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SURE

THE BOYS' BRIGADE -- 2nd AUCKLAND COMPANY

A Champ Magazine for a Champ Company

A MEMORIAL TO THE LIFE AND TIMES OF MICHAEL JAMES STEAD



Wobbly and Mutt

A MEMORIAL TO MICHAEL ("WOBBLY") STEAD

In many parts of the world, the Christian Church has established companies of The Boys' Brigade for the purpose of encouraging Boys to accept Christ as their leader, and Christianity as their Way Of Life.

For a company to be successful in its aim, it must work towards the establishment of an "esprit de corps", that wonderful feeling of committed companionship so often absent in clubs, schools, and homes.

In the early 1970's, the 2nd Auckland Boys' Brigade Company, whose home was at Greenlane, had such team spirit. Whenever it met, the atmosphere was very sensitive, sometimes electric; active, often thrilling; sincere, always loving. Boys and leaders were aware of God's reality, his very presence with them. In times to come, old boys of the 2nd Auckland will cherish the memory of those few precious years. Whilst some will remember the strong, consistent, and totally committed leadership, and others the exciting and full programme in the great outdoors, most, will remember the charisma of Michael Stead. . . .

In 1970, Michael Stead was a 14 year old at Auckland Grammar School, when his long-time friend Grant ("Tiddler") Provan, encouraged him to join the B.B. Along with two other 3rd form mates, he was very easily able to tolerate the 6 week period of recruit training where he found himself mixing with predominantly 11 year olds. He joined the company band as a bugler, attended the mid-week swimming class, camped at Whananaki for Easter, and assisted the junior rugby team to win the Battalion shield.

Toward the end of the year, he ran in the cross-country, and afterwards in "SURE", the company magazine, his enthusiastic article indicated a growing loyalty to his B.B. company.

Lured by the promise of a "Trip Overseas", Michael was one of forty five 2nd Aucklanders who attended the 1970 - 71 Battalion summer camp on Great Barrier Island. At about this time, his artistic talent became increasingly recognised and appreciated. His sketches for the early 1971 issue of "SURE" were the first of a remarkable two year period in which he so successfully documented Boys' Brigade as a way of life, his life.

There is no better way then of telling of that life, other than sharing it with him through his sketches and prose

Epilogue

At the Final Display and Presentation of Awards in December 1972, Michael was presented with the "2nd Auckland Anchor", the premier trophy, "awarded to the Boy who made the best contribution to the esprit de corps of the Company".

One month later, he attended the Auckland Battalion Summer Camp at Otautu, Colville Bay, on the Coromandel Peninsular.

Soon after, he went to Taumaranui with other seniors for the start of the company's biennial 8 day canoe expedition to Wanganui.

On January 26th, 1973, at the age of 16, Michael was drowned when his canoe overturned and was trapped by a submerged tree in a rapid downriver from Jerusalem.

In a letter to the B.B. N.Z. President, Mr Terry Hill, Captain of the 2nd Auckland, and leader of the expedition wrote . . .

On January 26th, Wobbly Stead drowned, Our desperate efforts to save him were of no avail. If you have really loved a Boy in the highest sense, you will realise how I felt as "Wobbs" was indeed someone special to me and the 2nd. Add to this the terrible sense of responsibility for the safety of someone else's son, and the very near death of other Boys involved in the rescue operation and you have the situation I was in.

Naturally, an experience like this has a lasting effect on your life, but it may be of assistance to others to remember in times of stress that God can cope with everything in His love. If we are broken, it is only so that we may demonstrate His strength through us more effectively.

I am a sadder man; but also happier as it is my view that we cannot experience the full heights of rejoicing unless we know what it is to mourn. And I have a lot to be thankful for.

"Wobbs" was a Christian, and is alive with His Lord, having left us with some wonderful memories. I have received tremendous support from his family and know the depths of the love of the people at Greenlane. And, above all, God allowed this accident to happen, despite all normal safety precautions being taken, and therefore has a reason for it.

The 2nd Auckland stood firm always. The Boys flocked in from all over N.Z. and overseas for the funeral, a really moving and victorious occasion, and we start this year even closer together, planning our usual full programme with its ample share of adventure activities. What is even more thrilling is the sense of spiritual renewal becoming apparent within the company and I am convinced that during the year, Christ will be showing His presence in an extra special way in the lives of these Boys.

I therefore thank those that prayed and rejoice in being able to share with others our experience of the living Christ and his overflowing love.

These sentiments, so keenly shared by many people were just one reason for a lasting memorial to such a fine friend.



Michael Stead Memorial Lodge

At the time of Michael's death, the Auckland Battalion of The Boys' Brigade had already commenced discussion with the N.Z. Forest Service about a proposal to construct a 24 person trampers' lodge at the junction of the Wainora Stream and the Kauaeranga River, 20 minutes by road from Thames. During the course of 1973, the proposed lodge came to be known as the "Michael Stead Memorial Lodge".

The 2nd Auckland was very much involved in the project from then until its conclusion. Captains Terry Hill and Geof Cammell helped keep the project alive during the long, protracted planning procedures of 1973 and 1974, when a number of contentious issues had to be resolved with the N.Z. Forest Service and the Thames County Council. Former Captain, Bob Caron undertook the responsibility for the project's co-ordination. Bob was rarely unnerved by the prodigious task of having to operate from an Auckland base, and all those who worked with him during the two years of construction came to admire his patience and tenacity. Michael Stead's long-time school and B.B. friend, Peter Gordon placed the foundation footings in the winter of 1975 and continued with the project almost until completion in late 1976. In his capacity as site foreman, Peter made innumerable trips to the Kauaeranga with the weekend work crews, and, for a period of several months worked alone at the site during the week.

On April 1st, 1979, the Michael Stead Memorial Lodge was officially opened.

Written and Compiled by John Simpson
Produced by Bruce Sai Louie
1984

Company Personalities

B.B. What a life ! B.B. Our Life ! We loved it, and lived for it.

