

New Boys

Go Bush Again

by James Tierney

**Illustrated by
Elisabeth Fanning**

NEWMAN PUBLICATIONS

IN MEMORIAM

In memory of my father, **John Lawrence Tierney**, 1892-1972, 'bush boy' of Eurunderee, via Mudgee, NSW, where his father (1838-1891) taught Henry Lawson (in 1876), and who borrowed my Christian names, Brian James, as his pen name for his own extensive writings; and of my mother, **Effie Isabelle Tierney** (née Brodie), 1897-1976, who spent the first months of her life in a tent while her father (1860-1931) was a civil engineer building a railway in Western Australia; and whose great grand uncle was Hamilton Hume (1797-1873), the first Australian-born explorer.

Brian James Hume Tierney

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Spirit of the Bush Boy Explorers

Self-reliance and Leadership

SELF-RELIANCE

*“Pitching your own camp,
trekking across country,
sailing a boat,
crossing England in a canal barge:
things like these
teach a lad self-reliance
in a way games cannot.
Games are not like life
and not much preparation for it either.”*

Field Marshal Sir William Slim, who used to “recall with a chuckle that he narrowly escaped being thrown out of a [British Army] staff college in India for questioning the character building value of polo.”

“His simple ways, simple speech and unaffected dress (in ‘civies’ he looked like a farmer) endeared him to Australians, despite his frank disbelief that organized games were of much value in building character.”

LEADERSHIP

*“You will neither eat nor drink,
you will not sit down
or as much as lean against a tree
until you have first made sure
that the men under you
have already done so.”*

Field Marshal Sir William Slim, addressing his officers in the Burma Campaign, in which he was in supreme command of two million men.

Passages in quotes from *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 15th December, 1970.

“Starch”

A poem about the author

The Ranger looked upon the place where fifty boys had been
And camped five days, but not a trace of campsite could be seen.
“I know who led this show,” he said, “Jim Tierney’s on the march;
The master of the campers’ art, with his little bit of starch.”

It’s no use going bush, you see, if you want to stay alive,
Unless you’re highly organized, in which case you can thrive.
For some have perished in the bush (they either freeze or parch)
But never a scratch on Tierney’s men, for he uses lots of starch.

No pack was there too heavy for any boy to carry:
Every item had a levy — there was no excuse to tarry:
Ten tablespoons of sugar and point seven five of salt,
And just five cups of cereal — to bring extra was revolt.

A pair of shorts and cotton shirt, and woollen jumper, too,
A pair of good thick walking socks: Those thin ones just won’t do.
And leave those silly thongs at home, and don’t walk round bare feet:
There’s broken glass and bull ants, will mess ’em up a treat!

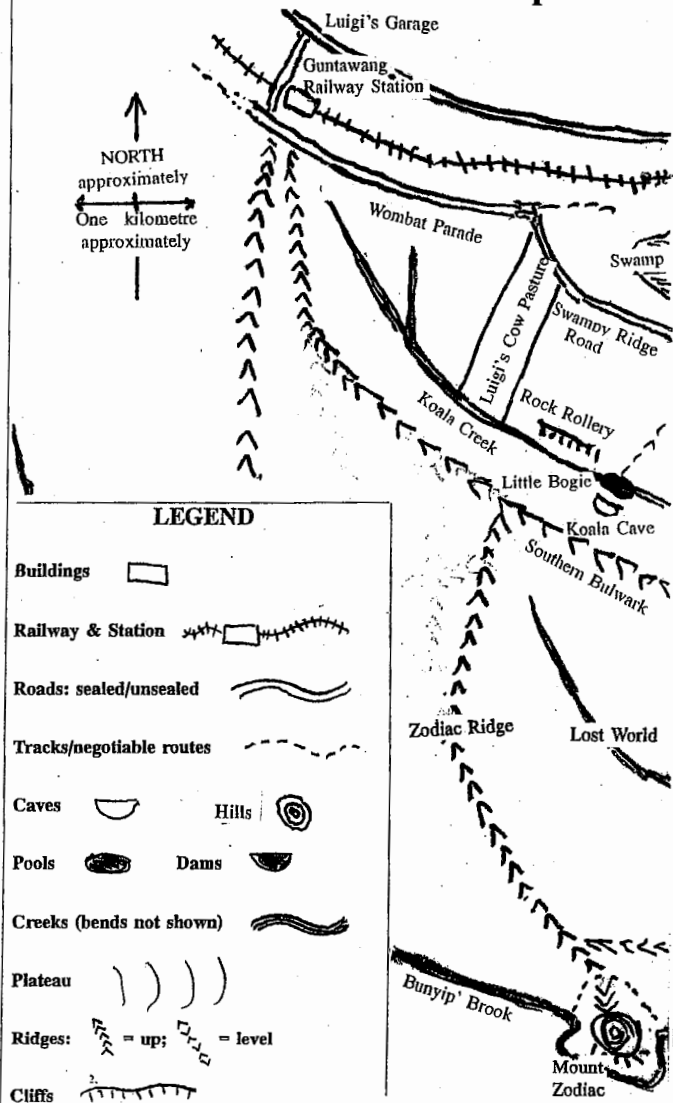
“Now when you light your fire, you’ll find that it will catch
If you use a bit of stringy, and, of course, use just one match;
Then add your bit of kindling, gum branches and all that,
And make a jolly roaring blaze, by fanning with your hat.

“A good bush hat with fine wide brim is something all must wear
To save your heads from falling wood or summer sun’s fierce glare.
You’re out in wild gum country, not under oak or larch,
So if you would survive at all, you’ll need that bit o’ starch.

“Now, answer when you’re spoken to, and do what you are told,
And then you’ll grow up like a man in true-blue Aussie mould.”
There were rules for this and rules for that and sometimes some complained,
But they’re all top bushmen still today, by “starch” all properly trained.

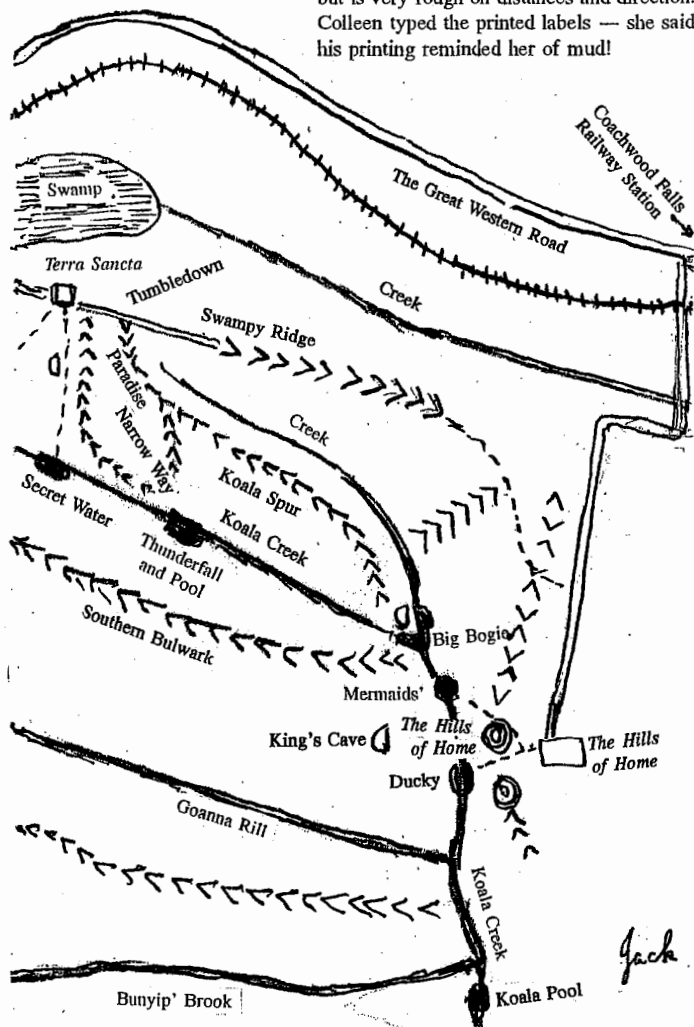
This poem was written about the author of *Bush Boys*, Father James Tierney, by his friend, Father John O’Neill, at Erskine Creek, in the Blue Labyrinth, Glenbrook, Blue Mountains National Park, 23rd November, 1987. While O’Neill wrote, Tierney was busy “boiling the billy” for them both.

