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Two Little Wanderers

NEWSLETTER No. 173 February 2023

'Snowy River Mail' (Orbost): Wednesday, July 1933

Two Little Wanderers

Mazy Way Through Bush Fastness

THREE NIGHTS IN THE BUSH

SLEEP IN HOLLOW LOGS

Saturday's Joyful News FOUND ALIVE AND WELL

"What will go down to history as one of the finest efforts in humanity's cause, reached a splendid culminating effort last Saturday afternoon, when close on 100 people engaged in the search for the missing children were joyfully electrified with the news that the two little wanderers, **STANLEY KELLY, aged 7, and his brother MAURICE, aged 5,** had been found alive and well."

The news came through on Monday morning, that two little boys named Kelly, aged 7 and 5 respectively had been missing from their home. It was considered that the search party immediately arranged by Constable Robinson would produce satisfactory results that day and when about 50 searchers, mostly on horseback, returned with the woeful news that they could find no sight of the wanderers, and that it was a case of the children being out a second night in the cold, caused a shiver to run up the spine.

On Friday, the search party increased to the size of 200, and when another long day had passed and still no news, it was a gloomy gathering that discussed the next day's operations, all sporting fixtures were cancelled in Orbost and district rose to the occasion Saturday morning. There was a constant stream of horsemen and vehicular traffic to what may be the starting point at Smith's adjacent to the Brodribb Hall.

It was known that the road was in a terrible condition for the four miles to Parker's homestead, and only a few took the risk, but they got safely through. The others went on foot or horseback, and it was calculated that that day fully 400 engaged in the splendid work of humanity. Everybody was there! It didn't matter whether veteran or inexperienced

tyro, they all carried out the great work with the same spirit.

In the morning, under the guidance of **Constable Robinson**, together with expert bushmen such as **Jim Leatham, Charlie Lay, A. Middleditch**, and other willing helpers, the countryside was combed. **Mr. Steed** reported that after giving the lads some bread and jam, they set off for home, and instead of taking the track through the bush, they thought they would take a short cut.

They were dressed only in a flannel shirt and trousers, the spoor of their bare feet could be traced in the mud, where they ended. That the beacon fires were lit on Mount Raymond, and people kept watch thereby. The nights were cruelly cold.

Mrs. Parker is an Orbost native, being Winnie Woodland. She married Mr. Kelly who farmed on what is called the Island adjoining Marlo, worked for Mr. Alaster Cameron. When her husband died about four years ago, she had a family of eight children. She kept on the dairy farm, with Mr. Parker working there. Later she married Mr. Parker, and they left the farm and went to live on a small holding owned by Mr. Pardew. It is desolate location, about a mile away is the only habitation for miles. It is on an elevated position looking at Lake Curlip and the panoramic views superb.

The Parker's house was originally Richardson's, who ran a sawmill at Tabbara years ago. After one leaves Steed's house for Parker's, towards Cabbage Tree Creek, which country flooded for a fortnight previous. The boys were conversant with the country, and surprise was expressed by the parents at them not finding their way home.



FRIDAY'S SEARCH

There were 200 searchers out looking for the children.

The track from Orbost to the locality was very bad after leaving the Prince's [sic] highway at Brodribb. Then for a distance of four miles, many cars got bogged. Still they managed to get through.

Tracks were found two miles from Steed's in the direction of Cabbage Tree Creek in very rough country, and a search was concentrated in that direction, also the country towards the Prince's Highway towards Raymond Creek.

Another party was sent, at lunch time, to the south in the direction of Marlo. All day long, a stream of reinforcements passed along the scene of operations, all districts being well represented.

The tracks found on Thursday leading up to the slip rails at Steed's were followed up to burnt country and there lost. They indicated a direction to Cabbage Tree Creek.

The country was rough with many gorges, but a recent bush fire had cleared it somewhat. Dogs were also tried, but without success. Orbost was denuded of most of its population to participate in the search.

SATURDAY'S SEARCH

Realising the seriousness of the situation; and that if the children were to be found, it were best to go afoot and on horseback. Orbost and district magnificently responded in the cause of humanity, and before the day was over fully 400 people were combing the country in every likely location.

Early in the morning, a party of 10 horsemen and 50 on foot led off for what is known as "The Nine Mile" under the leadership of **Jim Leatham** and **Geo. Richardson**. They were an eager band and took a line across country to Cabbage Tree Creek.

They were followed half an hour later by another party of 25 horsemen and 50 hikers, following on another ridge to come out at the same objective. This party picked up tracks at Cabbage Tree Creek, but found it impossible to follow them

for any distance.