Sun, rain, wind, or snow, at the top of mountains, on the rivers, or in the bush, life was good. God gave it all to us, and we loved Him for it. For all His goodness to us, however, we thanked Him most for our friends, lifelong friends, people we will never forget.



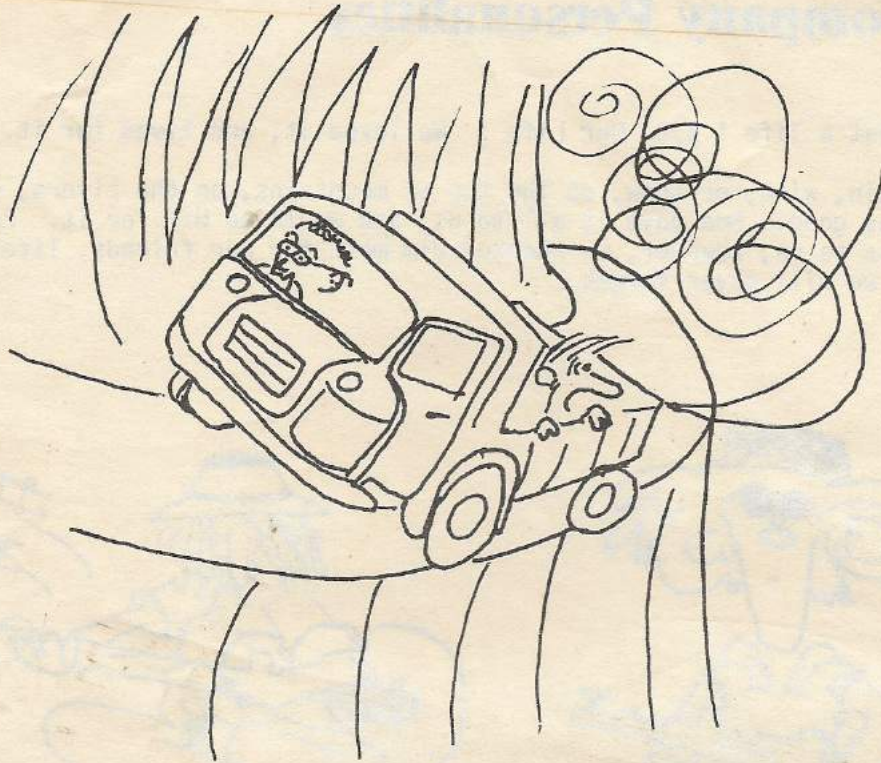
G.J.P.
in. Revolutionary garb.



Geof playing
his Geetar.



Sid attempts to
split kindling.



Mr Hill at the wheel.



A 2nd Auckland officer on the 3-day hike. having compass trouble. For obvious reasons, his name cannot be released.

Monday Night Band



. . . After S/Sgt Bruce Cammell got us into marching order, we then proceeded to unite in the harmonious music of the 2nd Auckland Band. The drums and the bugles sounded - well, as Cpl P.C. would say, - mild, mild, very mild !

A reader would be excused for thinking that everything was rosy and fine. But wait ! Mention has yet to be made of Mr Hill ! Because he had nothing else to do, firmly armed with a copious supply of drumsticks, he stalked around the hall never taking his eagle eyes off us. When we felt the slipstream of a flying drumstick which missed our ear by $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch, then we knew that we had done something wrong. Needless to say, we didn't waste time by looking around, but fixed our mistake as quickly as possible because the next stick didn't usually miss.

Mr Hill however, wasn't the only problem to contend with. There was always Stead the Elder madly swinging his drumsticks around our heads and Staffie Cammell who sniggered as he calmly wrapped his mace about our necks . . .



In August 1970, our senior expedition party into the Urewera Ranges got trapped and between swollen rivers and subsequently rescued by helicopter after 4 days on emergency rations of 3 raisins and a cubic inch of cheese!

The attempt to picture "J.P.", a Urewera hero as he came out of the bush, came to a sudden, but inevitable conclusion . . .



Aahhurrgh
'Elp! CHOMP
ARARRGH!!
CRUNCH!!
BURP!



Rugby Tournaments

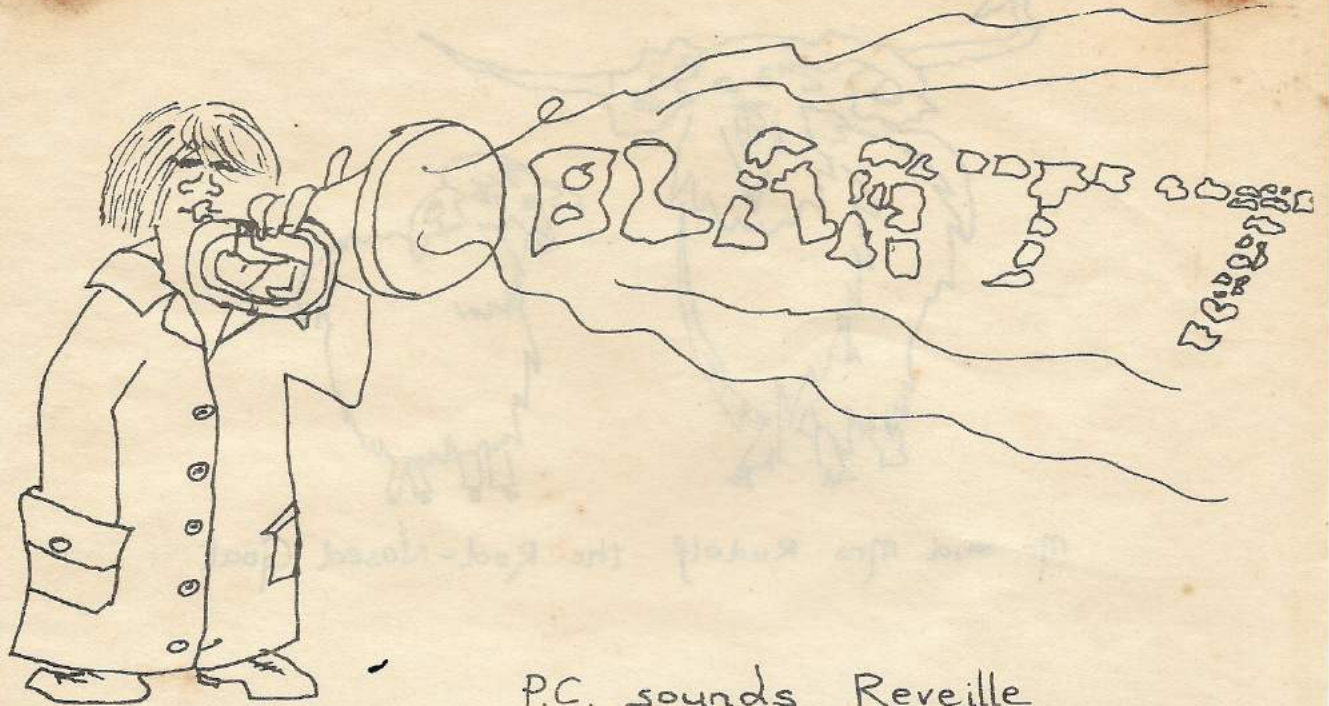
Every year, in or about the August holidays, the Battalion held a soccer and rugby tournament on the grounds of the Auckland Teachers College. Soccer was for those with finesse, whilst, on the other hand . . .



