

*Transcribed from Philp's diary by Jack Thwaites.*

## Gordon River Track to junction with Innes' Track

Extracts from Philp's log of the trip

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Compiled by Jack Thwaites

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Monday, 28 December 1908 to 11 April 1909

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Party: Robert Ewart, Leader, J.E. Philp, Eric (Dick) Rumney

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**Monday, 28 December 1908**

Party left Hobart at noon for Strahan per S.S. Makinapua<sup>h</sup>. Crossed bar at 10.00 am next day. Party went by Grining's little steamer 'Nellie' from mouth of Gordon for 23 miles to first rapid, where their goods were landed.

**Thursday, 31 December 1908**

Went upstream by boat with load of stores to find their starting point near Junction of Franklin River, which was reached in about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour.

**Friday, 1 January 1909**

Pitched permanent camp alongside Gordon on a high bank about a quarter of a mile beyond mouth of Franklin.

**Wednesday, 6 January 1909**

Building a permanent store depot at this spot. Log walls about four feet high, size inside about 10ft by 9. Roofed with sacks and tent fly. Bob and Dick 'eeling' that night and 'caught the largest freshwater crayfish I have seen.' Got six eels.

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*(following Ewart's death)*  
*See J.E. Philp's tribute to Bob Ewart & his particular reference to the March 14 - 22 episode: in The Mercury, 19 Aug 1929 (Archives NS 21/26/2) p178*

*Also Ewart's summary of 1909 trip from Daily Post, April 1909. (AOT NS 21/26/2 pp 173-4)*

**Thursday, 7 January 1909**

Started clearing out Webster's Track and found it 'in fair order.' A lot of work has been done here, the track being well-graded and formed and creeks well-bridged. It was made, I believe, by the Mt. Lyell Company and they must have contemplated using horses on it, judging by the care and labour expended. Country pretty thick, cutting grass along the cut line. Estimate we have cleared about 1½ miles from junction of the Franklin River. After tea we went eeling and had a fine haul at mouth of Franklin.

**Friday, 8 January 1909**

Found track much overgrown in a wide swamp, ti-tree intermixed with bauera, vine and cutting grass.

**Sunday, 10 January 1909**

In camp. Mosquitoes, smoke flies and sand flies a perfect pest. River scenery grand. Saw several kingfishers. Fine echo at this part of Gordon River.

**Monday, 11 January 1909**

At work on Webster's Track, portions much overgrown with cutting-grass. Passing through Huon pine country and saw a couple of trees which would girth 14 feet and a stump of one felled about 6 feet across.

**Tuesday, 12 January 1909**

Snared a tiger cat after tea; these are very numerous, ring-tail possums also much in evidence; large owls about every evening. Saw a couple of kingfishers; fantailed flycatchers plentiful. Heard firetails today. Bird life is comparatively scarce.

**Wednesday, 13 January 1909**

Dick and I on track. Thick bauera for the main part. Have now over an hour's walk to end of track as far as we have cut.

**Friday, 15 January 1909**

Track proceeding through better country.

**Saturday, 16 January 1909**

Takes us about two hours to walk along track to our camp.

**Monday, 18 January 1909**

Loaded boat with stores, about six hundred-weight altogether, so went upstream to the camp selected on Saturday. We had not been up river for more than a mile before this, so had no idea of what was before us, and we had about 14 rapids to cross, and none of which we could row over, so had to haul boat over, walking against rush of water and wet to our middles. We were over five hours doing the journey. Our return trip took 2¼ hours. Let boat over rapids with a rope. One rapid in particular near mouth of the Sprent River is dangerous – a mass of boulders, and as the river pinches in to about 25 feet in width, there is a great rush of water. River scenery grand, timber and growth to water's edge; limestone cliffs occur along each bank, with, in one place, stalactites suspending therefrom. Saw several salmon. Tiger bats numerous here, and came right up to tents in daytime.

#### **Tuesday, 19 January 1909**

Made another trip up river in boat with 'tucker,' etc. Ewart accompanied us and lightened our labours over rapids... got through without mishap, but with plenty of hauling and much wading.

#### **Wednesday, 20 January 1909 – Leave first Gordon Camp**

Packed up last of stores, our personal gear and camp outfit, and started up river at 9.00 am, repeating the two previous days' performance. River falling rapidly and in some places on rapids we had little enough water to spare... Our camp is about five chains from river and alongside track. We have had to 'fossick' the river so far without any local knowledge, and will have about another five miles to explore yet. This is familiar water to the piners, but outside the beaten track to most others, and we do not think many people have navigated thus far for the fun of it.

#### **Thursday, 21 January 1909**

...Ewart and I walked back to our first camp and chained back along track towards here. Knocked off when we completed four miles of it.