A "MUD MAP" for the expeditions



made by the BUSH BOY EXPLORERS

Jack's Mud Map looks like it is drawn in the dirt with a stick. It shows where things are, but is very rough on distances and direction. Colleen typed the printed labels — she said his printing reminded her of mud!



Jack, Jim and Joe



Two weeks ago (see *New Boys in the Bush*) Max & Meg Lawson and their nine children moved into a new home surrounded by trees in the Wild Bush Mountains.

The twins Colleen & Kathleen are the older sisters of **Jack, Jim & Joe**, with younger siblings, 'the littlies', Tilly (Matilda), Tommy, Billy & new born baby Bridget.

Home-tutoring mornings were spiced with variety and excitement. Dad tutored the older five before a 40 minute walk to the train, to teach mathematics at a High School; then Mum and Nanna took over tutoring.

Afternoons were full of wild adventure as the three boy *pioneers* collected firewood for their non-electric home and won them the freedom to become *explorers*, which counted as self-tutoring or non-formal education.

Now read on.

Chapter 1

“Halt! Who goes there?”

JACK nursed their old Land Rover along the ancient timber track. He dodged around the new-growth saplings, just as the old track itself dodged around the full-grown trees.

A trailer had a rough ride, bouncing out of tune with the Rover, yet snaking obediently behind.

On all sides, saplings and tall trees soared aloft in seeming defiance of men and machines, and against all their meddling with the Mighty Bush.¹

The three youngsters in the cab were Lawson boys. However, they had come, not to fell living trees, but to collect fallen tree trunks for the family's firewood.

Jack alone had legs long enough to reach clutch and accelerator. There was no point in treading on the brake because it didn't work.

“Stop, Jack! Look!” That was Jim, next in age, on the other side of the cab.

He reached across young Joe. By mistake, he punched him on the nose and jabbed a forefinger into Jack's mouth. “Look! Over there! See! Three of 'em! — and they're city slickers! Woe, Jack! Woe!”

If Jim's legs had been longer, he might have been at the wheel. In which case, he would certainly have bitten hard on any finger poking within range — out of sheer good humour, of course.

Jack, however, tended to take life more seriously. He was gripping the wheel firmly with both hands. His mind was focused on just one thing, on how to pull up without a foot brake — and on a downhill slope. He

1 In Australia, “the bush” means the woods or a forest; “a bush” is a shrub.

double-shuffled into first gear, and spared the merest glance on the 'city slickers' fifty metres off.

The quickest way to stop was to cut the engine while in gear. He groped for the big old-fashioned domestic light switch in the centre of the dashboard, flicked it off, and hauled on the handbrake for good measure.

"Three of 'em!" bristled Joe, youngest boy not counting two littlies back at the sandpit. "Cheek! Walking through our bush like they owned it! Cheek, I call it! Yo ho yep yes I do! Cheeky young devils..."

A family friend had once called Joe 'a cheeky young devil'. His brothers were kind and pretended it was a compliment. But Joe knew it wasn't really.

The shudderings of a dead engine in low gear, plus the weak handbrake, brought the Land Rover to a halt. Jack sprang out and called "Coo-ee!" to the distant boys. He added the usual formula from the story books, "Halt! Who goes there?" — all cheery, loud and friendly.

Jim and Joe tumbled out the left-side.

Amid shafts of light and shadow, the Lawsons caught a brief glimpse of three figures. Their hands were frantically coiling something.

Then they turned to run, and the bush swallowed them like rabbits in blackberries.

Jim, as usual, was quickest on the uptake. "After 'em!" he shouted.

Jumping over the trip-sticks, he led his older and younger brother skippety-hop, yelling cheerily to the runaways, "We're friends — or at least, we wanna be!"

Joe felt compelled to contradict. "We're not! Yo ho nope no! We're enemies!" he screamed. "And we're going to bash yers!" His brothers ignored him, likewise the strangers, if they heard.

They reached the spot where the trio had stood.

Here the bush began to slope more steeply. Somewhere ahead was the gorge of Koala Creek. A breathless Jack ordered, "Stop a mo' an' listen."

They listened: just a distant snapping of dry sticks, bodies crashing through branches, fading rapidly...

"No good..." gasped Jim. "No use chasing 'em." He looked cunning. "An' maybe it's a trick. Two of 'em running off, to lure us away from the Rover, while the other one's hiding, ready to nick it before we can get back." It was the sort of thing he might have done himself, if he had been them.

So the Lawsons straggled back to the Rover.

Jim ruminated. "They were fumbling with a rope and turning to run as we were getting out — maybe



LIKE RABBITS IN BLACKBERRIES.

thought we were grown-ups chasing trespassers.”

“Yeah,” huffed Jack. “Once they started to run, they were too scared to stop or they’d looked silly.”

Joe made the best of this set-back. “At least, we put the wind up ’em,” he gloated.

Jim thought for a moment. “You know, they might not have been trespassing, cos even we don’t know exactly where our place stops and the National Park starts. There’s no fencing beyond the home paddock.”

“Well, we can’t help it if they won’t be friendly,” grunted Jack. He took a sweeping look round. At the point they had stopped, the timber track spread itself in a more open glade.

More cheerfully, he reminded them, “It’s like the dead end tracks we saw when we were lost last Monday.”

Jim grinned, “Only a week ago...”¹

All about the glade, dead limbs and tree trunks lay scattered between old stumps of tall trees and the tussocks of grass cropped down by wombats and kangaroos. Jack grunted again, jerked his thumb in a general downhill direction, and summed up: “Forget ’em. This firewood’s just right for us. Get the bow-saw going, while I turn the rig.”

He put her in neutral, clicked on the old light-switch which acted as ignition key, picked up the crank handle on the passenger’s floor, hopped out, fitted it to the front of the engine, jerked it upwards with muscles hardened by axe and saw and log buster. The hot engine fired first off.

To save backing or decoupling the trailer, he sheered left, bull-dozing scrub and dodging odd stumps, to circle round and face uphill.

¹ See *New Boys in the Bush*, pp. 252 ff.

THAT MORNING, before he left for work, Dad had suggested them — suggestions were the nearest he got to giving orders — that, for this Monday, they forego their regular afternoon's exploring of the Wild Bush Mountains and get in lots of firewood.

They knew why. Tomorrow, their great unknown benefactor, who had a liking for adventurous boys, was paying for a major overhaul of the Land Rover. It would get a foot brake that really worked; a starter motor that would obey the floor-switch; cast-off tyres to upgrade the bald ones — plus a spare; and repair of a thirsty radiator and oil leaks; and new shock absorbers and muffler... The worn out synchro on the gear box didn't matter — Jack liked showing off his skill at double-shuffling. The headlights didn't matter either — the ute was not to be registered, and Jack was far under-age for a licence. And with all that, it would be safe for wood-getting.

The boys shuddered at the memory of their runaway descent of The Tumbledown barely two weeks ago. The Tumbledown was a little further out the main ridge.

Jack expected this minor trail would take a sudden plunge. If he saw it steepening, he meant to get into four wheel drive and low-low gear. He reminded his brothers of that morning's home-tutoring lesson, when Dad had showed off his gadget made of a broad piece of wood, a protractor and a dangling string. "An inclinometer," he said, "for measuring how steep it is."

While Dad did not mention The Tumbledown or The Jumpback, the boys guessed he wanted them measured. And as usual, he threw in bits of Christian Doctrine on defeating error and evil.

