so many got their stores and goods round by boat from Melbourne.

Sometimes a party of eight or nine of us used to go for two or three days and stay at Dixon's, spending the time boating and fishing. The first drive I had to Inverloch was in Dr. Birney's buggy, which was a double-seated one, but the back seat was missing, and Miss Birney and I sat behind on boxes, and held on to ropes, which was very necessary. I can assure you, for we got a good many jolts on the rough unmade track across the plains.

I had rather an unpleasant ride once from Inverloch through Kongwak, when there was only a narrow track. It got so dark by the time we reached the scrub that I could not see the rider just ahead, who would call out every now and then for me to hold my head down to avoid a blow from a branch, and a billy of fish tied to my saddle got battered about through knocking the trees and stumps. Several times I have had simply to trust to the sagacity of my horse to find the way, and it is wonderful how well they could do it.

One dark night one of my brothers was in the scrub with his dog and got quite bewildered which way to go, so he tied his handkerchief round the dog's neck and was led in the right direction.

All the women in the district got to be expert riders, and often carried their children on horseback. One of our neighbours often came to see us, bringing her baby in this fashion, and I have seen her cantering along the

road and opening gates with it in her arms. Sometimes they rode along with an umbrella up when it was raining.

The earliest church services were held at Mr. Elliott's residence by a Church of England Minister, who came from Poowong, and great was the cleaning up of boots and leggings, which were, more often than not, covered with mud. Our riding habits sometimes had a fringe of mud a foot wide, and I wonder now that we wore them so long, or did not adopt a different style. The minister sometimes failed to put in an appearance, and then someone read the service, and an essay perhaps in place of the sermon. The singing was usually very good, considering there was no musical instrument, for it is not easy to start at the right pitch and not get too high. There was generally a dearth of soprano voices. After the service very often afternoon tea was handed round, and altogether it was the social event of the month.

As the district got cleared many of the birds and animals disappeared and others took their place. At first when the scrub was plentiful we had jays, satin-birds, etc., around the door looking for scraps of food, and occasionally we would see one of the lovely blue satin-birds. We had one in a cage for a while, and, like so many of the Australian birds, it was a splendid mimic. Several times we tried to rear young lyre-birds rescued from their nests in the fallen scrub, but never with any success. There were no rosella parrots, which are now so numerous, only the beautiful scarlet lories. Often we were awakened by a native bear scratching and scrambling on the roof, and bush rats ran over the ceilings. Sometimes a bear would sit on a verandah post all day, looking at us with its queer solemn expression, and then go off at night-time. Wallabies have now quite disappeared from the district; we often saw or heard them leaping and crashing through the scrub. I remember how startled I was one night by hearing a dingo howl. It is one of the weirdest sounds I ever heard. They came up from the plains, and attacked the sheep and calves. Fortunately they have been quite exterminated. Caterpillars were the worst of the insect pests when the grass was long and plentiful. They swarmed everywhere, and came into the houses. We found them in the food, and in our beds, and they even ate holes in a green tablecloth we had. Scotch thistles used to flourish, and grew to a great height. I have seen some as tall as a man on horseback, and tracks had to be cut through them to allow the stock to get about; but they seem to have died out, and bracken ferns are now the worst things the farmers have to contend with.

As time went on a weatherboard house was built in another part of the selection, and the move "From log-cabin to White-house" was easily accomplished on a sledge. The most important piece of furniture was the organ. Soon after, the rest of the family came to live there, and it took nearly a week to get the furniture, etc., brought from Beaconsfield, about 75 miles away, where they had been living.

The Great Southern Railway was begun about that time, and was finished to Nyora, and passengers could get as far as Loch by the contractor's train, which was a great improvement upon going to Drouin; but the contractors burnt wood instead of coal, and sparks flew about, so that many passengers had holes burnt in their clothes and hats. A spark even burned a hole in my sister's wedding dress, which was packed in a box and sent by train. It was the first wedding in our district; Jumbunna and Outtrim had not sprung into existence, and there was no church, so a bower of ferns and

branches was erected for the marriage ceremony, and the bridal party made a pretty picture, standing in and around it. Then after the wedding breakfast, which was held in the house, the bride and bridegroom rode away on horseback to get the train at Loch to go for a honeymoon holiday before settling down in their home at Kongwak.

The day before the wedding one of our neighbours burned his scrub, and the wind blew the fire on to our place, and we were doubtful whether we would be able to save the house. A haystack was burnt, and the old log house caught fire over and over again, and was only saved by someone sitting on the roof with a bucket of water to put out the flames. The road was impassable, for the trees were alight and falling every now and then, and two of the school children were not able to get home that night, as it was so dangerous. We were preparing for the wedding, and anxiously watching the progress of the fire, with eyes smarting with the smoke, but fortunately the wind changed, and blew it away from us, and next day was all that could be desired.

It was a pretty sight at night after a burn to see the trees all alight, and the showers and fountains of sparks rivalled any fireworks I have ever seen.

When we vacated the log house, it was in use for some years after, as a State school, and church services and lectures were held there.

The first schoolmaster who was sent down was a young man who had not long come from Ireland, and so had never had any experience of the bush. He arrived at our place nearly exhausted after walking from Bena through mud which was very deep, as it was Winter time. He had no idea of the place he was going to, or what accommodation there was. We had no room to spare, but did what we could to supply him with utensils, etc., to batch for himself at the school, and our place was so close that it was like a home to him. The school was not very large at first, only seven or eight pupils attending.

One day several of us rode up to see how the railway line was progressing, where Korumburra now stands. There were several tents and a store built of corrugated iron, and we looked down a long avenue of scrub, where a clearing had been made for the line.

The Jumburra coal mine was opened about that time, and we and other ladies took over afternoon tea for those who came from Melbourne to the opening ceremony, and a party of us were taken into the mine in trucks as far as the drive was made, which was a very short distance compared with the miles they have gone since then.

# Recollections and Experiences.

MR. WM. WATSON.



Leaving Ballarat in August, 1887, my brother Robert and I journeyed by rail to Mirboo North for the purpose of occupying 220 acres of land in the parish of Mardan, which had been selected by us. Then we set out with our swags on our backs for Mr. W. Smith's property, "Authoringa," that being the nearest clearing to the land we were to settle on. Arriving there we were hospitably received by Mr. and Mrs. Smith, as were all who came that way. The day following, our camp outfit, which we had purchased at Mirboo North, arrived on pack-horses, and our next duty was to cut a track to our selection, a distance of about four miles. This accomplished, we erected our camp, carried in our provisions, etc., and made ourselves as comfortable as circumstances would permit. Then we set about cutting 100 acres of scrub, and ringing the larger trees. Not having much experience with axes, our work at first was not of a very high order, that is, from an axeman's point of view. I will never forget the appearance of the rings round those trees; they were generally a foot or more out when we came round to the starting point. However, the end was accomplished, the trees died, and the scrub was cut. Many were the hairbreadth escapes with the axe while scrub-cutting; I have seen a gash four inches long on a boot without cutting the sock, and, on the other hand, I have seen more than one toe amputated, and there were also many fatal accidents. My brother and I formed two of a party of twelve who carried a man 14 miles to give him a decent burial. He was a stranger to us all, and was killed by a blackwood tree splitting up and coming down on him.

Having completed the scrub-cutting, we returned to Ballarat for a month or two awaiting the burning season, but while absent, the scrub was either fired accidentally or otherwise, and we got what would be called in those days a miserable burn. This was a serious handicap, the picking up being much heavier, while the undergrowth, such as swordgrass, bracken, etc., came up quickly.

Having sown down the 100 acres, it was not long before we had an abundance of grass, and we purchased a few trucks of cattle to eat it off, but they had no effect on it, so abundant was the growth. We then borrowed all the cattle we could muster for miles, and one of the ever-memorable jobs we undertook was to remove 50 head of cattle along a pack-track for 6 miles, where they were strung out in single file, and we were fortunate enough to deliver the lot. Two of our neighbours, having a like area under grass, making a total of 300 acres, and no fences erected, the additional cattle were quite inadequate to eat the grass down. They, however, got assistance very soon in the shape of a plague of caterpillars, and in less than a fortnight there

was not enough grass to feed a goat. Talking of caterpillars, I must relate our experience. We had the post-holes sunk for a dividing fence. These holes were two feet deep, and they were all filled with caterpillars. Oh, yes, there were caterpillars here in 1887.

It was not long until we had good rains, and soon had plenty of feed once more. We then decided to start dairying, so, getting the necessary equipment ready, we commenced operations. The following season we were milking 35 cows, setting the milk in dishes, then skim, churn, work and make the butter into half and one-pound pats by hand. This we packed to Mirboo North once a week, a distance of 14 miles through mud in many places up to the knees of our horses. The butter was then consigned to a Melbourne agent for sale, and I am pleased to say at times topped the market, bringing 6d. per lb. Beef was just as cheap as butter, a prime fat cow being worth about £3 or £4. Those were anxious times for the pioneers; no one then dreamed that the progress and transformation of the country would have been so rapid; but for the young people those days were happy days, and I can say we were all much younger then. I can well remember one of the first young ladies to arrive in this district, and she must certainly have felt somewhat proud, for I have seen nine horses tied to the fence on a Sunday afternoon, mine, of course, being one of them.

It is pleasant now, with mile after mile of beautiful metalled roads, to let the mind run back to the time when it was impossible to drive any wheeled vehicle over the site of the present town. Even on foot the settler could not move through the tangle of scrub without cutting his way through it with an axe. His vision was limited to tiny patches of clearing, laboriously made by axe and firestick. This town, so well equipped with modern home comforts and conveniences, has been carved out of the forest in the lifetime of a single generation. It is typical of the pioneering work accomplished throughout the greater part of Gippsland. The strongest had to work in alternate moods of hope and despair, before a glimmer of ultimate success was visible. The marvel is that in face of such difficulties so much has been accomplished. Leongatha and its surroundings are typical examples of the grit and enterprise which characterise Gippslanders. Nowhere in the State is found greater courage and perseverance in the character of the people, both in their private and public enterprise. Development has necessarily been slower than in the North, but it is marked by less restlessness and more thoroughness. The moral fibre of the community has been strengthened by the difficulties encountered in establishing homes and towns and industrial enterprises in a virgin forest. Standing on the crest of the hill which Leongatha crowns, one can see for miles over hill and valley, clothed in verdant beauty. Thousands of acres are as free of stump and timber as a bowling green. Workers are engaged in all kinds of rural industry. What a triumph of pioneering enterprise! Pioneering, like war, has its triumphs and its tribulations. It is our "baptism of fire" which strengthens the moral fibre of national character, makes for courage, resourcefulness, and patience, under difficulties in those who are triumphant.

In the pioneering work connected with Leongatha and its beautiful district, as in all other Gippsland towns and districts, woman has played a noble part. Having accompanied her husband into the lonely forest, leaving all the comforts associated with an old settled district behind her, she has shared cheerfully the heat and burden of the day with him, and in more than one instance, when deprived by the hand of death of him she loved, has carried

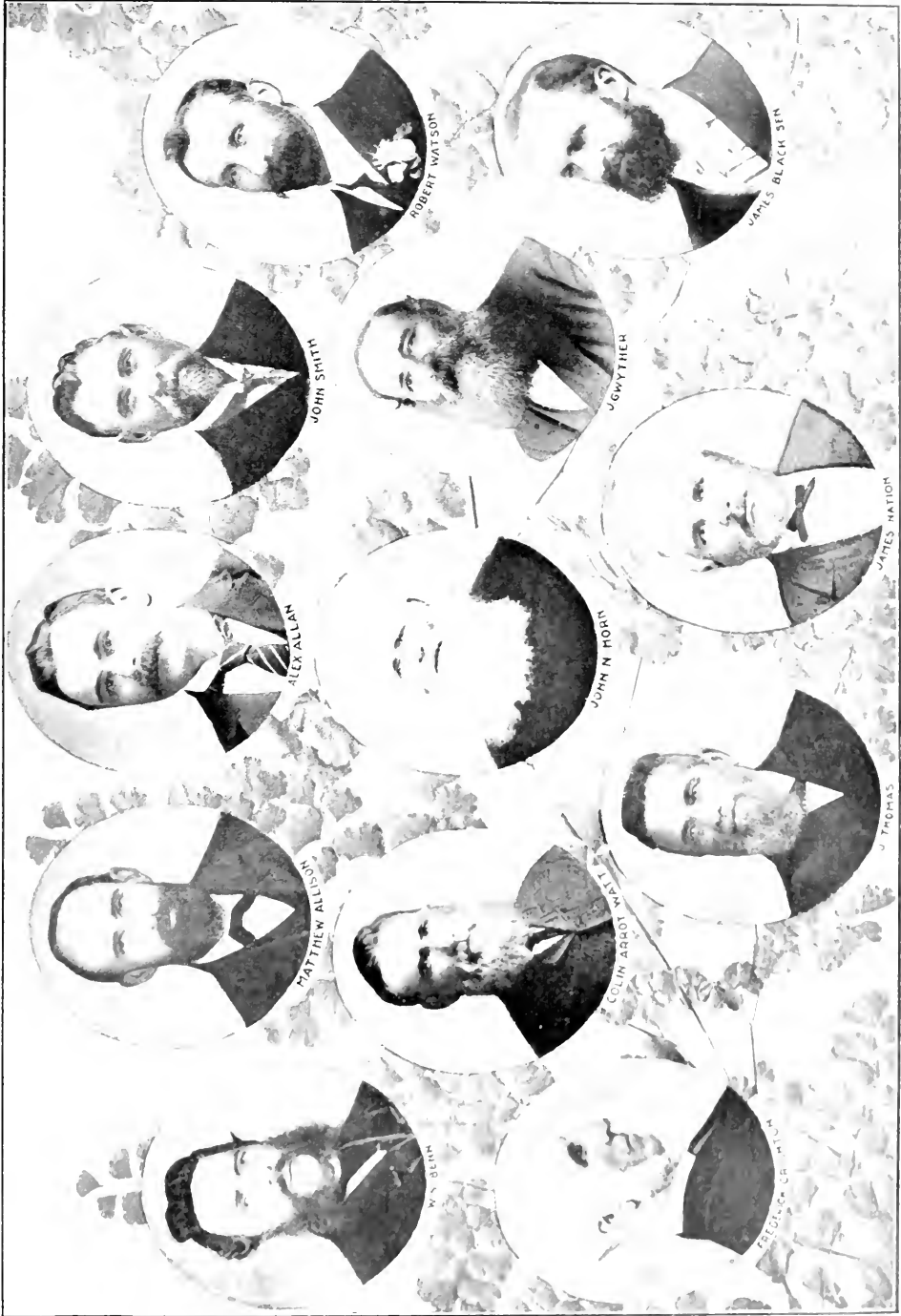
on and reared a family. Such as these are indeed brave women, and deserving of all the comforts the present-day can bestow on them. It is pleasing to note that a few of the very first ladies to arrive in this district are still here, enjoying the fruits of their enterprise, notably Mrs. Shingler and Mrs. Begg, both of whom have long since passed their four-score years, and are loved by all who know them.

Reverting to the mode of locomotion here in the early days, I sometimes wonder how the man who drives the cart at a store here, in which I spent a few years, would feel if he had to start out in the morning with 8 or 10 pack-horses, do a trip of about 20 miles, get two or three of them down in the mud, and land home about 10 o'clock at night. No eight hours, no wages board, and, may I say, no strikes. The work had to be done, and it was done cheerfully.

In conclusion, I would like to make reference to the hospitality that was meted out to all new-comers by those who had arrived first; their homes were practically thrown open, and everything that could be done to assist was done in a spirit that will never be forgotten, and in the district with which I was closely associated, Mardan, it is pleasing to note that the same spirit of hospitality still exists.







GROUP OF LEONGATHIA PIONEERS

# Recollections and Experiences.

MR. BEN. BRETT.



My father, with his wife and family, came over from Tasmania, where he had been farming and grazing for a number of years. He rented about 2000 acres, farming a portion, growing wheat, oats, barley, and potatoes, and grazing merino sheep. The latter did remarkably well there. My father was doing very well, but Victoria was booming, and he hoped to do better over the water. Accordingly, in August, 1863, we embarked for Victoria, and, landing in Melbourne, stayed there about a week.

My father brought with him five horses, two waggons, and all his farming implements and household furniture. My brother-in-law (Mr. P. Le Roux) had purchased the pre-emptive right of the Red Bluff run on the eastern shore of Westernport. It consisted of 160 acres, and the run of about 3000 acres. The previous owner was Messrs. Bakewell, Meikle and Lyell. We started from Melbourne with two waggons loaded with farm implements, bedding, and what was immediately necessary to start our home. The balance of our goods we sent round by boat to the Red Bluff.

With our five good farm horses we did not anticipate having much difficulty in getting to our destination, only 51 miles, but we soon found our mistake, as many a Gippslander has done. We only got 11 miles the first day, camping at Mulgrave. We found the roads very bad. Next day we got between Dandenong and Cranbourne. The former was a nice little village, but the latter, with the exception of two fairly good hotels, consisted of wattle and daub houses, covered with thatch.

The third day we only got about a mile, when the incessant rain compelled us to look for shelter. Mr. J. Adams allowed us to camp under a straw stack. We rigged our tarpaulins against the straw stack, and were glad to camp there a couple of days. The sixth day we got to Tooradin Bridge, and camped on the site of the Tooradin Hotel.

The seventh day we got as far as the Yallock station, and the weather continuing bad, we stayed there two days, Mr. Lyell making us as comfortable as possible. The surveyed road was so bad that Mr. Lyell advised us to go across the run, and sent a man on horseback to pilot the way. He rode ahead, and was up to the horse's belly in water nearly all the way, we ploughing in his wake with our teams. When we came to Adam's Creek, he crossed two or three times before he could find a place shallow enough for us to safely cross. However, we got to our destination at the Red Bluff just before dark on the tenth day from Melbourne. Such was the state of the roads in the early days, and so they remained for many years afterwards. Every rain in the Strzelecki Ranges and round what is now

Jindivick and Pakenham brought down floods of water that poured over the roads from Tooradin to Lang Lang, and Adam's Creek brought its tribute lower down. On arrival at the Bluff we found only a ramshackle hut, and had immediately to start building a wattle and daub house. The house completed, we started on exactly the same lines as we had followed in Tasmania, and this led to our initial and serious mistake. We purchased full-mouthed merino ewes. They had done so well with us in Tasmania that we never doubted they would do well over here, but the country was quite unsuited to them. The dingoes were so bad that we had to tail them all day, and camp them round the house at night. One morning soon after turning them out we saw the dogs amongst them, and we hurried after them, but the dogs had killed and maimed about 30 sheep. We would have got out of sheep, but that cattle were so scarce and dear.