#### **Friday, 22 January 1909**

Chained track as far as completed, viz. 4½ miles.

#### **Saturday, 23 January 1909**

... All hands on track, and we had good going, reaching about eight miles from starting point at Franklin River. Yesterday, Ewart cut right through the toe of his boot, and was afraid to look for further damage, but found on taking off his boot on return to camp in evening, that he had severed a thread of his sock. A narrow escape. Yet the cut was clean through the thick upper. Leeches bad today. Ewart bitten in a most painful spot.

#### **Sunday, 24 January 1909**

Dick caught a tiger cat last night – a big one.

#### **Monday, 25 January 1909**

All hands on track, which is now cleared for something over nine miles. There is a good bit of dead timber across track, and the horizontal scrub has encroached wherever it could, and in many places the ferns have grown very thickly. So far we have not touched the river and track seems to wind away from it. Have seen some very fine Huon pines, which are too far from river for piners to trouble with. All along river there is a fine growth of young pines, so a later generation should see some of it if not destroyed by unforeseen circumstances.

#### **Tuesday, 26 January 1909**

Dick and I started from 7 miles, 60 chains peg to mark a track down to river, and select a landing place. We found an old track which led to a depot which was, no doubt, used by those who first laid out this track. However there was too much dead timber across it to warrant clearing out. We went down to river, which here is not as wide as at the Great Bend. One rapid is a bar to successful boating, there being a fall of about four feet in it. Today the water looked black and just like running tar. In view of the river being so far from the track we consider it better to pack our goods along the track and not bother with the boat.

#### **Wednesday, 27 January 1909**

... Got things ready for a trip down river for mail and to leave boat at first camp at Franklin junction. About 11.30 am left No.2 Camp – the three of us being in boat. River about two feet higher than when we did our last boating, which enabled us to 'shoot' several rapids, which we had to rope in last trips downstream... reached Doherty's Hut about 4.00 pm. Ewart went over to Finn's Camp and found the Finn brothers (2) there... At way down we made a call at the historic Gould's Landing. There is a small stuffy, dark little Iron Hut, erected by T.B. Moore. The original hut has gone. Saw some Settlement Island bricks lying about.

#### **Thursday, 28 January 1909**

Had dinner with Finns and spent remainder of day with them. They are engaged in getting out the last of their pine and then say good-bye to the river for good. One brother has been here off and on for 22 years, and says he has had enough of it. One time he could stay here three months without seeing a strange face, but three weeks is now enough for him. Pining is nearly played out, as the available timber close to the river has been cut, and they have been running over country cut years ago getting timber discarded then. Naturally talk largely centred around pining and piners, many of whom I met in 1891 and 1892. Fouche, who worked with me on the Mount Lyell Railway Survey, was, with two mates, drowned in the Franklin. Fouche, it is reckoned, tried to come down on a log, as one was found in the river with a bridle and

stirrups made from a shirt which was recognized as his. I used this incident for a story published by the 'Bulletin' – 'In the River.' We talked also of Dick Webster, drowned in the same river. He was also an old camp mate, and in 1894 he and I were two of the four who walked the Overland Track from Strahan to Ouse. His body was found in the Harbour nearly six months after the disaster. Peace to their names!

**Saturday, 30 January 1909**

...I went with Ewart to look at country ahead through which we have to carry the track to the junction with Innes' Track at the Prince of Wales Range – where we finished last April. We found a likely spur along which we could swing away from this track... country promising... I almost put my hand on a snake which was coiled up and sunning itself on a root. I had my hand within inches of it before we saw it.

**Sunday, 31 January 1909**

Made up for Thursday's 'holiday' by working today. All hands carried a load out to our new camp site. I carried 70 lbs of sugar – distance about 6½ miles. Weather dull and overcast. Cleared out track and pitched a tent alongside a big creek on an old camp site. Ewart remained there whilst Dick and I returned here to continue packing. Have about three or four days of it ahead – the worst part of this work.

**Tuesday, 2 February 1909**

... We rise over 700 ft from this camp in 3¾ miles and then made a big drop for a couple of miles on to where we are storing tucker we are packing ahead. Ewart still on his own at forward camp.

**Wednesday, 3 February 1909**

... Still 'packing' ahead. Took easier loads today than our previous three ones. Did not see Ewart, but he turned up here first as we were about to start tea. The tiger cat which haunts this camp is now a regular visitor at breakfast time, and he will almost take food from the hand, and comes to within three feet of us without showing signs of alarm. He is not a handsome creature – with a tail larger than the remainder of himself, or rather I should say, than the foregoing part of himself. Leatherwoods now are a picture of white blossom. Ticks rather troublesome for past few days.