Later the parties united at the objective pre-arranged and then a move was made to scour further country.

It was at this juncture that **Mr. Morrell** took up a search on his own.

All through the day parties eager to have the honour to find the little wanderers combed the plains, gullies, gorges, and lower reaches on Mount Raymond, but without success.

The endeavours of all search parties at the end of their pilgrimage was Parker's homestead, and at varying intervals horse and footmen came in with dejected looks following on their non-success. The finding of tracks was diluted seriously and some left on another intensive search.

People unable to partake in the search, made up by sending provisions, and at 3.30 at Parker's homestead, there were considerably over 100 men, women, and boy scouts who were invited to participate in the good things at the improvised canteen.

In the midst of the meal, a messenger arrived at about 4.15 with the welcome news that the wanderers had been found, and a glad Hurrah rent the air, after which a stampede Orbostwards set in.

As pre-arranged, shots were fired to give the welcome news. First **Constable Robinson** was in the vicinity at the time and **Mounted Constable Sharp**, about a mile away, and they were soon at the homestead.

BROUGHT TO THE HOSPITAL

The children, when found, were at once brought to the Hospital arriving there at 4 p.m. When they arrived at the Hospital, according to **Matron Blacklock**, their condition was surprisingly good considering the trials they had been through. Their legs were scratched and feet swollen, the rough ferns and rough country telling its tale of the wandering. Gravel and rock had also embedded itself in their feet, so that they were unable to stand on them, which had necessitated recourse to the bivouac.

It was a case of sheer necessity of fear that kept them going.

On arrival at the Hospital, they were bathed and put to bed. They were able to take nourishment, and except for complaining about painful feet, they passed a good night. On Sunday morning, they were interested in Comic Papers.

They had no food from the time they left Steed's till they were found.

They were simply clothed in a flannel shirt and trousers. The older boy was of immature stature compared to the younger, but [had] more stamina.

'Snowy River Mail', Wednesday, August 2, 1933

THE KELLY BOYS!



BRODRIBB STATE SCHOOL - Teacher: Mr. Jack CANAVAN

Pupils L-R: Stan KELLY, _____, George LEATHAM, Pandil YANTSES, Danny LEATHAM, Maurice KELLY, Ben, Wally & Joe WEBB, Ruby JOY, Marie COULSON, Kathy KELLY, Glenis LEATHAM, Sylvia FIELD, June FIELD, Gwen LEATHAM, Beth LEATHAM.

**GO HOME TO SEE THEIR MOTHER
THEN TAKE A TRIP TO MELBOURNE.**

Save for unhealed wounds through being frost-bitten between the toes, Stan and Maurice Kelly, who were recently lost in the bush, are now restored to health, although the pinched look in the elder boy's face, shows the reaction of his valiant effort to look after Maurice, the younger brother in their wanderings. They have been discharged from the Orbost Hospital and were taken in charge by **Mrs. F. B. Andrews**, prior to being taken home to see their mother.

On Friday morning they held quite a levee at **Mr. J. S. Tomlinson's** business premises, where gifts sent in had accumulated. Well fed, warmly clothed and cheerful they presented a different aspect to when they were brought in to the hospital on Saturday last. Their little feet were bandaged and new shoes were a difficult proposition. Maurice managed to insert one foot into a shoe, but the bandage on the other foot was too much, and with the admonition not to lose it, the shoe was placed in the pocket of his new tunic. The sight of their wearing apparel on their wandering—a little flannel shirt, and tiny pants was all Stan had on, and Maurice had a dilapidated coat, which they state was used to cover them as protection from the cold when they sought a night's lodging in a hollow log—brought a pang of pity and a suspicious moisture about the eyes of the people assembled. They said they had had a real good time at the Hospital. There were gifts, suitable and unsuitable, and when all was ready they motored away from home, in charge of **Mr. F. B. Andrews**, and with **Mr. Dave Auger** at the wheel.

Arrived home they were received with joy by the mother and brothers and sisters. By the way, Mr. Parker, stepfather, was in bed with the flu. After some reluctance Mrs. Kelly gave permission for a visit to Melbourne, but laid stress that they were to be brought back, and not adopted by any sympathetic people. They then returned to Orbost and **Mrs. Andrews** again took charge. Arrangements had been made for a Benefit at the Majestic Theatre on the Saturday night, and this duly eventuated, a crowded house being in



Maurice and Stan Kelly, of Brodribb (who were lost for three days in the bush near Orbost), with Mr. F. B. Andrews of Orbost, were shown over The Weekly Times Office during a visit to Melbourne last week.

attendance notwithstanding the bitterly cold evening. It had been the intention to have the little mites present, but weather conditions put an end to that idea.