There was a gate on the bridge near Lyell's homestead; all the country on the East of the gate was proclaimed free from pleuro-pneumonia, and no cattle were allowed through the gate without a special permit. In those days there was no dairying, and all the calves were reared on their mothers, and were consequently very wild. However, my father decided to go into dairying, and purchased some heifers, and we used to yard them to gradually quieten them. I remember one chasing McMillian's stockman, who was yarding them, for half a mile.

We used to ship all our produce by boat from the Red Bluff to Melbourne. The first craft I remember was "The Wasp," Captain Nicholl. There was no jetty; she would lie off about a quarter of a mile, and we had to boat the cargo off. On the return journey we would get our stores. The Captain was salesman, and brought the proceeds for the sale of grain or butter. Such a thing as account sales were unknown; we had to accept the nett cash handed us, and be thankful. The boat generally made a trip once a month. We would put our butter into firkins for three weeks, and the fourth week make it up into 4 lb. pats. Butter was very cheap in those days through the Spring right up to Christmas, generally from 5d. to 6d. per lb. After Christmas, when the dry weather set in, it would gradually rise. I have known it in February or March jump up 6d. per lb. in a week or two. During the Winter it would range from 2s. to 2s. 6d. per lb. After some years we commenced carting our butter, eggs, and bacon to the Dandenong market. The roads were still very bad; the journey always took three strenuous days. I have often seen swans swimming about the roads. The water was often up to the top rail of the fences from Tobin Yallock to Tooradin. Then Hudson started a four horse waggon from Tooradin to Melbourne, charging 1d. per lb. for cartage on butter. Later on he came as far as Lang Lang, and would send a collecting cart as far as the Red Bluff. A lot of the new selectors would cart and pack their butter from Woodleigh, and finally came the "Iron horse," which made a material difference in every respect.

Our mail was a tri-weekly one from Cranbourne to the old Bass. About the year 1860, McDonald cut a track, afterwards known as McDonald's Track, from Tobin Yallock to Morwell. The object was to get a better route for stock from Sale to Melbourne.

Mr. James Scott was the first selector on the hills, followed by Dunlop, Littledike, Tom, Scott, and others. We knew practically nothing of the hill country.

Some cattle were travelled by the coast road from as far back as Yarram, and all Black's, of Tarwin, Feehan's, of Powlett, Turnbull's, of Kileunda, and

Kidd and Anderson, of Griffiths' Point, came by that route. The stockmen had to camp them on the roads, watching them or sleeping with one eye open. Later on they got accommodation paddocks, some of them stopped at my place: finally they trucked them by rail.

Dandenong was a good general market for stock, and all kinds of dairy produce. There, too, you could purchase anything you required in the way of drapery or stores. Cranbourne was a cattle market only. I have known 2000 head of cattle yarded there, but its glory is departed.

At the Red Bluff was one of the kitchen-middens of the old Westernport tribe of blacks, containing large heaps of cockle shells: but only three or four of the blacks remained in my time. They had a mia-mia at Tooradin, and used to come as far as the Red Bluff. They used to shoot ducks and catch eels and sell them to buy drink: food they would eadge. They had a novel way of catching eels. They would wade in the mud in the Tooradin Creek when the tide was out, feel for the eels with their hands, seize them, and bite them at the back of the head, and throw them on to the bank. They were so plentiful that they could get a couple of sacks in a short time.



# Recollections and Experiences.

MR. JAMES BAKER.

A Sketch by T. J. Coverdale.

The subject of this sketch, though not a pioneer of the scrub country, was so well and favourably known to all who passed along McDonald's Track that any account of early settlement there would hardly be complete without some reference to him. He was a character in his way, with a touch of humour all his own, and always good-natured and obliging. Of medium height and wiry, and with a bushy black beard when I first knew him, he looked a typical "waybacker"; and there was not much of the old country about him, except his dialect, which was rather puzzling on first acquaintance. I remember he always called heifers "hyphers."

He was honest as the day, and in the rough times of fifty odd years ago round Westernport, Yarrathban, and Lang Lang, when temptations were many and not always successfully resisted by some, the lure of "clear skins" failed to tempt "Jimmy" from the paths of virtue; although in those days it was said that a rough bush yard and a branding iron of the right design were all that was required to lay the foundations of a handsome fortune; and round the fire at night he often told some good tales of those early days, which his peculiar dialect and way of telling them made all the more interesting.

Starting in the country with no other assets but health and strength and plenty of perseverance, he made his way in the world, reared a large family, and passed away at a good old age, respected by all who knew him; and his success in life, and that of many others of his class and means in those days, might be taken as an object lesson, and profitably considered in these days of land settlement with spoonfed immigrants. There were no Government agents to meet them at the boats, and find them billets or show them land; they had to paddle their own canoes, and they made a better job of it than many do to-day, though wages were not nearly as good, and land was almost as dear, as now.

In the following quaint and amusing autobiography, published by permission of his son, Mr. H. S. Baker, he tells in his own direct and characteristic style, "the short and simple annals" of his life, or at least the more salient points, the events that impressed him most; placing them in order, like milestones along a road, and sticking closely to the personal, as all good autobiographers should. He is not beguiled from his theme to dilate on the adventures or misdeeds of the heroes (or scoundrels) of the bush of fifty years ago, as many with his knowledge of the subject might easily have been. Unlike many historians of their own careers, who most ungallantly omit all reference to the partners of their joys and sorrows, thus giving us no end of trouble to find out to whom they were married, and when, or whether they were married at all, "Jimmy," with a consideration for his historian that equals his gallantry towards the sex, gives us full information on these matters, and also on other events more or less consequent thereto.

The following is copied by T. J. Coverdale from Baker's own account.—

James Baker, the son of James and Catherine Baker, of Sutton Benger, Wiltshire.

I had no education. I was sent out in the fields at seven years of age to keep the crows off the wheat, and then to mind heifers in the bye-roads, and then to drive horses in the plough, and then to milk the cows; and then I went to work at a stone quarry for two years; and then I went to live with a gentleman as groom at Kenton-lane farm, in Middlesex, near Staunmore, for one year and ten months, and then I came to live at Sutton Benger again for one year, and then I went to Chippensbury hiring, and engaged for a ploughman to one Mr. John Sherburne, at "Cattages," near Irington, for six months, and then I went to Sherbrough for nine months as ploughman for Mr. Richard Hayward in Gloucester, and there I met Miss Dorcas Stephens, and we were married on the 6th of July, 1852, at Temple Church, Temple-street, Bristol, in Gloucester, England; and went on board the bark "Old Earl Grey" on the 24th of December, 1852, and landed on the 6th of May, 1853, two days after my wife was confined of a son. She was confined on the 4th, and landed on the 6th, and was hired on the 8th to one Mr. Samuel Griffiths, near Hobson's Bay, for three months, and then we hired to go to Tobinyallock station at the rate of £70 a year. We stayed seven months, I then left, and went to Melbourne and hired myself to one G. B. Peed for a farmer's man for £70 a year. I stayed six months, and then I bought 15 acres of land for £10 per acre. I had two years to pay it at 10 per cent., and I paid for it and got the deeds, and then I bought five working bullocks, and four of them died, and then I bought four more bullocks for £42.

Then I sent home to England for my father and mother and brother and sister and nephew and niece, and then sorrow began. Then I bought 57 acres of land in the parish of Lyndhurst for £5 an acre from Mr. Hugh Glass. I paid for it in two years and three months, and got the deeds for it. I stayed at Cranbourne for 14 or 15 years; then, on the 13th of October, 1866, I selected 69 acres 3 roods and 29 perches at Lang Lang. I stayed at Lang Lang 7 years, then I sold the property at Cranbourne and Lyndhurst and all my cattle, and selected 160 acres more at Lang Lang. I then started storekeeping for 9 years, but sold out when the Great Southern railway started, and have been carrying on dairying ever since. But in the year 1887 I wrote to the Government sending a petition asking for 15 acres of land for a cemetery, which was granted, and I had the pleasure of digging the first grave, and read the first burial service, and did so for twenty years, when there was no minister to do it.

## Pioneers of the Danish Settlement at East Poowong.

MR. M. C. L. HANSEN.

In the early seventies much was written in the papers about South Gippsland, with its great forest of giant trees, fertile soil, ample rainfall, and salubrious climate. Roads and railways were as yet not constructed. There were perhaps what might be termed roads, such as from Sale to Dandenong, Sale to Alberton, and also to Bairnsdale, Orbost, and Omeo.

Besides these, there were a few dray tracks of a pioneering nature, such as from Westernport to Morwell, now known as McDonald's Track, and from Morwell to Stockyard Creek, the latter place being now known as Foster, and at rare intervals an occasional adventurous pioneer might be found who had dared to face the primeval forest and carve out a patch of clearing. For the most part, the work was done in the most primitive manner, and all else around was a wilderness of tall trees and impenetrable jungle, or what was later on called scrub. Many of the prospective settlers, upon seeing the immense timber, came to the conclusion that soil capable of producing such a wealth of forest must necessarily be of good quality; others again feared to embark on such a stupendous undertaking. Many who came to Gippsland during the years 1870 to 1880 spent their little all upon their holdings, and gradually becoming disheartened and despairing of any better prospects, left, ruined, for the time being. Many came and inspected the country, and returned to their homes without even lodging an application, so obsessed were they with the probable hardships and difficulties that would have to be faced by the pioneers of South Gippsland. Others again who came and settled on the land, struggled and worked on until by stern perseverance and dogged persistency they have at last, and not more than they deserved, gained a competency.

Early in the year 1876, Messrs. J. H. Schmidt and C. Moller took train at Chewton Railway Station for Melbourne; arrived there they purchased a saddle horse, and strapping on him their blankets and a few wayside necessities, started upon a journey in search of land, and by the well-known method of "ride and tie" these two South Gippsland pioneers covered an immense amount of travel. First they journeyed towards Lilydale, thence back nearly to Dandenong, and from there towards Sale, then to Alberton and Stockyard Creek, and finally returned to where the Sale to Dandenong line was in course of construction, and from there back to Chewton without having made choice of a selection. They made still another journey, but with the same unsatisfactory result. Some time afterwards Messrs. H. Staben and C. Moller made another attempt, taking quite another route. Starting from Melbourne they took coach to Cranbourne, thence to Tobin Yallock, better known now as Lang Lang, and from there over what is known as the Tinpot Hill to Poowong. The whole of this countryside was then known as Poowong. A settler, Hodgkinson by name, I believe, showed them over the country, and eventually they pegged out a selection. The fee paid for showing over the land was £5 5s., and Mr. Moller has often related that a swamp existed, upon the land which he pegged, but he has never since been able to locate it. After having pegged out their respective blocks, they returned to

Melbourne, and lodged their applications with the Lands Department. They were shortly afterwards notified that at a sitting of the Lands Board in Melbourne, their applications would be considered and dealt with. They therefore appeared, and the land was recommended to them. They were granted an occupation licence for three years, 2s. per acre per annum to be paid, and improvements to be effected in three years to the amount of one pound per acre. After complying with these conditions and residing on the land for the three years, they were entitled to a lease under which they were to pay the balance due to the Government, viz., 14s. per acre, payable in 14 half-yearly instalments, after which a freehold title would be granted. These were the conditions under which land was then granted or selected. Not long after, these terms were considerably liberalised, and altogether made much easier. Mr. Staben, who had been farming in the Colbinabbin district, sold out there.

Mr. J. H. Schmidt (Mr. Moller's brother-in-law) and Mr. Jonsten Anderson also selected land adjoining Messrs. Moller and Staben, followed shortly afterwards by Messrs. Byriell Bros., Mrs. Linnett, and Messrs. Olsen and Fisher. The latter cut a strip of scrub about three chains wide right across his selection, and then abandoned it. About this time also Mr. P. C. Petersen, of Adelaide, selected a block to the East of Messrs. Schmidt and Moller. Some idea of the difficulties of transport in those days might be gained from the experience of Messrs. Byriell, Olsen, Petersen, Schmidt and Moller. In June, 1877, they travelled by train from Chewton to Melbourne. There they purchased tents, tools and provisions, hired two drays with drivers, who were to convey them to Poowong East or Cruickston, as it was then called, and they undertook to travel a stated number of miles per diem. On the 3rd or 4th day from Melbourne they got bogged near Tooradin, and the drivers refused to proceed further, owing to the bad state of the road. After a delay of three days, the pioneers succeeded in obtaining a bullock team and waggon, and made another start for the promised land, and it was still a very slow process. One night, while they were camped at Tinpot Hill, it rained and blew so incessantly that it was impossible for them to erect the tents, so they were forced to spend the whole night around the camp fire in the lee of the waggon, and some scrubby timber. Next morning found them cold, wet and stiff, but as there could be nothing gained by further waiting they pressed on, thus day by day getting nearer, if only a little, to the spot upon which they hoped to build a home. Eventually they arrived at Cruickston, having done the 68 miles from Melbourne in fourteen days, or at the rate of under 5 miles per day, including stoppages.

The first business was to locate the new selections, then to find the best route to make a track in, and afterwards to cut the track.

Finding one's land was not always an easy matter, as it may mean miles and miles of trudging along survey lines, and perhaps without a map or plan of any kind as guide, and as the holdings were mostly surveyed in uniform sizes, these survey lines were made without respect to the lay of the country, and were up hill and down dale. There would, therefore, be a considerable amount of lost time before the early settler could get down to the actual work of scrub cutting, which, of course, was the most important work in the primary stages.

Cutting a pack track was usually the first consideration, and as a rule there was not much time wasted in the operation; so long as the horse could scramble along between the trees and blunder over logs it was all right, but often enough the contents of the pack suffered.



It so happened that the first season was a particularly dry one: in fact, creeks that were dry that year have never since been dry. This fact made the burning of the scrub much easier than it was for many subsequent seasons. After the "burn" the grass was sown upon the ashen surface of the ground, and this done, they built their first huts, and returned to the Castlemaine district to purchase cows and draught horses. Mr. Staben, however, brought some of his own stock from Colbinabbin, and made the journey from there to Poowong East in a German waggon, the first of its kind that has been imported.

Most of the early settlers were new to the work of scrub-cutting, and many and various were the methods adopted. Some would cut down one tree at a time, and contrive if possible that each should not fall across any log or stump, but endeavour to get each tree to lie close to the surface of the ground. Some were very careful to see that no bark was left attached to the stump, lest the tree remain green, and so retard the fire; others have even cut up the fallen trees, and laid them alongside the old logs to ensure their burning. The various methods were criticised and discussed when the settlers met, and the various pros and cons marshalled forth, but the most popular method was that generally known as "nicking." A large number of trees would be cut only partially through either front and back, or at the back only, then a large tree at the rear would be carefully felled so as to take the lot down at once, thus saving a lot of chopping. This became by far the most popular method of scrub cutting.

About the year 1877, a man with a grown-up family from Warrnambool came to this district in search of land for potato growing, and they pegged out some 1500 acres of scrub land, paid the survey fees, and it was duly recommended to them. Some time afterwards they made a closer inspection of their property, and came to the conclusion that the hills were too steep for their purpose. This and the fact that there was no prospect of a road being constructed within reach of their property induced them to abandon the project, and they never returned to the district. Mr. and Mrs. Martin Johnson landed in Melbourne from New Zealand in 1878, having heard much about the Danish Settlement at Poowong East. He visited the Lands Department, and procured maps of the locality. He had been used to New Zealand methods, where they always surveyed and made practical roads before the land was thrown open for selection, hence when he inspected the Victorian map he came to the conclusion that the land along McDonald's Track was hilly on account of its not showing a straight survey, but, as all the other roads shown upon the map were straight, and therefore presumably level, he came to the conclusion that most of the land abutting on these roads would be level, or nearly so. Having purchased a horse and spring cart, he started off with his wife and infant and all their worldly belongings for the land of Goshen, Poowong East, intending, for a start at any rate, to seek work at his trade as a carpenter. Arriving at where Nyora now is, he secured employment from a selector named Mr. Kerr. While working here he paid a visit to the Danish Settlement, and finding the land there more to his liking, he left Nyora and removed to the Settlement, finding plenty of employment in building the first houses in that neighbourhood.

There was also among the early comers to the Danish Settlement a Mr. Edberg, who, while felling scrub on his own selection, met with an accident, the result of which caused his death. His widow being unable to carry on the land, it again became available for selec-

tion. Mr. Johnsen sent in an application for this allotment, and it was ultimately recommended to him. There also arrived in Poowong East at about this time a handy Norwegian sailor, Mr. Peter Anderson. He at once secured a contract for picking up from Mr. Johnsen Anderson, and being well suited for this class of work, he applied himself with energy and perseverance, completing the work in record time. Very soon he caught the land fever, and, after obtaining land like many another pioneer, concluded it would be a good move to take a partner into the business, and very soon afterwards was married to Mrs. Linnett. This was the pioneer wedding of the Danish Settlement, and it was celebrated about Xmas time in 1880. Mrs. Linnett at this time owned 320 acres of land, and Mr. Anderson a similar area. Mr. Jonsen Anderson, whose holding was to the south of Mrs. Anderson, passed away to the great beyond in September, 1881, and his property passed into the hands of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Anderson; these three holdings in one, now well known as the "Waterfall Estate." Mr. Johnsen Anderson toiled very hard and cleared a portion of land close to the creek of all timber, erected a house, and planted an orchard, as well as a vegetable and flower garden. It was while clearing this land that a neighbour visited Anderson and his helpers, and upon being asked how they fared, Anderson, who was ready-witted, replied, "Oh! we are doing all right; we've been burning off logs for about a month, and we are in hopes of soon finding the surface of the earth."

However, he was not destined to remain here long; he ailed for some time, and eventually passed away, as previously stated.