*The troublesome tick – so shiny and spic  
Will burrow a hole in your skin  
And you've got to be quick to muzzle the tick  
Before he can get his head in!*

**Thursday, 4 February 1909**

Raining when I turned out and air had quite a keen edge on it. All hands packed a load forward – rain holding off after we started. Our head has been very gloomy for

the past few days, and apparently dis-satisfied about something, though he has not said so, but he rarely exchanges a word with us. He walked from camp to camp today without speaking. Just before leaving here this morning he made some remark about we 'hadn't carried much.' As we have both taken over average loads, and packing has been stiff on two of us with the quantity of stuff we have, Dick and I resented such a remark, and on arrival at forward camp, told him we had decided to go no further with the job. This led to a general discussion conducted quietly enough, and finally, after giving our reasons and objections, we have, perhaps arrived at a better understanding. We agreed to continue. Dick and I returned here. If all goes well we will shift our personal 'dunnage' and tent along on Saturday. Keeping very good hours here – usually turn in at dark. Last night we bunked at 7.30 pm.

the following matters with the relevant Federal Ministers:-  
**Friday, 5 February 1909 – Leave No.2 Camp on Gordon**

... Dick and I started away as usual with loads. At 6 miles 30 chains, our usual halting place before making our final rise to top of the ridge, we met Ewart coming in for a load. We thereupon decided to go back with him and shift camp, as three loads would clear everything... We reached our new camp at 5.15 pm. Dick and I pitched our tent, and though we were tired, built ourselves a bunk about two feet off the ground as the site is rather damp. We are now camped about 9 miles from Pyramid Island (our starting point) on the eastern side of a fine creek running north and south (from the north) and only a few yards from it. Am pleased to be so close to water, as at our two previous camps along the banks of the Gordon we have had a long uphill carry with water.

**Saturday, 6 February 1909**

... Dick and I went over for the two loads left at 6 miles 30 chains, and shook hands with ourselves when we finally put them down at the depot, and thus finished eight days' hard packing. Ewart and I then chained up track down to this camp... Fires away to south-east today – possibly Clark's party.

**Sunday, 7 February 1909**

... A great number of bees about here, but have not located any of their trees yet. Huon pine growing close to camp but apparently no pining has been done up this far.

**Monday, 8 February 1909**

Weather still fine and warm. At last we have made a start on our track proper. We bridged a gully between Webster's Track and spur we are starting up, by felling a large myrtle across, which fell beautifully level and is a splendid crossing, saving a descent and a climb. First part of track stiff grade up a razor-back spur through Manuka, Celery Top and horizontal scrub. Very fair cutting as undergrowth is absent, excepting fern, which does not count. Chained remainder of Webster's Track which we have cleared; distance: 9 miles 3 chains to this camp.

## Tuesday, 9 February 1909

All hands on track, cutting about the same as yesterday. It is virgin country without doubt, and would be a great place for firing. In most of the track there is a coating of dry moss about a foot deep. Plenty of dead timber. Growing manuka three feet, though, and fine myrtles. We ran down spur at a stiff grade and ran across a swampy flat with numbers of grass trees, which are now in flower. Crossed the small river by which we are camped about a mile to northward of this camp... My tent mate is bald – mosquitoes have been extra annoying. March flies about by thousands... Scarcely any birds about, and even the ring-tail is not numerous. Not many tiger cats either.

## Wednesday, 10 February 1909

Continuing track along east side of river around hillsides – cutting not bad, but track itself rough, being mostly on a siding and it will not be extra good for our packing. I followed the course of the river down to camp from our second crossing – the others keeping track. Scrub thick in places, so I waded down bed of stream where not too deep and reached camp 20 minutes ahead of others.

## Thursday, 11 February 1909

...All hands on track...Cutting not heavy, but fair amount of axe work for all of us, and track rough underfoot. We are passing through a thick belt of Grass tree, some of which are of great height. They are in blossom just now – pretty delicate pinky flowers hidden in the crown and among the broad leaves. Natural history notes 'off'. Beetle collection progressing very slowly. Raining after tea.

## Friday, 12 February 1909

...Leeches abundant! Hence this:-

*The Leech.  
The lean looking leech  
Was born without speech  
Through a tongue nature gave it to carry,  
With an edge always keen  
To lance mortals, I ween  
And play with our life-blood Old Harry!*

## Saturday, 13 February 1909

...All hands on track. We each carried 50 lbs of flour along track as far as completed. By taking loads as we go to work each day we will make packing easier. Track running through a flat with a thick growth of cutting grass – which makes progress slow.

## Sunday, 14 February 1909

... Ewart has gone out to climb a hill to get a look ahead. Dick and I having a lazy day – that is as far as flies permit. Bob returned in afternoon with no adventures to relate save the killing of a lively black snake about five feet long. We have only seen four snakes altogether so far. Very different from our last summer's experience – when we killed over sixty.

