

MORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

PUBLISHED BI - MONTHLY

Meetings : 3rd. TUESDAY of the month at 7.30 PM

OLD TOWN HALL , MORWELL

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WELCOME TO THE MARCH NEWSLETTER

Firstly, some greetings:

Best wishes to Dorothy Fogarty, recuperating after a heart bypass. We hope you're soon fighting fit again, Dot:

Congratulations to Jean and Gordon Cook and to Dot and Gordon Taylor on their 50th wedding anniversaries this month. Well done! May you have many more happy years together!

Congratulations also to Gwen Fletcher on her 80th birthday this month and good wishes for your forthcoming hip surgery, Gwen.

Now for the bad news:

Due to changes in availability of photocopying, the cost of producing the Newsletter has escalated alarmingly, to the point where annual subscriptions will no longer cover it. We are the only Historical Society in this district which produces a monthly newsletter - most of the other Societies publish quarterly. Unfortunately, even with a proposed increase in subscriptions, it has been necessary for us to economise so we plan to publish the Newsletter every second month from now on. The next edition will be in May.

A word on annual subscriptions: At the Annual Meeting, to be held on March 21st, a motion is to be put increasing the annual membership subscriptions to:

\$10 single membership; \$12.50 couple or family. This motion is most likely to succeed and formal notice of its passing (or otherwise) will be given in the May Newsletter but, since some members will want to pay their subscriptions before then, this gives you forewarning of the increases.

The ANNUAL MEETING of Morwell Historical Society will be held on

TUESDAY MARCH 21st at 7.30 pm in the Old Town Hall, Morwell.

This will be followed by an ordinary meeting.

MORWELL HIST SOC

THE WAY IT WAS A.R. Fish

(cont).

So it was on again. This time to the town of Nhil. Not very far away - somewhat over twenty miles - but along the way I experienced two things. First, a dust storm, a new experience to me. I took shelter inside a hollow tree while the northerly whined around the tree stumps and hummed in the telegraph wires and sand banked up along the fence, held by the grass and stubble caught in the wires. But it was soon over and when it was finished came another experience. I was very hungry and the tucker bag was empty. I took out the fry-pan and, with my knife, scraped off the fat and ate that. It did not quite fill me but I gained enough strength to make it to camp in Nhil, and some food.

Here I met the wire-worker, a one-time jewellery salesman who had fallen on hard times and become addicted to the bottle, and he now lived by making all kinds of wire gadgets - toasters, soap-savers, fern baskets, those kinds of things. Also a special kind of garden hose stand (this was in the days before the elaborate sprinkler systems we now have) made out of lengths of conduit (the metal pipe used to protect electrical wires in house and factory wiring before the advent of the plastic industry). With a special type of wire spring made out of fencing wire, these hose stands sold quickly and I have seen my mate get out and sell as many as thirty in a day, which at one shilling and sixpence each, made good money.

He took a liking to me and taught me the rudiments of the trade and this became my mainstay, keeping the wolf from the door. He taught me all the tricks of the trade - how to get the wire, how to polish it, how to take the kinks out of it, how to fashion all those things that were, at that time, the wire-worker's stock-in-trade. Also, he coached me in some elemental sales technique. "When you knock on a door and a woman answers your knock, if she is a young woman, address her as 'Miss'. If she is older, call her 'Lady'. If she is elderly, always use the term 'Madam'. Never use the term 'Missis'. Women don't like being called 'Missis'.

So in the town of Nhil I began knocking on doors, something which, in later years I was to do a lot of, so I got a good grounding in the fundamental art of meeting people. And there is no better way to get to know people, but you can't do it these days - they are all out working. So, after this lesson in the technique of selling,

he turned me loose on the town. After the first three ice-breakers, I enjoyed it. The money came in slowly at first, but with practice things got easier. And of course, one of the by-products was that it took me to the doors of many good-hearted people, so things after this were never quite so bad as they were on that last track from Jeparit.

So life took on a more satisfying sort of shape. We went along the way together. After Nhil, Kaniva was the next to feel the impact of our adventuring in big business. I remember this as a very compact, friendly type of town and very sporty-minded. We bedded down in a shed on the local sports ground. Here on the weekends, the place was over-run by sports-playing townspeople - hitting golf balls, swinging tennis raquets, bowling balls and even, down in one corner, shooting at rifle-butts. But they left us alone.