Mrs. P. C. Peterson was the first lady to settle in these parts, and she arrived in March, 1878, followed closely by the Moller, Schmidt and Staben families, and Mrs. Linnet. The Olsen family settled in June, 1879, and the Byriells a few months later. The question of a school was now a new problem that presented itself. The settlers called a meeting, and Mr. Byriell was appointed a deputation to interview the Hon. the Minister for Education. Mr. Byriell offered the use of a small building (which he had replaced by a more commodious one for his own use) to the department, on condition that they supplied the furniture and appointed a teacher. The offer was accepted, and this building served the purpose of a school for 3 or 4 years. In April, 1880, the first teacher arrived, and the number of children attending was about 30. The attendance was not perhaps as regular as in more closely settled districts, and little wonder, as some of the children had to walk four or five miles along tracks that in wet weather could be more easily imagined than described. Some of these tracks were made solely for the use of the children, and in such cases just the undergrowth would be cleared to make a track, and gaps cut into the top of the larger logs to enable the children to climb over them. During the winter of 1882, the Education Department erected a new school upon an acre of land presented by Mr. Byriell, and it stood until destroyed by the disastrous bush fires on the 1st of February, 1898. This building was used for many years for religious services by no less than four denominations, viz., Lutherans, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Church of England, also for public meetings, debating societies, social functions, and as a polling booth.

The question of roads was ever present, and all important. During the summer of 1879, an agitation was started to open up a road to Drouin. Nearly all the settlers turned up at a working-bee to find and clear a suitable

road, and as there were several creeks to be bridged, the same means were adopted. Needless to say, these bridges were neither substantial nor ornamental, but they were perhaps as good as any that might be formed in any newly-settled country of a similar nature. Drouin now being the nearest railway station, provisions of all kinds were packed or carted from that town. Occasionally, the settlers would depute one of their number to go to Melbourne, and buy necessaries at wholesale rates, and hire a carrier to cart them from Drouin to Poowong East. This, it will be observed, was a co-operative movement, and the pity is that the same spirit did not operate in the years that followed. The principle was a good one, and it enabled the settlers to buy at a rate that no individual could, if he purchased only for the needs of his own household.

Postal facilities were at first particularly crude and uncertain. The mail came via Cranbourne and Lang Lang, and from there by chance to Poowong and Poowong East. By agitation a regular mail service from Lang Lang to Poowong and thence to Cruickston was secured, and when vehicular communication between Poowong and Drouin was established, the mail was changed to that route. The settlers took it in turns to go to the Poowong P.O. for the Danish Settlement mails. Many of the oldest settlers of the Poowong East District have passed over the great divide; thus Mr. J. H. Schmidt died in May, 1883, leaving behind a young family to mourn their loss and to do for themselves.

Mr. C. Moller, Senr., died in June, 1897, after having seen the bulk of the heaviest clearing done upon his selection, a sturdy man standing over six feet, strong in proportion, a very willing worker and of a cheerful disposition. His family, two sons, one of whom is now a councillor in the Poowong and Jeetho Shire, and three daughters were all of an age at which they were able to care for themselves.

Mr. H. Staben, one of the most energetic of the early pioneers of East Poowong, was one of the first to take an active interest in the establishment of the Poowong Butter Factory. He was a practical farmer, and his property was always looked upon as an object lesson on South Gippsland farming, always actively engaged in farming pursuits. He swooned suddenly whilst at work in his farmyard and never regained consciousness, Mrs. Staben only survived him about four years, leaving a family of one son and four daughters.

Mrs. Anderson passed away in July, 1902; her sister, Mrs. Byriell, crossed the great border the following year. These are both laid to rest in the Poowong Cemetery.

Mr. P. C. Petersen retired from farming and settled in Korumburra to spend the evening of life. He died in August, 1905, from the effects of a paralytic stroke. His only son is Mr. Edward Petersen, who is well known in Korumburra and surrounding districts. Mrs. Moller, Senr., joined the great majority in July, 1911. Mr. S. P. Olsen having seen all his family married with one exception, retired and lived privately at East Camberwell. Mr. Olsen was a man who was respected and beloved by all who knew him, and at the ripe age of 80 years, on the 15th July, 1911, he passed to his final rest.

Might it not be said of all these pioneers that "honest toil is holy service"—for surely each has borne his and her share of the responsibilities and burdens that are inseparable from the tasks of converting a "howling wilderness," such as Poowong East was in the seventies, into a "land flowing with milk and honey," such as it is to-day?

# Education.

W. H. C. HOLMES.

The earliest record of the establishment of a school in the part of South Gippsland that comes under our notice is that of Woolamai, which was opened on June 1, 1866. Then followed Grantville on January 6, 1874, Griffith's Point, March 26, 1874, and Corinella, May 8, 1874. These four schools served the earlier settlements on the lightly timbered and open coast country between Tobin Yallock and Anderson's Inlet. In the early part of the year 1878 Messrs. Gardner, Horsley, Burchett, Henry, Cook, Scott and L. C. Holmes, of Poowong, made representations to the Education Department with regard to opening a school in the locality, and the residents offered to erect a building for school purposes. This offer being accepted, the timber was sawn by a pit-sawyer close to the site of the building, and the roofing iron and other materials required were brought by steamer to Westernport and thence by team to Poowong. Mr. L. C. Holmes had the contract for the building, which consisted of one room, and was the first public building erected in this part of the forest country of South Gippsland. The walls were covered with unseasoned blue gum weatherboards, and as the lap specified was the same as for seasoned pine, after the first summer's shrinkage many of the boards had contracted so much that wind and weather penetrated freely through the openings. The building was erected for a church and let to the Education Department for school purposes. It was opened as a school on December 2, 1878, with Mr. Chas. Cook, who had previously held appointments in the Education Department in the Geelong District, and had selected land on the Bass River, as head teacher. Some of the settlers had been living on their holdings for some years before the opening of the school, and consequently some of the older children had missed several years of schooling, and it took some time before the heterogeneous collection of young and old were got into normal school routine. The first examination was conducted by Inspector Campbell on December 31, 1879.

On January 27, 1881, the building had a narrow escape of being burnt owing to the wind changing while some cut scrub in the vicinity was being burned. The school children had been dismissed, but some who loitered on the road home had their road blocked by the fire and were in considerable danger until late in the evening, when the track was safe for them to resume their journey. On February 15, 1881, Truant-officer McAlpine paid his first official visit to the district, and at that time it was compulsory for each child of school age to attend at least 30 days in each quarter; but, owing to the abnormally heavy rainfall during the winter months, it was difficult for some children to get in even this limited number of days. As a consequence my father had to ride to Drouin, a distance of about 20 miles, to attend court, the journey taking two days, and had to satisfy the law of the land by paying a fine of 1/- and 2/6 costs for my brother and myself, who had failed to attend the requisite number of days. During the eighties a new state school was erected in the Poowong township, and Mr. Cook continued his duties as head teacher until he was superannuated.

The first school in the Loch district opened at Sunnyside, in 1880, with Miss Mary Leys as teacher. A chock and log building was first used, until

it was destroyed by fire, and then a deserted hut was used, and after that the Wesleyan Church. Miss Leys, the daughter of a retired naval officer, who, with two others, cut the first track from the open country to where Loch now stands, came to the district in 1877, and, while teaching at the Sunnyside school, rode four miles to her duties every day along the usual rough bush track. In 1889 the school was transferred to Loch, with Mr. Francis Clarke as teacher.

In 1880 schools were opened at Fernhill, now St. Helier, and at Kileuncla, where a coal mine had been opened.

In 1881 a building was erected on Mr. Eccles' property, about two miles north of where Korumburra now stands. Though in the parish of Korumburra it was known departmentally as the Jeetho East school, and was as truly typical of pioneering effort that it is worthy of detailed description. It was of modest dimensions, 24ft. x 15ft., and 9ft. high, and was made of bush materials by the residents. The walls were made of paling, the roof of shingles, and the floor of rough hewn slabs. The furniture at first was somewhat primitive, split slabs placed on blocks, some high, some low, the former doing duty as desks, the latter as seats. These gave place later to the more finished article, which some ten weeks later left the workshop in Melbourne, were carried by boat to Westernport, and in due time arrived at the school building on a sledge. Mr. E. Williamson, afterwards head teacher at Korumburra, was the first teacher appointed to this very primitive school.

In the same year a school was established in the Geachville Hall, on the property of Mr. Frank Geach. When Mount Eccles, about a mile to the south, became the centre of settlement in the locality, the school was, in 1889, removed there in sections and re-erected upon an acre of ground donated by a local resident. At first the school was worked as a half-time school in conjunction with Halston, about six miles distant, until the increased attendance raised its status. In 1912 a new building was erected, and the "old pioneer" now does duty as a shelter shed. Mount Eccles is, in point of altitude, one of the highest schools in South Gippsland, and for many years, on account of the steep and rough tracks, was almost isolated. On one occasion a lady teacher, newly appointed to this school, arrived by train at Leongatha, and asked at the livery stables to be supplied with a horse and vehicle to take her and her luggage to Mount Eccles. The proprietor said that if the lady would leave a deposit of £50 and pay him for two days' hire, he would undertake the journey. Needless to say, the lady returned to the city the following day.

In 1881, owing to the efforts of some of the residents of Woodleigh, among whom were Messrs. Bowman, Biggar, Henry, Hamrahan, Michie, McGill, and Ward, a school was established in the district. A building was brought in sections by boat to the Red Bluff and carted thence by Mr. Geo. Binding, who also erected it on Ward's Hill, where it was known as the Jumbunna State School, No. 2163. The first teacher appointed was Mr. E. J. Wilson, a pioneer settler of Jeetho, who started with an attendance of 47 pupils in June, 1882, a public picnic being held to celebrate the occasion. The site, though it commanded a magnificent land and seascape stretching from the Baw Baw Mountains in the north to Bass' Strait in the south, was, chiefly on account of its altitude, somewhat unsuitable for a school, and it was removed in 1892 to its present site, purchased from Mr. Delaney. In the years 1906-7-8 the school gained second class, and in 1910-11, first class certificates for effectively planted and well-kept garden and ground.

In the early eighties a number of settlers to the east of Poowong cleared a site for a school at the junction of McDonald's Track and the East Poowong Road, and there a small paling and shingle building was erected by Mr. Medley and leased to the Education Department for school purposes. It was named Ranceby after Mr. Medley's residence. It was opened in January, 1883, with Miss J. Mackay as teacher. Her experiences were of the roughest, as during part of the time she rode each morning from her father's home, near Korumburra, to the school, a distance of five or six miles, through pack-tracks, or trenches, often knee-deep in mud, returning in the evening, often after dark, in all weathers. The school was burned down in the great fire of February, 1898, when Miss Mackay had a very trying experience, working heroically with others to save the lives of the younger children until she was completely exhausted. Two years later, when the school was rebuilt, she was reappointed to it, and held the position until her retirement from the service in 1903.

In 1884 the first school at Mardun—which in the native language means "misery"—was built in the midst of the dense bush by Mr. Elliott. It was a wooden building 30ft. x 15ft., with a slab floor. Mr. Foran was the first teacher, and the number of scholars 32. In 1909 an up-to-date weatherboard building, 26ft. x 24ft., was erected by the Education Department. The grounds have been neatly fenced, and there is now a fine plantation, a garden laid out in walks, and nursery and experimental plots have been established. The pioneers comprised Messrs. Elliott, Pincini, Inglis, Toomey, Howard, Campbell Bros., and Trease.

The Jeetho school was opened in 1886, in a small bush building erected in the corner of a small clearing with heavy bush on three sides, and tall bluegum and blackbutt trees towering into the sky, the heavy foliage almost excluding the sunlight. It opened with an attendance of 20, and for the first three years was in charge of Mr. E. J. Wilson, formerly teacher at Woodleigh. In the latter part of 1890 Mr. Stielow was appointed to the school, and continued in charge until 1915, having in the meantime obtained for the school a very wide reputation. In 1897 Inspector Bothroyd conducted two examinations under the "result" system. The percentage of passes was 100 and remained at that high level until the "result" system was abolished. A new school to accommodate 75 pupils was erected in 1908, and the old building fitted up for an infants' room, necessitating an increase in the staff, and raising the status of the school. In 1892 the South Gippsland Agricultural Society first offered prizes for State school work, and of these the Jeetho school gained nine; and in nineteen years has secured 858 prizes, some in competitions in States outside Victoria. In 1909 the Royal Agricultural Show Committee offered three valuable prizes for essays, and Jeetho scholars were successful in obtaining first and second prizes, and the following year in the same subject, first, second and third prizes. At the A.N.A. Exhibition in 1909 a gold medal for best handwriting, and first and second prizes for drawing, came to Jeetho, and in 1910 the Jeetho pupils secured the whole of the eight prizes awarded for writing, and two for drawing at the A.N.A. Exhibition. In the first year that merit certificates were issued, two were awarded to the Jeetho school, the total number gained by it to date (1918) being 102, most of which were gained during the last five years. The first scholarship was gained in 1909, two in 1911, and three in 1912. The school gained the A.N.A. prizes for best school garden for eight years in succession. The pupils have cultivated plots for a considerable time, and on one occasion donated a ton of potatoes grown on these plots to the Children's Hospital, Melbourne. The percentage of attendance at this school

has been very remarkable, ranging for many years between 95 and 100 per cent., though the bulk of the children came from considerable distances, some travelling between 30 and 40 miles by rail. Local effort contributed largely to the equipment of the school and grounds, particularly in supplying a piano, shelter-shed and library. It was recognised that the Jeetho school offered special opportunities to pupils, especially seniors who possessed ability and ambition, and the results are quite unique in school history. Teachers in other districts complained that parents, by sending the most promising pupils to the Jeetho school, had helped to keep down the records of their own district schools. There was certainly much truth in this contention; nevertheless, Mr. Stielow's ability in securing merit certificates and scholarships for his pupils was undoubtedly the chief factor in the success of the Jeetho school. The school was accidentally burnt down in 1914, but was rebuilt. Messrs. J. G. Wilson, N. Bennett, Hosking and Ireland were some of the first settlers.

A school was opened on January 16, 1886, at Mountain View, and one at Inverloch in August of the same year. At Halston, in the hills somewhere midway between Leongatha and Yarragon, a school was built by the early settlers and leased to the Government in 1886. It opened with an attendance of 22 scholars, many of whom had to walk from three to four miles through the forest to attend school.

In 1888, shortly after the opening of the Mirboo North railway, a school was erected on the top of Berry's Hill, which, until a deviation was made, was one of the most difficult hills to be found on any of the main roads of South Gippsland. The first teacher appointed was Miss David. The school was burned in the bushfires of 1898, and for over a year the district was without a school; but in 1899 a new school was opened at Berry's Creek, with Mr. Tanner as teacher. Among the early settlers were Messrs. Smith, St. Ellen, and Aberdeen.

The year 1889 constitutes a record in the establishment of state schools in the hill country under review, Leongatha, Loch, Almurta, Arawata and Krowera claiming this as the year of their birth.

The Almurta school was opened on New Year's Day, 1889. It was first known as Jumbunna South, but was changed to its present name of native origin, meaning "sweet," at the instance of Mr. Paul, of Grantville. The earlier settlers of the district were Messrs. Watson, Harding and M. Bowman.

Krowera state school was opened on May 16, 1889, Mr. Johnston Hughston being the first teacher. He enjoyed the luxury (in those days) of a spring mattress; but before he had the pleasure of that experience, Mr. Thompson had the unpleasant experience of carrying the mattress over two miles through the dense scrub. Miss Grace Hall and Mr. H. B. Vale succeeded Mr. Hughston as teachers. The early settlers were Messrs. Biggar, Belfrage, Mann, R. Wilson, J. R. Stewart and Jos. Thompson.

As a result of local meetings a public hall for school and church purposes was erected on the Two-chain road near the junction of the Kardella road. It was known as the Korumburra Hall, and school was opened there by Mr. Canale on September 28, 1889. When the Great Southern railway was started, and Korumburra township sprang into existence, it became necessary, in order to avoid confusion, to find a new name for the district and school, and the name of "Arawata," Mr. L. C. Holmes' residence, was chosen.

and thus the Korumburra school became the Arawata school. It was situated in one of the very heaviest timbered parts of South Gippsland, and it was over twenty years before the school and grounds were reasonably safe from falling timber. For many years the parents assembled annually as a working bee to cut down some of the enormous trees, and in later years to clear and burn off the fallen timber from the school ground. Some would bring axes, others saws, shovels, screwjacks, or teams of horses and bullocks. Mr. Canale was succeeded by Miss Connor, who, after 12 years' service, was in turn succeeded by Mr. A. Mitchell, to whom is due most of the credit for the picturesque appearance of the garden and grounds, which have been awarded a first prize certificate.

The Leongatha state school was started during September, 1889, in the Kooroman Hall, which was leased for school purposes. The building was built of hardwood boards, and had calico windows. A few planks of hardwood placed on sawn blocks constituted seating accommodation, and for the first fortnight the only school material was a packet of notepaper and a few leadpencils which the teacher (Mr. Denholm) had purchased. An urgent request to the Education Department resulted in the arrival, per mail boy via Mirboo, some 17 miles distant, of 36 copy books and 24 slates, the cost of transport being 30 -. The copy books were not used for several months, owing to the absence of desks. In November, 1889, Mr. John Jeffrey was appointed, and held the position of teacher until 1905, when he retired on a pension. In March, 1890, the Kooroman Hall authorities gave the Department notice to quit, and a contract was let for the erection of a school building. In the meantime Mr. Jeffrey offered to teach the children at his residence, and did so for over six months. Mr. Cowling had charge of the new school from 1902 to 1909, and during his term a library of 200 volumes, two shelter-sheds, school garden, swings, sewing machines, and teaching aids were among the many improvements added. Mr. M. Clanchy took charge in 1909, and as the buildings had again become overcrowded, a large infant room, cloak room, lavatory, and corridor were added, at a cost of £600.