#### **Monday, 15 February 1909**

... Tiger cats have been 'walking into' our bacon. Today Ewart left his crib (tied up in a handkerchief) on track for a few minutes. On returning he found a cat making off with it, but rescued it all safe!

*March flies in February.  
When once March flies –  
The pests – their buzz and bite will cease  
When each one dies –  
From stings and wounds I look for peace  
From crawling things. I want release –  
From stings and wounds I look for peace  
When each one dies,  
The pests their buzz and bite will cease  
When once March flies.*

#### **Tuesday, 16 February 1909**

... Ewart also took some tucker and a fly, intending to push through and examine country and may be away two or three days.

#### **Wednesday, 17 February 1909**

Leave No.3 Camp. Ewart reports rough country ahead and which he had fired. Feel tired today, having felt a bit off colour past few days. A fire, which Ewart lit on spur where we leave Webster's Track, about first of the month is still burning in the peaty soil and there are now holes a couple of feet deep, exposing the roots of a manuka tree... Only two more loads left behind, which are yet to be brought here. Will be glad to see last of 'packing,' but the worst of it is that no sooner do we get it up a stage than we have to start again. Are comfortably pitched here with three or four yards of a



nice little creek. Ewart had our tent poles and forks, also bunks, made ready for us on arrival here, so we only had to hang tent up and lay in a supply of feathers. I made me a couch of Grass tree leaves which I hope to enjoy tonight. Indications are of another frost. Had baked wallaby for tea – the finest meal we have had this year!

#### **Thursday, 18 February 1909**

...Made an early start from camp, and the three of us made our way to top of a spur to eastward of us, over which our track will pass. The summit is a matted mass of bauera and cutting grass and umbrella fern... Dick and I left about noon to go over to last camp and bring last of our gear away. We also stored goods we are leaving in a depot on Webster's Track near the turn off to this track. Caught another wallaby today. Feel off colour yet, and am glad packing is done for a time.

#### **Friday, 19 February 1909**

... This camp is distant 11 miles and 1 chain from Franklin River.

#### **Saturday, 20 February 1909**

Very warm. All hands on top of spur, and continued fires. Had a tremendous flare-up in bauera and fern. A warm wind from the north-west and the past dry days made all the difference. The fires lit on Wednesday also took a new life and blocked our return by track – consequently we had to work down gully through thick matted scrub till we could make up on to track with safety. We had just reached track when a sudden shift of wind drove a roaring mass of flame over and down on to us. Fortunately for us there was an opening through which fire had run, and into this we made a dash, over hot embers and ashes – with intense heat behind us. I dropped my slasher and hat but could not think of stopping to attempt to recover them. Ewart's vest caught alight on back, Dick had his face scorched, and I had hair on left arm singed off. But for the opening we were fairly trapped, and I don't want another closer experience. For some of the remaining portion of track we had to make a bolt through thick smoke and hot cinders. The fires continued burning to windward, and after dark we could hear the roar and see the flames from camp here, and are hoping there will be no shift of wind, for if there is we will have to make a move from here, which will not be pleasant in the dark. We can hear trees and limbs crashing down every now and then – which points to the fact that fire is raging fiercely. Had a good sight of Frenchman's Cap today, and also Prince of Wales Range, our objective. Fires lit today on one ridge fairly flew along, leaping great spaces and sweeping the foliage before it like a mighty blast, with flames thirty, forty and fifty feet high – great fingers of devastation, all-destroying.

#### **Sunday, 21 February 1909**

...Had a restful day in camp. All hands at cooking. Dick baked bread, and made pea soup; Bob made a quantity of rock cakes; I made a large plum pudding (plenty of fruit in it) and made pea soup ready for tomorrow.

**Monday, 22 February 1909**

... All hands out on track route to see effects of Saturday's fires. Found slasher I dropped, with handle completely burned away. Naturally there was no trace of my hat, and I deplore the loss of an old and oft-worn friend, who was with me at Port Davey in May, June, July 1907, and was in active service last summer on the Western Expedition Track. Fortunately, I had another with me.

**Tuesday, 23 February 1909**

... Ewart on ahead firing and blotting out landscape with volumes of smoke, and a mighty roar of flame. Very pleasantly cool in evening... Had just turned in last night when a tiger cat was caught in springer. Had to get up and despatch him.

**Wednesday, 24 February 1909**

Overcast and dull. Muggy. I went with Ewart on to part of the Prince of Wales Range to try and locate ourselves as to end of Innes' Track. Too much smoke about to see far. Saw High Rocky Peak, across Denison River, which summit I climbed this month last year, with Innes and Fulton.