Mr. Charlie Vaude, the well known comedian, and of broadcasting announcement fame, put in an appearance at the Hall, at a somewhat late hour, he and his pianist, **Mr. Reg. Brown** having missed the turn at Nowa Nowa, and had proceeded nearly to Buchan before the mistake was discovered. Anyway he made up for his late appearance by keeping the audience in high good humour with his quips and topical allusions. As his car a Baby Austin, could not accommodate the children and Mr. Andrews, the latter had made arrangements to get through to Bairnsdale and then on by train, but luckily on Sunday morning, a friend came along in a roomy car and the journey to Melbourne was made in comfort .

ancestry.com.au

WINIFRED MARY VERONICA PARKER (nee Woodland) was born on 4 September 1897 in Wodonga, Victoria.

She married John Robert Kelly on 19 January 1919 in Church, Lancashire. She then married Edward Parker on 28 October 1930 in Orbost, Victoria.

She died on 4 February 1964 in Flinders, Victoria, at the age of 66.

ancestry.com.au

EDWARD PARKER was born in March 1905 in York, Yorkshire.

He married Winifred Mary Veronica Woodland on 28 October 1930 in Orbost, Victoria.

He died on 5 March 1966 in Warragul, Victoria, at the age of 61.

Snowy River Mail (Orbost): June 1933 (extract)

HEAVY WEATHER AT ORBOST

Nearly Six Inches in 48 Hours

"Quick and lively" is the best expression of the Brodribb River consequent on the first fall. Down it came in a raging torrent, and soon the waters were flowing turbulently over the low level bridge, and on Saturday afternoon had reached a height of five feet about the level of the decking. In the early hours of Saturday morning, there were four feet waves cresting the flat near the site of the new high level bridge over the Brodribb near Mr. Coulson's.

ancestry.com.au

RECORDS SHOW:

Robert Stanley "Stan" KELLY: died 8 July 2007 at Sunshine, Melbourne, Victoria; married with a family.

Maurice Leslie Kelly: died 23 March 2007 at Traralgon, Victoria; never married.

Special thank you to John Phillips for his assistance.

THE FINDER'S STORY

Mr. William Morrell, of Orbost, who found the children, on being interviewed on Sunday last, said —

"I went out at 5.45 on Saturday morning, leaving Orbost with Stafford's party comprising **W. Stafford, R. and J. Freeman** and myself. We went along the road to Parker's for a distance of three quarters of a mile. We left the car there and went east. We went straight through the bush towards the next spur running south of Mt. Raymond. We followed the spur within 400 and 500 yards of Cabbage Tree Creek, where J. Freeman picked up barefoot tracks. W. Stafford and R. Freeman then made in the direction of Parkers to give information as to the footprints. I lit a fire in order to attract people who might be coming from Parker's direction. Jack Freeman circled round in an endeavour to pick up further tracks. The tracks seen led into a dirty bit of scrub, principally bracken, leading down into a gully which led into Cabbage Tree Creek.

After lighting the fire I circled in another direction, and found two tracks but they had become almost obliterated by previous search parties. At this time J. Freeman and other searchers arrived. Somebody then discovered that it was 10.50 o'clock, and time to have a snack. About 20 had arrived and the whole party had lunch. After lunch we decided to spread out and follow the Cabbage Tree Creek up towards the east, as the footprints denoted that direction. The party then came to another creek running south into Cabbage Tree Creek. The idea then was formed that the creek was too deep to have been crossed by the children, and it was decided to follow it up. It was very dirty country. They continued up the creek, and I left them, crossed the creek, and continued up the other side. I was then on my own, and continued on up that side of the creek for a distance of about 2½ miles. I, there, ran into a search party of about 15 horsemen. They continued on their search, and I kept straight on up the creek for about another half mile. At this stage I noticed on my left at a distance of about 200 yards in a clear patch, two little nippers toddling along towards a depression in the ground, where water was lodging, for a drink. I looked at them in astonishment, then walked across and chatted with them.

I said — Hello!

They replied — Hello!

I said — Are you the lost children?

They did not reply.

A good look over them convinced me. They had no boots or shoes, and their clothes were in tatters, and there was a mixture of charcoal and blood oozing from their toes.

I said — Can you do with a bit of bread and jam?