One other thing I remember here was the crop of mushrooms that sprang up on some newly fertilised ground. Also I remember waking one night and seeing several large, bushy-tailed possums cavorting around among the rafters and one swinging lazily by the tail from the rail just above my head.

We stayed only a few days in this town and soon worked it over, then it was time to move on to Servicetown - the next place on the map. This was a small township - so called because here the population were mostly railway workers, and their work servicing the trains and maintaining the lines. However, as this was also the jumping-off point for interstate travellers, travelling free, the town was also over-supplied with policemen. This was a tough place for the bagman, travelling salesmen, bums, bludgers, cadgers and down-and-outers that descended upon the town with the stopping of every train. Jumping the rattler was a fast and economical way of seeing the country, but as I mentioned earlier on, not without its perils.

Somewhere about here runs a narrow-gauge line down into the south-east of South Australia and my friend the wild wire-worker was keen on getting down into this part of the world, so we invested in a ticket each and travelled first-class down to the town of Narracoorte. This was a good town to be in, pleasantly situated in one of the loveliest grazing districts in Australia, and at that time, certainly one of the most prosperous. Even though it was in the middle of the great depression, we were the only two unemployed in the district. I was offered a job here. I had

been to a picture show and afterwards was approached by a farmer who offered me a job cutting scrub. Apart from this I only got kindness from the local inhabitants. I politely refused the offer, not caring to say that I could make more cash in a morning than he would give me for a week, and I already had the best of bosses - myself. And, the hours were good and the work pleasant, and I have always enjoyed meeting people.

We had a good camp here, staying in an empty shop in the main street. I was somewhat amazed at the temperance stand of my mate who put up a good tale - never touched the stuff, had he a white ribbon, I am sure he would have worn it. The owner of the shop believed him despite the fact that instead of the white ribbon he did wear a very long, very red nose. Alas for man's veracity, for reputations false and true, as the poet says. A few days and some cash in hand, and my mate broke out, quite forgetting his temperance vows, and soon it was necessary for us to move out and on.

We hitched a ride with a transport going Mount Gambier way. The weather had turned cold and damp as it was now early in the month of May, and we had come a good deal south from the sunny plains of the Wimmera, so I, for one, was glad we were not walking. It was a long, slow ride in the 'Reid-Drury' and we had to help load before we got away, so we boiled the billy on the way down, pulling in to a stop not far from the famed Strahan Homestead.

Finally, late that night we arrived at the Mount. It was raining when we got in and the driver pulled up in a pub yard and we had to crawl out, cold and hungry, while he curled up around the steering wheel and went to sleep. We dossed down on the ground, partly sheltered from the rain but not at all from the wind, but tired enough to sleep, except being disturbed by several horses wandering around. I remember hearing later of a man being trampled to death here in this yard. It happened while he was sleeping off a bender and at first the police thought he had been murdered.

(to be continued).

GLIMPSES OF PIONEER DAYS ***Jesse William Huggett (cont).***

On the second day they met two men who had travelled a good many miles and had given it best and were returning to Cooktown, leaving their mate who had taken bad by the roadside to take his chance while they pushed on to the port, and as they had no food they had to push on.

They asked my brother to look out for their mate and speak to him if they came across him. Well, the next day they came across the sick man where he was seated against a stump. My brother asked him if he would like a drop of brandy and he said he would be glad if they would put some in his tea. They did so and then they had to go on. Before leaving home, my mother had given Frank this bottle of brandy for an emergency and it may have saved this poor man's life. Unfortunately, when he returned the bottle to the swag, he did not put the cork in properly and when opening it next he found it had all run out.

They had to travel through a place on the road called Hell's Gates, a big patch of rocks standing up like soldiers, a very dangerous part of the track as the blacks would hide behind the rocks and spear the miners as they went through. The blacks were very hostile all the time but chiefly when you were about ready to make camp in the evening - or at daylight. They would sneak up and spear a man if watch was not kept. Even when they eventually got to the field, they found that one man had to keep watch with the rifle while the other men dug in the claim.