**Friday, 26 February 1909**

... Our course improving as far as leading us to point we want – the spur running right to the Prince of Wales Range, but wants burning. Going downstream tomorrow, so busy letter writing tonight.

**Saturday, 27 February 1909**

... Left camp about 7.00 am for Franklin River – reaching there about 2.00 pm. Found some mail there which Finn's had left. After boiling billy we launched boat and pulled downstream to Finn's hut.

**Sunday, 28 February 1909**

... No steamers up river as we half expected. Had a quiet day of rest... About 3.00 pm got boat underweigh and pulled up to our Franklin River Camp... Saw several platypi in river on way up.

**Tuesday, 2 March 1909**

Chained track as far as 12¾ miles and put in distance pegs. After noon, each carried two loads of tucker ahead to a little beyond 12 ¾ mile peg – shifting everything from depot we pitched on 25 February 1909 and stored them under another 'fly.'

**Wednesday, 3 March 1909**

... Don't know whether I am losing weight, but have shed enough perspiration to considerably reduce some of the adipose tissue. Packing in this weather up some of our grades is rather more than mere healthy exercise. One thing is good and that is – we will not have many more stages as we are closing up on to the Prince of Wales now. We are hoping fine weather continues so we can fire bauera. Have seen some of the largest honeysuckle trees here that I thought impossible to be such. Must try and get measurements of these.

#### **Thursday, 4 March 1909**

The cats were in evidence before we left, apparently being anxious to take possession... Ewart away along Prince of Wales firing.

#### **Saturday, 6 March 1909 – Sixth Camp**

... Ewart on ahead... He killed five snakes today.

*(Very bad weather then ensued and lasted to 12<sup>th</sup> March)*

#### **Thursday, 11 March 1909**

... Chained remainder of track, making a total of 15¼ miles.

#### **Friday, 12 March 1909**

... Have marked up to 15½ miles. Had a good view of adjacent country – the first I have been able to get. Located Prince of Wales Range proper. The range we are following is, I think, leading us away from Innes' Track.

#### **Saturday, 13 March 1909**

... Tomorrow we are going to break through and find Innes Track – carrying only a fly and some tucker. Expect we will find it rough... I am sadly in need of a real good wash, and haven't shaved for over a month... This time last year I was only a few miles away from here, east of Prince of Wales Range, where I spent my birthday. We had a rough week or more of it there, but if memory serves me right our worst time was rather later in the month. We are drawing near the end of our stay now, and I for one will be pleased to roll my swag away, bound homewards.

#### **Sunday, 14 March 1909**

... I have camp all to myself tonight. Ewart and Dick have gone towards Prince of Wales Range to find Innes' Track. Expect to return tomorrow. Have taken a fly with them for shelter tonight. I was not asked to go – presumably the serang doesn't want any help from one 'who has been there before.' However, I pointed the way, despite

the fact that the range we are now on was 'beyond doubt' the Prince of Wales Range! Perhaps now the right one will be found. I have been working by myself all day – staking out track over button grass – running north along the range. We will use this to effect a junction with Thirkell's Track. Everything very still and quiet here, but I am rather pleased to have it on my own – though not naturally given to preferring my own company. This is a change, and I have only myself to consider and please. Today I recognized many places I saw last year from the Prince of Wales.

#### **Monday, 15 March 1909**

... Came into camp early and prepared a substantial meal for the absentees, who did not turn up – so I am solitary again tonight. Feel it cold here. We are about 1,400 feet up. Have to don bluey and thick pants when 'turning in' to help blankets. Last night coldest so far.

#### **Tuesday, 16 March 1909**

... Went out and staked a further section of the line until noon. I then came back towards camp, and waited on track beyond 14½ mile peg, thinking I might see some sign of Bob and Dick. However they did not show up, so I came on into camp and prepared a feed for them. Darkness set in, and yet no appearance – so I am to have my own company for another night. If they do not turn up by tomorrow I will begin to get anxious. At present I think they have found they could not get over to Innes' Track till some time on Monday, and may have had some trouble in locating the track, and so could not reach back here in daylight. They did not take very much 'tucker' with them. I baked tonight in case their appetites would out-run stock of bread on hand. Will go out in the morning with some soup, etc, and try and meet them. Hope they are all right, though I can hardly see any reason to worry. Still, in our conditions one never knows.

#### **Wednesday, 17 March 1909**

My birthday – and certainly the most peculiar one I have ever spent – being miles away from home folk is only an ordinary matter, which is the experience of many, but here I am absolutely by myself, and have had a worrying week as well. Ewart and Rumney did not arrive this morning, as I half-expected they might.

