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## "WALKS & TALKS"



THE MAGAZINE OF THE BUSH  
CLUB

The New Year is now well on the way, dollars and cents have come to stay, and we are already thinking about the winter Walks Schedule. However, it is not too late to note the trends for 1966, as observed on the Christmas Walk. Everyone must be "with it" these days.

Bush Club members always seem to just be coming back from or just going on holidays to interesting places. In this issue you may read about two islands - very different from each other, but both very beautiful - Fraser Island, undeveloped and almost primitive, and Lord Howe Island, a tourist resort developed in a simple style.

Judging by the number of new faces I see every time I go out walking these days, the Club is in a healthy state of growth. This means new readers for WALKS & TALKS, and we hope it means new contributors as well. (Just send your articles, on any subject that interests you, to either of the addresses below.)

Everyone is rejoicing with Alan and Janet Catford in the birth of their son, Robert, who, like the Club, is reported to be in a healthy state of growth. In the next issue we expect to be able to announce cause for rejoicing in certain other north side homes.

The cover for this issue is a resurrection of one of the excellent bird series designed by a former member, Elizabeth MacLennan. It has suffered somewhat in the process, but I think you can still recognize the bird.

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#### PRESERVER OF THE WILDERNESS

In a recent issue of READER'S DIGEST there is an article about the life and work of Stephen Mather, the founder of the National Park Service of the U.S.A.

At the age of 47, Stephen Mather could have retired a wealthy man; instead he chose to accept a Government position to further the interests of the National Parks.

According to the article, there were only thirteen parks in the country when Stephen Mather took over their administration, but in sixteen years he added to the Park Service an area nearly a quarter that of Tasmania. Stephen Mather awakened public interest and support by high-pressure publicity, most of it at his own expense. He realized that the national treasures of nature had to be preserved before it was too late.

A bill for the establishment of a proper Park Service was passed in 1916 despite the opposition of some Congressmen and certain vested interests. More parks were acquired and more rangers trained, sometimes by Mather himself on his frequent visits to the parks. Access roads and properly constructed facilities for the public were put in.

Stephen Mather labored unceasingly for the preservation of the wilderness and his death in 1930 was partly caused by overwork. In a grove of sequoias at Yosemite there is a young tree chosen to stand as his living monument, and another man-made memorial in a park has this inscription: "There will never come an end to the good that he has done".

The article states that the U.S.A. National Park Service was the first of its kind in the world, and many other countries have since emulated it.

## TRENDS FOR 1966?

Our dear readers who were not on the Club's Christmas trip 1965 might be wondering what the "Au-Go" or the "Jet Set" (take your pick) of the Club are up to. We too, would like to know!

Some variations and/or deviations from the Club norms noted by your correspondents are listed below. How far they represent new trends and with what intensity they will carry through 1966, you must decide. (Please don't say we did not warn you).

### Walking.

The "get a taxi to the top" movement was amended: this year we went only half way up. Half an hour before lunch on the first walking day some members would have preferred to go by taxi all the way. The next day the cult of walking in front of the leader suffered what now appears a temporary set-back only, en route to Hell's Window.

Sleeping in huts was discouraged by a rat's New Year's Eve attack on a member's pack.

### Food and Drink, etc.

The traditional communal (share and share alike) meal on the first day out was not served, and the evening was considered very successful. Drambuie reappeared after several years.

Paddy's dinners were increasingly featured on menus. Pink lemonade (appears to be a dessert) was noted for the first time. Older readers note; the damper era has gone. There was also no evidence of malted milk tablets.

Joyous camp-fire singing was as absent as billy-hooks. If you can sing pleasantly, don't - rather try to send up the song. No change was noted in the topics of conversation.

We were mildly surprised at the consumption of unboiled water at Macalister Springs. Prior to our arrival, Melbourne walkers told us of water contamination by cattle parasites, and we saw what appeared to be white worms in the stream. One member reported drinking 5 cups!

### Clothing and Gear.

Fly veils were very much in evidence. Eating meals while wearing them was considered normal (note no sign of Aeroguard, but consider evidence of day walks).