About the fourth or fifth day out they came to a river running in flood. Here a party of prospectors, who waited for the going down of the river, were camped. There was, in all, a party of about a dozen men with packhorses. They had been waiting for about two days. When they saw my brother preparing to go over they called out to him "You can't go over there mate, you'll be drowned." To which my brother replied, "Might as well drown as starve, which we will do if we stay here". On that, one big Irishman, a giant of a man, seeing that my brother was determined to try, said to him: "Get up on my back, I'll be damned if I see you get your feet wet." So, he carried him over on his back and this showed the way for the others as they all mustered pluck enough to try the crossing and all got safely over.

My brother and his mate struggled on, getting very weak from starvation and on Friday evening, the 13th day out from Cooktown, they thought that the end had come and that they would die there. But, as a last resort, my brother took out a bottle of Liebig's extract of beef which he had carried up from Melbourne - this was all the food they had so they divided it and it seemed to put a bit of life into them, so they went on again the next morning and made it to the diggings the same day about noon.

They found everything very dear, the lowest priced article except meat was salt 2/6 a pound. Meat was 1/-. Cattle were being driven over from Bourketown (300 miles). Flour was 4/6, sugar 4/6 a pound, tea 21/-, tobacco 21/- and everything else in proportion. They had to pay a shanty keeper £5 for an old gin case and a piece of old nail-can to make a cradle for working. "If you said too much or complained then you would get nothing at all".

So the start was made on the Palmer Creek fields and they did not do too well at first but my brother reckoned the chances would be better later on as many men would leave and go out prospecting for new finds. This proved to be the case here for another rich gully was found about fifty miles away, called Sandy Creek, and so many rushed off there, thinking that if it was no good they could easily return and take it up again - but this was not so as their ground would be taken over as soon as they left it.

A lot of Chinese were there, in the employ of Kong Meng, the wealthy merchant who had in those days gangs of Chinese working for him on goldfields all over Australia.

Well, my brother's mate turned out very disagreeable. He knew nothing of mining but fancied he knew more than my brother who had years of experience and was expert. The mate wanted to rush off to the new field, so my brother had to agree to that as he could not do very well without a mate. So they left their claim there and started off to Sandy Creek. The man who took over their claim took over £80 worth out in one day. After leaving the Palmer my brother and his mate set off for Sandy Creek but when they were only a few miles on the way the mate took a stupid fit and set down and said he was going to have a couple of day's rest as he had plenty of time. My brother was very reluctant to wait as gangs of miners were passing them all the time and he knew that the good ground would soon be all taken up if they were late. When he finally decided to start off

again they did reach the field just in time to be too late, as all the good ground was pegged. They got to talking to a man who was onto good gold. He said that there had been an allotment pegged just adjoining his claim the night before. He said he was very sorry as he liked the look of my brother and would have liked to have him working alongside. But they were too late, nothing could be done - there was no outlook.

So they returned to the Palmer and on the way came to two men who wanted to go away and offered them the tent and tools and everything for £2/10/- It was purchased by the newcomers and my brother and his mate got some good gold there.

Well, some words about the climate. It was very unhealthy, the temperature being up to 125 in the shade. There was not a spot of rain for months, every day roasting hot, the river just a string of holes. The water remained clear but was bad to drink. It caused no end of sickness. A man would take ill suddenly and be dead in forty-eight hours. A doctor came there and fixed a tent for himself and another lot of six small tents for his patients. He charged £6 per week for medicine and treatment and his tents were sure to be always full. He demonstrated to the men the cause of their sickness by taking a glass of water and putting a chemical in it which brought to the bottom of the glass a white, jelly-like substance. He told them that this deposit was all living germs which cling about the inside causing much sickness and inflammation and very quickly would bring death. He taught them that the water must be boiled and strained at least twice before being used. Strange to say the Chinese did not get the complaint but they never drank water, either boiled or raw, as such, but they used a large billy and would put some tea in it and pour over it some boiling water that had been strained twice - they would not throw the old tea leaves away but would put more tea to it and fill it again with boiling water. They would do this for several days before throwing it away.

(to be continued)

GORDON COOK'S STORY

Member Gordon Cook was the February guest speaker in our 'Australia Remembers' program. Gordon was born in Morwell and moved to Yallourn North with his family at the age of two.