* * * *

Meanwhile two worked the bow saw while the third

did the loading, with a change around as good as a rest.

The back tray of the Rover soon filled with logs, then the trailer. "I'll rope down the loose stuff," volunteered Jim, "to save picking up what bounces off."

"Thank heaven it's not a scorcher like yesterday," panted Jack. He mopped a sweaty face on his shirt sleeve. "This heat's okay for work."

"Be good for a swim," hinted Joe, in case they hadn't thought of it. But today they must go without, for it would take too long to get to the creek.

They paused briefly to swig oat meal water and chomp on Anzac biscuits.

A goanna waddled by with the usual exasperating slowness — just to make sure they did realize that he was not scared of them or anyone else.

This performance of the goanna somehow prompted Jack to mull over their sighting of the strangers: "What do yer reckon those boys were up to?"

Jim spoke uncertainly. "They were doing some-thin' with that tree, and all starin' at it — or up it..."

Joe had no such doubts. "They're sissies," he stated confidently. "Yo ho yep yes, sissies! Running off like that..." He ruminated a moment. "They were all dressed the same..." then excitedly, "so let's call 'em The Triplets, cos all girls are sissies and all triplets are girls an' all dressed the same."

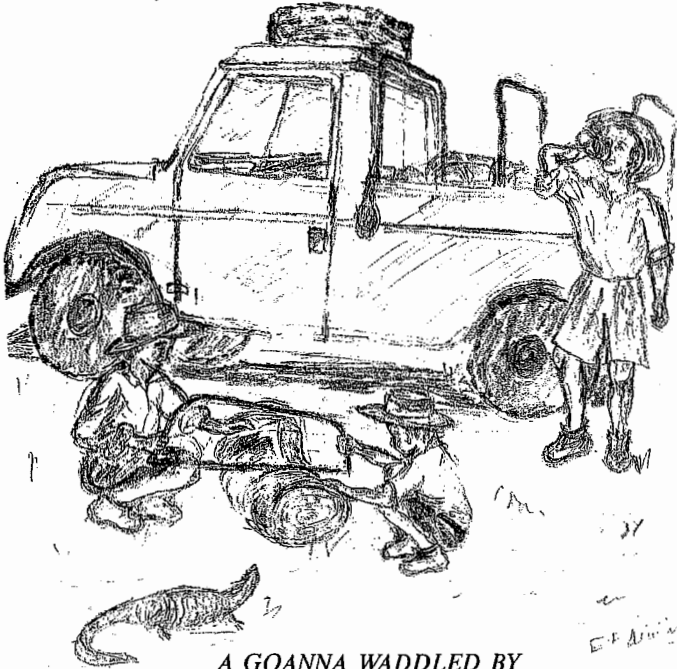
His brothers were used to Joe's breathtaking logic.

Jim protested, "But they were boys and boys *can* be triplets."

Joe would not concede the possibility.

Jack chuckled — which was more than he usually did — and proposed the name which stuck: "The Shy Spy Triplets."

They finished loading and roping down, stowed in



A GOANNA WADDLED BY

the saw, crowbar and axe, and drove back to the slip-rails. Here they were entering the home paddock of their 40 acres. It alone was fenced.

Kanga the pup, a blue cattle cross, barked from his kennel close to the house, then raced out to greet them, woofing for joy and kissing their knees with licks.

At the woodheap, they hurled off the logs. Usually, they would have stacked them carefully to save double handling, but today they were hurrying to fetch a second load.

Taking down the sliprails for the third time, Jim suggested, "Listen, Jack. The Shy Spy Triplets just might've come back to finish whatever they were doing. And they won't expect us. How about you turn the

engine off and roll in silently, and we can nab 'em?"

"Tor-cher them!" Joe chortled at the prospect.

They ignored Joe, and Jack answered Jim. "You can't get her into low gear unless the engine's firing, and yer need to be in low gear to stop her."

Nevertheless, Jack did his best, and made a quiet approach to the same place, as quiet as the poor old Rover's healthy engine would permit — AND...

"They're back!" cried the three Lawsons as one.

Yes, once again, three strange boys were at the same big tree — and so rapt in their task as not to hear the muttering approach of the Land Rover.

This time, Jack got close enough to see for himself.

One boy stood inside a loop of rope around the tree, facing it, and leaning back on the rope, while the small boy was tying a knot, and the third gazing up the trunk through a thing like a telescope.

Once more the Triplets freed the rope and 'took off', like greased lightning, the smallest coiling it as he ran.

Again, the Lawsons jumped out and gave chase, and at the double — plus boosters, as Jim described it later.

This time they closed the gap and got a closer view of the strangers.

However, it is just not possible to run full-split through scrub, and to watch where you put your feet, and to glance back fearfully over your shoulder.

So the smallest Triplet tripped over a log...

Jack pounced, yelling in triumph, "Got yer!" But he tripped too, yet snatched the boy's left ankle. This smallest boy gave a fierce wriggle, broke Jack's grip, rolled into a somersault, sprang up on the run, and fled.

Jack was winded. He gasped painfully and he couldn't splutter a word. He waved his arms for Jim and Joe to continue the chase, but they could not

understand him. They helped him up, and the strangers had gone.

There was nothing else for it but to admit their second failure.

They sawed a second load of wood and loaded it on. This new defeat gave them lots to talk about during a second round of oat meal water and bikies. There's nothing quite so satisfying as a good grumble over a shared grievance.

"They'll be back," Jim assured them, "and third time we'll get 'em."

"We'll biff 'em on the

boko!" — that was Joe again. His mother did not like such expressions from his lurid reading. Nor did it help when he told her, "It means a clout over the lug."

Jack was reflective. "They're pretty good running through rough bush at that speed," he pointed out. "They just can't be sissies — even if we do call 'em the Shy Spy Triplets. Actually, they'd make jolly good friends."

Jim was inclined to agree, but not Joe.

* * * *

They got the second load to the woodheap.

With the Land Rover away for the rest of the week, they now had enough wood to keep all fires going: kitchen cooking stove, verandah pot-bellied stove, and



*LEANING BACK
AGAINST THE ROPE*

for both laundry coppers. This was necessary, because the *Terra Sancta* home lacked mains-power electricity.

Jim and Joe wanted to go for a third load.

"On the third time we'd sneak up and get 'em for sure," bragged Jim, "and find out what they were doing with that tree and the rope."

Joe added, "Torture 'em to tell!"

But Jack reminded him of their evening jobs. "We're running late," he said.

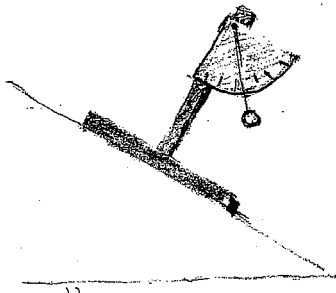
So Jim went off to 'yard the calf' for the night, for the mother cow to get up a good flush of milk for their breakfasts. She'd make more for the calf.

Joe fed his chooks, and started sawing logs into short billets for the stoves.

Jack had more jobs to get through than the younger boys — topping up the distilled water in the storage batteries on the solar panels for the feeble electric lights; firing up the potbellied stove for the rest of the family's bath water, and one of the coppers in the old laundry where the boys showered from overhead buckets.

From the woodheap, he raced a barrow of short billets up the ramp into the kitchen, to fill its wood box and the verandah box, then rejoined Jim and Joe on more sawing and splitting.

INCLINOMETER



Chapter 2

Happy Plans

AT RACING speed, they did squeeze in a quite different expedition before showers and tea. But it was on foot, over the boundary fence and three minutes scrubby going down to Cubby's Cave with a 20 litre barrel. They chocked it off the ground with stones to free its tap, filled it from a nearby trickle of water with two big billies, in just four trips, using a pouring funnel.

Joe gloated, "All ready for us sleepin' here tonight."