#### **Thursday, 18 March 1909**

Another day passed without any sign of absentees. I am feeling anxious, and quite at a loss to account for length of time they are away... I am feeling keenly my awkward position for making a systematic search single-handed. The job is too big for me... I do not like the look of things at present, but hope for the best. I returned to camp after 5.00 pm and kept up cooys till after dark, when I knew it was hopeless to expect them. Had a good meal all in readiness, as I have done since Monday, and only regret they are not here to enjoy. If all right in themselves they must be short on tucker by this, unless they are able to replenish at Innes' depot. And even so, why so long away?

### Friday, 19 March 1909

I am sorry that I have to record no sign yet of Ewart and Rumney. This morning I left camp early, taking provisions as before... waited on ridge for a short time till it brightened up somewhat, and swept all round with glasses. Saw no smoke or other trace. Went down spur at 14¾ mile peg. Very steep and rough. At foot got into a bad patch of horizontal. Could not get hill I was aiming for, as in horizontal I made too much northing. Have no compass, having lent mine to Rumney. Managed to break through on to thickly-timbered knob, where, by climbing a tree I got a limited outlook towards Prince of Wales Range, but it came on to rain heavily, blotting everything out. Weather is very unsettled. I reached camp just before darkness set in – numbed to the bone... Had a bad fall today, which has jarred me all over, and am not feeling too well... Am very anxious, and unsettled, and sitting up half the night.

### Saturday, 20 March 1909

No entry

### Sunday, 21 March 1909

No entry

### Monday, 22 March 1909

Good news at last! Raining and very misty this morning when I turned out. I had quite given up hope of ever seeing Dick and Bob alive, and started to get things ready for a start to the Franklin River tomorrow early, when, at about 10.00 am I heard a cooey. I could scarcely realize it for a moment when Bob and Dick came in view at camp. Dick was just about done. They have had nothing to eat for six days and have been travelling all the time! Bob looked the better of the two. Helped Dick undress and got him into blankets, whilst Bob busied himself getting some extract of beef prepared. They have had a severe gruelling and describe the scrub as the worst they have ever seen. They got on to Marriott's Track, and did not see Innes' at all – consequently they found not depot. They reckon they have travelled 60 miles since leaving. It is wonderful to think men can go so long without food. They have had nothing but hot water to drink – no tobacco, and reached here with but three matches left! I have been nurse and doctor all day – making gruel and giving them a mug-full of that and soup every couple of hours. No solids allowed. Tonight Dick is quite jolly, but craving for food. Bob looks in no way altered. He was very pale when he came in, but he has more reserve of gut than Dick to draw on. So all the worry and anxiety of the past few days is gone. I am not sorry, but must confess I never expected to see them again. Bob says he was never in doubt about getting back. Dick admits he nearly gave in once... Well, it was a very close call, the point between life and death had just about reached its breaking tension. They have only their dogged determination and level-headedness to thank for their deliverance – for their great feat of endurance was accomplished with no stimulus but love of life – to which we all cling.

**Tuesday, 23 March 1909**

... Last night bitterly cold, and both felt it keenly. Dick tells me his heart got very weak and he could feel it give great throbs within him. Also that he began to get rocky on his feet, whilst Bob's eyesight began to fail him, and both of them lost feeling in hands and arms. Dick was leading for five days and on him fell the strain of 'breaking through' which, in the country they encountered, was hard enough for a full-fed man. However all's well today – even though I know not what the future holds in store for me – where will the next wave take me? Have had many strange happenings in my time and perhaps fortune will deign to smile – even at this late stage.

**Wednesday, 24 March 1909**

... Fixed depot on ridge near 14½ mile peg, under and against a big quartzite boulder, hollow to eastward. Had to carry spars up nearly a quarter of a mile. Dick not nearly himself yet, complains of weakness. Ewart looks all right, except for a slight pallour in complexion. In the afternoon he and I chained line up to 16 miles 60 chains, then staked ahead for another mile. Very cold on top of range... Intend shifting camp ahead tomorrow for last few days' work.

**Thursday, 25 March 1909**

... In morning Dick and I took advantage of a break and went up on ridge to complete depot. Found that water makes its way through rock. We abandoned this site and started to build a proper framework in the afternoon. Ewart worrying about not being on track, but weather really unfit. Have decided that the only suitable title for this place is Misery Camp.

**Friday, 26 March 1909 – Misery Camp**

Hurrah! and also Hurroar! We have finished up. Weather today decided it. I turned out at 6.00 am. Hail thick on ground and ice in the dishes, billies, etc.... We went out on track. I marked distance pegs up to 17½ miles – reaching thus far at noon. Was told there that this was last of it, and was pleased to hear it. Came into camp and fixed depot. Are to leave here in the morning, and make to 4-mile camp. Have a big day before us as we are going to shift everything in three swaps. I killed a black snake about 3 ft 6 inches long today, right on top of mount where hail was lying about, so one never knows where they may be. He was a very black specimen, and against the burnt ground looked like a twisted root, for which for an instant I took him.