When war broke out, he joined the Army Remount Depot at Maribyrnong where he trained horses for their various military duties. Pulling limbers, general service wagons and buggies, the horses were driven throughout the city and suburbs and, rather than waste all this horsepower, they were often used to pick up and deliver rations and supplies.

In August 1942, the **1st Australian Pack Transport Company** was formed at Royal Park with members from Victoria and South Australia, and Gordon volunteered to join it. After several months training, horses and men were sent, some by rail and some by sea, to Townsville, then to Port Moresby, from where the unit worked along the famous Kokoda Trail. On disembarking at Port Moresby, the men walked four miles through difficult country to make camp, then had to return to Port Moresby the next day to collect their horses. However the saddles, tents and other necessary equipment had not arrived so they returned with the horses to camp and waited, enduring torrential rain, air raids and illness without shelter for the next fortnight until their supplies arrived.

From the Four Mile Camp they moved on to Donadabu where they established a base, then to Itiki, a nightmare journey of two days - they covered only 20 miles in 12 hours the first day and walked another nine miles the second day. On the way, passing the site of an old military hospital, one of the horses fell into a latrine pit. It was rescued and cleaned up as well as possible but it was some days before that horse and his driver were popular companions!

The unit worked along the southern part of the Kokoda Trail in appalling conditions, packing in supplies for the troops fighting in the Owen Stanleys and along the Trail. The men suffered badly from malaria, dysentery and dengue fever. The climate was awful - heat and daily torrential rain taking their toll of men and animals - and it was said that you never saw any blowflies in New Guinea because the mosquitoes were so big they won every fight! Mud was everywhere, making travelling in the mountainous jungle area even more difficult. Gordon used a trick he had used in the hills at home, turning the heels of the horses' shoes

down which allowed them more grip in the mud - rather like the stops on football boots. At times the mud came up to the stirrups of the riding horses.

Most people will be familiar with the photographs and stories about the hardships suffered on the Kokoda Trail. Gordon told us of the man who walked out with seven bullet holes in him; another had a completely black leg - his foot had been shot off. 'The Salvos' were always there with tea and whatever supplies they could obtain, to cheer the men on their way. Gordon, at one time, negotiated the narrow, twisting, mountainous track with a big copper on his horse, so the Salvation Army officers could heat water.

At Uberi men and horses had to cross a bridge over the Goldie River to the foot of a fearfully steep slope, into which 2000 uneven steps had been cut. The horses were left at the bottom of the steps and the goods carried up by native carriers. Gordon and one of his mates volunteered, on Christmas Eve, to carry up some Christmas cakes for the troops at Templeton's Crossing - a three hour walk. They left the horses at the foot of the steps and set off, walking twelve steps and having four seconds rest, but as they climbed higher, it became more like four steps and twelve seconds rest! They pushed themselves to get back since next day was Christmas Day, wondering all the time if the Japanese would be waiting for them at the foot of the steps.

Those who know Gordon were not surprised at some of the antics he and his mates got up to - things like selling two mythical white kangaroos to a couple of American sailors in Melbourne and stealing turkeys from the Americans in New Guinea! What is surprising is the fact that he escaped court martial for some of his exploits! In New Guinea he came perilously close to losing his corporal's stripes in an incident involving the placing of bottle tops under the saddle of a horse (named The Mother-in-Law because of its habit of kicking, biting and generally causing trouble) which was to be ridden by one of the senior officers! Some of the other incidents are unsuitable for inclusion in a high-class newsletter such as this, but a cassette recording of Gordon's talk is available and you can hear the yarns told in his own inimitable style!

John Bromwich, well-known Australian tennis player, was in New Guinea with Gordon. One day, while playing cricket in the hospital



grounds, he jumped up to take a catch and had the tip of one finger shot off by a stray bullet, probably from someone shooting at coconuts. The injury apparently did not affect his later career in tennis.

Gordon also met up with Fred Strong, another Yallourn North man, in New Guinea. Their paths crossed several times, they ended up in hospital together and, after the war, they found themselves at the same carpentry bench in rehabilitation training.

