



Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

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Dear Friends,

JULY 1994 NEWSLETTER

June Tree Planting

Thanks to all the people came last month -despite threatening skies we had 20 including 6 children by the end of the morning; in addition, this group was just finishing planting approx. 330 trees for the day about 1.30pm feeling pretty proud of ourselves when a group of brownies (and parents) came, looking very businesslike with spades, trowels and buckets. Rob very quickly fetched more seedlings, and this group planted towards the bottom of the gravel entry road with the help of Rob and a couple of our Committee who stayed on. The weather put on a good show, with raincoats and jumpers being shed early as the blue skies appeared and the sun shone -nearly needed the SPF15! It was good to welcome a family and 2 individuals from outside the Group -these tree plantings are a good PR exercise and thanks to Yvonne for the good publicity job she does, as the planting was mentioned in the local press and radio. Great inroads were made into the program with a total of approx. 440 trees planted, as follows:

First Group: (Northern end of Billy's Creek Section)

85 Varnished wattle
100 Manna gum
58 Messmate
50 Swamp gum
40 Apple box
2 Austral. Mulberry

Second Group:

(Brownies & Parents): (Lower section of Entry Road)

60 Blue gum
20 Blackwood
20 Silver Wattle

On a sad note....

We were sad to hear of the death on 9th July of Mr Stewart McFarlane. Stewart was our guest in February this year as he told us of his memories of the area, where he had,lived for all of his nearly 87 years. We are pleased that a tape recording was made of his remarks, which I have put into written form and circulate for your interest.

Propagation shed

Paul Lambert has taken on supervision and much of the practical work of the propagation shed. Many thanks Paul for taking on this task.

Other Friends group visit

Once again we are planning to visit Sale Wetlands in spring -hopefully we won't be flooded out this year (last year the causeway was under water). More on that later .

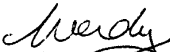
Annual General Meeting

Notice' is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting will be held on **Sunday 7th August at the Rangers Depot, at 1.30pm**. This will be followed by an Ordinary General Meeting. Yes, once again it is time to think about the AGM, and for you to consider whether you would like/be willing/can be coerced into being on the Committee as a member or an office bearer. Below is a nomination form which of course needs to be signed by both nominator and nominee. Please return it to the Secretary .

July Tree Planting

Yes, we still have MORE trees to plant even after such a good effort in June. Remember, this is your chance to be invited to the memorable After Tree Planting Celebration (Wake?) Dinner in September which has become something of a tradition. Make sure you qualify - only 2 more planting days to go. Activity day is SUNDAY JULY 17TH AT END OF BRANIFF'S ROAD, 10.00 START.

Cheers for now,


Wendy Nickson
Newsletter Editor

(Detach this section and return to Secretary, FMNP, pa Box 19, Churchill 3942

I wish to nominate

..... (NAME)

for the position of..... (President, Vice President, Secretary, Ass Secretary (Newsletter), Treasurer. Committee Member).

Signed Signed
Nominator Nominee

Date Date

RECOLLECTIONS OF MR STEWART C. McFARLANE

OF THE BILLY'S CREEK SECTION OF MORWELL NATIONAL PARK

In mid February 1994, Friends of Morwell National Park member Tom Lawless brought along Mr Stewart (Stewie) McFarlane to the Billy's Creek section of Morwell National Park, as guest of the Friends of the Park. Stewie was 86 years of age, and was then living along Hazelwood Estate Road, having lived in the Hazelwood/Billy's Creek area all his life, and came to tell us some of the history of the area as he remembers it from his younger days. The group stopped at various places as we made our way to the Weir, and asked Stewie to record his memories of various subjects along the way. The following is a report of the contents of the tape.

It was with sadness that we heard of Mr McFarlane's death on 9th June 1994, and look upon the tape made by him on his visit to FNMP as a valuable record of his memories. It was gratifying also that while the people who came along in February thoroughly enjoyed Stewie's anecdotes, he himself expressed pleasure in being able to once again have the opportunity to access (on the Park vehicle) an area which he would not have been able to otherwise visit.