**Saturday, 27 March 1909**

Said 'good-bye' to Misery Camp at 7.45 am. The three of us had a fair swag up. Mine

consisted of my own dunnage, a tent (not too dry), a fly, about 10 lbs of rock cakes, loaf bread, 4 or 5 lbs raisins, hammer and chisel, saw, axe, 6 plates, 6 mugs, knives and spoons, a lump of bacon, and a billy with tea, sugar, butter, etc, so on the whole I had a tidy weight up. We made slow travelling from 14-mile camp to our old camp at 11-mile, reaching there at noon... we pulled up for the night near 9-mile peg on Webster's Track. I got there about 6.00 pm, thoroughly knocked up. Pitched tent among tree-ferns, and laid in a good stock of fronds for bedding. The reason we took so much time doing the five miles was, for one thing roughness of track which meant slow pacing, and frequent obstructions which late heavy winds have put across track.

### **Sunday, 28 March 1909**

...Reached our old camp at 4-mile at noon... There is a difference in our rate of travelling today. We did in four hours a distance which yesterday took us all day, which is accounted for by reason of track being good – although from 9 to 8-mile is a stiff, uphill pull. At 4-mile we lightened our loads and pushed on for the Franklin River. At 3-mile Ewart did not care about us crossing spars across creek with our swags on, so we tried to send them over on a rope... It is only about 30 feet of a span, but log is old and very slippery. All creeks are carrying a lot of water. Made good progress and reached Franklin River Camp about 5.00 pm, feeling satisfied that the worst of our journey is done. Our old camp looked quite home-like. We had left a tent pitched here and so had dry bunks ready for us. I went down to Gordon for water and found her in flood, but falling. The water had been right up to our boat, which was twisted right round, broadside on, and off the skids we had placed her on.

### **Monday, 29 March 1909**

... Dick and I started back to 4-mile to bring in remainder of our things ... Reached Franklin River Camp at noon. We had intended felling a bee-tree near camp, and had tins, etc, in readiness for honey, but rain warned us to be away, so as soon as we had dinner we packed up, and got the boat into water. It was raining hard all the while. We started downstream at 2.00 pm and rain eased off, keeping fine till we reached Finn's Camp at 3.25 pm. There was a fair run in the river, but rapids were not bad, and we were fortunate in getting down without having any rain. Laid in a stock of wood and made hut snug. No-one has, apparently, occupied it since our last visit, though a piece of bacon we left here is 'missing.' Leeches worst than ever the last two days.

### **Tuesday, 30 March 1909**

... Still raining, and river keeps at about one level. In the morning Dick and I took the boat and got some wood, which is scarce here close at hand, as this hut has been in existence for about 16 years. It is built very close to the river – too close in fact, and on one occasion during a flood, the inmates spent 24 hours on the beams, water being over the bunks. All hands did some washing, and I feel cleaner now than I have done for weeks past. It is evidently blowing a gale outside, and we can feel the wind here, though 20 miles from heads. It is useless to attempt to go further till weather

moderates, as we could not possibly get past the mouth of the river, and if this continues I am afraid there is small chance of seeing a steamer up.

### **Wednesday, 31 March 1909**

Weather shows no sign of abatement and, if anything, showers are more frequent than yesterday. It is not cold, however bad the other features may be, and Pine Cottage is a veritable palace after our late camping places. Got a boat-load of wood in the morning, then thoroughly cleaned the boat out and turned her keel upwards to dry the inside, after all the water she has had for so long. In the afternoon had the luxury of a shave and got rid of six or seven weeks' growth, and feel the better for it. Would like to see a change for the better in weather, and see a steamer along, which will save us a forty mile pull, so we are not quite out of the wilderness yet.

### **Thursday, 1 April 1909**

Rained steadily throughout last night, causing a good rise in the river, which has increased during the day as rain has been very continuous. We do not want to see too much water in the river which might flood us out of our comfortable quarters here, and drive us across the stream to Doherty's 'Palace' – which is a comfortless hovel, though better than a tent in this weather. We were lucky in getting downriver when we did, as now we could not have risked it from the Franklin River. Plenty of logs and driftwood passing here. Am having a very quiet day – not much to read here. A 'Red Funnel,' 'Cassells', and a 'Strand,' which I am reading thoroughly – even to the advertisements. 9.00 pm: raining steadily – rising river.

### **Friday, 2 April 1909**

Still no change in the weather... If there is a start tomorrow, we are going to try and make the mouth of the river. There is a good run downstream now, and logs and drift going past. The width here is about a quarter of a mile, and very deep. Finn told me he could not get bottom with two fishing lines attached. Have occupied myself today making a boat for Murray. Huon pine and blackwood, and I am sure it will please the little fellow.

