

PO Box  
19  
Churchill  
3842



President:  
5122 3137

# **Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.**

## *Newsletter – January 2004*

Website: <http://morwellnp.pangaean.net>

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Welcome to the first edition of our newsletter for 2004. I hope everyone had an enjoyable silly season and are feeling thoroughly rejuvenated to get right back into the fray. Personally, I've been suffering this cursed flu bug that has been going around, since the end of November and have been coughing and spluttering my way into the new year. Despite not being able to breathe, Cathy and I have still managed to get away for a week, camping along the Wellington River above Licola in the Alpine National Park. It was not as busy up there this year, perhaps because people may have thought it had been burnt out in last year's fires. We tolerated a couple of very torrid days weather-wise, with temperatures over 40, by sitting in the river most of the time. Otherwise, the weather was glorious, the marchflies a nuisance and the cicadas deafening for most of the daylight hours. There were three types of cicadas (that we saw!), large green ones two inches long (greengrocers?), large black ones with red eyes and a yellow patch under their abdomen and smaller black ones, about an inch long, again with red eyes, but also with red markings on their body segments and no yellow patch. There were also heaps of caterpillars around, of many different varieties, most of which I have no idea as to identity. Green ones similar to Cabbage Whites, thin brown ones up to three inches long with two 'horns' behind their heads, loopers of all sizes and colours and, most spectacular of them all, Emperor Gum Moth caterpillars up to four inches long and as thick as your thumb, bright green with rainbow coloured spines and plates. Just the sort of thing to find walking up your leg as you're sitting around the campfire, enjoying the cool and quiet of the evening.

### **January Activity**

On Sunday, January 18, 2004, we are pencilled in for some seed collection activities. I'm not sure that we need a great deal of seed other than Blue Gum, which may not be easily or readily available, so we will have to play it by ear and make an executive decision on the day. So, at this stage, despite what the calendar says, I suggest we meet at the propagation shed at 10am, where at least there will probably be some seedlings to pot up.

### **In The Mailbox**

Only a small amount of mail to report this month:

- Friends of Tarra Bulga NP Newsletter Spring 2003.
- Friends of Coolart Newsletter 4/03.
- FriendsNet Newsletter No45, November 2003.

Here is an interesting little historical item on Billys Creek, provided by Rob de Souza-Daw (via Ken Harris), who has permission for its reproduction.

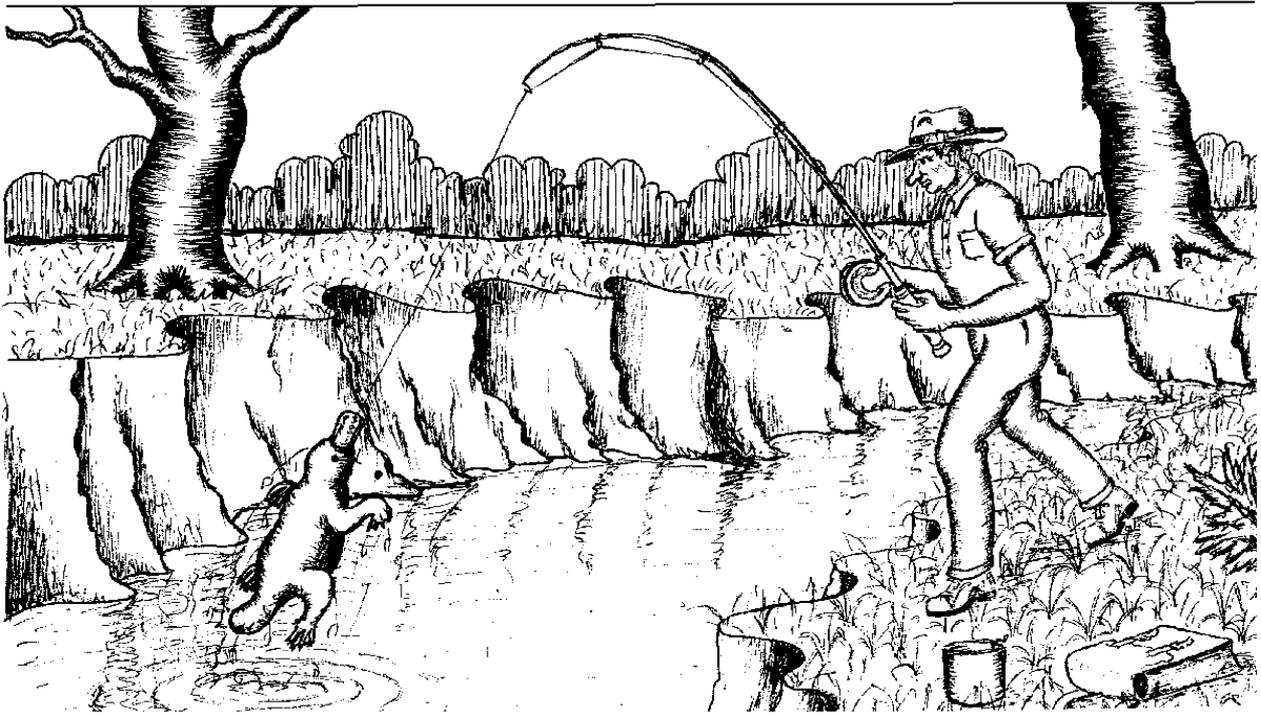
Derrick Chapple was Head Teacher at Hazelwood South State School 3350, from 1928 to 1934. He boarded with the Howard family at the Jeeralang Post Office. He is now 95 years old and lives in Geelong. The sketch and note below, was made by Derrick for his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations, but refers to his time teaching at Hazelwood:

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While I was at Hazelwood South, I sometimes fished in Billy's Creek, but didn't catch much except snags. One Saturday at the picnic ground I got a good bite.

As I reeled in, out of the water came a platypus. Fortunately it gave a strong flip and came free of the hook. It headed straight for its burrow under the bank.

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### Seed Sorting in the Summertime

We arrived at Kerry Road to find everybody (Ken, Reg, Hilmar) waiting in the carpark, even though the gate was open. We stopped to say giddy and inquire what they were all waiting for, but were soon on our way up to the shed where Rob was waiting. Wendy wasn't far away from arrival. Within a little time to sort out who would do what, we were soon beavering away, Ken and myself planting trays for next year's crop, Wendy, Reg, Hilmar and Cathy processing seed collected last January, Rob getting everything organised for 'ron (as in later on) and Nicole ignoring everybody in the back seat of the car. Teenagers!

Ken and I finished first, so we got together with Rob and Hilmar to walk the creek in Foster's Gully checking for thistles. Rob and I took the lower section, while Ken and Hilmar headed upstream. After an hour or so of stumbling and slipping our way along the creek, we had seen no sign of thistles, only an incorrect sighting of a Sassafras, which turned out to be a Muttonwood in full fruit. Ken and Hilmar had also found nothing in the creek, other than the initial patch of several dozen thistles near one of Ken's orchid plots, which was the reason we were looking in the first place.

The rest (which now included Dorothy) were just finishing up their chores on our return, and deemed it time to light up the BBQ. Rob did the honours, while the rest of us readied the refreshments. A great deal of smoke and charcoal ensued as Rob thoroughly got into cremation mode, battling a stiff breeze which threatened to blow out his burners and would not allow him to turn the heat down a bit. Despite all appearances, the meal was excellent and everyone enjoyed the variety of meats and salads on offer. Danny and Joan, along with Rob's family, arrived to help us polish off the afternoon and the year.