The felling of the great tree -

Stewart firstly recalled a tree situated near the end of Braniff's Road. It was recognised as one of the biggest trees in the area, and Mr Foote, who owned the land, decided that with the help of his son and neighbour they would fell the tree, a bluegum, and make it into fence posts. They didn't have a large crosscut saw, so they chopped a big scarf out of one side where it was a bit weak, and they ran the saw (only a 6ft.6 in one) around one side in a half circle. However, it still sat there, so they decided to call it a day and headed home. The next day they discovered that during the night, the wind had sprung up and blown it over! It was beautiful timber, and was split into posts, eventually producing over 2,000 out of the one tree. Wes Esby in Switchback Road took most of these, and they are probably still in some of the fences in that area. Another large tree was just over the Creek but the first was well known as the largest one in the area.

Earlier property owners -

At the bottom of the Park road near the first Creek Crossing, are now some old fruit trees. Stewie recalled that Fred Foote used to grow fruit and vegetables there, and had planted the fruit trees, before the First World War. He probably grew maize and potatoes on the flats. The house was higher up the hill near (where a cyprus tree grows now) with a milking shed -there were no buildings down near the Creek, they just farmed there. After 1914 were the Kemps, and Doug Trewin later. Also in that area in about the 1930's was a property owned by a Mr Cashman. Cashman later got into a bit of financial trouble, and borrowed from the National Mutual company who

eventually foreclosed on the property. A series of managers later ran the place on behalf of National Mutual, one of whom was Joe Daley. They ran stock, and the farm ran up to past the weir, possibly 300-400 acres. National Mutual later sold off all of their small properties at cheap prices and Cashman's was sold to O.J. Howard, a well known resident in the area. Summerfields had a smaller place in the area.

The building of the weir and pipeline -

At a site where the original pipeline from the weir crossed the creek, Stewie told how this was a 6 inch cast iron pipe, joined with a lead collar which was hammered in, and then sealed with red clay. The pipe was laid in 1913, George Billingsley having the contract, as a water supply for Morwell township and was connected to Morwell in the same year. Stewie had two brothers working on the weir scheme, and they had a camp up by the weir, under the tree ferns, a most beautiful place in those days. Later the pipe was insufficient to cope with the water demand for Morwell, and in the 1930's just before the Second World War they put in a 9 inch wood stave pipe, doubling the capacity. They took this section for a mile or two, then put in two 6" pipes side by side through the McFarlane's property, because there is very little pressure up from the weir site. This system served as Morwell's only supply until the 1950's, when Moondarra storage dam was built, and even then continued to supplement the supply. In addition to Morwell, all the farms on the Hazelwood flats were served from the weir, as well as Yinnar.

The pipes were transported from the Morwell Railway Station 2 or 3 at a time to the site by

bullock wagon. It was winter and they often got bogged on the flats along the way -Stewie was only about 7 or 8 and the time, "all eyes and ears", and soon found out when there was a bogged wagon.

Originally a track went up where they dragged the pipes in, and there was a picnic spot at the Weir. Stewie's family would go up in a horse and buggy, having to cross the Creek several times, and have picnic parties. It was a very popular picnic place in the area.

The "Potato Flat" area -

At the "Potato Flat" site, Stewart recalled that Doug Trewin was a very industrious member of the farming community, and grew maize, pumpkins and potatoes on any bit of land along the Creek, including "Potato Flat". He had a disc hillside plough, which could go back and forth along the same furrow line by flipping over a handle. He ploughed on the steep slopes well up, nearly to Jumbuk Road -all the hills were cleared at this time for farming. Every bit of land possible in the hill country was under cultivation up to the First World War, when the young fellows went overseas to fight and the parents found the going too hard going to keep this up. There were a lot of cattle, 80-100 cows on some of the hillsides. The farmers then switched to sheep which was easier and in addition there was a big demand for wool for clothing during the War. Then the rabbits got in and ruined the hill country. When the boys came back from the War it was not fit to take on, and they went into other jobs anyway. The hills became idle, with vacant houses for a number of years. The blocks were tidied up as the timber industry started when APM moved in.