The establishment of the Agricultural High School was the outcome of much local controversy and continued effort, under, at times, great discouragement. As far back as 1902, when a strong attempt was made through the shire council to subdivide and sell the whole of the Labour Colony area, one or two citizens entered vigorous protests, and urged that the area should be retained for the establishment of a dairying and agricultural college. The Government, however, sold portion of it. In 1905 and 1906 the agitation for subdivision was vigorously renewed and again opposed. The agricultural high school system was then being much discussed, and as Korumburra was anxious to have one of these schools established, a meeting was held at Korumburra at which a Leongatha representative attended, and it was resolved to try and obtain an Agricultural High School for Korumburra and an Agricultural College for Leongatha. The proposals were placed by a deputation before the Minister (Mr. Swinburne), who stated that he considered Leongatha too far east for an Agricultural College, but he was agreeable that an Agricultural High School should be established there. It was estimated that the initial cost of erecting buildings would be £1500, and the Woorayl Shire Council made the erection of the school possible by agreeing to raise £750 towards the cost, the payment being spread over a period of three years. An extra rate of 3d. in the pound was imposed in 1906, but owing to a change of Ministry, and the lack of interest throughout the State in connection with the high school movement, nothing was done for some



time. Later, however, money was placed on the estimates for the establishment of the school, and in 1910 a site was chosen on the Labour-colony area, after a visit by Mr. Frank Tate (Director of Education), the Hon. J. E. Mackey, M.L.A., and Inspector Leach. The new school was opened officially on March 7, 1913, by Mr. Frank Tate. The occasion was made the opportunity for holding an interesting exhibition of school work, at which over 39 district schools exhibited. The foundation members of the Council were Messrs. W. L. Livingstone, P. Johnson, G. F. Michael, S. C. Wilson, J. M. Molloy, P. Nash, J. O'Toole, A. Allan, Wm. Russell, J. Eccles, Wm. Watson, S. S. Smith, A. E. Nelson, R. Kewish, J. T. Willoughby, P. Matthewman, and Dr. Carr. The staff consisted of Messrs. A. Mesley (Principal), Sharpe, M.A., Cornell, and Miss Adamson, M.A.

The establishment of a State school at Juabumna East was in keeping with the primitive condition of the country. Mr. Bailey, who had only a few days previously arrived in Australia from Ireland, was the first teacher appointed. His first business was to explore the various tracks to find the settlers, and ascertain the number of scholars with which to open his roll, the result being an attendance of eight pupils upon the opening day in January, 1890. The school building was built of logs with a shingle roof and slab floor, and was owned by Mr. Arthur Elms. Desks, seats, etc., were mainly conspicuous by their absence. A neighbouring settler, however, made some rough benches by boring auger holes into the log walls, and then driving pegs into them and placing split slabs along the top of the pegs. These did duty until desks and other necessities were supplied. School continued here for some years, until in 1893 the Education Department sent Mr. McLeod to open a school in the Jumbumna Hall, where he had charge for two years. During his term, a heavy wind storm overturned the hall, fortunately during the night. While it was being rebuilt, the children were taught in an old building in Station Street. For some time the attendance only averaged about 20, but it gradually increased until the hall became too small, and a fine school was erected in 1900. The attendance continued to increase until the pupils numbered 180, necessitating increased accommodation. Mr. McLeod was succeeded by Mr. W. Eccles, son of one of the Korumburra pioneers, who had charge for 17 years. The original settlers were Messrs. Elliott, Hine, Glew, Herring, Horsley, McLeod, Clancy, Elms, Parsons, Rainbow and Matheson.

In the year 1890 a school was opened at Bena in what had been a Coffee Palace, and continued there until the present building was erected by the Education Department. The first teacher was Mr. Opie, who was succeeded by Mr. Mitchell, and then by Miss Mary Leys, one of the pioneer teachers of the district. Pioneers:—R. J. Fuller, T. J. Coverdale, Pobjoy Bros.,—Kewish, C. Blew.

On October 1, 1891, school was started at Bridge Creek in a building erected by four local residents. A sawmill was in operation there at the time, and the school was established chiefly in the interests of the "mill" children, as they were designated. It had a mud chimney, and was unlined for the first ten years. In 1901, however, by the efforts of the teacher, a sum of money was raised, and the school was lined and painted, and a brick chimney erected.

School was established about July, 1891, at Mardun South, in the old Presbyterian Church, and was held there for about ten years, until a new school was built upon five acres of land near the township, commanding extensive views of South Gippsland scenery. The first teacher was Mr.

Walters. The school committee and parents have taken a lively interest in the school, and have contributed nearly £100 in cash, besides other donations in kind, and have done a great amount of work at working bees. The school is now a fine, up-to-date building, comfortable and well equipped. Among those who have taken a keen interest in the development of the school are Messrs. A. McKinnon, Gray, Steele, Wilson, J. Coulter, and J. McQueen.

The residents of Fairbank in 1892 built a comfortable and commodious hall on Mr. R. Mitchell's property, from which the district received its name, and there a school was opened on November 28 of the same year. For some years previously Mrs. Alex. McNaughton, one of the pioneer settlers of the district, had gathered the neighbours' children at her own home, and taught them on several days of each week. This is but one of several instances where early settlers in remote districts have gratuitously given their services in teaching children unable to participate in State education. The school opened with an attendance of 12 pupils, and 40 is the highest number enrolled. Miss Campbell was the first teacher. The early settlers were Messrs. Mitchell, McLellan, Beard, Tack, McNaughton, Rasmussen, Hamman and Calder.

The establishment of the village settlement at Kardella, as well as the number of sawmill hands with families, caused an immediate need for a school, with the result that a public hall was built of sawn timber supplied gratuitously by Mr. McColl, millowner, and school was opened in it on November 7, 1893. Mr. Flude was the first teacher, followed by Mr. Patterson. The attendance became so large that the Department removed a large school from Clunes and erected it on Mr. R. Cornall's property. Mr. Mankey was the next teacher, and then Mr. Evans and Mr. Greenwood. The school has a fine garden, and a fine plantation of native and imported trees, giving protection from winter storms and summer heat. The parents' interest in the school is evinced by the fine shelter-shed, laboratory equipped with chemical balances, milk-testing machines, and other apparatus enabling pupils to practice science as applied to modern dairying. Mr. R. Cornall, one of the school committee, is an enthusiastic entomologist, and for several years gave periodical demonstrations on the subject to the scholars. Among the pioneer settlers were Messrs. R. and J. Cornall, J. Brydon, J. J. Palmer, A. Barrett and Spry.

Ryanston, originally known as Goodhurst, school was opened on August 16, 1894, as a half-time school with Powlett River, with Mr. A. A. Farthing (later M.L.A.) as teacher. Later, a full time school with Mr. Crossley as teacher, was started in a building erected by Mr. Jas. Daly. An up-to-date building was built by the Department in a more central situation, and opened as a school on June 30, 1909.

The Glenalvie state school was originally established at Mr. Varcoe's residence, and then known as the Wonthaggi North school, and conducted as a half-time school, in conjunction with Almurta, by Mr. G. H. Wood. Owing to the large increase of scholars at Glenalvie, a public hall was built and school started there with an average attendance of 50 pupils, under Mr. Ronald McDonald. In 1900 the name was changed to Glenalvie. The pioneers were Messrs. R. N. and F. J. Scott, Walker, Edwards and Dowel.

The Ruby state school was established in 1894. In 1895 the Outtrim school was started, and from that date to the year 1913 the following long list of state schools have been established in various parts of the district to keep pace with its educational requirements:—1899, Kongwak and Kileunda

Road; 1900, Dalyston; 1901, Kooroman, Nerrena East, Powlett River, and Trida; 1903, Korumburra South; 1905, Allambee East; 1906, Glen Forbes; 1907, Moyarra; 1909, Ferndale, Kardella South; 1910, Wonthaggi; 1911, Hicksborough, Dudley, Poowong East, Allambee Hall; 1912, St. Clair, Edgerton; 1913, Glen Forbes South.

All praise is due to the Education Department for its readiness at all times to provide teachers and schools. The hilly and inaccessible nature of the country, together with the fact that the whole of South Gippsland is fairly densely populated, has probably rendered it necessary for the Department to provide a proportionally greater number of teachers and schools in South Gippsland than in any other province of the State. Only those with personal experience of the early settlement can place a correct value on the services rendered by the teachers during the initial stages of settlement. The personal discomforts, both with regard to the primitive structures in which they taught, the rough and ready accommodation of the bush homestead, the bush tracks, a succession of mudholes for the greater part of the year, and the interminable drizzle and rain, were surely bad enough for men teachers, but for lady teachers, fresh from city life—they must surely have been heroines to carry on their work under such conditions. Often suitable accommodation could not be obtained within walking distance of the school, and the lady teacher has had to start by teaching herself to control and ride a horse up and down hills and gorges, along bush pack-tracks, and to learn the art of opening and shutting gates and sliprails from the saddle. For the most part, it may be said to their credit that they put up with the roughness and discomforts of bush life with Spartan courage and Christian fortitude.

And one cannot but feel sympathy also for both the mothers and children during those first decades when drizzling rain, day after day, for over six months of the year, was the common experience. Wet garments and wet feet, which were more usual than dry ones; mud and slush underfoot, with undergrowth and bush dripping water through all the long winter, meant continual drying of clothes, with the many ailments to which children are liable.

Thus we find that the Education Department, their fine staff of teachers, the parents and also their children, have all borne their part in making the history of education during the making and building up of a new and valuable province.

## The Methodist Church in South Gippsland.

THE REV. JAS. SMITH.



Following in the wake of the selector pioneer there came the ecclesiastical pioneer, designated by some the "sky pilot." The Methodist Church was early in the field. Her first services were conducted in the homes of the people or, weather permitting, in the open air.

At the close of the year 1877, in the vicinity of the present township of Poowong, there was a notice on a big gum tree intimating that "Divine Service will be held at Mr. Burchett's house at 3 o'clock on Sunday, December 30, 1877; all welcome." This service was duly held and was conducted by Mr. Caleb Burchett, an excellent lay preacher of the Methodist Church, formerly of Brunswick. From that date regular services were established. Soon the congregation became too large for the "Church in the house," and steps were taken to erect a church. The Rev. John Watsford, the General Secretary of Methodist Home Missions, was interviewed, and he promised to visit Poowong. Great preparation was made for Mr. Watsford's visit. A big tent was sent up from Melbourne. In this a preaching service was held on the Sunday, and a tea and public meeting during the week. The object was "to raise funds for the erection of a Wesleyan Church for the parishes of Poowong and Jeetho on a portion of the reserve about to be sold." This was a most successful function. The settlers came from far and near. A subscription list was started and was liberally responded to. That list bears the names of some of the early settlers of Gippsland, viz., Mark Gardiner, W. V. Hill, C. Burchett, C. Cook, C. H. Gardiner, T. Fordyce, W. H. Bee, F. Hammond, D. Ferrier, E. C. Holmes, W. Foreman, D. McTavish, C. Mair. — Faithful, — Gowdie, — Grant, S. Medley, P. J. Murphy, W. Horsley, D. Beckett, W. Baker, Miss Motton, Miss L. Motton, and Mrs. Clayson. Mr. Gardner was elected treasurer, and Mr. Hill and Mr. C. H. Gardner secretaries.

It was not an easy matter to build in those days. Owing to very wet weather the first men engaged in timber getting abandoned their contract. Others with stouter hearts took the job on and soon the contract for the erection of the building was let to Mr. L. C. Holmes, a new settler.

The Rev. J. C. Symons had the honour of preaching the opening services. A successful tea and public meeting was held next day. The tea meeting ticket bears the date of November 4, 1878.

Subsequently other churches were built. The preachers' plan has the names of Poowong, Poowong North, Sunnyside, Fernhill, Lang Lang East and Medley's. Changes since those early days have taken place in the ecclesiastical boundaries of Poowong and its surroundings, but Divine service has always been held in Poowong.

As the settlers began to go further south towards Tarwin, and east towards Mirboo, there was a vast stretch of country where no religious services were held. An occasional service was held on the coast by a visiting clergyman from Yarram. It was a kind of yearly visitation to two places, Warratah Bay and "Black's" on the Tarwin. Some good Methodists from Ballarat and district had taken up land in Leongatha, Jumbunna and Korumburra. They felt the need of a "spiritual shepherd." Representations were made to the Rev. E. S. Bickford, who had succeeded the Rev. J. Watsford as General Secretary of Home Missions. In the year 1885 he visited Leongatha and conducted service in the home of Mr. Jacob Thomas, of "Lyre-bird Mound." Here he met a few representatives from all round the district. Mr. Williams, Senr., of Buninyong, had promised generous support. On his return he visited Ballarat and interviewed James Smith (later the Rev. J. Smith, of North Melbourne) and asked him to become the pioneer missionary of that part of Gippsland between Poowong and Foster. After a few weeks consideration, Mr. Smith consented to go. It needs to be remembered that such places as Leongatha, Jumbunna, Koorooman, etc., were not then on the map.

In the month of December, 1886, the pioneer missionary set out for his new field of labour. After training it to Frankston and coaching it to Hastings, he took steamer for Griffith's Point (now San Remo). At that picturesque watering place he was met by Mr. J. Hamilton, of Leongatha, with a horse for the missionary's use. Mr. Hamilton informed Mr. Smith that he could not return with him as he had to go on to Melbourne. It seemed a risky business to turn a new chum adrift in the Gippsland forest without a guide. A plan of the route and other particulars were furnished, and the missionary, well mounted, set out that same day to find Mr. Kent's home in the vicinity of the now famous coalfield, Wonthaggi. The Kent family most hospitably entertained him overnight. Next day the journey was completed along a very lonely track, "Lyre-bird Mound" being reached just at sundown, and the missionary warmly welcomed by Messrs. J. and W. C. Thomas, and the members of their families.

Prior to the advent of the missionary it had become customary for a few of the settlers to meet in some of the homes on the Sabbath and read and sing together, thus forming the nucleus of a congregation. There were no public buildings of any description. The homes were roughly built, some of spars, and others of palings. The parsonage was a small log hut, lined with hessian. On the first Sunday after the missionary's arrival he preached to a congregation of seventeen in Mr. Jacob Thomas' home. The service and singing was most hearty. Immediately he set to work to find out his future parishioners. This was no light task, involving many hard hips. The tracks were difficult to negotiate. It used to rain in those days, not a paltry two or three inches, but several feet of rain. An ordinary shower would last about three weeks. Swollen rivers and blind creeks were met everywhere. To find the settlers was exceedingly difficult. They entered South Gippsland by different routes, some coming by the coast, other by way of Dromin, others by way of Mirboo North. "Whitelaw's Track," and McDonald's Track" were much spoken of and much used in those days. There were the "tracks" opened up by the Government. There were many competitions, however, for all classes and creeds vied with one another in bidding him welcome.

Over fifty miles square of territory was practically unexplored by any church. Poowong, Warragul, Morwell and Yarram had clergymen stationed

in their midst. The honour of first establishing and sustaining regular religious services belongs to the Methodist Church. One of the first plans, dated 1887, contains the names of the following places where services were regularly conducted:—Leongatha, Jumbunna East, Korumburra, Koorooman, Tarwin, Waratah Bay, Nation's and Newton's. Later Mirboo North and "Dodd's," Mirboo South, were added. The lay helpers associated with the missionary in covering this wide field were W. J. Williams, W. C. Thomas, J. Hamilton, M. Allison, J. Thomas, — Dyson, and H. Medew. Occasionally Mr. G. Dibdin, of Melbourne, rendered valuable assistance. When one remembers the difficulty of travel, one can appreciate the loyal help of such sons of the Church. The need of suitable buildings was soon felt. The congregations outgrew their homes. The following homes had services conducted in them:—Leongatha, Mr. J. Thomas'; Jumbunna, McLeod's, Rainbow's, and W. J. Williams'; Korumburra, Brydon's and Newton's; Koorooman, Creighton's and Allison's; Tarwin, Turpin's and Wydel's; Anderson's Inlet, Kidd's; Waratah Bay, Skelton's; Mirboo South, Dodd's; Mirboo North, Hall's.

In 1887 a move in the erection of a church building was made at a meeting at Mr. John Brydon's home, known as "Glentress," in what is now the Kardella district. The site chosen was on the property of Mr. George Lancey, who gave a quarter of an acre of land. A working bee felled the trees and cleared the ground. Arrangements were made to get sawn timber from a mill beyond Poowong, close to Drouin. Mr. T. Lancey, with his bullock team, undertook the carting, and it would be interesting to know how many times he had to load and unload through being bogged.

As soon as the timber was on the ground the "Bee" got to work under the supervision of Mr. Brydon, and when the date advertised for the opening was reached the building was ready. Not a penny was expended on labour. The opening services were preached by the Rev. C. Angwin, of Poowong, to large congregations. On the Monday there was a social and entertainment presided over by Jacob Thomas, J.P., of Leongatha. That event will live long in the memory of all who were privileged to attend. It was a pronounced success. The homes of the Twyfords, Westerns, Newtons, Fidges, Lanceys, and others were fully taxed accommodating the visitors. In November of the same year, 1887, another church erection was decided on. As in the former case a "bee" got to work and cleared the ground. The material came by boat from Melbourne to Anderson's Inlet, and Mr. W. C. Thomas very generously carted it to the site, which was on his father's property, "Lyrebird Mound," near the present site of Koonwarra, to which township the church was afterwards removed when the railway came through. This church also was erected by the people without a penny being expended on labour. The opening services were preached by that large-hearted man, the Rev. E. S. Bickford. The church was crowded at each service. For the next day there was a very full programme. They had planned for a picnic, sale of gifts, a tea and public meeting. What a crowd gathered. The whole forest seemed to be centred in one spot. The Hon. F. Longmore came over from the Tarwin to preside at the public meeting. There were no "Melbas" in song present, but there was some good singing by the choir and by visitors, and some excellent speeches. There was no catching of last train or tram or coach or even horse. To move through that forest at night was well nigh impossible; it was certainly very dangerous. What to do with the people after the usual closing hour was the difficulty. There was not sufficient accommodation for one half of them. To get over the difficulty it was decided to keep going till daylight. A

programme was soon provided and kept at least some awake until early morn. It should be stated that in one house the ladies went to bed in relays. From every point of view this church opening was a great success.

Thus the work grew and much space could be taken up in chronicling such events. From unexpected quarters there came requests for religious services. A letter appeared in a Mirboo paper, headed "sadly neglected." It was an appeal to the Methodist Church to give some attention to the spiritual needs of the Mirboo South residents. The pioneer missionary was soon on the spot, and soon a successful service was established in the home of Mr. Frank Dodd.