### **Saturday, 3 April 1909**

No break in the weather... The expected has happened! On turning out this morning found water up to door-sill, river having risen about 8 feet since we came here. Judging by quantity of timber going downstream, there must be a tremendous rise further up. Am writing this sitting up in my bunk. Water is over six inches deep on floor and still rising. Flooring boards, boxes and utensils floating about. We only just managed to get breakfast cooked when the fire was swamped... I do not see why we remain here while we have daylight to get away, but others will make no stir, though I suggest it many times. I would make an effort to reach Doherty's Hut, or failing that, go downstream on the flood.



Another foot or two of rise would make our position somewhat of an anxious one – not to say serious, and we could not attempt a shift in the dark. 4.00 pm: Water about 18 inches over floor – and still rising. Have occupied our bunks all day except on two occasions. I have had to wade out on salvage duties – others not moving. Too late now to attempt a move. I reckon we will spend a miserable night in the boat at the back of the hut. Can see nothing else for it. 10.00 pm: Just after writing the above we made a start to shift to high ground at the back of the hut, which is now surrounded by water. We could not get the boat past the end of the hut on account of a stump a few feet from the hut blocking our way through. We chopped the stump off but it was no use, so we returned to the hut, mooring the boat alongside the front so as to be ready for a hasty exit... but after dark the wind came in harder than ever, with harder rain than we have had. River began to rise rapidly, and there is now about 3 feet of water over the floor, so later we MUST get out of it and face the rest of the night in the boat.

#### **Sunday, 4 March 1909**

At 12.00 pm last night we had to leave the hut. Water rose over the bunks, which are extra high. Dick and I got through shuttered opening which does duty for a window, into the boat without wetting our feet. Bob swung himself off his bunk near the doorway. With our dunnage aboard we pushed off, and, having more water under us, got past stumps which blocked our earlier attempt. It was raining heavily. We managed to push under the roof of lean-to shed at the back of the hut, then had a weary wait for daylight. Bitterly cold in the early morning. River kept rising steadily, and at dawn was fully 12 feet higher than when we came here.

#### **Monday, 5 April 1909**

Very rough night... after breakfast Dick and I went down to the boat and paddled over to the hut. Found water had fallen about 5 feet; we then decided to come back to the hut. Struck our camp, and got to the hut about noon. There was then only 6 inches of water on the floor. Everything inside was in an awful muddle; a big box on the table, together with flooring boards and firewood. Water has been about 6 ft 6 inches above the floor – about 3 feet above the bunks. We soon got a fire going and had some crib, got in a stock of wood, and dried things up a bit, but hut will be very wet and cold for sleeping tonight. Hope we can make a start down the river in the morning. River is falling rapidly, and the night looks fine. The total rise here has been over 15 feet.

#### **Tuesday, 6 April 1909**

... Made a start away at 6.20 am. Not very much run in the river, but what little there was, was in our favour. Weather very fine after fog, which at first was rather thick, before it cleared off. Reached mouth of the Gordon at 10.40 am, which was very good progress for 20 miles. Pulled up and had some crib, but did not spend much time ashore. Then we saw smoke at Kelly Basin, and thought a steamer was there, so made out to be in her track if she came out. Wind freshened from north-west and we had to pull up at Farm Cove about 2.00 pm. Two half-starved pigs here made a raid on our

tucker on the beach. We pitched a tent, but just before dark we saw 'Nellie' going down to Settlement Island. We struck camp and pulled across. 'Nellie' was laying in all night to take on lighter – a load of logs to Strahan. We spent a comfortable night aboard, and were treated to the latest news.

### **Wednesday, 7 April 1909**

After Rudy Doherty's party had finished boating off logs and lighter was loaded, we got a start away for Strahan... our progress was slow, and it was 6.00 pm before we tied up to the wharf at Strahan. Captain House met me with two letters from Vera. Put up at Macquarie Harbour Hotel.

### **Saturday, 10 April 1909 – Leave Strahan**

Have had a monotonous time during the past two days.... Ewart and Rumney went to Zeehan on Thursday – the former returning to Strahan this morning – Rumney remaining behind. At 11.00 am we embarked on board 'Mahinapua,' and cast off for Hobart. Outside Heads there was rather a heavy sea running, which proved too much for most of our passengers, of whom some 33 were in the saloon.

### **Sunday, 11 April 1909**

At 7.00 am we were abreast of Partridge Island. I turned out at 5.00 am and fraternized with the cook (an old acquaintance) and sampled early coffee. Morning fine and bright. Reached Hobart about 11.00 am. Found A.H.J. waiting with motor boat, so was soon transported across to Beltana. The kiddies were down to meet – all well, and was soon safe at home once more.

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