

MARYSVILLE HOLIDAY – MARCH 1941

BY GLAD HAYES

Excitement as three sixteen year old girls travelled by car for a week's holiday with the Mother and young brother of one to stay at 'Mary-Lyn.' Travelling towards Healesville the tall skeletons of Mountain Ash trees, burnt in the 1939 fires, stood ghostly above the forest regrowth and did for decades while across the Black Spur rooted trunks of huge blackened trees lay fallen across the forest floor with new Tree ferns, bracken and young saplings starting to surround them. We arrived at 'Mary-Lyn' just before noon to be shown upstairs to our room, three beds around the walls and a small wash-basin near the central door - Mrs. F. and son were a few rooms away - our window looked down onto the lawn at the back, I think the bowling green. The bathroom was at the end of the passage and used by all rooms on both sides of the passage. Shortly after unpacking the gong rang for lunch so we hastily descended to the lower level to the dining room, which also looked out to the lawn and enjoyed our first meal. After this Mr. F. left to drive back home to Ivanhoe.

We three, Gwen, Jean and Glad, after lunch walked to find what was around the township and found 'The Log Cabin' which was shut as it was Sunday, it looked old even then. Crossing the small stream bubbling along under the white wooden bridge we discovered it was a river, the Steavenson, its banks lined with ferns, grasses, and trees, a pretty stream in its natural state. We roamed around the gravel roadways discovering other Guest Houses, 'Marylands,' 'Roseleigh', 'Kooringa' and there were one or two more whose names I can't recall. Next morning we were back at 'The Log Cabin' to buy a district map and, as we did every day, a 'Violet Crumble' to sustain us on our walks and postcards of Marysville to send to family and friends - 'The Log Cabin' was quite cluttered and dusty with everything you could imagine available. Our walk in the afternoon was along the pretty Tree fern bordered narrow track, which wended its way through the forest to the 'Beauty Spot,' where underneath tall trees, tree and small ferns ringed a small quiet pool - a truly beautiful place.

The mornings usually started before breakfast with a game of tennis played on the 'Mary-Lyn' court across the road from the main building or on the adjacent Croquet lawn ensuring a hearty appetite! One morning walk was to the 'Fruit Salad Farm' situated on the bend of a small stream where we sat waiting for the proprietor to come for our order, after a while Gwen knocked

on the house door to let them know we were there and the order soon taken with the remark that we were early 'it was quarter past nine!' - teenage appetites. However we were soon enjoying the large bowls of fruit salad and cream with Sarsaparilla drinks. The afternoon walk was along the 'Taggerty River View Track' which wound around the hillside among the blackened trees which were slowly being hidden by the new leaves sprouting on their trunks, this, two years after the '39 fires, showed how long recovery takes. On reaching the Taggerty River sparkling water below enticed us to cool our feet and, we thought, to paddle over to a small mid-stream island but the iciness soon hurried us back to the bank. The 'Wishing Well' was at the end of another track we explored.

Ambling along the track to the 'Steavenson Falls' we were sure we could hear them around the next bend until finally they appeared above the low growth ahead, a wonderful sight as they tumbled over the four levels from the top to crash noisily into the river below - it was an invitation to scramble across the river and clamber up the other side, and, what a climb! The steepness was rather testing and needed several pauses to regain one's breath and energy as we pulled ourselves upwards, at times even crawling over rocks by the side of the water as there was no definite track to make it easier - what a reward to reach the top and from a flat rock a little upstream have a reviving drink of the clear water and take photos to prove we'd reached our target! It was quite eerie at the top as it was very quiet, and so still, with no sound of bird or animal, and the plants on the other bank were all a tangled mass of thin white trunks and fronds, most unusual and evidently the result of intense heat. I took a photo with Gwen in front of them to show the effect they gave. Our descent was cautious as in steep sections the soil was quite loose and tended to move under our feet.

Morning ride - we hired horses from 'Roseleigh' on the main road, pictured, I had Jimbo, Jean the tallest of us was given smallest Helen and Gwen had spirited Whisky for our morning ride which was a novelty as I don't think any of us had been on horseback before. We set off at a slow pace until on a quieter lane where we were enjoying our ride until a flock of sheep travelling the other way soon surrounded us, as did the dogs with them - Jean's Helen refused to move, mine eventually edged through and Gwen's Whisky pranced and frisked through them and wouldn't turn back to Marysville! Once the sheep had gone into a paddock Jean and I returned to 'Roseleigh,' Gwen arrived sometime later - we decided one horse-ride was enough.

Our last walk turned out quite an adventure - with map in hand 'Keppel's Lookout' appeared to be a straight forward one so after lunch set off up the

steep track, with many stops to look around, or more truly gather our breath! - when reaching the top there was no definite lookout, just less bracken, and Marysville could be seen in the valley below ringed by the high ranges, nearby a sign pointed to Steavenson Falls - on consulting our map it was thought we had plenty of time to return to base by this other route as the distance across didn't look very far. The bracken encroached over the track in many sections and was hard to follow but we were sure it would improve - wrong - and when we came to where there had been timber felling on both sides of a small wet depression it was quite boggy, but after much slipping through the mud finally found the indistinct track again, and decided we'd have to keep going towards the Falls as it would be the nearest way down, and as long as we kept the valley, occasional glimpse of the township and the glow from the lowering sun on our left we'd be OK. Finally, with much relief we came to the top of the very steep zig-zag path leading to the base of Steavenson Falls, from where we had a nice flat walk back to 'Mary-Lyn' where we arrived in time for a quick clean up and change before dinner. On looking back in the years afterwards we realized how lucky we were not to have been lost trying to find a track that had been obliterated by fire, fallen trees and regrowth - a day we clearly remember.

(Source: Letter dated August 2009)