The work soon became too much for one man to supervise. Another agent, Mr. Stafford by name, was sent to take over the Korumburra end. He proved himself a capable man. He was ably assisted by Mr. J. Western, Mr. Shepherd, Mr. W. Fwyford and others. Mirboo North was then made a separate station, with a missionary in charge. The greatest drawback in the early days were the well nigh impassable pack-tracks in the long winter months. The reader will better understand this when it is on record that the pioneer missionary took nine hours in the saddle in returning from one of his appointments, a distance of 25 miles. For a time he had three saddle horses, and in addition had frequently to borrow others. There were many compensations, such as the kind hospitality extended, the willingness to help, and the marked progress in every way. Many of the laymen gave much valuable time to church affairs. As a rule it took pretty well three days for the quarterly meetings of the circuit. They were held at different places each time. They were times of great spiritual uplift and brotherly intercourse. Some, prior to taking up their abode in Gippsland, were associated with other communions, but right loyally did they support the pioneer Methodist missionary. Those were not the days of "isms." That day, unfortunately for the Kingdom of Christ, has come since. Churches, many and varied, abound now. Only in one place has the spirit of unity been maintained, namely, at Arawatta, on what was known in the early days as the "two chain road."

Such, in some measure, is the history of the beginnings of the Pioneer Church in South Gippsland.



# Church of England.

MR. W. H. C. HOLMES.

The early history of the Church of England in this district centres in the Poowong district, the first service being held by the Rev. Furlonge on December 15, 1878, in a building erected for school and church purposes, and which is now part of the Wesleyan Church. Occasionally Church of England services were afterwards conducted in this building, and also at the residence of Mrs. Horsley and at Mr. L. C. Holmes' store, the preachers coming from Grantville, Lang Lang, and Cranbourne. On May 30, 1880, Mr. Gunson officiated, and on December 14, 1880, the Rev. Walker held a service at the store and baptised a number of children. Rev. H. Potter, of Grantville, was entrusted with the establishment of the Church of England in the Poowong district, and conducted service at Mrs. Horsley's on February 13, 1881. He was then a grey-haired veteran, and one cannot review the first decade of the Church of England history in South Gippsland without paying a tribute to the great zeal and energy displayed by him in opening up a district so remote from his own, and whose only means of communication were the roughest pack-tracks. In 1881, owing to communication being opened up with Drouin, the charge of the Poowong Church of England was transferred to the Rev. Sandiford, of Warragul.

There were a number of families settled on their bush holdings in the area between Bena and McDonald's Track, who were too far distant from Poowong to attend service there. Mrs. Matthews, of Llandaff Glen, offered her residence, and the Rev. Potter, and afterwards the Rev. Walker, availed themselves of the opportunity to minister to these families on the outer verge of settlement. Mrs. Matthews took an active interest in establishing regular services, and eventually, with the assistance of neighbours, prominent among whom were Messrs. W. Langham, Coverdale Bros., Matthews Bros. and Sanders, a small church was erected, almost wholly of bush material, by Mr. Henry Eccles, on the property of Mr. Theo. Matthews. Archdeacon Langley opened the church about the year 1883, and regular services were maintained for many years by the Revs. Sparling, Secomb, Walker and Wiltshire from the Poowong centre. The building was destroyed during the bushfires of 1898, and as churches had been established at other centres near at hand, it was not considered necessary to re-erect it.

The first Church of England minister to reside in Poowong was the Rev. Sparling. He and Mr. Secomb, who followed him, conducted services in the Poowong Methodist Church. In 1884 the present Church of England at Poowong was built, and was for that time a building of considerable pretension. The Rev. Dr. Moorhouse opened it on July 11, 1884. The roads were very bad, and a breakdown of the Drouin coach necessitated the bishop, as well as the other passengers, travelling portion of the journey on foot.

In 1885 the committee decided, when having the church painted, to remove the crosses at each end of the gable by cutting them off a foot above the roof. The Rev. Sandiford, hearing of the decision, cautioned the painter against interfering with the crosses without the permission of the bishop, as it was an indictable offence, and he might be apprehended for sacrilege. Needless to say, there was no indictment, and the crosses remained intact.



During February, 1886, Bishop Moorhouse again conducted service in the church. He was deeply interested in the bush missionary work of his church, and showed his eminent ability in selecting a suitable man, by appointing Mr. A. A. Wiltshire to Poowong. He was young, and had just that bright, cheery and hopeful disposition that was no necessary to hearten and encourage the early settlers, who had so much to contend with in their new venture. The interminable mud for so long a period of the year restricted the social life within very narrow limits, particularly for women. Thus the weekly or fortnightly visits of the missionary were "oases in an arid desert." During the five or six years of his pastoral work among the early settlers, it is not surprising that he endeared himself, not only to the members of his own congregation, but also to those of other denominations. During the earlier years of the Poowong Church of England, Mrs. Chas. Cook and Mrs. Chas. Mair for many years rendered valuable services as organists.

On January 1st, 1888, Mr. Wiltshire opened services at a small bush school at Jeetho, not far from the site of the present State school. A riding party of 24 visitors from Poowong assisted at the service. He was also the Church of England pioneer in the Arawata and Kardella district, then known as Korumburra, holding services at Mr. Thos. Rowe's, and at Mr. Duncan Clerk's. At the latter place there was no organ, and an accordion was used as a substitute, Mrs. Clerk, and occasionally Mr. James Cornall, officiating.

Services were also established in the Jumburra district, where Mr. Wiltshire was greatly assisted, as well as at Poowong and Jeetho, by Messrs. E. K. Herring and M. McLeod, two of the pioneers, who filled many appointments which would otherwise have lapsed. Mr. Geo. Lloyd, the first married minister in the district, succeeded Mr. Wiltshire about 1888, after acting as his assistant. Mr. Wiltshire was afterwards transferred to Euroa, where he met an untimely death through falling over a cliff. His two sons, Colonel A. R. L. Wiltshire, D.S.O., Croix de Guerre, and C.M.G., and Lieutenant John Wiltshire, M.C., both of the Australian Imperial Forces, served their country with conspicuous bravery in the Great War, as did many another son of the old pioneers.

Bishop Goe preached at Poowong for the first time on March 2nd, 1888, and again on February 12th, 1890. The Rev. Walker, who followed Mr. Lloyd, started services in the Arawata Hall on May 1th, 1890. Bishop Goe, accompanied by Mrs. Goe, visited Arawata, and held a baptismal and confirmation service on April 6th, 1891. Mr. Walker was succeeded by Mr. Rouch.

When Korumburra was established, it became the centre for this part of Gippsland. Mr. Elvery was the first Church of England minister, followed by Mr. North. Services were held first at Mr. Guy's home, and later in Mr. Shepherd's galvanised iron store. Bishop Goe preached on one occasion to a congregation of about 20 ladies and Messrs. Jas. Cornall and Tho. Guy. This attendance throws some light on the church-going habit of the class of men engaged in the clearing and construction of the railway. There were numerous camps, and they comprised the great majority of the population at that time. From Mr. Shepherd's store the services were removed to the old Mechanics' Institute. When Mr. North was appointed, Archdeacon Langley preached in the Arawata Hall on December 17th, 1893, and on many occasions he and Archdeacon Armstrong officiated in the Poowong church.

One of the most important events in the more modern history of the Church of England was the appointment of the Rev. W. D. A. Reid to Korumburra, where he came with a high reputation, which he sustained for the 14 years during which he remained there. In his work at Korumburra he was ably assisted by Messrs. James Cornall, R. S. B. Young, R. G. Shogor,

A. P. Lloyd, Thos. Guy, G. W. Mitchell, and Mrs. Duncan Clerk. On one occasion, while riding to a service at Outtrim, his horse fell, and being a man of considerable weight he received a severe shaking, and for a considerable time afterwards he walked the seven miles to and from Outtrim to keep his appointments.

Church of England services were first established in the Outtrim district in a log hut, on Mr. A. W. Elms' farm, some four or five families comprising the congregation. On one occasion an unpleasant sensation was caused by the appearance of a snake during the service. With the development of the coal industry and the formation of the Outtrim township, the supporters of the Church of England became more numerous, and the local committee decided to erect a church. Through the efforts of Mr. Chas. Beard, the gift of land was obtained at a land sale held by Messrs. J. H. Riley and W. L. Baillieu, and on this land a very nice little church was erected, and before long entirely cleared of debt.

The establishment of Church of England services at Leonagtha were largely due to the efforts of Mrs. Mary R. Shingler, who, after living eight years there, with only one opportunity of attending an English Church service, wrote early in 1890 to the Bishop of Melbourne, asking if a clergyman was available for the district. The Bishop's reply was "if men and means were forthcoming, one would be sent." At the end of January a letter came from Ven. Archdeacon Langley, saying that he would visit Leonagtha on February 25th, and hold any services that could be arranged. On that day the first service was held in Mrs. Shingle's house, which 30 people attended. Communion and baptismal services were held the following morning, and an evening service in a school known as Crichton's, about two miles out of what is now Leonagtha. At these services Archdeacon Langley, the Revs. H. de Putron Hitchcock, and C. J. Chambers, of Mirboo North and Foster, took part, and also the Rev. W. R. Elvery, who was afterwards the first resident reader. Since that time gradual advance has been made under many drawbacks, and now (1917) there is a wooden church (all seats free), parish hall, and parsonage, all nearly free of debt. The parish has laboured under the disadvantage of many changes in its clergy in the 28 years of its existence, during which time there have been ten. To single out any one for special prominence in their work would be difficult, but to the pioneer, Mr. Elvery, it is only his due to say that few would do the work he did. He took services at Poowong, Leonagtha, and Inverloch on one day, and at Korumburra, Leonagtha and Waratah on another. To Bishop Goe and Archdeacon Langley the church owed much in the early days for their wise counsel, their ministrations often involving long journeys through miles of roadless country in all weather. To the Rev. E. S. North we are indebted for the first missionary work, and the name of Richard de Courcy Shaw will be a memory of gratitude to many parents as the devoted head of the Sunday school for 23 years.

The date on the chalice that has always been in use in this parish may be an item of interest to many in days to come. It was given by her son in 1806 to an invalid mother in England, for use in her home. The communion set was completed here by a descendant, who is a parishioner, and presented to the church in memory of a relative.

One cannot conclude this retrospect without speaking in the highest terms of the self-sacrificing and willing co-operation given, often at a great sacrifice of time and energy, by lay readers in various parts of the district to the ministers, with whom they were associated, in building up the spiritual and social fabric, which is such an essential part of the life of a people.

# The Presbyterian Church.

MR. A. GILLAN.

The information contained in this sketch is chiefly obtained from articles which appeared in "The Quarterly Review," published in Korumburra, from 1905 to 1911, and edited by Mr. G. H. Murray.

In 1883, six allotments in the Township of Poowong were purchased for a manse site by Mr. James Gibb, M.L.A., at the request of Mrs. Florence Rebecca Wallace-Dunlop, who took an active interest in the Presbyterian cause there, and had collected £40 towards the erection of a manse. Mr. Gibb, Mr. David Fernier, and Mr. J. R. Wallace-Dunlop were nominated by her as trustees of the site, which, after remaining unimproved for many years, was transferred in 1907 to the Poowong congregation, on their agreeing to pay £15 towards the manse at Loch, which had been built some years previously. Shortly afterwards, the site was sold, and the money realised formed the nucleus of a manse fund at Poowong.

To Mr. John Reid, of St. Helier, is due the honour of initiating the first Presbyterian Church service in the district. As a result of correspondence respecting the want of church services, he induced the Rev. J. Caldwell, of Mornington, to hold a service in the Jeetho West School on March 22nd, 1885. A committee was formed, comprising Messrs. W. Cron (chairman), John Reid (secretary), M. Bowman (treasurer), R. Magill and J. R. Stewart, and at the first meeting, held on April 19th, 1885, it was resolved to establish Presbyterian services in the district. The Rev. John Murdoch was sent to take charge, but after six weeks was succeeded by the Rev. John Taylor, who left at the end of two months, and the Rev. J. W. Little took his place. He added Poowong to his charge, and held the first Presbyterian service there in the State School on October 18th, 1885. A provisional committee was formed, consisting of Messrs. James Scott, T. G. Scott, R. Gregg, A. Kennedy (treasurer), A. Gillan (secretary), and it was arranged to hold fortnightly services. Later, Messrs. R. O. Timms and H. Campbell joined the committee, whilst Mr. D. McTavish was a warm supporter.

In 1885 services were started in the Leongatha district by Mr. Duncan, who was stationed at Mirboo North, the mission centre being at Traralgon. One of the preaching stations was at the residence of Mr. R. Smith, Mardan West, and in 1888 the district of Kooroومان was included. Later, the territory was handed over to the care of the South Melbourne Presbytery, and Mr. Brandrick, from Poowong, took charge, but it was not until the division of the district into two charges in 1891, when Mr. Law took the portion of the Poowong district north of the railway line, that the work was taken up regularly.

Poowong was, in the early days, the centre from which a number of preaching stations were established. Mr. J. R. Stewart, of Kongwal, wrote:—"The district was a large and scattered one, and under a single ministry. This necessitated a great amount of supply work by laymen. In such work Mr. A. Gillan was always to the front, riding great distances from his home to conduct services, and has been styled 'The father of the Presbyterian Church in South Gippsland.'"

In 1886 services were started at Poowong East, Mr. R. Henry being secretary, and in Korumburra the first service was held by the Rev. J. E. Armour in 1887. In 1889 services were begun at Loch, Mr. C. S. Bigelow being secretary, and in 1890 Bena was occupied, Mr. R. J. Fuller acting as secretary. In the same year services were started at Arawatta, and at Crichton's Hall, Messrs. John Bell and M. Allison being the respective secretaries. In connection with the church at Arawatta, which is used by Presbyterians and Methodists alternately, Mr. John Ritchie started a Union Sabbath School, attended by children of both denominations. In 1889 services were commenced at Longwarry East, Mr. James Aikman being secretary, and other helpers were Messrs. John Brock and Thos. Hallyburton. Fairbank was also started as a preaching station in the same year, Mr. A. McNaughton being secretary, with Messrs. A. McLennan, Mitchell and Black as members of committee. In 1892 services were started at Strzelecki, Mr. F. Raven being secretary, while other helpers were Messrs. Munro, Kelly, Claney, McKæ, McIntosh, Adkins, and Ross.

After Mr. Little's departure, several missionaries worked with varying success until the appointment in 1889 of Mr. Brandrick, who, although upwards of 60 years of age, was a most energetic worker. He was the first to establish the Federal Committee, consisting of one or more delegates from each preaching station. The first meeting was held at Loch, when the building of a manse was one of the matters considered. In the beginning of 1891 the district was divided, Mr. Brandrick taking the district South of the railway line, while Mr. Edgar Law, a young student, took charge on the North side.

A church costing £250 was erected at Poowong, on a site purchased from Mrs. Horsley, and opened on July 27th, 1890, by Mr. Brandrick, the original trustees being Messrs. James Scott, A. Gillan, Hugh Campbell, R. O. Timms, and R. Gregg.

In 1893, Korumburra was made the centre of a ministerial charge, and the Rev. J. G. Davies appointed. He describes his first experiences as follows:—"In 1893, there was a large influx of population to Korumburra and the surrounding district. The coal mines were being opened out, the railway to Jumburra and Outtrim was in course of construction, and much work in clearing land and road-making was in progress; so, it seemed to the Home Mission Committee of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria that the time had come to send a minister to the district. Mr. Edgar Law, home missionary, from Poowong, held services occasionally in the Mechanics' Institute, then on the North side of the railway line, and I was asked to go to Korumburra with the object of forming a charge there. Accordingly I arrived in Korumburra in pouring rain on May 27th, 1893, and found Mr. Wm. Henderon waiting to meet me. Mr. Geo. Matheson, of Moyarra, was also at the station, and told me I was to ride out with him on a horse he had brought in for me, and conduct service the following morning. The service was held at Moyarra in a log schoolhouse, and Mr. G. Beard, Mr. Geo. Matheson, and Mr. Jos. Rainbow composed the congregation. In the evening service was held in Korumburra in a large unlined and ill-lighted hall, the attendance being three men, one woman, and three children. This was not a bright beginning, but it was known that there were staunch and loyal Presbyterians on many of the surrounding farms ready to give a hearty welcome and generous support to a minister of their own church."

The preaching places were now under the care of Mr. Davies until 1900, when it was considered that something more should be done at Leongatha, so Mr. James Forbes was appointed to the mission there, with Mt. Eccles and Berry's Creek as out-stations. In 1901 the Rev. H. C. Matthew was appointed, and in the same year land was bought for a church and manse site, and a church built and opened by the Rev. Professor McDonald the same year.

In Korumburra everything had to be done. There was no church, manse, Sabbath School, or organisation of any kind. A committee representing all parts of the charge was formed, and it was decided to build a manse. A house, costing £250, was built, and in it the Sabbath School was started in April, 1894. The services were held in a hall situated on land in the railway reserve, which had been purchased and fitted up for a church. The congregation increased, and later, through Mr. J. R. Munro, the present excellent site was purchased for £210, and a church erected at a cost of about £400. The building was opened on December 2nd, 1900, and subsequently the original manse was sold, and a new one built on the church site. Mr. A. H. Thomson rendered valuable service as head of the Sabbath School and choir-master, and was succeeded in the latter capacity by Mr. James Burnet.

Besides Korumburra and Moyarra, Mr. Davies, with the assistance of Mr. Law, conducted services at Koorooman, Fairbank, Arawatta, and Ruby, and Kardella was soon added to the list of stations. Mr. Matthew Allison took services frequently, and by his aid preaching was maintained in these seven preaching stations. Messrs. John and Stephen Ritchie, of Arawatta, and Mr. David Munro, of Strzelecki, also gave valuable assistance to the minister in his pioneering work.

In the district South of Korumburra, services were first started at Moyarra, where a church was opened in July, 1893, Messrs. G. Matheson and Rainbow Bros. taking an active interest in the work. It was burned down in the great fire of 1898, and a new building was erected at Kongwak, on a site given by Mr. W. J. Williams. Whilst the church is Presbyterian, there is an arrangement that the Methodists shall have the use of the building for worship every alternate Sabbath. Mr. Williams has been superintendent of the Sabbath School, which is attended by children of different denominations.