The number of 'made it myself' tents has not increased, although self-made windjackets and groundsheets of nylon have. The finish is not as important as élan in wearing them.

From the reception at the King River camp accorded a bare-topped sportsman wearing tight moleskin trousers, male club members should be warned of the danger of wearing same without firm foundation garments.

Only one member was observed carrying a cobbler's outfit. At least one departing sole was arrested! Whilst evidence on cameras is not strong, we did note for the first time one international photographer not bothering to carry one, which might suggest a decline in popularity. Transistors, never really popular, appear to have further declined since we discovered it was possible to receive notices through them of total prohibition of fires.

## CHRISTMAS WALK IN THE VICTORIAN ALPS

For those few readers who have not heard of about the Christmas trip, the following brief account is given.

### Sunday, 26.12.65

After a night in the train we arrived at Benalla (Victoria), deposited in the cloakroom the respectable clothes we would not be needing for the next six days, and loaded our packs and ourselves on to the landrover waiting to take us to the wilderness. Mansfield was the first stop, a pleasant little town at the foot of the mountains, where we bought food for lunch. It was hot and dusty in the landrover as we bumped along the rough roads, and a relief to get out when the driver, who had taken a short cut along an even rougher bit of road, found that a tyre had come off one of the wheels. Not long after that we parted altogether from the landrover, at our first campsite where a little creek crossed the road and there was a meadow of grass and flowers under the tall forest trees for our tents. In the landrover we had been following the Howqua River valley, and then turned up Eight Mile Creek. It was on one of the tributaries of Eight Mile Creek that we were camped.

### Monday, 27.12.65.

Heaving on the heavy packs we took to the road at 8 o'clock, and found that, instead of being a nice level track along the foot of the cliffs as we had expected, it went very steeply up and down little gullies, each one more precipitous than the last, until eventually we got above the cliff line on the slopes of The Bluff and had lunch at The Bluff Hut, where the snow-gums gave shade for those who found the sun too hot. The route for the afternoon was along the top, with lovely views over the valley to Mt. Buller, and the night was spent at Lovick Hut at the foot of Mt. Lovick. A small tank provided water for drinking and cooking, but the only washing water was a murky pool about  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile away where the muddy banks were well trodden by cattle.

### Tuesday, 28.12.65

The way continued along the tops, following a well-defined jeep track past the place where a woman met her death about five years ago on an N.P.A. trip, at a spot now known as Helicopter Spur. The jeep track was so easy to follow that we stayed with it longer than we should have and had to retrace our steps for a couple of miles. This at least gave us the chance of a drink on what would otherwise have been a waterless day, as we turned back where a little watercourse crossed the track. Back to the signpost where we should have left the track, it was a bit hard to tell where we should go, but after some trial and error the way became clear and we trudged across Mt. Magdalas, with an awe-inspiring view through Hell's Window as rainclouds gathered, then over to Mt. Howitt. The very steep ups and downs of this section took toll of our energy, but the wonderful views and the lovely variety of flowers were some compensation. It was on one of our rests here that we were given the depressing news that the water at Macalister Springs, where we were heading for the night, was contaminated and unfit for drinking unless boiled. There was no other water in the area, so we just had to go there and do the best we could to avoid the worms. It was a very pretty stream in a rocky gully over towards Howitt Plains, with a good pool near the campsite. It seems a great pity that cattle grazing is allowed in these areas when it can result in contamination of water that is in such scarce supply.