Rugby was for those who could tackle it.
(apologies for the muddy pun.)

Company Camps

The day always commenced with "Reveille". . .



P.C. sounds Reveille

. . . and finished with a sound sleep

in preparation for another exhausting day . . .



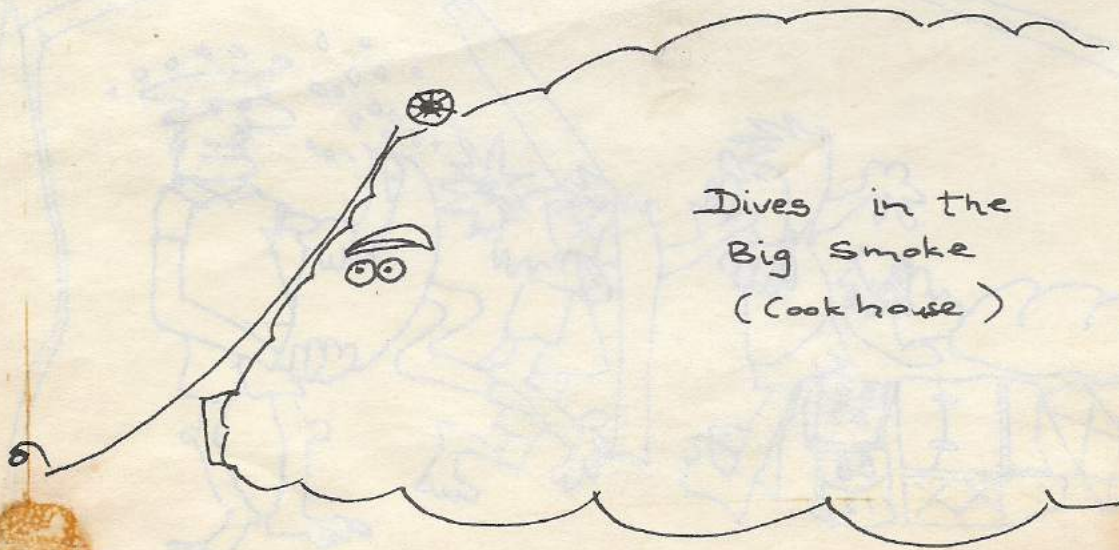
Tent Life at Night.

In between times, we chased goats . . .



Mr and Mrs Rudolf the Red-Nosed Goat

. . . stayed clear of the cookhouse . . .



Dives in the
Big Smoke
(Cookhouse)

... rode the waves ...



A senior surfing

... watched foolhardy officers test a suspect flying fox ...



J.S. after his epic flight from yonder to hither.

... introduced ourselves to fauna in the camp creek ...



A sociable Cray.

... sat around the fire and listened once more to the story of "Rindercella" ...



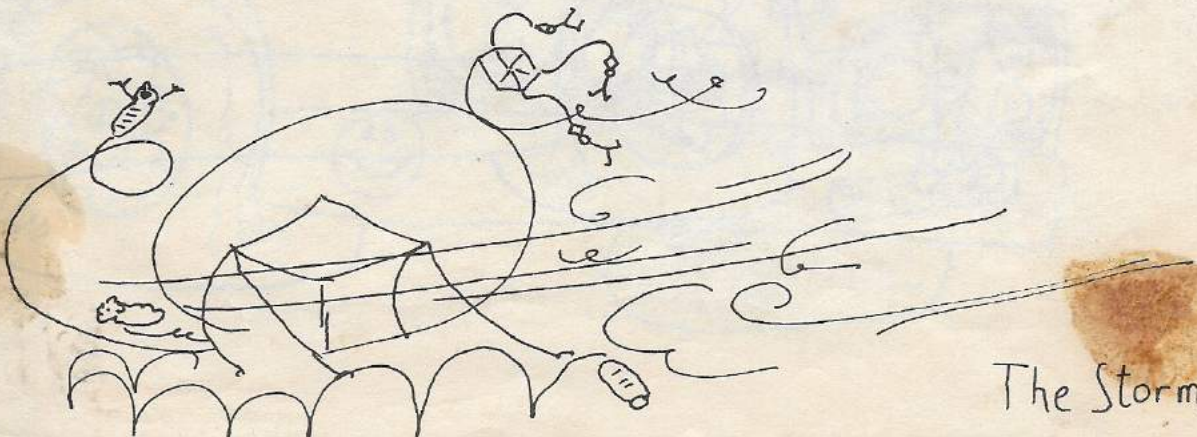
The Community Feed at Mule's campsite

The real battles were small private duels waged at a discrete distance from the main battleground . . .