At Outtrim, services were first held in the Methodist church. In 1902 a block of land was secured, and on March 1st, 1903, a church, which cost £540, including furnishing, was opened by the Rev. A. Alwyn Ewan, and a Sabbath School was started under the superintendence of Mr. W. H. Walters. The first board of management consisted of Messrs. J. Brownlee, James Johnston, Donald McLeod, D. C. McKenzie, J. McAllan, John Robb, Alex. Thomson, A. R. Tulloch, E. A. Wheeler, W. H. Walters, W. L. Richardson (secretary), R. Gillespie (treasurer). Arrangements were made to form Outtrim, Kongwak, and Moyarra into a mission charge, of which Mr. Carlton was the first missionary.

From the little meeting convened by Mr. John Reid, upwards of 30 years ago, there have been established two regular charges, Korumburra and Leongatha, with their outside stations, and three mission charges, Outtrim, Poo-wong, and Loch, which include eleven preaching places. There have also been built three manses and nine churches; and so the Presbyterian Church moves steadily and surely on its way, assisting in the great and good work done by all denominations throughout this part of South Gippsland.

# The Infancy and Progress of the Catholic Church in Korumburra.

MR. E. F. WILLIAMSON.

Old as Christianity itself, yet ever young and expanding, the Catholic Church follows whither her children may roam, and among the sturdy resourceful pioneers who ventured to carve out homes in the heart of what was then a primeval forest, in a great measure unexplored by civilised man, were members of the Catholic fold. Few in number, and widely scattered as they were, for some time no concerted effort was made to have a Catholic mission permanently established.

With the advent of the railway and the birth of Korumburra came a considerable influx of population, and among those attracted by the glowing promise of the new-born township were many Catholics, some of whom took a prominent part in the pioneering work of the Church mission in Korumburra. This increase soon eventuated in a movement to have Mass celebrated in the town, and so it happened that one Sunday morning, about twenty worshippers reverently knelt in prayer on the landing at the top of the stairway in the Korumburra Hotel, then newly built by the late Mr. A. Radovick, and heard Mass celebrated by the Rev. Father O'Leary, of the Warragul mission. For some time regular monthly services were held, but as the Catholic population steadily increased, the limited space on the landing became inconveniently overcrowded, so arrangements were made to have the services conducted in the newly-erected Mechanics' Institute, which then stood, not in its present central position, but among the timber on the top of the hill in Station Street.

So important had this outpost of the Church now become that fortnightly services were held. Early in 1893 the forward movement took a decided practical turn. On Sunday, January 15th, a meeting of the worshippers was held, Father O'Leary, of Warragul, presiding. The outcome was the appointment of a committee, consisting of Messrs. A. Radovick, W. Malone, O'Connor, J. M. Gannon, H. Eccles, senior, P. Fahey, and the secretary, E. F. Williamson, to inspect land then under offer, with power to purchase should it be deemed suitable for Church purposes. The seven gentlemen appointed were the active spirits in the pioneering work of the Church in Korumburra. The committee soon found that the selection of a suitable site was no easy matter. What were considered good positions had already been alienated by the Crown. Negotiations were opened with a private owner, and after some delay, the present site was secured in July, 1894, for £100. The only obstacle in the way was a financial one, but with earnest adherents of the Church at the helm, the difficulty was soon surmounted, and on March 1st, 1895, Mr. Bald's tender (£230 10s.) for the erection of the church building was accepted. Owing to the larger portion of the Township being in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, Korumburra early in 1894 had been attached to the Dandenong mission, Father Daly being the Parish priest.

Sunday, April 28th, 1895, was a red letter day among the Catholics of the district, the occasion being the blessing and consecration of the Church

as a place of divine worship by Archbishop Carr. The rapid expansion of the mining, dairying, and agricultural industries was still largely increasing the population not only of Korumburra, but also the outlying townships of Loch, Jumburra, and Outtrim. For a time the spiritual wants of the Catholics of these places were ministered to from Dandenong, but the organising and administrative ability of His Grace, Archbishop Carr, led him to form a new Parish, comprising all these outposts of the Church, with Father Keating as Parish priest. To be convinced that the Catholic Church in this favoured and bountiful part of South Gippsland has ever moved forward from the day when the handful of worshippers knelt on the staircase landing, one needs but look around. Three churches, a convent and school, and an ornate palatial presbytery, where Father Rafferty, the Parish priest, welcomes all, and dispenses good cheer, are ample evidence.



# Impressions of Gippsland.

MISS M. C. JOHNSON.



Fair fertile land, where beauty reigns supreme,  
The artist may sojourn and poet dream,  
Midst picturesque seclusion here alone,  
To pay their homage at Queen Nature's throne,  
And mark her varied moods as she appears,  
Like some fair changeful maid of tender years—  
Gay in sweet Spring, in Summer grand and proud,  
Coy in fickle Autumn, in tears 'neath Winter's cloud.

I fain would linger in some sunlit glade,  
Or wander through those peaceful aisles of shade,  
And through the gullies where the rippling creek,  
Midst fern and bracken plays at hide and seek,  
With merry sunbeams as it winds along  
Till lost in some mysterious billabong;  
Its soothing rhythm falls upon the ear  
In dulcet cadence ever sweet to hear.

I love to climb the dark-browed mountain side,  
Where broad-leaved tree ferns flourish in their pride,  
And breathe the pure exhilarating air—  
The precious gift of Heaven's diffusion there,  
Whilst lovely scenes viewed from that lofty crest,  
On memory's pages deeply are impressed,  
The distant sea arrests my wandering gaze,  
In dreamy splendour gleaming through the haze.

Tier upon tier those scrub-clad ranges tower,  
Like massive ramparts of an Unseen Power;  
Each peak in Alpine grandeur steep and high,  
While the deep gorges in the shadows lie,  
A thousand sun-kissed hills of emerald hue,  
Rise up to greet the sky of azure blue,  
And pleasant homesteads nestle here and there  
On fertile slopes amongst the foliage fair.





"Gullies where the rippling creek,  
Midst fern and bracken,  
Plays at hide and seek."

Amongst the hills I trace the winding road,  
By thriving townships—Industry's abode—  
The iron monster rushes on its way  
Through rural scenes far from the city gay,  
Laden with deposit from the mine,  
Or the rich produce of the meek-eyed kine,  
And bounteous products of the fruitful soil,  
Won by the sturdy settler's thrifty toil.

Those blackened tree trunks mark the bush-fire's course,  
Where it swept on with its resistless force;  
But once more o'er that devastated scene,  
Has Nature spread her robe of verdure green,  
A forest giant, crumbling in decay,  
Midst fern and mosses, mingling with the clay,  
Reminds me that when life's brief term is o'er,  
All doth return to Mother Earth once more.

When o'er the landscape shades of evening creep,  
 Then to their forest homes the bush birds sweep,  
 To chant their hymns of praise from some sweet bower,  
 In solemn hush of Nature's vesper hour,  
 As myriad stars illumine the vault on high,  
 From the dim distance comes the mopoke's cry:  
 The soft moon rises o'er the eastern range  
 And floods the earth with light subdued and strange.

The tall dead gums fantastic shadows cast,  
 Like giant spectres of a mystic past,  
 When a dark race roamed these vast forests through,  
 To hunt the 'possum, bear, or kangaroo,  
 Or in the moonlight 'neath some grand old tree,  
 Assembled for their wild corroboree,  
 Ere mighty progress, with his axe and spade,  
 Did those primeval solitudes invade.

Victoria's Eden! Memory loves to rove,  
 Through each romantic glen and sylvan grove,  
 Where fragrant shrubs perfume the gentle breeze,  
 That softly sighs and murmurs through the trees,  
 There, 'midst the music of the warbling birds,  
 The soul communes in thoughts too deep for words,  
 Of deep humility and reverent love,—  
 With Him who guards Creation from above.



# The Country as It Is, 1918.

MR. P. H. WATKINSON.

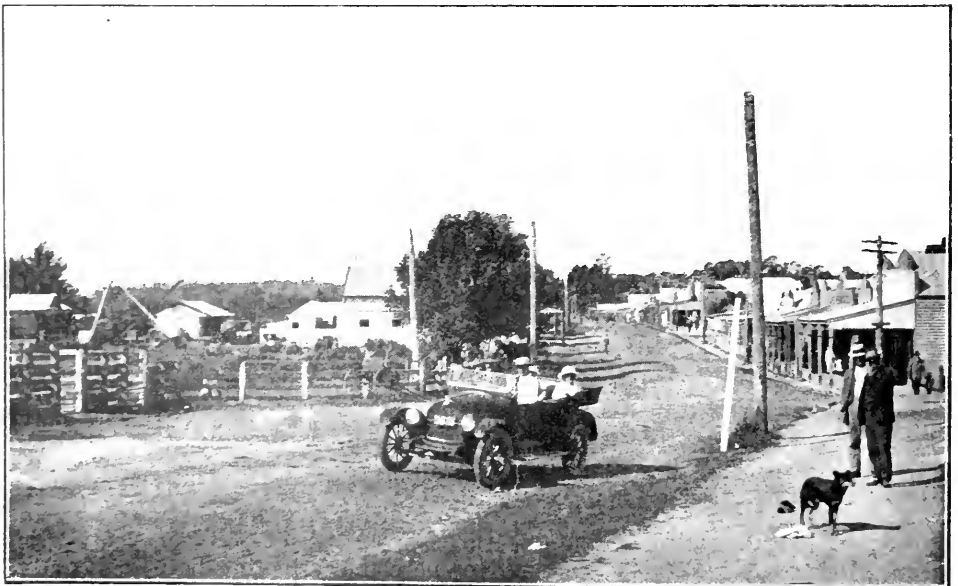
What first strikes the visitor to the portion of South Gippsland to which this book of pioneering experiences refers is the large number of straight dry trees of varying heights that constitute so prominent a feature of the landscape over a considerable area. These remains of foretime monarchs of the forest country convey to the person who sees the district for the first time some faint idea of the work performed by those stout-hearted pioneers who, some thirty or forty years ago, settled in what was then a virgin forest, and, with so much labour and so many privations, succeeded in overcoming all difficulties, and turning this part of Victoria, till their advent, neglected, into one of the most productive districts in the Commonwealth. These relics of the past are gradually disappearing; but some years must yet elapse before this not unpleasing feature of the countryside becomes non-existent. The hilly nature of the country between Nyora and Leongatha also adds to its picturesqueness. One great advantage that is enjoyed in South Gippsland—an advantage that is not always sufficiently appreciated—is its copious rainfall. Year after year, when the pastures in other parts of the State are dry, and the ground baked hard, the grass here is green throughout the Summer. Anything in the nature of a drought is unknown; seasons differ, of course, and production varies on account of climatic conditions, but the rainfall is sure, and on this account those engaged in the primary industries are not subject to the set-backs which droughts elsewhere occasion. There are only four rivers in this territory—the Bass, Powlett, and Tarwin in the South, and the Lang Lang in the North, and these are fed by innumerable little rivulets from the gullies that intersect the hilly country. In many of the gullies are still considerable numbers of beautiful tree-ferns, although most of them have disappeared with the clearing of the land. Blackwood trees, too, are fairly numerous in parts. It is noticeable that, while there are pine and other trees about nearly all the homesteads, there is, in many instances, a total absence of live timber in the paddocks, the settlers having evidently been so intent upon the clearing of the heavy timber that constituted one of their chief difficulties in the early days, that the benefit of trees as shelter belts was not perhaps fully appreciated. The grasses are principally cocksfoot, clover and rye, which grow luxuriantly. The land throughout, of course, needs constant attention, because if holdings are neglected for a while, there is soon a heavy growth of bracken and undergrowth. Here and there may be seen areas of land that have, through inattention in this regard, gone back almost to a wild state; but these are exceptions.

In dealing with the development of agriculture, it is necessary to bear in mind that this part of the State, measured by the years of its settlement, is comparatively in its infancy. Owing to the country having been so heavily timbered originally, it was impossible for a long period after the land was occupied, for settlers to till the soil, because clearing and burning-off were essential preliminaries. Farm orchards were planted, and the growing of produce for home use and of fodder crops was undertaken to a necessarily limited extent; but agriculture on anything like a large scale was practically



#### POOWONG.

Poowong is situated on McDonald's Track, about six miles from Nyora railway station. The district was settled between 1874 and 1880, and Poowong was the first township established in the great forest of South Gippsland. It possesses a State School, Athenaeum (with library), three churches, two banks, post office, etc., and has a monthly market for the sale of stock.



#### MIRBOO NORTH.

The township of Mirboo North is situated 109 miles from Melbourne, at the terminus of the branch railway line from Morwell, on the main Gippsland line. It is on the top of a range dividing the watersheds of the Latrobe and Tarwin Rivers, and the main street divides an area of poor country on the north from the rich chocolate soil to the south. It has a population of about 400, and, in addition to the Mirboo Shire Hall, has three churches, three banks, three hotels, a co-operative butter factory, and market yards.



## LOCH.

Loch is prettily situated in a valley at the junction of the Bass and Alsop Rivers, distant 59 miles by rail from Melbourne. It contains State School, Mechanics' Institute and library, three churches, two banks (State and Commonwealth Savings Banks), newspaper, police station, hotel, etc. It is surrounded by a rich agricultural and dairying district.

impossible up to a few years ago. The position now is, however, very different, and there has recently been a remarkable development in this respect. A steady expansion of the acreage under crops in the future may be confidently anticipated. The suitability of the soil for the production of root, as well as fodder crops, has been amply demonstrated, and the quantity and quality of the yields have been shown to be eminently satisfactory. So far, attention has been directed principally to the cultivation of potatoes, and to a lesser extent of onions. The potato growing industry is subject to setbacks on account of disease and weather conditions, and South Gippsland farmers have experienced their share of these; but on the whole the returns have been good, and constitute an important addition to the income from the principal industry of dairy farming. More land is being cleared for the plough annually, and with its great natural advantages, there is no room for doubt that the importance of this district as a producer of potatoes, onions, etc., will be greatly enhanced later on. An indication of its possibilities is given by the displays of farm produce exhibits at the several agricultural shows, where the quality and variety of such exhibits have been favourably commented upon by large numbers of visitors from other parts of the State. It is in the fields rather than on show benches, of course, that the true test of the productivity of the soil must be applied, and there the opinion formed on inspection of the agricultural exhibits is confirmed.

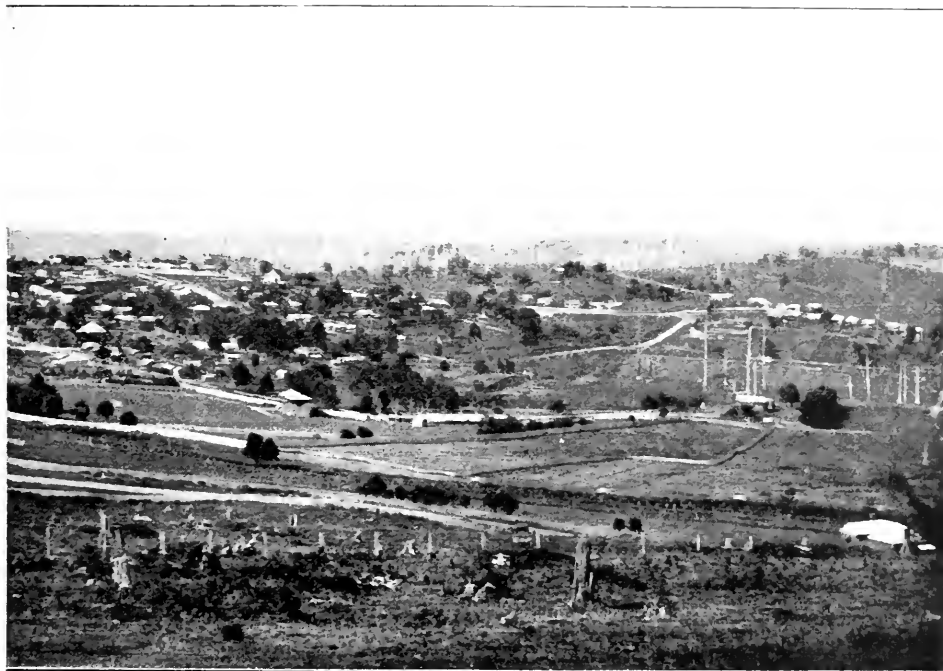


KORUMBURRA.

Korumburra is the capital of the Shire of Poowong and Jeetho, 70 miles from Melbourne of the Strzelecki Ranges. Among the public buildings are shire hall, post office, court. There are also six churches, four banks, three hotels, and drill hall; also municipal sale yards service, and is lighted by electricity. There are two newspapers in the town, and a telephone and vast dumps of shale that have been burning for five and twenty years, from which

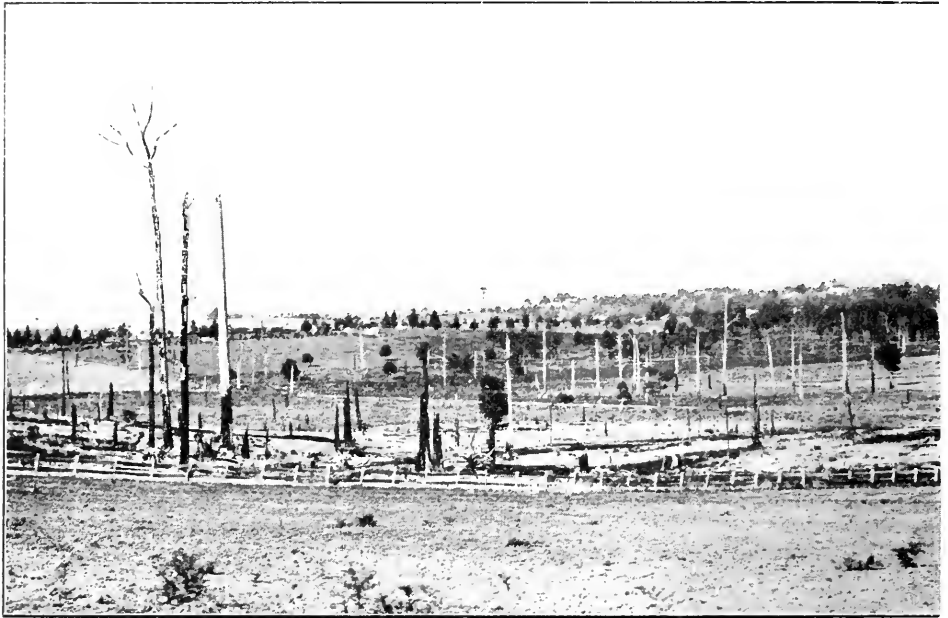
To the visitor, used to flat country, the cultivation of some of the steep hills, such as there are in the neighbourhood of Korumburra and surrounding districts, is a source of wonder, because one would think that the attempt would lead to disaster to both ploughman and horses; but with the implements available, the work is performed, and crops have been, and are being, successfully grown on hillsides that are apparently too steep for any purpose other than the grazing of sheep and cattle. One marked effect of the extension of agriculture is the improvement in the landscape. After having been cropped and sown down in grass, the land presents a nice clean even surface, pleasing to the eye. That there is a great future before the district in respect of agriculture is certain, and there is reason for the belief that the tendency, on account of this and other factors, will be towards smaller holdings and closer settlement.