### Wednesday, 29.12.65

We were getting into our stride by this time, and needed to, because this was the day we crossed on the Cross-Cut Saw and climbed Mt. Buggery and Mt. Speculation - all very formidable. The Cross-Cut Saw is a ridge between Mt. Howitt and Mt. Speculation, and as the name suggests, it is a narrow rocky way with ups and downs like the teeth of a saw. But the views were quite breathtaking. We were able to see all the way we had come and all the way we were still to go, and right

below us on both sides were the rugged valleys - the King and Howqua Rivers to the west and the Macalister River to the east. We had lunch on Mt. Buggery, which evidently gets its name from the steep drop to the saddle between it and the Cross-Cut Saw on one side and between it and Mt. Speculation on the other side. We were so used to the steep drops and rises by that time, though, that we didn't take much notice of it. It was a very pleasant place to have lunch, though. The campsite on the other side of Mt. Speculation was marked on the map as having good water, and we were looking forward to that after the night with wormy water. When we arrived we found the water good, certainly, but there was not enough of it, and it was a slow process filling water bags and having baths.

Thursday, 30.12.65

We left the heights on this day, via Mt. Kookinda, and came down from the snow-country to the big timber again. We came over a saddle where a track went off to Mt. Cobbler, but we let that wait for another day, and continued down along a winding timber road to the King River - a really good plentiful water supply at last. A mob of cattle had camped on the flat the previous night, leaving myriads of flies behind them. The hut was occupied by another party, so we went a few hundred yards down-stream and made ourselves comfortable, with the river making lullaby sounds as it bubbled over the stones.

Friday, 31.12.65

This was officially our day off, and some spent it quietly about the camp, but the more energetic ones climbed Mt. Cobbler. Before setting out we protected ourselves against sunburn and flies, but as we climbed higher a cool breeze blew all the flies away and blew clouds across the sun, and we found that what we should have brought was warm clothing. Climbing without a pack was wonderful, and we just managed to get to the top in time to see the view before the rain came down. It was magnificent standing on the top with mountains in all directions and seeing the rain sweeping up the gullies towards us. We huddled and shivered in the inadequate shelter of some rocks while hailstones pelted us, and when a lull came we hurried down the mountainside to the warmer temperatures below. It was still showery when we got back to camp, and as the party from the hut had left that morning, some of us transferred over there. The passing of the old year was celebrated, well before midnight, with tea, coffee and dry biscuits as we sat around the fire in the hut.

Saturday, 1.1.66

A beautiful clear sunny morning after the rain, and a long climb up from the river, but with packs noticeably lighter by now, brought us to Clear Hill from where we could look back over practically the whole of our route. We were on a jeep track again now, which led us almost to the top of Mt. Stirling, and then steeply down to the river again where we had arranged to meet our landrover to take us back to the train. The camp-site was rather dusty, but water was plentiful and we were able to make ourselves more or less presentable to face the civilized world again.

Sunday, 2.1.66

The landrover called for us at midday, and with a short delay while a team of men with machine saws brought a couple of tall stately mountain ash trees crashing across the road into the gully below, and another short detour to inspect Timbertop, the school where Prince Charles is to spend a few months, we came again into Mansfield and thence to Benalla for the train home.

For spectacular scenery this Christmas walk was the best yet - the only drawback being the water shortage, which was probably partly as a result of the dry summer.

## FRASER ISLAND

By Peggy Tafe

Fraser or Great Sandy Island is not well known despite its size. It is the largest island off the east coast of Australia, a narrow island about 77 miles long, most of it 9 to 10 miles wide, but varying in width from about 3 to 14 miles. It is off the Queensland coast near Maryborough, and is about 3 miles from the mainland at its southern end, forming a large V with the coast and partially enclosing the waters of Hervey Bay which is wide open to the north.

Captain Cook skirted its eastern shore in 1770. He named Sandy Cape, the northernmost point, and Breaksea Spit, which extends 20 miles to the north of the Cape, on which several ships have been wrecked. He also gave the name Indian Head to one of the few rocky outcrops because of the number of camp fires and 'Indians' seen.

Matthew Flinders in the 'Investigator' made a detailed examination of the coast in 1802. He anchored 2 miles off Sandy Cape on 30th July 1802, and made friends with the aborigines, of whom he speaks well. He found them more fleshy and sleeker than those of Port Jackson, probably because of their diet of fish and zamia nuts which were pounded and soaked in running water before being eaten.