The Camp Battle.

While at camp, we had a visit from Cyclone Rosie. Tent leaders were pounding around lesser-spotted-slobovian lurgiburghers-in-a-fog trying to encourage the tents not to depart. However, despite their persuasive powers, the marquee for one could not resist the urge to search for greener pastures. Spirits were high, and I think we all got to know the words to "Raindrops keep falling on my head". We survived, and Rosie only helped us to enjoy camp more . . .

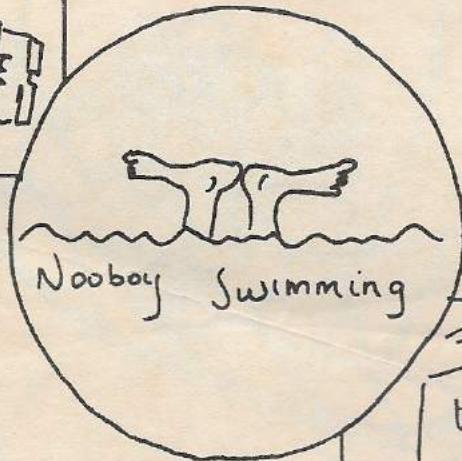


The Storm.

The stew and spuds and carrots were served up to the ranks while we continued with our apple and rice pudding cooking, meths and white spirits spilling and primus booting. We had just completed all our hard work when Mr Simpson made another devastating discovery. In his usual weird and wonderful state of mind he had put stew thickener (with salt) into the rice pud, thinking innocently to himself all the while that it was milk concentrate (total tsk, tsk). So you know why there wasn't any rice pud with the stewed apples.

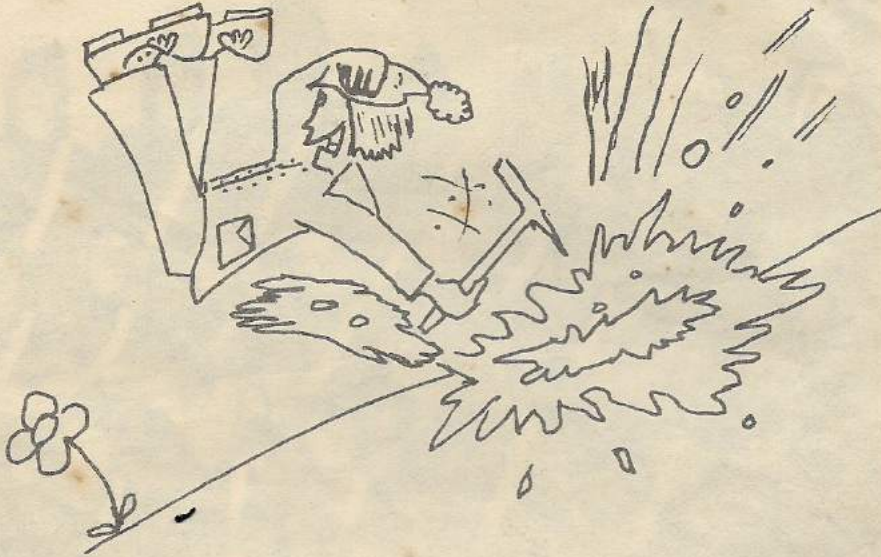
Next on the list came cocoa. There was the usual chaotic procedure of events except for one thing. We boiled the milk in the same drum as the stew but it was still a bit dirty 'cos everyone else had given it a final rinse. So now you know why the cocoa tasted funny.

One morning after a late rise, we cooked breakfast, and to please our beloved Captain, had a compulsory swim in the river, polar bear style . . .



Mountain Trip


A trip to the Tongariro National Park was often a case of exciting action . . .



"Self arrests" (Ha-ha.)

. . . but more likely a case of acclimatising to the elements . . .