While the show ring affords no certain evidence of the average quality of the herds in any district, it may be taken for granted that in districts where the entries by local breeders of pure cattle are numerous and the quality excellent, the herds generally are quite up to, if not above, the average elsewhere. One has only to visit the Korumburra, Leongatha and other shows to be convinced that breeders of pure Ayrshire and Jersey cattle, which have



bourne, on the Great Southern line. It is prettily situated among the hills on the southern house, Mechanics' Institute, a large State School, in connection with a continuation school, and sheep dip, while a public park and show ground are adjacent. It has a good water exchange. Once a busy coal-mining town, the industry is now only represented by one mine, material is obtained for making footpaths. The population is about 2500.

long been regarded as the principal dairying breeds, have here achieved great success, and attained a high standard. Ayrshires have been in great favour with South Gippsland dairy farmers all along. The claims of Jerseys, as regards butter production, have always been recognised, but the leaning to the Ayrshire breed has been largely due to the fact that Jerseys are not looked on as "dual purpose" cattle. Jersey breeders some two or three years ago established the South Gippsland Jersey Breeders' Association, which aims at popularising this breed, and already good work has been done, but it is questionable whether Jerseys will displace Ayrshires to any appreciable extent. In the district show rings the exhibits of both breeds are excellent, and almost invariably the judges, brought from distant parts of the State—well-known and successful breeders themselves—have referred in the most favourable terms to the quality and number of the animals exhibited. So far as the ordinary dairy herds are concerned, the Ayrshire strain predominates, and the average herd will compare favourably with similar herds elsewhere. Much remains to be done to bring the yield per cow up to the highest level by culling out the "wasters," and breeding from the most profitable cows in the herds; but although there are as yet no herd-testing associations in this district, the experience of the dairy farmers themselves leads



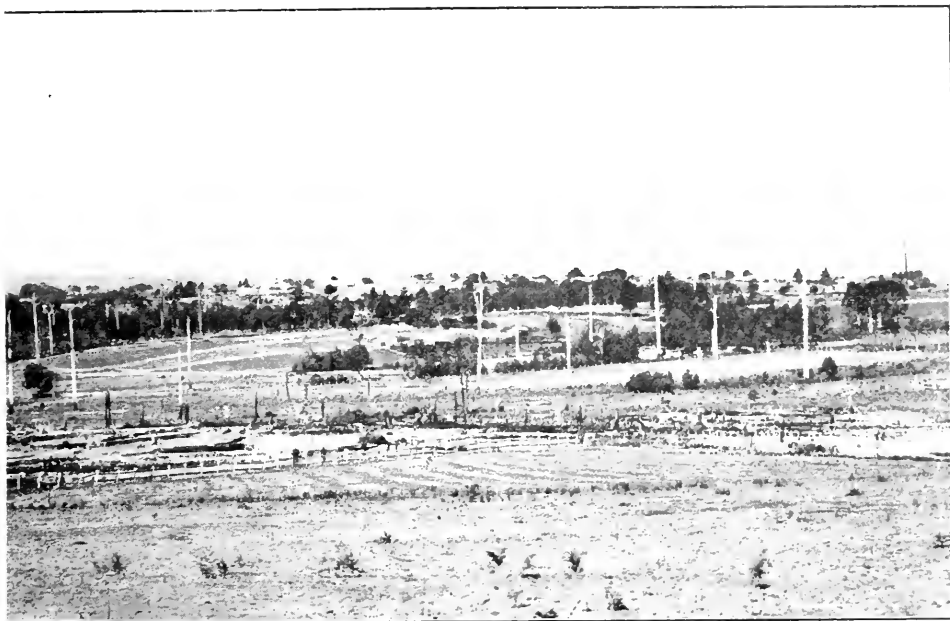
LEONGATHA.

Leongatha is the head-quarters of the Woorayl Shire, and is 78 miles from Melbourne agricultural country of an undulating character, with the Strzelecki Ranges in the distance. attached), and there are also four churches, State School, three banks, two hotels, a large a good water supply, and is lit by electricity, while its telephone system links up many of stone quarry, which supplies many of the surrounding districts with road metal.

to a gradual improvement. On almost every dairy farm, the visitor will see a sleek, well-conditioned herd, and the homesteads and general surroundings bespeak prosperity.

Butter factories, mostly co-operative, but a few proprietary, are dotted about the district, and are provided with the most up-to-date plant, as might be expected in an essentially dairying district, such as this. A proportion of the dairy farmers close to the railway line have in later years been supplying milk for the city retail trade; but the great bulk of the milk produced is separated on the farms, and the cream sent to one or other of the butter factories. On account of the poor roads and heavy grades, home separating was in the first case absolutely essential, and this has been continued up to the present. It was established years ago that the choicest butter can be manufactured from home-separated cream; ample proof of this has been afforded by the very high percentage of superfine butter turned out by the several butter factories and the excellent prices it has realised in both the Commonwealth and England. Great credit is due to those who have so successfully conducted the co-operative butter factories, which have been beyond doubt an important factor in the steady progress of the dairying industry. The cream is collected by the butter factory companies from a radius of many miles.





on the Great Southern line. It has a population of about 2900, and is surrounded by rich farms. The public buildings comprise post office, shire hall, atheneum, high school (with hostel), co-operative butter factory, one newspaper, show grounds and municipal sale yards. It has the farms in the district. In the vicinity are the Leongatha Labour Colony, and a valuable

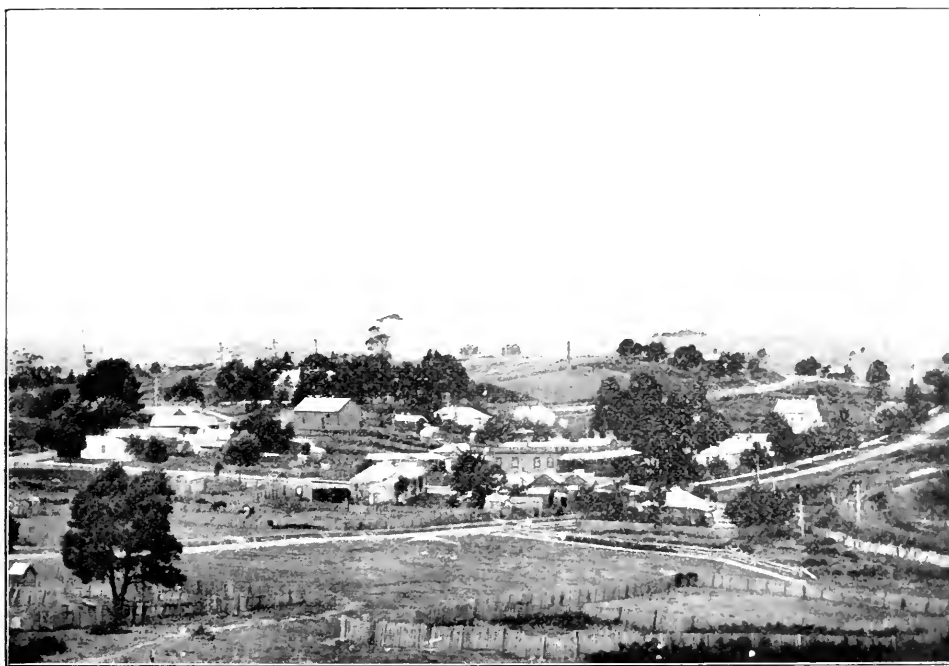
That the importance of pig raising as an adjunct to dairy farming is generally recognised, will readily be admitted after an inspection of the farms in the district. Apart from the breeders in the Korumburra and Jumbunna districts, who have made a specialty of raising pure Berkshires and Middle Yorkshires — and these have for many years been among the principal prize-takers at both the Melbourne and Sydney Royal Shows, and have gained so high a reputation throughout the Commonwealth, that orders for stud pigs from every State have been received and fulfilled by them—pigs are grown on nearly every farm, and have been an appreciable source of income.

Sheep and cattle grazing is carried on to only a limited extent, judged by the standards in purely grazing districts. However, on many of the dairy farms some sheep are run, and those landholders who devote their attention principally to grazing have achieved success, though during the last two or three years the dairy farmers have had the better of the deal, owing to the high prices ruling for butterfat. There are flocks of pure-bred Border-Leicesters, English-Leicesters, Lincoln and Shropshires in the district, and the breeders have been successful not only at Gippsland shows, but also at the Melbourne Royal Show. Latterly some Romney-Marsh sheep have been brought into the district. All these breeds do well here, as also do the cross-

breeds. Fattening cattle has proved profitable, and considerable numbers of "fats" are sent to the Melbourne markets, especially from the Leongatha district.

The Shows held under the auspices of the Agricultural Societies in this part of Gippsland compare favourably for all-round excellence with those in any other portion of the State. Draught horses are not so numerously represented as at many northern shows, but with the development of agriculture heavy horses are sure to be more used. As regards light horses, including thoroughbreds, there is invariably a fine display at these shows, the class for ponies, which are particularly numerous, is always well filled. The cattle exhibits always attract the attention of visitors from other districts, especially the dairying breeds. Sheep and swine exhibits are also of a uniformly high standard, and the agricultural and other exhibits evidence the keen interest that is taken by the residents of the respective districts in the shows. The Korumburra and District Agricultural and Pastoral Society has just held its 25th annual show, and its record is one of continuous progress. Prior to the war the prize-money offered totalled about £450, but on account of the altered conditions a reduction was inevitable. The Leongatha Agricultural Society was established some years later, and it has also become a strong society. Other societies are Lang Lang, and Dalyston, the latter having been inaugurated only in recent years.

For a long period the making of trafficable roads was one of the most serious problems the settlers had to face. Originally, roads were marked out on the draughtboard plan, and, as can be easily understood, in the hilly country from Nyora to Leongatha, and for many miles on both sides of the railway line, roads marked on the plan were in many cases useless. The shire councils had, therefore, with the limited means at their disposal, to acquire land for deviations, and many thousands of pounds were expended in this way, with the object of obtaining roads with trafficable grades. Later on, metalling the principal highways from centres on the railway line was commenced, but the expense was so great that progress was necessarily slow. The passing of the Country Roads Act and the establishment of the Board was the beginning of a new era for the district in this respect. The principal roads were declared main roads under the Act, and within a short time work was commenced. Had it not been for the war, several of these roads, over which the traffic is particularly heavy, would have been completed. As it is, even those who had serious misgivings regarding the result of the new policy freely admit that the operations of the Board have already been attended with very beneficial results to some of the men on the land. The municipalities, if they had to rely upon their own resources, could not have attempted, for a generation at least, to carry out road works on anything like the same scale. It has been frequently pointed out that good roads are as essential to the development of the rich hill country of Gippsland as irrigation is to the northern districts, and the grading and metalling of the principal thoroughfares by the Country Roads Board will ultimately be of incalculable benefit to this district. The total cost of these works has averaged about £2000 per mile, the Board having determined to secure the best grades and solidly constructed roads. Subsidiary roads are in many instances still badly in need of attention, but their improvement is only a matter of time. The sections of the roads connecting Korumburra, Poowong, and Drouin; Korumburra and Leongatha; Korumburra, Kongwak, and Wonthaggi; Poowong, Nyora, and Bena Loch, the Glenalvie district, and Wonthaggi; that have been completed, have entirely altered the condition of affairs with re-

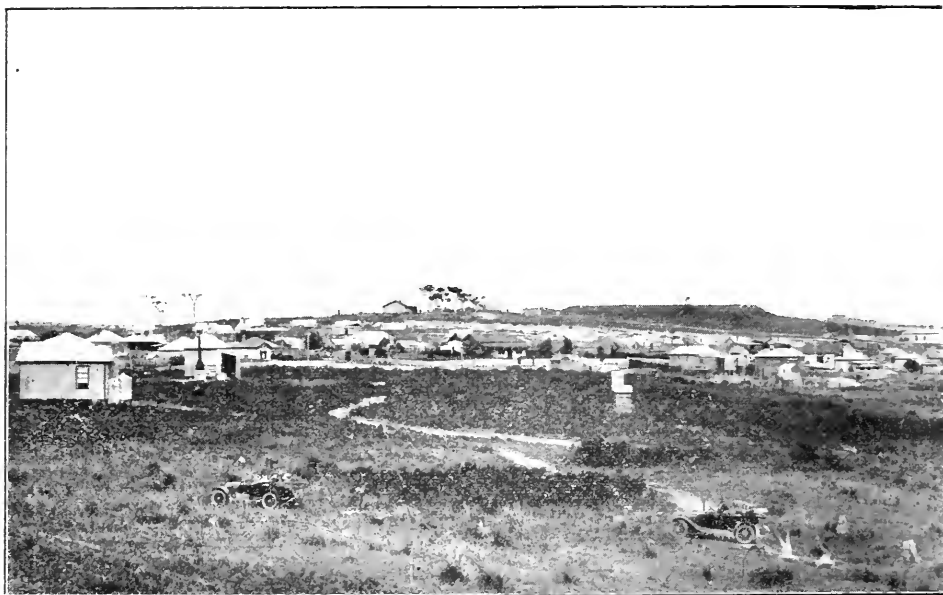


JUMBUNNA.

Jumbunna is a small coal mining town on the railway line from Korrumburra to Oattrim. It lies in a picturesque position, and is well sheltered by the surrounding hills. It serves as a railway centre for the fertile districts of Moyarra, Kongwak and Glenalvie.

spot to road traffic in the Poowong and Jeetho Shire, and in the Woorayl Shire, which has its headquarters at Leongatha; and in the Philip Island and Woolomat Shire, main road construction is equally appreciated. When the grading and metalling of the whole of these roads is completed, there should be a marked and sustained increase in production. From the social as well as the utilitarian aspect these road improvements are of the utmost importance, and in this regard the conditions are infinitely better than they were ten years ago.

It is only fair to state, however, that in the opinion of many experienced men, the system of road-making adopted by the Board, involving, as it does, an expenditure of over £2000 a mile, is too costly for the needs of this district. They point out that, although the conditions of the settlers on the highly improved main roads are greatly improved, those situated even a comparatively short distance from these main thoroughfares are little better off than before, for the reason that the roads from their properties are in such a deplorable condition as to prevent vehicular traffic to the main roads during the Winter season. They consider that there is no prospect of improvement on these side roads, as the money to be provided by the shires for maintenance on the main roads already taken over, if the present system of construction be maintained, will absorb a large proportion of the municipal fund. It is proposed by the Bowser Government to introduce a



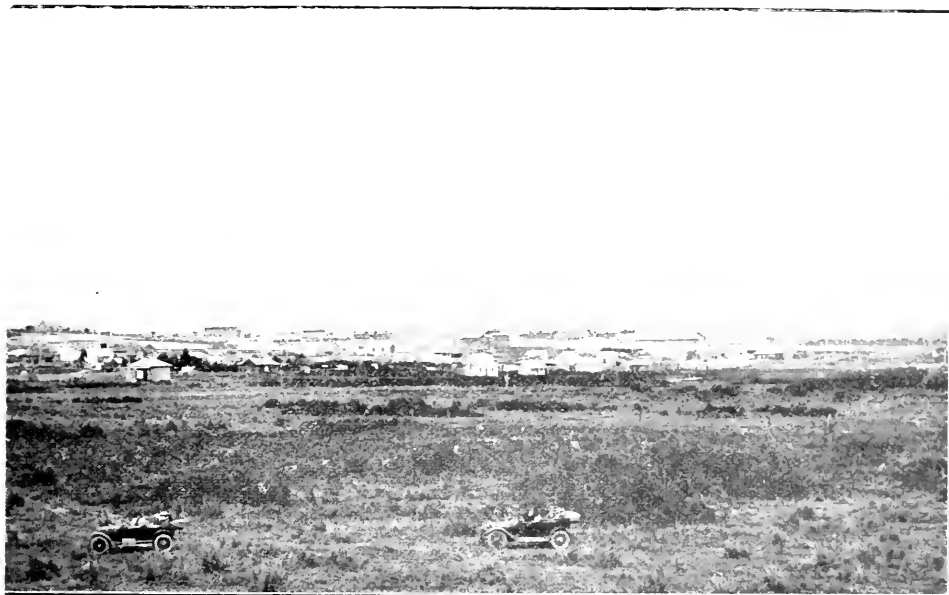
WONTHAGGI.

Wonthaggi is situated at the terminus of the railway line from Nyora, 86 miles from Coal Mine, which was developed in 1909 to make good a shortage of coal caused by a coal the plains between the forest country and the coast. It possesses a municipal hall, post and State Savings Banks), four hotels, a court house, two newspapers, besides theatres, skating Hollins, an early settler, at £15 per acre. The annual municipal valuation (1918) is £21,740.

Bill to provide £500,000 for subsidiary roads, the Premier stating, in referring to the proposal, on February 5th, 1918, that "the Country Roads Board Act has not given that assistance to the producer in districts distant from railways and at right angles from them, which its authors believed it would do." Certainly, there is ground for this statement, which appears to justify the criticisms that have been levelled at the Act in this respect.

*Note.*—Since the above was written Parliament has provided £1,000,000 to be spent by the Board on these "subsidiary" roads.