"I doubt it," grunted Jack, "Dad said maybe Friday."

So back at *Terra Sancta*, after showers, they hauled on their pyjamas as usual. There was no time left for their Log Books before tea. After tea, prayers and family time followed at once, and left time for yarning and reading in bed. Early nights and 'lights out' was standing orders, with a view to rising early.

'Tea' was their big meal and quite early at 5 p.m. Dad had declared tea to be a *convivium* — meaning lots of eating and cheery talk and listening.

The reports were made by the eight children big enough, leaving out only the newborn. Often the younger children had more to say than older siblings — who perhaps had more to conceal...

This time, Dad treated his sons' reports on the Shy Spy Triplets far too lightly. "Maybe those boys were just playing games, same as you do?"

Fancy reducing their serious reports to such trivia! It was quite out of character for Dad.

Jim was indignant. He insisted, "I'm telling you, Dad, they were up to mischief."

After all, he should know, thought the twins.

Dad put his foot deeper into the mire. "Did you notice the colour of their hair?"

Jim was firm, almost snappy. "They had hats."

Jack, too, protested against Dad's attitude, but more gently. "We don't play games in the bush, Dad. We work, or explore — and that's school work."

Mum aimed to make peace. "Anyhow, if you ever see them again, do make friends with them."

"Yes, Mum," they answered obediently.

Jack could not refrain from adding, "We tried to."

Even Joe reckoned, "We really did want to" — despite his earlier blood-curdling proposals.

The boys felt a little hurt. They had not been able to describe the strange boys, their doings, their clothes, let alone propose their theories about them.

Then Dad redeemed himself. He waved two more khaki felt hats: "Big brims for Jim and Joe."

"Thanks, Dad!" they chorused. "Tilly and Tom can 'ave our floppy giggle hats."

Nanna smiled. "I'll fit chin straps for all of them."

Night Prayers concluded the convivium. Joe lit the candles on the Family Altar for the Rosary in the Creation Schoolroom. Many homeschooling families used the kitchen table, or desks in the bedrooms instead.

After that, the three 'littlies' were put to bed by Mum and Nanna with a brief bedtime story, and a soothing lullaby, while the older children did the washing up, with some robust singing.

Then Dad continued his story of the old days, when their new home was a flourishing boarding school.

He waved a neatly bound book, "Our own robust photocopy of the Cubby Cave Log Book!¹ It was you

1 See *New Boys in the Bush*, p. 450 ff.

who found original" — he nodded to the older boys — "and it was well over a hundred years old, and very fragile."

Jack interrupted proudly, "We've got our own log book there now."

Dad proceeded to read 'the doings' written by a boy of long ago, in his own words: "It's signed 'Brown Minor' so his big brother would be 'Brown Major':-

Last night was our first back from home and far too hot to talk or sleep. Our dorm [dormitory] had two new boys who had no brothers. So in our nightshirts we just had to give them a pillow fight. Old Angel-face, our dorm prefect, picked two big boys for his side, against us four younger boys.

The other dorms were all fighting, too, and Angel-face wanted us to fight them in the main hallway. We didn't, and just as well, because while we were arguing, Mrs Windsor made a surprise visit to see if the new boys were homesick.

The boy-explorers could picture it all. Jim was contemptuous. "Pack of scared-dee-cats!" — though it was not clear whether he meant the new boys or the failure to wage pitched battle in the hallway.

Dad pretended to frown and went on reading:-

So we just missed getting caught, though the next dorm did, and she sent them to old Mr Windsor for the usual.

Again a boy-explorer interrupted. In genuine curiosity, Joe asked, "What was the usual?"

Dad had been well briefed by Old Fred on the previous history of *Terra Sancta*. He grinned. "In boarding schools, primary school boys got birched."

His sons yelped in fellow-feeling: "OOooh!"

The twins smirked at their brothers and told them unfeelingly, "And serve them jolly well right!"

Dad looked at his watch and finished off with, "Next thrilling episode tomorrow night, and please, *DON'T* you boys copy-cat the boarding school. Remember, Mum's strap might be *worse* than the Rev. Mr Windsor."

The boys had overlooked a final matter that must be settled that evening. Which visitors should they invite next weekend — for Jack, Jim and Joe, and for Colleen and Kathleen?

Dad declared, "Mum and I've mulled over your short lists. For you boys, we suggest your old friends from Boxwatch, Mick, Rick and Phil. That'd fit in well with the twins: they'd like to have Mick's big sister Jill, and her friend Jane who's a bit older. And the invites must be written tonight for me to send in the morning."

No way could they have slept in The Cubby Cave that night. Ah well, there were more nights to come.

The Lawsons' only computer was a laptop in the Creation Schoolroom. On it, Jack completed the invitations. Happily, Jim had the files almost ready, for he had sneaked it in to his morning's schoolwork.

The finished letters ran like this:-

Dear Mick,

Please come next weekend with Rick & Phil and your sister Jill. Our Dad and Mum are sending details.

Talk to our cousin Simon & Dominic Cox. Ask your parents to talk to their Dad, Mr Walter Cox. He likes us.

We are now proper old-time boy-explorers and we've plans for an even more exciting exploring weekend with you.

Your sister and her friend Jane are coming too. She's old enough to escort you on the train. Our parents know her.

Ever your friends,

Jack, Jim and Joe Lawson

Finally, Jack added attachments, also pre-prepared in the computer, about the gear for the guests to bring:-

BUSHWALKING CLOTHES AND THINGS TO BRING

<i>On your</i>	<i>you need</i>	<i>details</i>
Head	Hat	with brim, perhaps with chinstrap
Top	Shirt	with collar; long sleeves, roll up/down
Bottom	Shorts	roomy are best, and reach to the knees
Legs	Socks	thick, with no holes
Feet	Boots	solid, waterproofed and polished
Picnic	Mug	for tea, enamel, not china or plastic
Walking	knapsack	share one between three: we travel light.
just in case	Parka	or raincoat and jumper

At first, they had thought it was best **not** to send their lists of DOs and DON'Ts. The visitors might mix up the two lists, or their parents might get "the willies".

But now they changed their minds and included:-

WHAT JACK/JIM/JOE WILL BRING FOR EVERYONE:

1. billy and gridiron and spoon and pocket knife;
2. First Aid Kit against bites of ants or even snakes;
3. compass and map (we've made the map);
5. rope, matches, and water bottle to avoid dehydration.

WHAT VISITORS DO **NOT** BRING GOING BUSH:

1. plate, fork, spoon: cos outdoors we eat with our fingers;
2. knife, but a pocket knife is OK;
3. towels — we dry in the sun or at a fire;
4. a watch — we tell the time by the sun.
5. mobile phone: it lacks range and spoils being in the bush.

Jack copied everything onto the USB memory stick for Dad to email from the High School on Tuesday morning. Though Dad had only been teaching there a fortnight, he had so impressed the principal and his colleagues with his maths teaching that he was allowed an open-go on all school equipment.

* * * *

While the boys were in the school room, Kathleen popped in. She was the more discerning of the twins, and more sympathetic to the boys.

She explained why Dad had not seemed his usual self that evening: “It’s because he’s so excited at his better paid job next year, when he starts at the Wild Bush Mountains Grammar School. He’s still working out some details with Mum.”

So the boys forgave Dad everything.

They started on their log books. Usually they would have read them aloud at the convivium. In spite of Dad’s disregard, or perhaps because of it, they wrote with even more gusto than usual.

Jim’s Log Book, which he called *Jim’s Journal*, was set out in points in a clipped sort of narrative:

- We saw Shy Spy Triplets (SST) twice.
- Both times they were at the same big tree.
- First time they were coiling something.
- Next time we saw it was a rope looped round the tree.
- One was looking up through a 30 cm tube or telescope.

Joe was reading Jim’s Journal over his shoulder. He interrupted, “Telescope! Rubbish! It was a ray gun — to zap us into shrivelled up sultanas.”