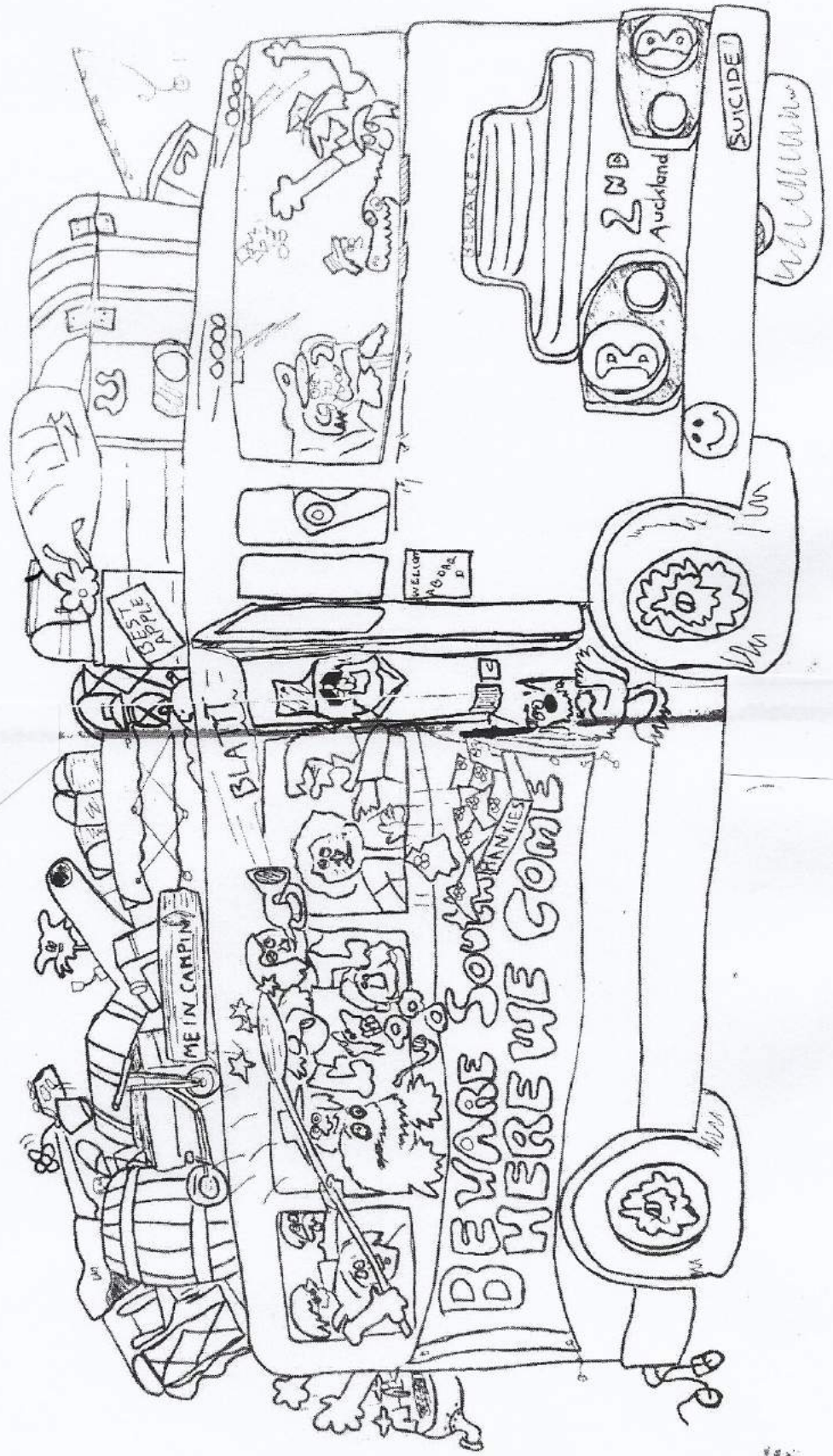


Getting the feel of the weather.  ..

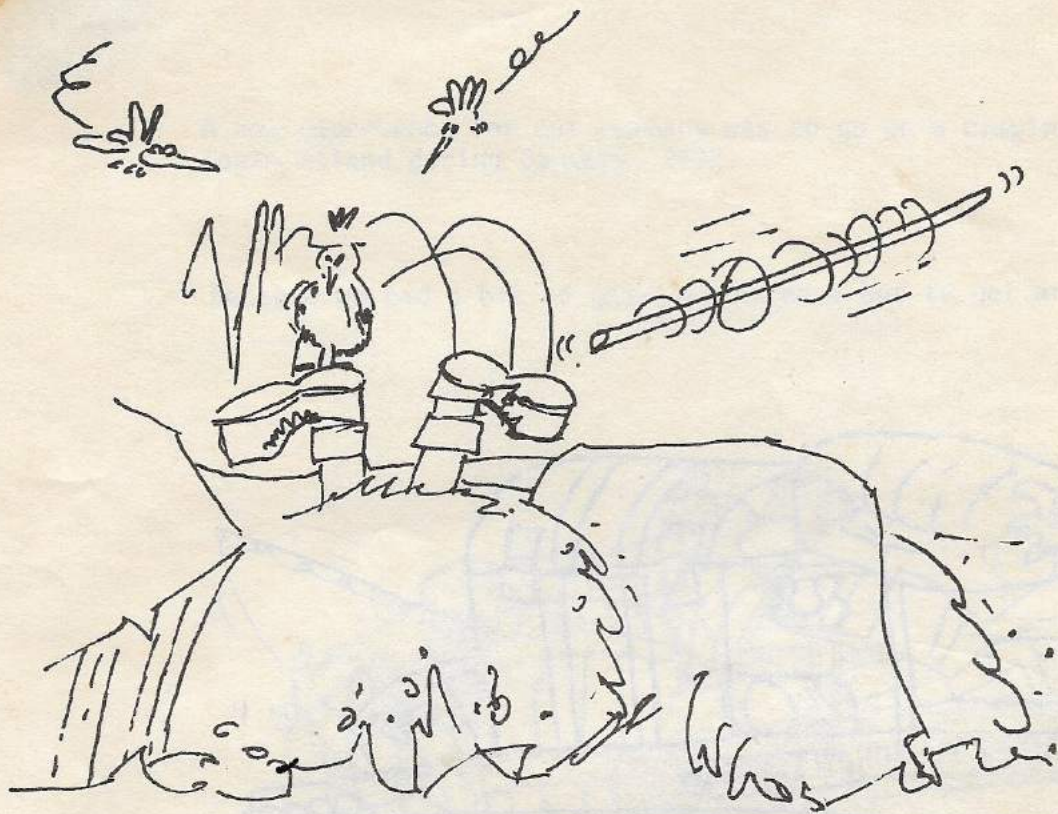
South Island Tour

A new experience for our company was to go on a camping tour of the South Island during January, 1972.

Because we had a bit of gear, we hired a bus to get around on . . .



As a preliminary exercise in preparation for South Island river crossings, we went out to Clevedon where we learnt the different techniques . . .



Mr Allen demonstrating the Prop Method.



One of Mr Simpson's group discover a deep place.

We farewelled the West Coast, and eventually made our way around to Cascade Creek where we made a base camp in preparation for our 3 day Hollyford Valley expeditions in Moose Country.

Said Mr Moose to Mrs Moose

"What have we for tea?"

Said Mrs Moose to Mr Moose

"Moss is whats for we"

Said Mr Moose to Mrs Moose

"Why always moss for tea?"