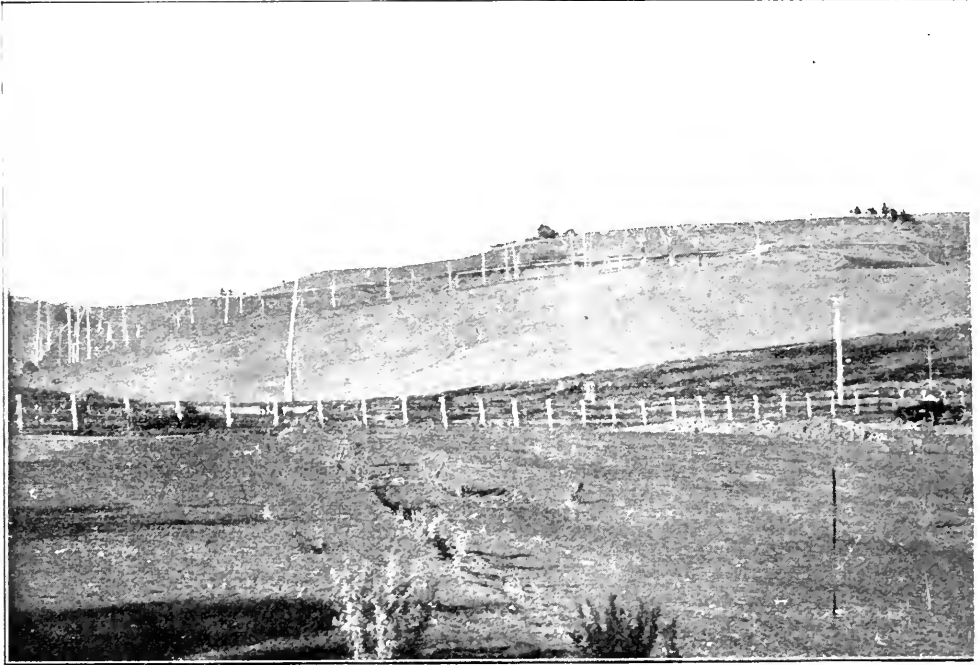
A line of railway from Koo-wee-rup to McDonald's Track at Strzelecki was decided upon by Parliament a few years ago, and the work of construction was commenced; but, as was the case with so many other works of a similar character, construction had to be suspended on account of the financial situation consequent upon the war. This will be a developmental line, and it is expected to have a decided influence in increasing production in the area of country it will serve.



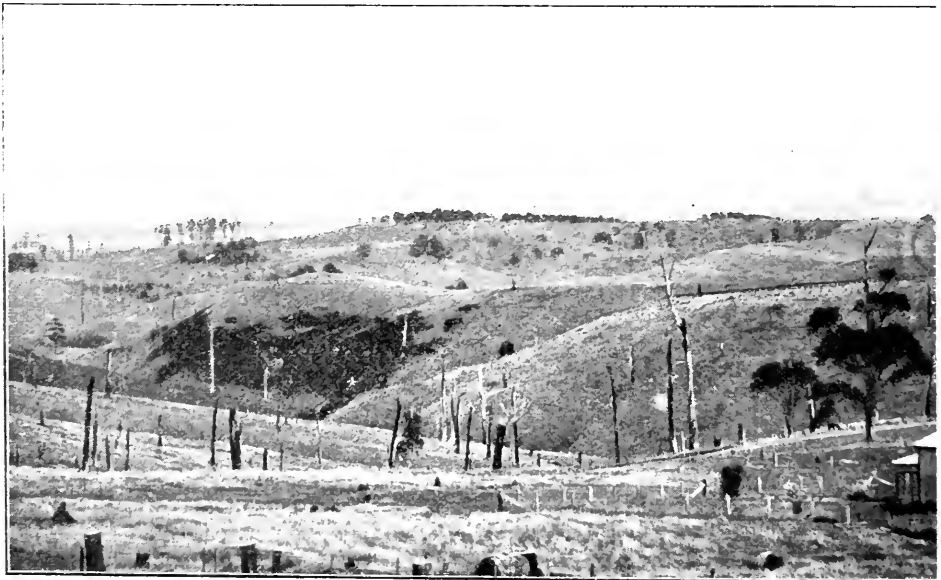
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Melbourne. It is a borough with about 8000 inhabitants, and owes its existence to the State strike in New South Wales. It is the centre of an extensive coal-bearing area situated on telegraph office, telephone exchange, six churches, five banks (including Commonwealth and rinks, bowling greens, etc. The site of the town, 1280 acres, was purchased from Mr. John Water is supplied from a reservoir nine miles distant, situated in the hills near Kongwak.

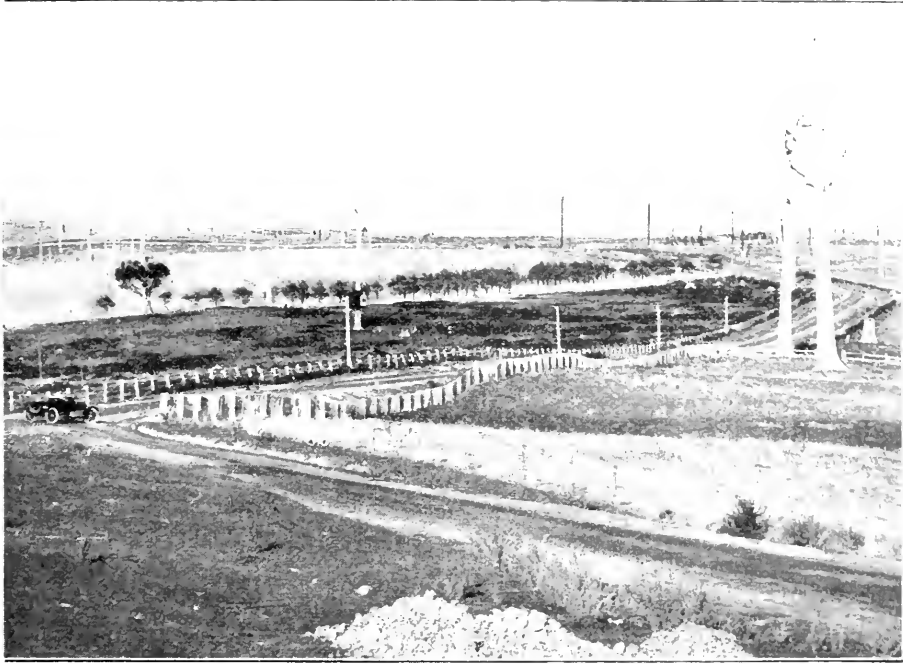
By reason of its great natural advantages, this part of the State may be truly said to merit the title of "the garden of Victoria." Eminently suited for closer settlement, it is indubitably capable of carrying a much larger population than it has at present. Smaller holdings can be more easily, and, taking into account the value of the land, more profitably worked than can those of 300 acres or more. The ability of settlers to obtain a good livelihood from less than 100 acres has been demonstrated in various parts of the district, and there is reason to believe that the general tendency will be in the direction of subdivision of the larger into smaller holdings. Having reached a stage in its development that was passed by the Western District twenty to thirty years ago, a more rapid advance than has been made even during the last ten years may be confidently anticipated. Dairy farming will no doubt continue the principal industry, but agriculture is sure to play a more important part as time goes on.



HILL COUNTRY UNDER



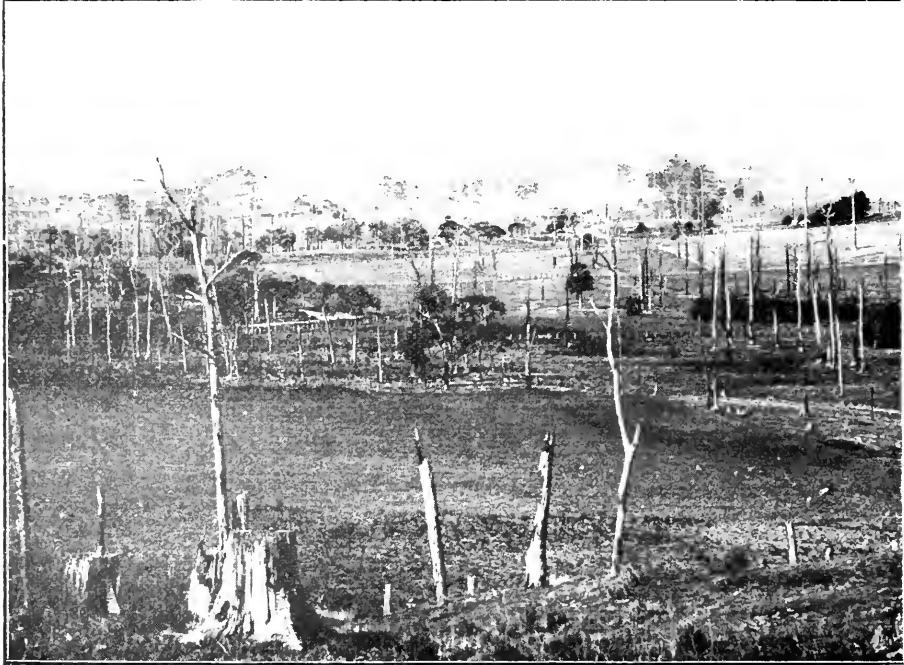
HILL COUNTRY USED



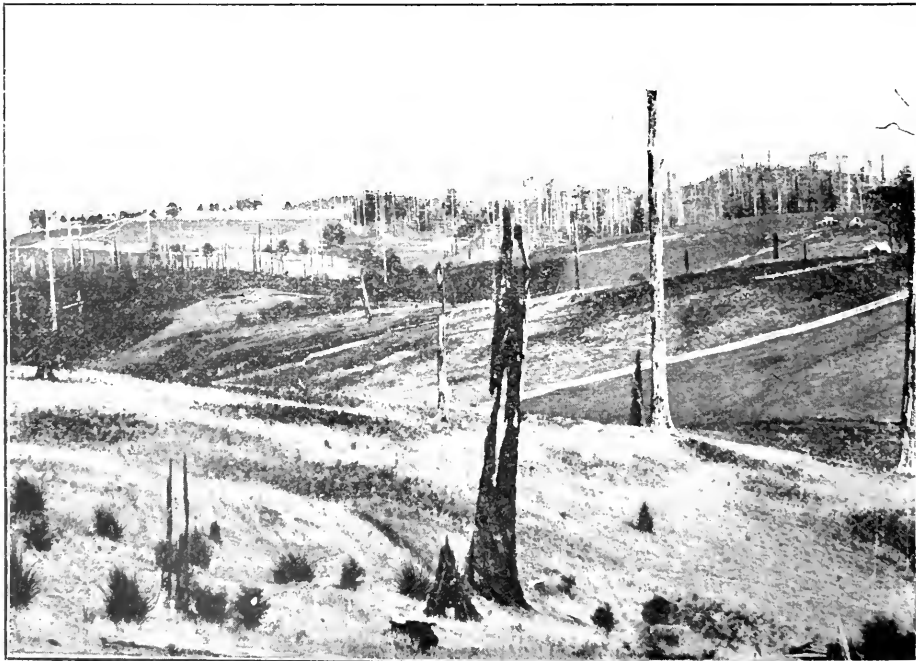
CULTIVATION.



AS DAIRY FARM.

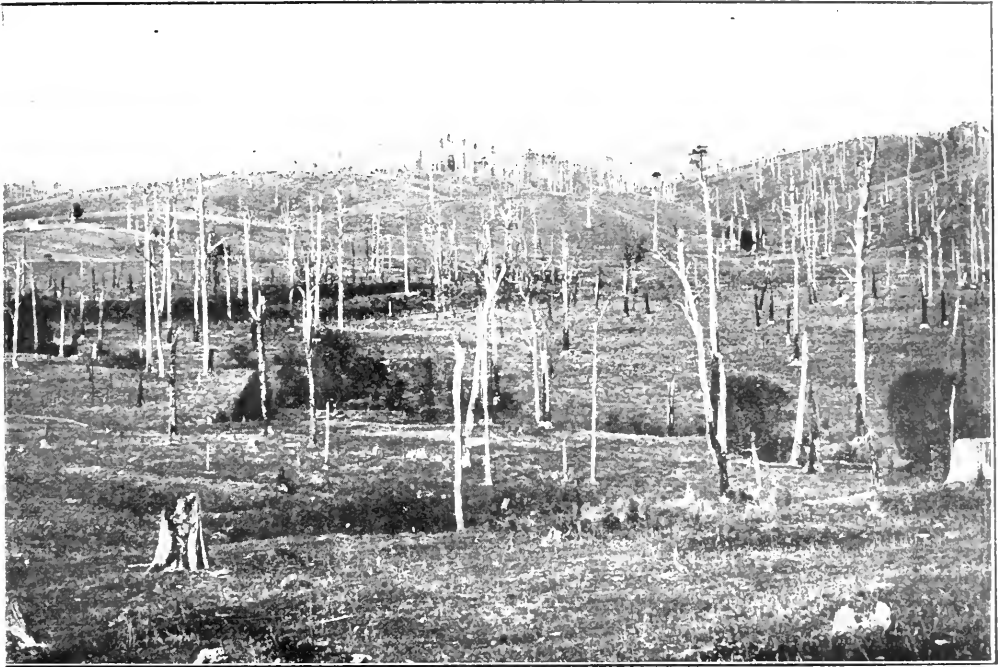


GOOD DAIRYING

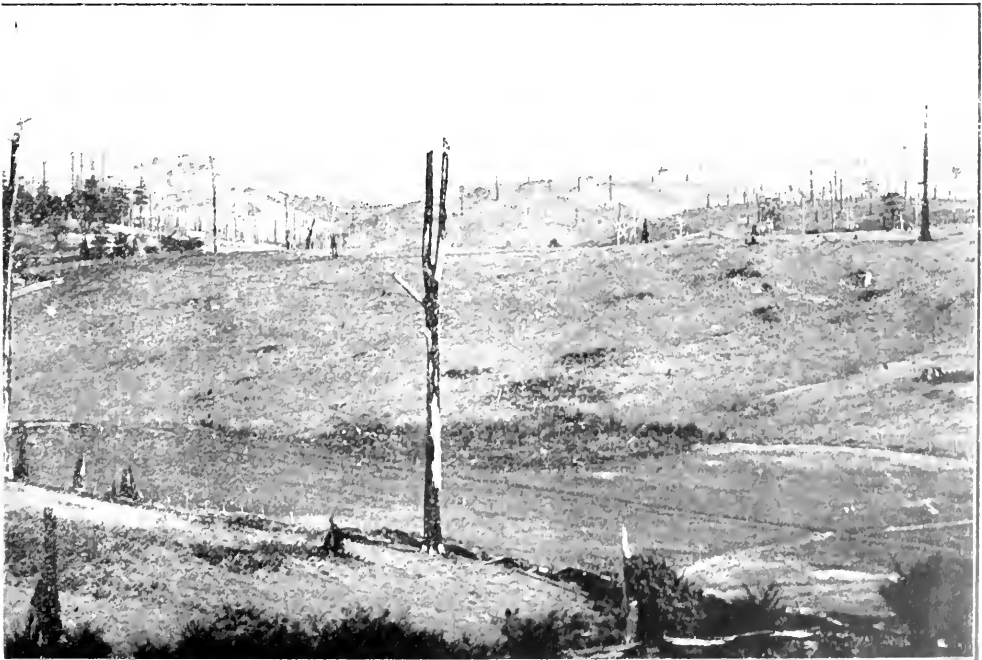


HILLY COUNTRY





COUNTRY.



WELL-CLEARED.





## Return Furnished by Victorian Commissioners for the Period of 5 Years — From 1909 to 1914.

COUNTIES	CATTLE		SHEEP		HORSES, CATTLE, AND PIGS		CROPS				LIVESTOCK		CATTLE				
	1909		1910		Outward	Inward	1909		1910		1909	1910	1909		1910		
	Head	Value	Head	Value	Head	Value	Head	Value	Head	Value	Head	Value	Head	Value	Head	Value	
<b>From Lang Lang to Leongatha</b>																	
Lang Lang	4,200	4,334 10	804	1,130 0	5,209 2	17,177 2	1,775	2,820 9 11	1,034	4,793 10	265	1,544 0	5	1,200 0	1,000	1,100 0	
Nerby	1,280	7,065 2 2	754	6 0	903	7 11	36	19 2	88	17 0	1,346	3,484 15 1	60	504	8,945	14 2	
Leong	6,690	10,045 1	1,029	0 5	178	7 8	66	19 3	66	9 3	8,747	2,140 5 4	9,154	1,683	11 7	2,298	16 8
Leong	2,850	1,773 4	716	15 0	200	16 1	19	16 3	9	6 0	829	268 13 9	2,586	1,036	7 7	1,765	1 0
Leong	6,077	9,144 0	345	1 0	290	5 11	47	4 2	16	9 0	2,024	1,422 1 5	665	6,25	15 0	1,470	8 0
White	1,114	9,055 5	1,048	8 16	1,163	3 11	1,190	9 0	1,088	8 6	1,140	61 7 2	1,114	23	16 1	15	5 8
Korumburra	181	0 88 0 2	2,257	3 10	2,312	14 8	22	17 1	121	16 1	89,949	24,498 1 11	49,120	22,00	16 0	3,122	14 0
Koolba	20,455	894 13 0	86	4 0	176	6 0	1	11 0	4	15 0	1,780	884 11 9	1,151	725	14 2	2	13 0
Leong	1,550	1,000 11	1,000	8 10	1,190	7 6	12	7 0	5	12 3	4,005	1,849 1 6	3,584	1,547	7 11	1,245	15 2
Leongatha	6,000	1,000 0	1,400	8 1	2,112	3 9	190	2 0	151	7 4	7,036	18,241 11 0	27,815	17,76	0 1	10,711	0 8
<b>From Jumbunna to Outtrim</b>																	
Jumbunna	4,000	2,504 4 10	257	13 7	649	11 7	10	3 6	17	3 0	219,129	49,861 8 6	7,600	4,634	10 7	1,55	18 0
Outtrim North	2,011	562 4 0	0	3 0	8	17 8	5	19 0	0	4 6	26	51 15 0	—	—	—	—	—
Outtrim	3,880	3,166 11	211	2 9	659	4 1	8	17 3	24	0 0	91,070	18,048 14 0	6,786	4,401	7 0	189	8 10
<b>From Wyara to Wonthaggi</b>																	
Wonthaggi East	15,540	5,100 12 0	1,000	0 1	54	0 19 0	186	16 5	402	16 0	786,115	217,314 16 4	148,997	75,368	0 0	1,122	6 1













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