THE KELLY KIDS

The Brodribb was out in flood, you see,
And Mummie was short of sugar and tea;
No way to Orbost to get some more,
So borrow one must from a neighbour's store.

Maurice and Stan on the message bent,
Jogged off down the road and were quite content;
Their errand done, they'd a little snack,
Then they set off home down the old bush track.

Stan being seven, a quite a (unreadable),
Decided he knew of a better plan,
"Let's take a short cut," he blithely said,
So they left the track and they went ahead.

The evening went; it came time for tea;
Still Mummie awaited them anxiously.
This the search began, and eerily,
The dim bush rang—"Cooee, Cooee!

A few set out on the search next day,
Believing the kids were not far away;
A band of horsemen, without success,
Went scouring the scrub-grown wilderness.

Without success! And with fall of night,
Came serious thought of the kiddies plight.
Next morn the alarm went forth, and then
Went out the call for a hundred men.

The response was grand, and from near and far,
Men went forth to find, as they would to war,
A search now frantic went grimly on;
In the hearts of some hope was nearly gone.

The third night came. To their bitter cost
Folks knew that the kids might indeed be lost.
Dark of the moon, and the nights were cold,
Their feet were bare and their clothes were old.

They both nodded.

I then cooeed to get in touch with search parties. I boiled the billy, and gave them a light snack of bread and butter, cheeses and assorted biscuits. They did not seem particularly ravenous. In fact, the little boys ate slowly.

The older boy said — Do you know what makes Maurice so fat? It is because he eats so slowly.

I did not give them too much but they were very thirsty, and drank the billy tea up. They were all a shake and tremble when I found them.

They told me when eating the food I gave them, that horsemen had ridden right past them a short time before I came on the scene. They had had no food all the time they were lost, but they told me they got plenty of water out of the crabholes.

They said every night they rigged up a bed in a tree hollow, and kept themselves warm in a thick layer of leaves and dry bracken.

I said — "Didn't you put in a freeze?"

Maurice replied — Last night I was terribly hot (doubtless the little chap was becoming feverish), but I kept my coat on.

When found they had a hollow tree selected for camping that night, and when I came along, they were in the act of rigging up their place of abode in similar manner.

The bush was foreign to me, and I had

The tears oozed out beneath many lids
For hearts were sad for the Kelly kids.
Saturday came, and with early dawn,
The search was on, but the hope forlorn.

Four pals, in trying a different tack,
Rejoiced on finding a barefoot track,
Then every heart was with hope imbued,
And the search went on with zest renewed.

Till one who wandered somewhat apart,
With gladness that very nigh burst his heart;
Beheld the pair, but could scarcely believe
That his eyes or brain did not deceive.

Their legs were bleeding, their clothes were torn,
Their poor little bodies, weary and worn.
But still alive — very far from death —
"Too good to be true," everyone said.

He gave them a drink of his billy tea,
Then carried the little chap tenderly,
With grit of the most unusual thing
Stanley gallantly jumped behind.

Meeting of searchers another band,
They soon struck the road and a boy at hand.
Thus to the Hospital ——— so to bed,
Soon the kiddies were warm and fed.

You're a truly wonderful tale they told,
How they feared not hunger, nor dark, nor cold.
But in hollow logs, with leaves spread o'er,
Slept like little pigs 'neath a heap of straw.

I have told the story as best I can,
Of the Kelly brothers, Maurice and Stan,
And we who rejoice they're alive today
Hope only good fortune will come their way.

Anonymous

looked about to get my bearings, and I came to the conclusion that the spot was five to six miles south of Mt. Raymond, and three to four miles from the road leading off the Prince's [sic] Highway at Brodribb, leading towards Parker's.

I put my coat around Maurice and carried him. Stan toddled along behind, and we travelled due west to pick the road leading into Parker's. I cooeed every few minutes. We continued for two miles through rough country. I had to stop to bandage Stan's legs, which were torn by the ferns.

Stan was stumbling on his hands and knees at times. By Jove, he had grit! I had to carry him across the worse places. We came across **G. McPherson**, and then three or four other lads came on the scene. We then carried the boys out to within three quarters of a mile of the road, where the car was reached.

We put them in the car and Mr. McPherson drove them to Smith's just off the Prince's [sic] Highway.

They were transferred to Mr. J. Gilbert's car, who took them to the Orbost Hospital in quick time. Syd Smith and I accompanied the boys in Mr. Gilbert's car, and arrived at the hospital and 4 o'clock.

I found the kids between 1 and 1.30 o'clock."