Said Mrs Moose to Mr Moose

"Because the moss is for free"

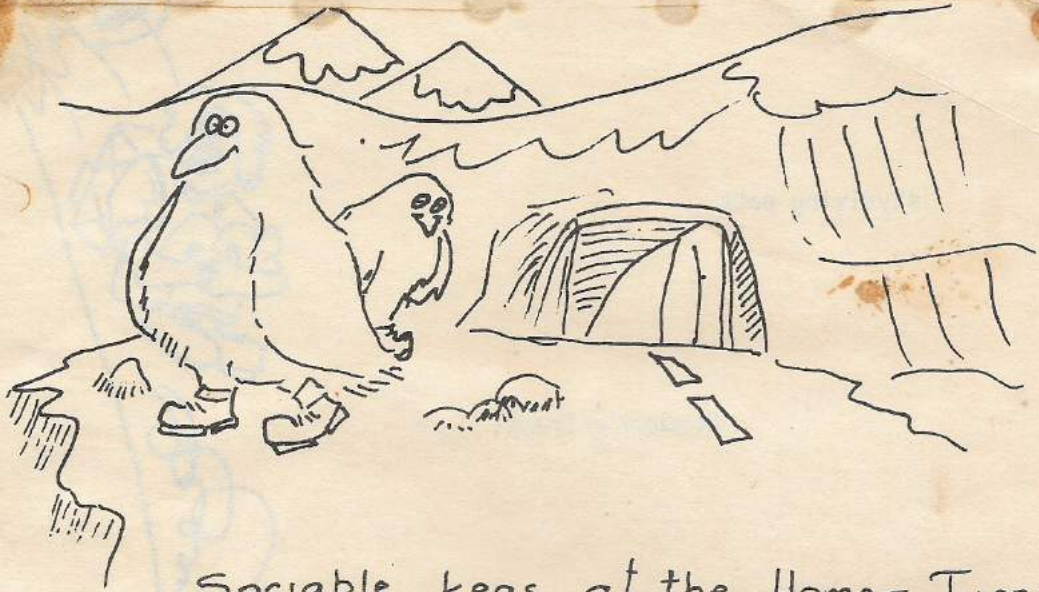


Expertise in crossing rivers wasn't a guarantee that we could cross a bridge . . .



In a spot of bother with a swing-bridge.

The next morning, heaven smiled on us once again. Even the keas were friendly



Sociable keas at the Homer Tunnel.

as we left for home via Wellington and a confrontation with civil servants . . .



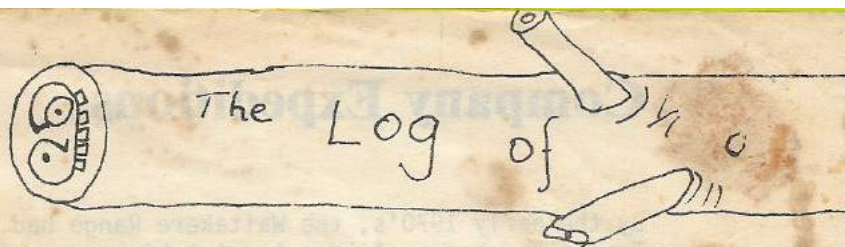
Winning the Hearts of the Local Yocals

Company Expeditions

By the early 1970's, the Waitakere Range had lost its wilderness character. Tracks had become 4 lane tourist highways. Campsites, fires and routes were all wrapped up in red tape. On our last trip out for an expedition, we would not even have been surprised had we been told where and when to bog !



It often rains at Karekare.



The Log of

Our party consisted of Mr Simpson, Grant Provan, Paul Johnson, Me (Michael Stead), Geoff Martin, Paul Blampied, Mark Smith and Andrew Seebold.

We set off from camp at about 1 o'clock on 31st December, 1970. Most of the tramp consisted of road-bashing and most of the road-bashing consisted of up-hill slogs. Geoff found the hill bash to be nothing but a harmless jog while the rest of us sweated away $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile behind. It took us an hour to reach the top of the 1st hill and another hour to walk down the other side to get to the main track. There was a bit of a problem about where the track was because the map was a bit wrong. It said the track was 200 yards from the top. It turned out to be one mile. It was much easier going in the bush and spirits were high. Our track was an old railway which was used by the Kauri Loggers to haul logs to the creeks. It took us 30 minutes to reach our camp. It was a perfect camping spot, a little beach by a cascading stream. Two Massive rocks sheltered us, and there was plenty of firewood. Paul Johnson was assigned to be cook so he knocked up some sausages and spud and mixed veges and we ate like pigs for 3 minutes. We had a two pint "Greggs" Instant Pudding for dessert and then we had devotions - we used Grant's "God is for Real Man" to read from. Right in the middle of prayers we heard a possum start croaking nearby. This disturbed us a bit and we couldn't concentrate so we finished prayers and looked around. We found a Seebold fast asleep in his sleeping bag snoring away like a motorbike doing 90 in 1st. We couldn't stop him so everyone went to bed except Grant, Mr S. and Me, who stayed up to break the ice at midnight. The water was freezing.

The next day dawned bright and early with three of us feeling rather bleary from the night before. We had a weird concoction for breakfast. It looked and tasted just like chicken food. It was terrible. It had "Non fattening Health food" on the packet. The only reason it was non fattening would be because no one would eat it. We had some though and that made up for the chicken feed. After breaky we packed up and got washed up by the splash of rocks which were chucked into the stream from another fun-loving party.

We got under way by 8 o'clock and it felt like lunch-time by the time the 1st orange peel corner had been conquered. It was a killer slope, almost verticle. To our dismay, on the 3rd orange peel corner, Mr S. found that his compass was no longer with him, so he left us looking for souvenirs and ran back to our previous camp. Mr S. arrived and by the time we were near the Black Rocks and that was very depressing because the map showed we had only just started the tramp and we had a long march ahead of us. We followed pig tracks down into the next valley and found ourselves in a huge bog hole which consisted of cutty-grass, mud and mosquitoes. It was now about 10 o'clock and the mossies were very, very aggressive so it was lethal to stop and rest for more than 5 minutes. It was an hour and a half of bog stomping later that we found a track that looked like an old bush railway strip. It went straight and wide for yards and then zig-zagged around a bit before it dumped us at a little grassy place with a stream of CLEAR water.