This distracted Jack. “Perhaps the spies were going to climb the tree, the way aborigines do? Well, from up the top they could see the highway...”

Jim’s imagination, too, was at bursting point: “That’s it, Jack! They terrorists! They gonna shoot at VIPs on the highway from the top of *our* tree!”

Joe added smugly: “I told you it was a ray gun.”

Before Jack and Jim could get back to work, Joe hastened to explain his pictures, in what he called *Joe’s Jottings*. There was a rough sketch of a boy — like the Bush Boy pictured in *The ABC of Camping*¹ which Father John had sent via Dad. Joe favoured brevity

1 See p. 437



"PERHAPS... GOING TO CLIMB LIKE ABORIGINES DO?"

and simply added to the typical boy, "× 3."

Jim was overly critical. "Actually, one boy was smaller than the other two. You should put $2\frac{3}{4}$."

"Sort of," admitted Joe, "but triplets've gotta be the same size, and we've decided they're triplets."

His brothers shook their heads...

But Joe's king hit was still to come — his schemes for capturing the spies: "The easiest way," he explained, pointing to a sort of squared off U, which was the entire drawing, "is to dig a pit so deep and steep they can't climb out, even standing on each other, and they won't see it till they fall in cos we'll cover it with branches to look solid." The single letter U said all that!

Jack winked at Jim to restrain him from protest.

"The second one's harder to fix up," enthused Joe, "cos we've got to make a net with lots of knots" — for this his drawing was single # which meant lots of mesh — "and they walk on it and trip on a trigger and get whisked up into a tree like captured wild animals."

Good-naturedly, his brothers applauded. Dad had taught them to value imaginative thinking.

Joe had more plans. "I don't know how to draw the third," he apologized, "and it's the hardest to plan. We've gotta catch them when they're swimming and sneak off with their clothes and boots (and towels if they've got 'em) and only give 'em back if they promise to tell us all we want to know."

This won over Jim. "That's the best of the three, Joe," he enthused, "and it'll be even easier to do next weekend when we have Mick, Rick and Phil to help us. They can distract the SST from upstream while we're pinching their things from downstream" — Jim loved planning mischief.

Jack brought them down to earth. He read from

his own Log Book, written in Jim's style of points:

- SST climbing a tree like aborigines with a rope loop.
- SST are doing a school project on trees.
- SST are studying birds.

Again, Jim interrupted: "More like they're spies for a sawmill and deciding if they can make money buying our place off Dad to cut down all our trees."

Joe bristled. "We've gotta stop 'em!"

Jack looked reprovingly at Jim. "I'll put it in, though I don't think it's likely," and he added:

- Jim says they're after our trees for a sawmill.

Jack went on, "I only thought of it while adding the attachments. Their clothes *are* like a school uniform, and that fits a school project on trees," so he wrote:

- SST were in school uniforms.

Jim objected, "Their clothes are just like ours, a bush uniform, and that fits *my* idea of a sawmill."

Jack grinned: "Rather less tatty, I think! And not all scuffed. No patched burn holes. No grubby dirt. Those clothes were washed and ironed and worn for the first time today, not like ours, all battered from work."

Jim countered, "Our clothes are almost new."

Jack grinned. "You'd never know from looking."

Jim argued on. "Well, ours aren't school uniforms, so theirs mightn't be either." Then, magnanimously, "But I'll put it down." He added to his Journal:

- SST wore a sort of uniform.
- Grey-shorts, blue-grey short-sleeved shirts.
- Long socks with turned down tops.
- Swank straw hats and a sort of badge thing...

Jack scoffed. "You couldn't possibly see all that."

"Me an' Joe did," insisted Jim ungrammatically. Then reprovingly, "The first time *you* were too busy driving, and the second time coming down thumpetty-

thump, but between me an' Joe, we've put the details together. Hasn't Dad trained us to notice things? It's modern science! And let me finish:-"

- Will the SST come round tonight or tomorrow night to scare the littlies to make Dad sell out to the sawmill?

This set Joe off again: "It's not for a sawmill. It's for a special sort of expensive bees making honey up high trees where ordinary people can't get at 'em, yo ho yep yes it is."

His brothers grinned, and Joe insisted he write:

- They're climbing our tree to get our honey.

With such sobering thoughts, they set off for bed, got into pyjamas, knelt for a private prayer or two, and when they were comfortably in bed, Joe made more plans about the Shy Spy Triplets. He'd been delighted with Jack and Jim's praise, so he listened with proper respect to what his elders had to say. Then he dropped off suddenly into deep sleep.

Jim asked, "Do you reckon anyone could really climb that sort of tree with a loop of rope?"

Jack thought for a moment. "You'd've to shorten the loop as the trunk narrowed two metres up."

Jim hesitated. "With a sliding long-stopper hitch like guy ropes? Too bad if it slips."

Jack said, "Well, tomorrow arvo, we're going to meet the mighty Cumberlands at their place. We'll tell 'em all about the SST and get 'em to help."

"Yeah," reckoned Jim, "combined operations — that's how commandos got started in England. And we've gotta make plans for getting to Mount Zodiac with Mick, Rick and Phil."

"Thank Heaven they're tough enough," added Jack.

Chapter 3

The Shy Spies Again

JACK SPRANG in one great leap from the top bunk to the lino floor. The great CRASH-BANG woke his brothers.

He greeted them with a carefully planned chant:

“Today’s the day
we’re going to meet
the mighty Cumber-lands.”

The mischievous Joe chortled, “We’ll creep up on ’em and spring out on ’em and give ’em a whopping great fright — as good as that boy got who saw the long necked hairy llama at blackest midnight on a dark night and could see its mouth gaping open to eat him.”

With such vim and verve Joe held his own with two big brothers. And while he might lay a claim to boss his little brothers, he overdid it, bossing his big brothers as well. He finished off with his theme song, “Yo ho yep yes we’ll fix ’em!”

This Tuesday was the Lawson boys’ sixteenth day on the family’s hobby farm at *Terra Sancta*. They had settled in to a happy mix of routine with variety.

Seven days a week, early morning and late afternoon, they had family jobs. They found it satisfying, doing a man’s work, and doing it well.

Weekdays ran to a rhythm. Home-tutoring from Mum and Dad and Nanna was bearable. With a very early start, it was all over by lunchtime. Wowee!

From earlier experience of going out to school, they had proved that schooling was better at home.

Lots of each afternoon was free time, much more so than at school, even for sport. Their sport now was

exploring the mighty bush. On the days when they went swimming there was the added joy of boiling a billy on a fire.

Weekends were even more glorious, with the bonus of boy-visitors and cooking sausages in a grid-iron leaning on a stick as a vertical griller. They really tasted beaut! It saved waiting to make red hot coals.

Their big sisters also had visitors, often the sisters of the visiting boys.

Life was good.

But first things first. They dropped to their knees, sped through prayers at a pious gallop, raced along the labyrinth to the old laundry with its primitive wash-tubs, and back to get dressed.

Before breakfast Jack's job was firing-up two wood-burning stoves. On Monday, Wednesday and Friday, there were the two laundry coppers as well. Jim milked the cow; Joe fed the chooks. Whoever finished first helped the others, or sawed more stove wood.

Each morning, Dad led family prayers. This morning Kathleen had read out the Bible on the Corporal Works of Mercy. Then came porridge, with raw sugar and their own creamy milk, plus tea and toast.

* * * *

After breakfast, Dad tutored the three boys and the twin girls with snippets of maths, science and religion.

Today he did map-making from compass bearings and a shrewd guessing of distances. He applied it to conscience and making what he called 'a map of life'.

Usually he walked the four kilometres to Gunta-wang for his train to Galway Craggs where he was a newly joined teacher of maths at the high school.

Today, however, Dad was taking the Land Rover for vital transplants of its mechanical organs, to make it

safe for Jack and the wood-getting on the hobby farm.