Gordon's knowledge of and work with horses is well known in this district. Before he retired he acquired a Cobb and Co. coach, one of the last built at Charleville, which he drove with a team of six horses from Yarram to Rosedale in the Rosedale Centenary celebrations and the same coach and team were used in many wedding parties. He is one of the foundation members of the 13th Ceremonial Light Horse, which makes appearances at parades and functions, and he has ridden postilion, with a six-horse team pulling a gun carriage and ammunition limber, at the last three Melbourne Shows. He says he is probably the only man in Australia (maybe even in the world) who was riding postilion in 1941 and is still doing so in 1995! The team wears an original set of 1914 English Army harness, probably the only set in Australia. The harness and other military equipment will be on display in the hall at Yallourn North on April

23 when the Yallourn North War Memorial is dedicated.

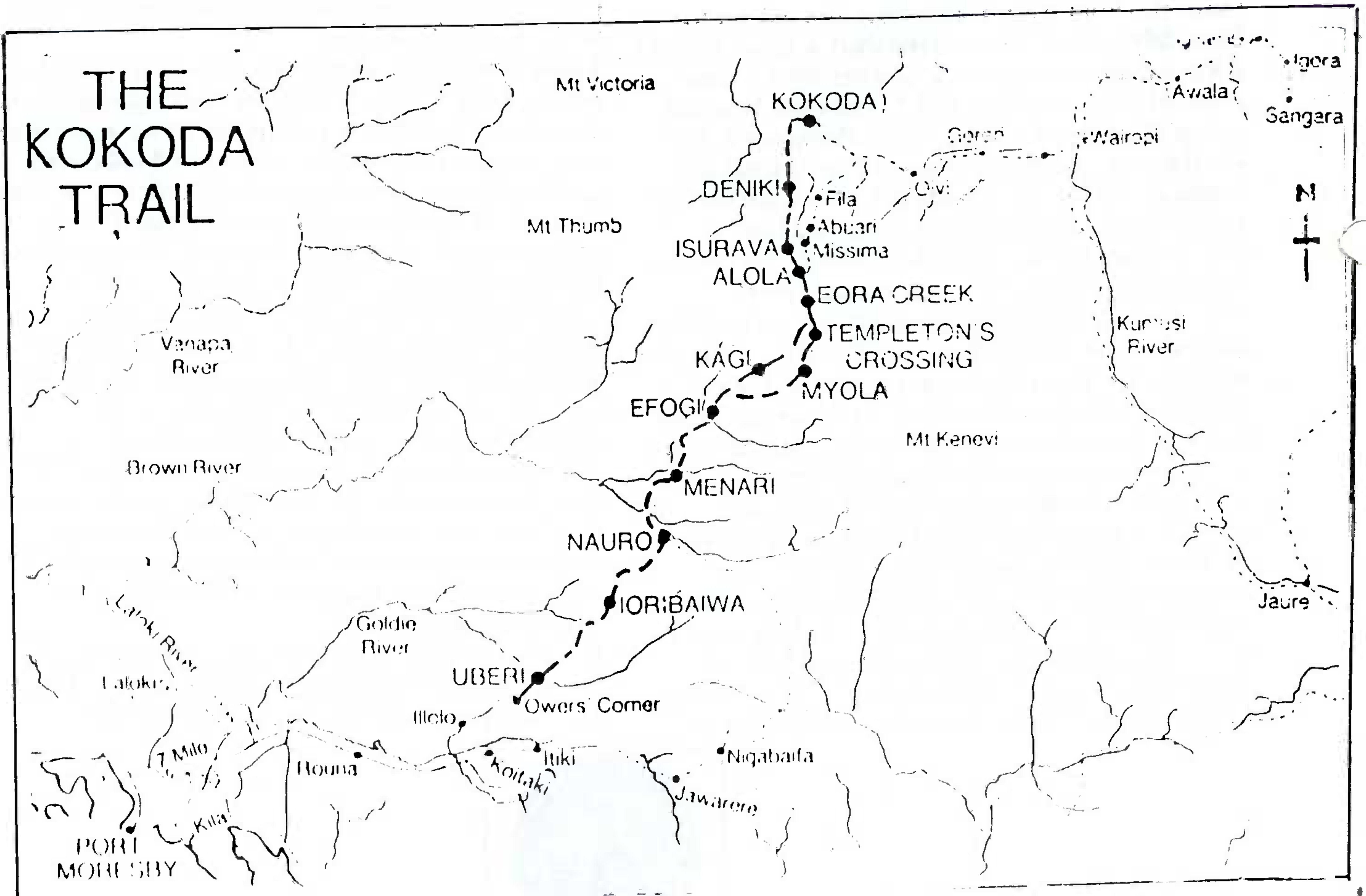
This report does not do justice to Gordon's most informative and entertaining talk and there is certainly much more that he could tell. He kept a diary during his war service and he has all the letters he wrote to his mother during the war - hopefully he may consider publishing them.