Big bushfires –

In 1939 the big fire went through and took all the houses, over 39 burned out, as well as a couple of halls -Jumbuk and Jeeralang -and a church. This fire started on "Black Friday" at Darlimurla. Stewart remembered this very well; he went up to see if he could help, but could not do much.

Regarding the great 1889 fires, Stewart's father (who had selected land near where Stewart now lived on the Hazelwood Estate Road), always used to say to the boys that they had never seen a real fire, only he had (referring to the 1889 one). This fire was said to have started at St. Kilda. The 1898 fire was the last big one to go through, and went through to the coast. It was seen as good as it

helped to clear the land of timber. People just wanted to clear the land, and ringbarked the big trees in the hills. Land on the flats was regarded as no good, boggy with no timber, and they liked the hill country. The humus and loam under the trees made good soil -they burned off and put in cocksfoot seed which grew up to knee height.

Then the rabbits came, and as the cocksfoot has a crown near the soil surface they killed it off. Ryegrass and clover ("English" grasses) followed, but again the rabbits ate them out, and over the years the beautiful topsoil was washed away by the rain, leaving bare hillsides. Stewart described how people would not plant trees as seedlings, but instead they would burn off, and about 6 -8 years later would have a fine stand of trees spring up from the seeds in the soil.

The World War II years -

During World War II, there was a rifle range for army training on the side of Billy's Creek, 600 yds in length. At this time, the Traralgon and Moe ranges were closed up, but this one was left open for training. Stewart was an instructor, and the army platoons would come from Boolarra, Yinnar, Morwell, and Traralgon, 20 to 30 men at a time. Stewart and another chap would issue .303 rifles, which came packed in grease and had to be cleaned prior to issue, a difficult and messy job. Stewart would supervise and instruct the shooting, while the other chap did the marking at the butts. The men got in a lot of practise as the captain insisted they be spot-on before he was satisfied. Stewart worked sometimes 7 days a week with the men, and as a result lost some of his hearing. The army made a road into the hills by the Creek, which later led to a scout camp. However the road became impossible to maintain, so the whole thing closed down.

Billy Hillier -

The Creek itself is named after old Billy Hillier, a bachelor who used to run a few cattle. The blackfellows speared him, and he died and was buried there. Stewart knew of a small cross in the ground marking Billy's grave, but he would not go there as a boy because he was afraid of getting chased by the blackfellows! - however he and his friends would go fishing in the area. He knew the site of the old slab hut, where Billy's and Middle Creek join, on the flats towards Yinnar near where a lone poplar tree stands today. He thought there may be a few stones where the old fireplace used to be, and one of the old-fashioned rose bushes

grew nearby. Stewart's brother later bought and cleared the site of the old slab hut.

The loan of a horse -

The Reidy family were the early selectors of the land around the Billy's Creek valley, and so Reidy's Road was named. Reidy went up with pack horses and built the dwelling. The road used to go by the Creek and up the hill, but came to an end as there were no connections with the roads along the tops of the hills. Old man Reidy was an Irishman, and they used to have a couple of horses. However one of them cleared out, and after 2-3 weeks of looking for the horse he finished up down on the Hazelwood flats at the McFarlane property. Stewart's father told him to catch one of their ponies, and use it until he found his own. Mr Reidy always remembered this kind gesture, and there was always a great welcome at his home for any member of the McFarlane family, with the whisky bottle and a couple of glasses being brought out! The horse was eventually found safely, but this was how people helped each other out.

Of Weir Park, fishing and picnics -

The lower Billy's Creek valley was called "Weir Park", and ran from Junction Road (which Stewart called Billy's Creek Road) up as far as you can get before the hills get too steep to negotiate. The Chitty's lived high up the hill. The higher hills are very dry and there used to be tracks to get the cattle down to the water from these higher farms. Gordon Summerfield's farm went up as far as where Jumbuk Hall is, and was in beautiful condition. He milked about 140 cows. There were the Reidy and Koenig family living high in the hills above the Creek, and Stewart and friends would climb the very steep tracks to visit the girls!