Jack was anxious. "Dad, *you* can't double-shuffle. How will you get into first gear for The Jumpback? Would you like me to drive you to Wombat Crescent?"

Dad's cheerily repulsed him. "I'll repent my failures if I get home this arvo..." He kissed Mum, the baby and Nanna, then the three 'littlies' and the twins, and last he kissed the boys on their foreheads.

They heard him rev the engine *M'room* as he accelerated. So willy-nilly, Jack and the others had to settle down for Mum and Nanna's tutoring.

* * * *

THE HOME-TUTORING for the boys was over for the day. Their afternoon exploring was deemed to be schooling, though unsupervised except for writing up log books and reporting on it at the *convivium*.

As they romped in for lunch, they found that Nanna had been at work on the back verandah. "What yer doin' with that contraption?" demanded Joe.

She smiled. "It's a Kalgoorlie safe, a drip safe."

Jack was non-plussed. "What's that, Nanna?"

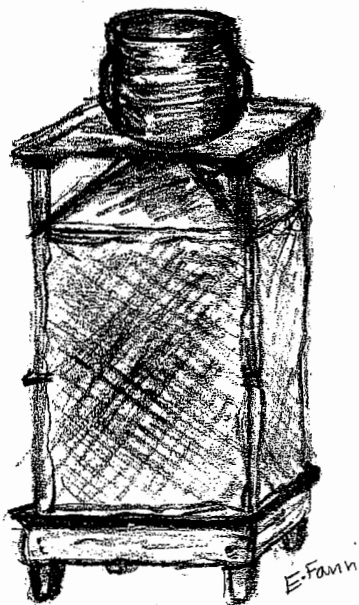
Jim was rather rude. "Looks like a bird cage left by Old Fred when he sold us the place."

Nanna was gentle with ignorance and cheek. "The tray on top has water to soak the Hessian strips. The wind blows through the hanging hessian on the gauze sides. The water evaporates and makes it cool inside."

Jack interrupted. "Oh, I get it. Like shaking a wet hanky and putting it on your face."

Nanna beamed. "That's it. Ask your Dad. In the meantime, just notice how firm the butter is." She opened its hinged door. The boys prodded it — they'd just washed their hands.

Jim hurrahed. "It saves space in the fridge."



"IT'S A DRIP SAFE."

THE EARLY lunch was over. Big sisters beamed at their brothers. Colleen — she took charge more often than Kathleen — told them, "We'll wash up today — you need an early start to get all that way to the Cumberland's." It was a kind offer, because washing up after lunch included the breakfast wash-up as well.

"Thanks, Col and Kath," they chanted.

The knapsack they shared was ready packed.

Jack swung it up and on.

They rammed on their hats, seized their staffs from the kitchen corner, let Mum and Nanna kiss them, waved to the big girls, patted the littlies, and were off.

* * * *

They fairly zipped out to the slip-rails, along the main track, ignored the branch track of yesterday's wood-getting, and came to the steep descent of The Tumbledown at the southeast boundary of the property. At its foot, they gathered a half knapsack of passion fruit as a gift for the Cumberlands, and to stave off any new pangs of hunger on the way.

They got to the part where they had been 'slightly slewed' eight days ago, in other words, lost for an hour or two. That time they had swung off north and then west, and gone round in a half-circle.

Now they were entering a Great Unknown Land.

True, they could picture the overall view seen from Pisgah Heights, their room-on-the-roof. And here, sure enough, they got reassuring glimpses of the Twin Peaks. Behind them was the Cumberland's, so fittingly named *The Hills of Home*. And Mount Zodiac was to their right but further off. Their map was blank on all this and so a compass was little help.

The timber track had completely faded out, but Jack continued to step out confidently. Sometimes they were on an old animal pad. These were rather faint and confusing, for other pads branched off at odd angles, where four footed creatures had crossed the watershed from the swamp to Koala Creek.

The ridge had convex sides which hid Koala Creek and its features like their Big Bogie swimming hole. But they could guess where it nestled in the gorge.

Jack was navigating by 'the lie of the land'. He noted it sloped steeply down on their right but gently to the left. And the general trend was a bit downhill.

He was concerned about finding their way home, and started half-breaking little branches. Coming back, the broken bits would catch the eye. "Blazing a trail," he told Jim. "Lawson, Blaxland and Wentworth did it with tomahawks, so it must be alright."

Occasionally they caught faint sounds of civilized transport, trucks and trains away off to the north, beyond the swamp, ugly noises even when muted by distance.

The Great Australian Bush has a baffling sameness. It has got many a man lost, and baffled visitors from

more varied scenery, such as tramping in New Zealand.

However, for a bushy Australian the trees *do* look different. Trunks of bushfire-blackened bloodwoods are quite distinct from bushfire-blackened stringy barks. A city greenhorn cannot even tell they are different types, despite the contrasting textures of blotchy mottled and fibrous furrowed bark, let alone name them.

For such a keen observer, all these trees and shrubs were wondrous. Long ago, they had fascinated Sir Joseph Banks, the grandfather of the colony, with their greater variety in one square mile of barren sandstone soil than the whole of the British Isles.

Here and there were traces of timber tracks or rotting stumps, reminders of timber-getting a century or more ago, and the 'snigging' of great logs behind teams of horses or bullocks.

THE LAWSONS were hoping for some sign of Shy Spy Triplets. Perhaps too much to hope for?

Then lo! they caught the briefest glimpse. Three boys burst into view in a dip in the scrub. And only twenty metres off on the right.

Afterwards, Jack called it 'the top end of a non-perennial side-creek'. At home, he and Jim pinpointed it later on their map between Koala Spur and Swampy Ridge, and southeast from the foot of The Tumbledown.

For now, Jack coo-eed and in his friendliest tone.

At once the strangers about-turned and vanished into the scrub. It was so very puzzling, disappointing.

"Could it've been the Cumberlands?" pondered Joe.

"Nope, they wouldn't run off," replied Jim, "an' only two of 'em are active, cos the little bloke's house-bound with a busted leg. It's our Shy Spy Triplets."

Jack muttered, "They heard me all right and just turned tail and buzzed off. What's wrong with them?"

Jim puzzled, "What've they got to hide?"

Joe had no doubt. "Crooks! and up to no good." He was used to similar assessments of himself, when his mother was investigating a suspicious silence after the prattling of Joe playing with the littlies.

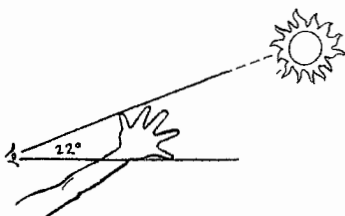
Jack reckoned, "Well, we can definitely put it in our log books. One natty knapsack. And their matching clothes *must* be a school uniform."

This time Jim had to agree: "All clean and ironed."

Swampy Ridge continued to slope down gently. Jack glanced at the sun. "Must be about one o'clock," he muttered, "so knock off an hour for daylight saving and it's about noon, so the sun's true north."

Yes, the sun was aft of their left shoulders, as it should be, since Swampy Ridge ran about east-south-east, or as Jack wrote it, 'ESE'.

The ridge broadened and flattened, with thicker scrub and taller trees.



BY THE SUN

Navigation by 'gorge on the right and swamp on the left' was impossible. For that, they needed to *see* the edge of the gorge, or better, get a glimpse of the twin peaks in the middle distance, also to *see* the lower ground where lay the swamp.

He checked the compass. It was ESE. Good.

While Jack babbled technicalities, Joe seized the lead. He jabbed his staff at marks on the ground. "Footprints! The spies! I bet you anything you like."

Jack and Jim looked closely. Jim commented, "Footprints going both ways. They must've come in from Cumberland's Lane and must've gone back the

same way yesterday.”

The boot prints were in a soft patch of bare-earth. “Gotta be scientific,” added Jack. “Measure ’em.”