A brief history of the unit - *The 1st Australian Pack Transport Company (AIF) - from "Gee Up" August 1942 to "Whoa" May 1944* - has been compiled by Jim Patterson, one of the drivers.

DEDICATION OF YALLOURN NORTH WAR MEMORIAL

On Sunday April 23, at 2.30 pm, a War Memorial will be dedicated at Yallourn North by Mr Mal Bugg, State Vice President of the R.S.L. Victorian Branch.

An invitation is extended to all interested people to join the residents of Yallourn North for this event. Activities will commence at 10.00 am and barbecues will be available for those who would like to use them. B.Y.O. everything - tea and coffee will be available. There will also be a display of military equipment in the hall. The Memorial is 'in memory of all the citizens of Brown Coal Mine (Yallourn North) who unselfishly served in defence of our homeland and all who supported them in ensuring our peace and freedom.'





Putting Gippsland on the Map

CENTRE FOR GIPPSLAND STUDIES HISTORY CONFERENCE

Saturday 15 October 1994

at Monash University Gippsland Campus

9:30am - 10:00am

Registration

PROGRAM

ROOM 1S103

10:15am - 11:00am:

Judith Scurfield, Map Librarian, State Library of Victoria.
Gippsland Maps in the State Library Collection.

11:00 am - 11:15 am

Morning Tea

11:15am - 12:00pm

Robin Bailey.
Surveyor Thomas Townsend.

12:00pm - 12:45pm:

Charles Fahey, Latrobe University Bendigo.
Mapping the Selection Era: Families and Parish Plans.

12:45pm - 1:00pm:

Susan Purdy, Gippsland School of Art.
A Dumbalk Photographic Documentary.

1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

Lunch

ROOM 4N120

2:00pm - 2:30pm:

Debra Squires, Kapana Press.
Map Making De-Mystified.

2:30pm - 3:00pm:

Cathie Lewis.
Cultural Mapping in Gippsland: Focus on Moe.

3:00pm - 3:30pm:

Anita Brady, Historic Places Section, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.
High Tech History: Putting Gippsland's Past on Geographic Information Systems.

Afternoon Tea at the Centre for Gippsland Studies.

Registration: \$10. Tea and coffee are provided but please bring your own lunch.

Enter at Reception (Entry 3) for directions to the conference venue.

For more details contact Meredith Fletcher, Centre for Gippsland Studies, (051) 22 6356.



Australian Institute of Genealogical Studies inc.



FAMILY HISTORY OPEN DAY 1994

**Saturday October 8th
10.00am - 4.00pm**

**Blackburn High School hall
Cnr Williams and Springfield Roads
Blackburn North
(Enter from Williams Road)**

BRING YOUR FAMILY HISTORY PROBLEMS AND CONSULT THE EXPERTS ON :-

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| DONATE-A-FICHE, ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND | EARLY SHIPPING |
| EARLY MELBOURNE LAND RECORDS | GOLDFIELDS |
| ENGLAND | HERITAGE OZ |
| GERMANY | IGI |
| ITALY | MAPS |
| IRELAND | NEW SOUTH WALES |
| MILITARY RECORDS | POLICE HISTORICAL UNIT |
| PHOTOGRAPHS | PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE |
| PORT PHILLIP CREW RELEASES | SHIPPING |
| REGISTRY OF BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES | STATE LIBRARY OF VICTORIA (MAPS) |
| SCOTLAND | SOUTH AUSTRALIA |
| STATE LIBRARY OF VICTORIA | TASMANIA |
| SOUTH AFRICA | VICTORIAN LAND RECORDS |
| ST. CATHERINE'S HOUSE INDEXES | WILLS AND PROBATE |
| UK MARRIAGE WITNESS INDEX | |
| WILLIAMSTOWN | |
| WRITING AND PUBLISHING A FAMILY HISTORY | |

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**Refreshments and
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**Admission \$6
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