There were some good sized fish to be caught in the upper Creek; where logs and trees had fallen in and built up debris was a good spot for yellow bellied blackfish. Now gravel has been washed off the hills and filled the good fishing holes up - there used to be at least 12 feet of water behind the weir wall. There was also a track from Jumbuk Road, near the old shearing shed near Summerfields boundary, which went down to a little flat where Summerfields grew a few potatoes. They would go down the track then up the Creek to fish, coming out again at Bluchers. There is a waterfall higher up and they went no further than that, supposing that the fish couldn't get above it.

There are also waterfalls on Jeeralang Creek. The road crossed the Creek near Boreman's properly and in summer the family would drive up by horse and buggy, and go to the Falls for picnics and swimming. However it was the site of a bad accident to one of Stewart's brothers. A rope had been installed to help negotiate the steep track down, and one day the rope loosened, and a large rock fell and hit Stewart's brother on the head. They had a terrible job getting him out, and he was in hospital for ages, his injuries affecting him for many years.

There was another picnic area at the side of Jeeralang Road, where the locals had put a log and concrete dam across the creek with a pipe, which used to be a spot where the young fellows would go for a shower and lark around.

His grandparents and the old aboriginals -

In the old days, aboriginals roamed the hills but did not camp in one spot for long. They would go out and catch and kill and kangaroo, then eat it in one or two days (they had no means of storing meat). When they were hungry they would go hunting again, so they would follow food sources and go to the coast for salt, and for shellfish. They had trails through the hills and all the roads on the tops of the hills are where the old blackfellow trails were. The white man came in with pack horses and settled the land, and fixed up the old tracks, eventually widening them for use by bullock drays. The aboriginals kept in small family groups, not in tribes, and they had no permanent camps, nor did he know of any rock painting sites. Quite a lot of tools had been unearthed in the open country on Stewart's property as he ploughed the land - axe heads, choppers, tomahawks etc.

The stories about the old aboriginals were told Stewart by his grandparents. They had come from Tasmania to Port Fairy, and trying to obtain land in Bacchus Marsh found that all the good land had been already taken. They heard there was land to be had in Gippsland, so in the 1850's came by dray taking 3 - 4 weeks. Aboriginals were here then. Settlers had to go from here to Rosedale for supplies, it being a centre on the way to Walhalla. His father was about 9 years old at the time, and would drag a packhorse behind a pony, and fetch flour or a bit of tea, cream of tartare and soda to make damper. They used to give the friendly aboriginals flour, as they were often hungry, but

they did not know what it was for they would paint their faces with it and go and scare their neighbours! They had no idea what the cream of tartar or soda were for, but were taught to make Johnny cakes just from flour and water, and roast them on the fire ("take a bit a bit of chewing wouldn't it?").

Native animals -

Stewart recalled there were a lot of native cats, or tiger cats*, in the old days. Back in the 1860's his grandmother had brought chooks with her from the Western District, tied on to the back of the cart. They built themselves a wattle and daub hut (i.e posts in the ground, tea trees each side and filled with dirt). They had no materials such as galvanised iron to make a proper pen for the chooks, and his grandmother would bring them

inside each night and keep them at the side of her bed, safe from the tiger cats. A disease eventually wiped the tiger cats out, and the last one Stewart knew about was one his brother Alan reported seeing about 80 years ago. His grandparents used to say that the cats killed off all the birds except the kookaburras. When rabbits and hares came in, the farmers had difficulty growing oats etc. for their horses, and in the end had to put a wire-mesh fence around the paddocks. Wallabies had grown to plague proportions in his father's time, but kangaroos had been fairly scarce when the blackfellow was around as they used to hunt them. There were always plenty of possums.

**Ranger believes these may have been quolls.*