Jim protested volubly. “Oh yeah? What with?”

Jack grinned slyly. He’d only just thought of it himself. “Just as well I’ve got a sheet of paper in my pocket and a stub of pencil. Measure them by how many paper lengths. If there’s a bit over, mark the amount along an edge.”

“Huh!” Jim pulled out a length of string and gave Jack a superior look. He declared, “I’d rather put in a knot to mark each end of a boot print.”

It’s a tricky business tying knots with any accuracy to mark a length. He took nearly as long as Jack.

Jim reported, “Seems there’s two distinct lengths.”

Jack complained. “Ssssh! I’m concentrating.”

Jim snorted. “You’re rats, stats and bats! There’s nothing to it but boys’ length boots. So what?”

Joe was busy on his own system. He broke lengths of little sticks. He finished first, and scoffed at his elders, as young brothers do.

But Jack was also sketching the treads on the sheet where he marked the lengths. “Two the same size but different patterns, and one smaller with the pattern of one of the big ones.”

Jim studied their own boot prints. “Yes, ours are three different sizes and all with the same pattern. Good on yer, Jack.”

Jack bowed. Shrewdly he suggested, “Two patterns the same might mean an older and younger brother. The other big one might be the older brother’s friend.”

To this, Jim bowed even lower and doffed his hat. “They’re real bushies to find their way so well.” Then he claimed credits for himself. “More prints go west



TWO THE SAME SIZE, THE OTHER SMALLER

than east. It means they came and went yesterday, and still gotta go back today."

Again Jack led off, muttering, "East-south-east" as he checked on the compass.

Jim objected. "We're sliding down to the swamp."

Jack looked puzzled. "Maybe the swamp and the ridge are swinging round to the south?"

Joe was half-joking and half-serious. He gave his well-known wail. "We're lost, los-os-ost!"

Jim spotted something more hopeful. He pointed

right. "Look! it's starting to slope up over there."

Jack checked the compass again. "Southeast," he muttered. Then aloud and, with a show of confidence he did not feel, he added, "The ridge must've swung a bit here, and it's passed through a saddle."

He told Joe, "You lead, and step it out briskly. You'll soon prove we're jolly well not lost."

Being in front Joe made two more finds. The first was the beginnings of a faint track, veering off at a shallow angle to their left. He swung onto it. Next, he pointed to the prints of bike tyres in a soft patch.

"Not mountain bikes," opined Jim. "Thin tyres — road bikes. No good in the bush. And all the same tread, but lots of criss-crossings, so lots of bikes."

Jack disagreed. "Might not be lots, but one bike several times, maybe on different days."

Jim countered, "More likely the Shy Spy Triplets."

"Okay, and some made yesterday, like those footprints Joe found," conceded Jack, with a bow to Joe.

Well! Joe vied with Toad of *The Wind in the Willows* in gloating at his own cleverness.

The boys took a sweeping look around for other signs of bicycles. Almost behind them, close beside the way they had come, a mere fifty metres away, were the unmistakable shapes of several bicycles. They gleamed in the glory of chrome and bright colours. Being boys, they did not remember the colours.

"We'll counter-spy them," muttered Jack. But even as they turned towards the bikes, there came the rattly purr of a diesel — just like the noise their own van made — from close ahead. He frowned. "Might be someone who owns the bikes... If he finds us near 'em, he'll think we're stealing..."

Jim looked grim. "That van's slowing down."

Chapter 4

Raid on *The Hills of Home*

QUICK-WITTED Jim! He cried, "Into the scrub! Hide!" The three scurried into thick bush on their right and didn't stop for a hundred metres.

Jack gasped, "I think it's kept going." They listened hard: no sound of movement, no engine noises. "We'll look at those bikes on the way home and press on for now." Again, anxiety at finding their way back kept gnawing at him... and the Twin Peaks, their only decent landmark, would be *behind* them.

Where they had stopped was only a dozen metres from the lane leading to the Cumberland's. They peeped out, to make sure the van was not in sight.

Jim did not stint his praise. "Good navigatin', Jack: William Lawson and his pals couldn't've done better."

Jack grinned. "That van might just've been the Cumberlands slowing down for the ruts." He swung south for the last lap to *The Hills of Home*.

The lane finished at great posts and a new looking gate. Jack instructed Joe, "You start our surprises for the mighty Cumberlands. Be like Bilbo in *The Hobbit*: Gandalf sent him ahead of the dwarves, in case it upset Beorn the Bear-Man if they all came at once."

Jim added, "You'll be first coming in from nowhere. That'll stir 'em! Ask for a cuppa, and say 'please'. I'll come next and give 'em another shock. When Jack comes, it'll just about flatten 'em."

Jack said, "That's it." Then to Joe. "Go to the back door. Don't knock, just coo-ee. When Greg or Bernie opens the door, they'll be mighty puzzled where you've sprung from. Stall their questions till you've

had a cuppa. Then coo-ee for Jim to come.”

Joe was pleased at the prospect of any distinguished role within his capacity — or even beyond it. He strode off, staff in hand, round the driveway.

He needed no reminding that friends and family don't use front doors. “It's *not* Boxwatch,” he told himself. “It's the Wild Bush Mountains.”

Here things were done in a relaxed and rural style.

A barking tornado sped to meet him. It had tawny hair and four legs. She licked Joe's hands and bare legs, then jumped to paw his chest.

Joe knew what to do with a doggy welcome — a kind word, a pat on the head, and a brief tummy rub.

He trotted round the side with the dog dancing round his legs to a door that looked hopeful for a kitchen and family head-quarters.

He banged on the door with his staff — that's *not* knocking, he told himself — and ‘COO-EED’ loudly, forgetting that that was also the signal for Jim to come.

From within came a woman's voice. She knew the reply, “Coo-ee, whoever you are. Do please come in.”

Joe charged in. A pleasant motherly woman rose from her sewing machine. She radiated welcome.

In excitement, not nervousness, Joe mused his words: “I'm-Joe-Lawson-yo-ho-yep-yes-I-am-and-are you-Mrs-Cumberland-mother-of-Greg-and-Bernie?”

Mrs Cumberland was delighted. Her eyes twinkled. She held out her hand, which he shook with all the vigour of his youthful years. She told him, “Yes, I am. And I thought you must be Greg and Bernie come back, though it's far too early. Please excuse me a moment.” She half-turned and called down a long corridor, “Tim!”

At a cripple's gallop, young Tim swung himself into

the kitchen on his crutches. Joe sized him up as two years his junior — about his own sister Matilda's age, whom the Lawsons called Tilly.

Mrs Cumberland introduced them, and the boys eyed each other off. She went on, "Only Tim and baby Beth are here, plus Gran. Gran's having a nap, so please pardon her for not coming out. We've just back from shopping" — she waved her hand at stacks of groceries on the table. "Greg and Bernie 'went bush' earlier; also Kate and Tess are at their Mermaids' Pool with their cousins Jenny and Judy to look after them."

Joe was invited to sit down. He parked his staff in a corner. "How about a cuppa?" he asked. Then he remembered just in time, "Please."

"Parched from a long march," murmured Mrs Cumberland to herself, as she poured boiling water from the gently steaming kettle on the wood-burning stove.

Joe got his cuppa plus Anzac biscuits and plain cake. She and Tim ate and drank to keep him company.

Tim of tender years played his part gallantly. He asked Joe, "What's your favourite animal?"

"Kangaroo, of course," replied Joe. They nodded their approval of each other's orthodoxy. Joe went on, "Dad's going to get me one to ride."

Mrs Cumberland could not hide her surprise at this unlikely assertion.

Now Joe asked Tim, "Got a favourite reptile?"

Tim looked at his mother, shrugged, and admitted, "Nope — and I hate snakes."

Joe was irrepressible, "So do we. My big brother chopped a tiger snake in half at the woodheap, and *my* goanna swallowed the top half straight off but took days to get the tail half down his leathery throat."