We had lunch there at 12 o'clock. It was again knocked up by Paul Johnson who made a classy 3 course dinner; chicken soup, tomato soup and 16 crackers each. We spent 2 hours over lunch, then Mark Smith, Paul Blampied and Paul Johnson went off for a dip in the hot springs. They were away when



Intermediate Tramp

another party came past. They said "It would take us only 4 hours to reach Coffin's camp, but there wasn't any water there so we had to go on to a stream a mile on past the camp". They moved on and the merry three reappeared, so we cleared up and set off up the track at a speed of a Land-Rover in 4-wheel drive. However, Mark got a 1-inch size blister on each heel and he couldn't carry a pack so Mr S. took Andrew's pack plus his own and Andrew took Mark's. We followed a bushy track until it crossed a stream. Here we drank out of our hats. Then we began climbing again. The track took us out of the bush and onto the top of a very high ridge. Mr S. walked back down 100 yards to check on another track. When he returned he told us we had come 100 yards too far so we all trudged back to the other track. This track was like a big S. We started at the bottom and finished at the top an hour later. Coffin's Camp had been reached in 2 hours, it was now five o'clock and we were getting rather hungry. As there was no water at Coffin's Camp, we set off down the road towards a creek.

The creek was infested with mosquitoes so Mr. S. decided to go to a river which should have been 2 miles further on. We reached it at 7 o'clock that night. Gingernuts were served while the hash was being made, and what beautiful hash it was. The Tropicoca was a complete flop; it didn't set and it tasted terrible. That night we caught an eel with rocks and knives, listened to the pigs crashing around down by the river and got serenaded by mosquitoes all night.

The next morning Paul Blampied woke up with a mosquito bite on one of his eyes. It looked big and red and painful and it made him look bug eyed (very embarrassing). For breakfast we had porridge and spaghetti and sausages, and then it was 9 o'clock so we once again set off on our little excursion.

The track wound its way up a huge canyon with bush on one side and rock faces on the other. Halfway up we met a bee or two living in a big hollow rock, so we took our time getting past. It was bush country all the way up, but, that didn't make any difference to the slope of the track. About a quarter of a mile from the top we met up with a big old Kauri-log dam. Some of the logs that had been used to build it were over 4 feet across. After the dam, we began to climb almost vertically up the side of Mt. Hobson, using roots as hand and foot holds. We were at it for about an hour, then suddenly we were on the summit. We had a raisin and a peanut and looked in awe at the view. It was exactly midday and the whole island was visible; it was certainly worth getting there.

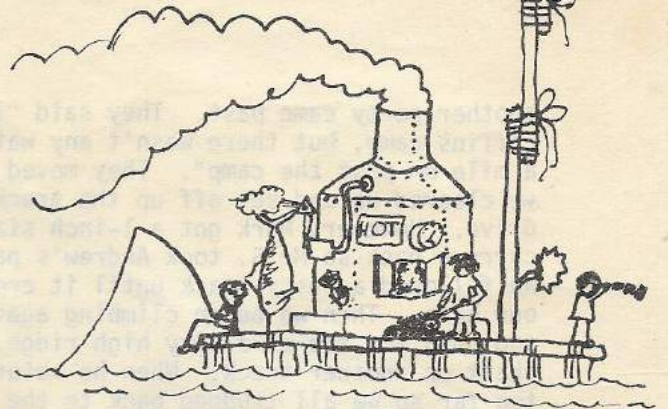


Mr S. decided to move on quickly, so we could get some lunch. After a couple of hours of orange-peel-corner-bashing a puddle of water was spotted by the track so we filled the billies, lit a fire and had soup and coffee. After lunch we got straight back on the march and after quarter of an hour we reached the road. It was easy going from there; all down hill.

We arrived back at camp an hour later and lay down for the third time that day; only this time it was in the lap of luxury.

The climb up onto Mt Moehau at the tip of the Coromandel Range was strictly for seniors - it had been rumoured that the Hairy Man had an appetite for sweet and tasty juniors . . .

CAMP COLVILLE 1972-73



let alone

skydiving past

Deadman's Track.

That night, once again, the rain came down, and so stalled our progress. The arrival of Mr Hill and Sup a Gert was as welcome a sight as we'd seen all trip.