As he nibbled cake, he remembered female

sensitivities. "I beg your pardon, Mrs Cumberland. I forgot you was a girl. No offence meant."

On the contrary! She was tickled at his precocity.

Joe could tell that she was full of questions...

Nevertheless, he tucked in and took his time. After a polite silence, she asked, "Do you mean to tell me that you've walked all that way from *Terra Sancta* at Guntawang, all on your own, and without any food?"

Joe was cagey. "Well, sort of." In the interests of truth, he added, "Not quite exactly." Then, "How didya know the name of our place? and where it is?"

He did not wait for an answer, but went on, "You watch when I do this." In a single bound he jumped to the window and bellowed, "JIM!"

Mrs Cumberland and Tim listened eagerly. An answering bellow came from the front gate.

Jim loped up. "Coming ready or not! And you're meant to coo-ee now, not at the start like you did!" Mrs Cumberland stifled her mirth with a hanky.

Tim hobbled over to let him in the back door — more criss-cross introductions and more pouring tea...

As the boys ate and drank, Mrs Cumberland exclaimed, "Well, you two *are* a surprise!" — which was gratifying for Jim and Joe. She continued, "But I thought there were three of you — I'm sure Father John said so. He's been telling us about you."

For an answer, Jim sprang to the window. "JACK!"

Jack arrived even more promptly than Jim. What with his long wait out the front, he'd been fudging closer. There were introductions and another cuppa.

"It's hard to credit it," resumed Mrs Cumberland. "At this very moment, Greg and Bernie are on their way to your place, to say 'welcome'. Father John's been telling them about you — they serve the early Mass on

Sundays. He said it's about time you met up."

Jack was puzzled. "We must've passed 'em somehow. Maybe at a broad part of Swampy Ridge?"

"They went another way," said Mrs Cumberland, "an easy track down to Koala Creek, then past where the girls branch-off to the Mermaids' Pool, over a rise to what they call Fugitives' Pool — it's at a creek junction. Then up a long easy ridge between creeks to your place. They planned it from the map the Ranger's given them."

At the mention of maps, Jack pulled out the Lawson boys' map from his shirt pocket.

Mrs Cumberland was impressed. She gave it her highest praise: "It looks home-made."

Jack looked her in the eye and asserted proudly, "Of course." His gaze swept over his brothers. "We are the boy explorers. We're *direct* descendants in the male line from William Lawson, leader¹ of the Famous Three, and from William Cox the great road maker."

Mrs Cumberland was further impressed.

Jim also held her eye: "See this map" — he jabbed his finger — "it's all *our own* exploring, plus rough guesses of distance and direction, plus a bit of advice from the natives, to help us find your place."

Later, Mrs Cumberland heard that "the natives" were Luigi Castonelli and his wife, who ran the combine of businesses in Guntawang.

"May we leave a note for Greg and Bernie, please Mrs Cumberland?" asked Jack, "and a copy of our map? And will they be free tomorrow arvo?"

She nodded and smiled when Jim and Joe insisted on signing for themselves — to impress her with their best writing. Jack wrote:-

1 Some historians have concluded that Blaxland was not the leader.

Dear Greg and Bernie,

Sorry to miss you. We challenge you to see who can surprise whom, tomorrow arvo, Wednesday, at Big Bogie (Fugitives' Pool on your map).

Watch out for the aliens we call the Shy Spy Triplets.

Like you, we are servers of the sanctuary.

Jack Lawson, Jim Lawson, Joe Lawson.

After a bit more yarning, Jack pointed to the kitchen clock. "We got here at 1400 — it took us an hour and a half, so would you please excuse us? We've been here 45 minutes, and we're not sure how long it'll take us to get home, and we must be there by 1615 for our evening jobs for the family." Then to Tim. "Like a passion fruit?" Yes, Tim certainly would. That reminded Jim and Joe to fill one of Mrs Cumberland's biggest bowls with a great pile from the knapsack.

"Thank you," she said, "it's very thoughtful of you. However, I'd suggest you go home using Greg and Bernie's route. That way, you might run into them."

Jack was very grateful: it would be much easier to navigate. Despite Jim's urging, he declined her offer of a spare copy of the Ranger's map — "We've gotta make our own," he told her, with a determination not far short of stubbornness. Nevertheless, on his own spare copy, he added some bits from the Ranger's.

Mrs Cumberland was helpfulness itself. "I'll show you where to start." At the window, she pointed west. "Before you get to Twin Peaks, take the faint track on your right. It runs northwest, an easy slope down the side of the ridge. At the bottom, there's a T-fork — ignore the old notice, 'Boys left, Girls right'. Go right, then cross Koala Creek — take no notice of girl-noises on your right at Mermaids' Pool — just go up through the canyon, and on a bit, and in no time the track'll

have you at your Big Bogie, what Greg and Bernie called Fugitives' Pool."

They thanked her and Tim for the tea and "for having us", shook hands and set off for *Terra Sancta*.

It worked out well. The track was such an easy grade that they trotted down it, to make up time.

They ticked off the landmarks as they came to them.

Joe had put himself in front, which suited Jack. He could keep an eye on him better, especially as he might be getting tired.

Joe pulled up. "Here's the T-intersection," he told his brothers. "Here's where we turn right" — and he hastened to add — "but we're definitely *not* girls."

Jim consoled him. "Even if you dressed up as a girl, you wouldn't fool anyone, Joe." Joe pulled a face.

"I can hear Koala Creek," said Jack.

After fifty metres, he added, "And here it is."

Shaded by shrubbery was shallow water with four flat stepping stones, about a metre apart.

Jim chortled, "Jolly good! Just watch me. I'll show you — hop, step and jump."

"What about number four?" murmured Jack.

Jim ignored him. He'd show 'em! Hop and step and all okay. He looked back for applause. At 'jump' he jumped too high. He faced front just in time for what he was about to receive: a dead branch with a jagged end waiting to impale his forehead — and it did.

His foot skidded off the side of the third stone. "Ouch! Ughhh! Oops!...!" and a mighty SPLASH!

Knee deep, it soaked him to the skin. Blood poured from under his hat from his wounded forehead and coursed down his face.

Jack and Joe helped him up and out — without as much as getting a boot wet, and hobbled him to a rock.

Jim flopped down. Jack fished a clean hanky out of his shorts' pocket. It was still folded. With his left hand he flung off Jim's hat and pulled out a piece of stick which was still stuck in Jim's head. He slapped on the folded hanky and turned to Jim. "String."

Jim gave a goofy look. "I left it at home..."

"Joe, try my right pocket," ordered Jack.

Joe got it and tied on the hanky. In his turn, he ordered Jim, "Put yer finger on the knot."

Good First Aid tries to involve the patient *doing* things. It reassures him. With Jack's help, Jim peeled off his shirt. Meanwhile Joe undid the boots, emptied out water and sand, and stripped off the clinging socks.

Jim wrung out his socks. Jack mopped the blood off Jim's face with the wet shirt and gave it a quick swirl in the creek. He and Joe twisted it opposite ways and ran squeezing hands along the thick rope of khaki.

Blood still trickled out from the pad. "Messy, but not life-threatening," observed Jack.

Jim stood to get his shorts off and wrung them out.

They chuckled good naturedly at his misfortune but did not jeer. Jim laughed too and hauled on his shorts.

They helped him into his shirt. He left it untucked and all unbuttoned to dry. "We'll do your socks and boots," Jack told him. "If you bend over, you'll bleed."

He asked, "Are you dizzy?" Jim shook his head.

"Can you walk? or will I piggy back you to the Cumberland's? It's closer than *Terra Sancta*."

"No thanks," grinned Jim. "Let's go home."

"You lead," Jack told him. "We'll watch that you don't faint. Walk as fast as you can to keep warm."



HE JUMPED TOO HIGH



GOOD FIRST AID TRIES TO KEEP DOING THINGS