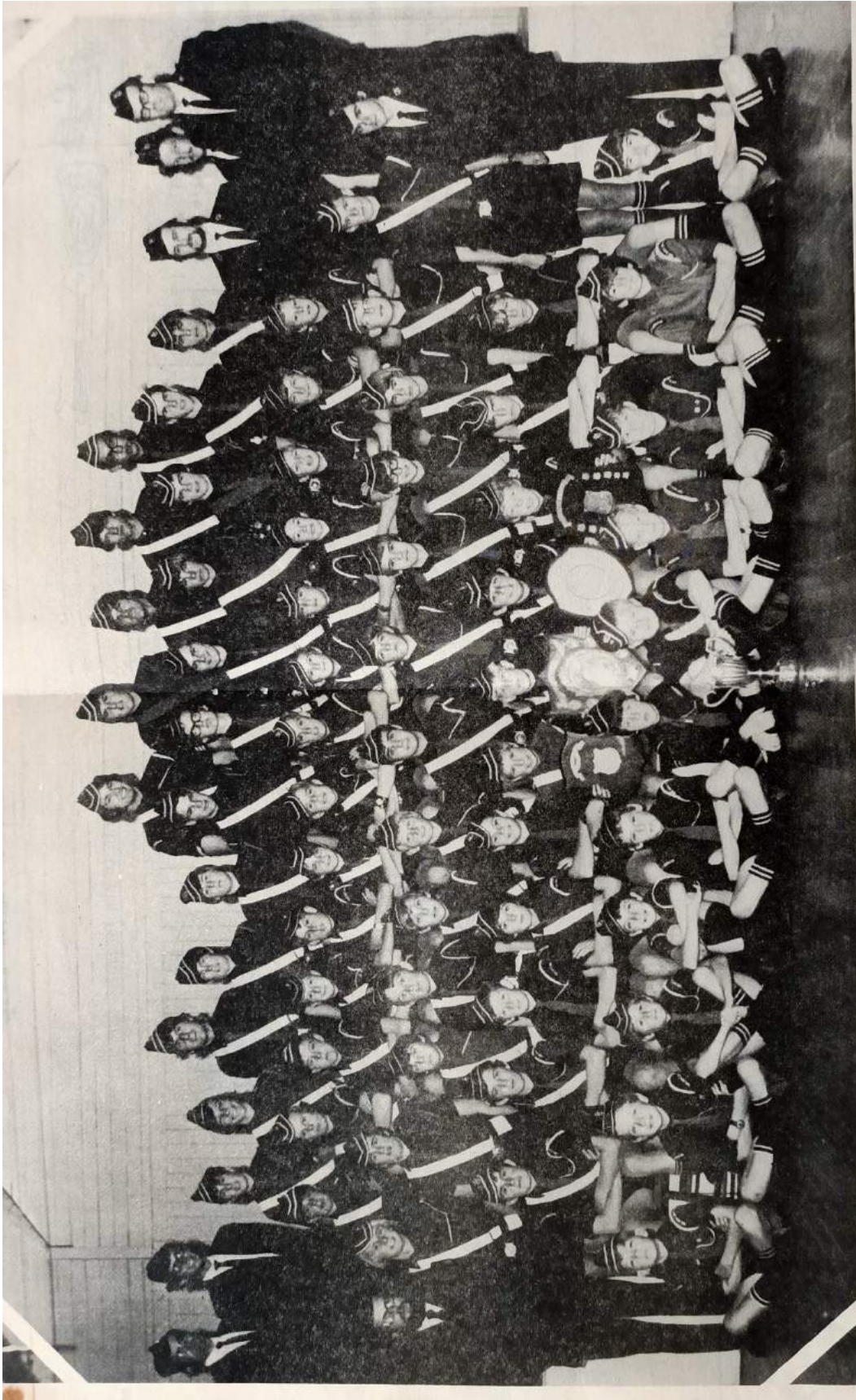
The rain-sodden night back at base camp was one of the more memorable. We nearly lost "Blamps" because of exposure, many of us got the lurgi, dry gear fetched a high price, and only a few lucky ones got any sleep.



Dead
Mans
Track.



Drying out
gear



6th Row - John Poole, John Montgomery, Don Windley, Phillip Kooperberg, Bruce Sai Louie

5th Row - Mr. David Potter, Mr. John Simpson, Howard Iseli, Ian Stread, Robert Vile, Ian Matheson, Ross Baird, John Francis, Keith Johnston, Brett Dunningham, Peter Clarke, Bruce Cammell, Brian Furness, Neil McLaren, Mr John Teal, Mr David Gordon, Mr Terry Hill

4th Row - Bob Taylor, Paul Johnston, Colin Hard, James Tibbles, Peter Izzard, David Cammell, Paul Wilton, Tony Easteel, Robert Davis, Paul Blampied, Mark Williams, Andrew Norton, Robin Gee, Peter Busfield

3rd Row - Mr Grayson Allen, Kevin Taylor, Peter Ellis, Peter Dallimore, Paul Campbell, Paul Dallimore, Peter Rowlands, Mark Vidak, Stephen Hard, Ewen Patience, Peter Gordon, Geoff Martin, Don Carter, Grant Pilgrim, Mr Lew Carmack

2nd Row - Craig Jones, Alan Hobbs, Jeffery Nelson, Michael Stead, Brent Perkins, Ralph Clarke, Carl Mikkelsen, Martin Brettell, Howard Bowick, Colin Barrow, Mark Smith

1st Row - Graeme Syms, Peter Ensor, Grant Leggatt, Stephen Turner, Peter Hough, Jeremy Williams, Alan Stim, Peter Davies, Peter Martyn, Simon Hana, Bruce Johnston

Editor's note

Sometime during the late 1960s I noticed a small newspaper article saying that the Girl Guide movement had obtained permission to erect a tramping hut in the Coromandel Forest Park. I don't think it was ever built, but my thought was, "Why shouldn't we have one too." and suggested it to the Auckland Battalion Executive, which I was on at the time. They agreed, we applied and got approval from the NZ Forest Service (forerunner to DOC) in the early 1970s.

My first design was for a concrete floor and stone walls. The Executive preferred a wooden building and someone, possibly Bob Carron, had an architect friend prepare plans. I arranged for Trevor Kenny, Captain of the 1st Rotorua BB Company and a stonemason, to build a stone base wall using rocks from the Kauaeranga River, and a family friend in a top role at New Zealand Forest Products, New Zealand's biggest company at the time, got us the timber framing, flooring and cladding as a very generous donation.

BB members from all over Auckland put in many hours over several years, under the initial direction of the father of John Seccombe of 1st Papakura Company. The 2nd Auckland Company was one of the strongest supporters, and towards the end of construction, asked if the project could be named the Michael Stead Memorial Lodge, in memory of Michael, so tragically drowned in the Wanganui River. The Executive agreed.

At the official opening of the Lodge on 1st April 1979, during a no-petrol-sales weekend (2nd oil shock) Bob Stead, Michael's father, a former officer in the 18th Auckland Company when I was a Boy, was present and spoke.

In 1984, when my wife Robyn and I repainted the interior of the Lodge, we removed the partly damaged contents of a display board: faded, sellotaped pages from a memorial issue of 2nd Auckland's magazine "SURE", reproducing a number of Michael's cartoons, compiled by John Simpson and Bruce Sai Louie. I had every intention of preserving and publishing them – 40 years later I have finally done so.

Ian Bogue

February 2023