In later reports the aborigines appeared savage and cruel according to white standards. Several survivors of shipwrecks were murdered, including Captain Fraser after whom the island was named. The large native population of the island seemed to vanish rather quickly. In 1850 the aborigines were said to have totaled between 2,000 and 3,000. The island was made a native reserve about 1860, but only 300 aborigines could be mustered when a mission was established in the early 1890's - the mission was transferred to the mainland in 1904.

In October last Ruth Price and I and six other members of the National Parks Association spent ten d on Fraser Island. It is a Forestry reserve and a permit to land on the island must be obtained from the Forestry Department. From Sydney we made tentative arrangements for transport on the island and intended to camp at several spots for two or three days. Our party met in Urangan and saw Mr. Keith Giles there, who had a launch for the trip over, vehicles for the island's sandy roads, and said we might as well use one of his cottages as our base. This proved to be a most satisfactory arrangement for us.

We left Urangan early the next morning and on reaching Fraser Island had to unload quickly at the jetty so that the launch could be taken out of the mangrove area and anchored in deeper water before the tide dropped. After loading the truck we were soon experiencing the first of many exciting rides over the sandy tracks that crisscrossed the island. Coming out to the east coast on to Seventy-five Mile Beach at Poyungan Rocks, we drove down to the hard sand and had an exhilarating ride northwards to Yidney Rocks, where our home was to be for the next nine nights. These are of dark sandrock, - not genuine rock but a kind of cemented sand, adding variety to the scenery on the island.

We didn't plan our days too far ahead, as so much depended on conditions on the beach for the truck. Our longest trip was to Indian Head, about 25 miles away. We left shortly after 6 one perfect morning and raced northwards along the sand. At one point we saw a wavy line of a snake track in the wet sand leading down to the water's edge, & about 50 yds further on the brown snake himself was coming back from the sea after his morning dip, or whatever snakes take a morning wiggle for.

We stopped for photographs at the Cathedrals, about 13 miles from Yidney Rocks. These eroded cliffs of vividly coloured sand were magnificent in the early morning light. About 100 feet high, with chasms cutting into them and varying from all tones of orange and yellow to deep red, the Cathedrals area was quite unforgettable. The volcanic formations of Indian Head, Middle Rocks - with its lovely natural aquarium - and Waddy Point, are the only true rock formations

on the island. From Waddy Point we looked straight down the basaltic cliffs, about 150 feet high, and were rewarded with a fascinating procession of stingrays slowly swimming along in the clear water, turtles, usually in groups of three or four, and even a shark.

The crystal-clear Eli Creek is the only large creek flowing east into the ocean, but there are many small streams and innumerable soakages, though no creeks occur north of a point about 6 miles south of Indian Head. On the western side there were many large flowing creeks. Our trips along the beach were often enhanced by the many brumbies around - they seemed to regard us as the interlopers there. Other wild life on the island includes wallabies and dingoes, and it is a stronghold for birds - white cockatoos, wrens, honey-eaters, kingfishers, etc. - the island bird-life having been the subject of many articles by ornithologists. Wild life is protected and guns are not allowed on the island.

The island is noted for its freshwater lakes, which occur up to 400 feet above sea level. They rest on a floor of organic cemented sand analogous to coastal sandrock. There are over 40 of these lakes, some being more than 200 feet deep. Lake Boemingen - the largest - covers 470 acres. We went to Lake Birrabeen on a cloudy wet morning, driving south along the beach, past Poyungan Rocks, and eventually past one of the forest stations. Before arriving at the lake the white sandy track went through an area of many paper-barks and tea-trees. The sand bordering the lake was silvery-white, and the water was so clear and still it was hard to see just where it started. In the distance the lake was a pale clear aquamarine, and this, the silvery-white sand and the cloudy grey sky, together with the twisted paper-barks and reeds fringing the lake, gave the scene a beautiful, rather ethereal quality.

The vegetation is astonishing, considering that, apart from the few rock outcrops, the island is of sand, some of the dunes being almost 800 feet high. There are the plants of the swampy regions, pandanus and low creeping plants on the sand dunes, a dense rainforest type of vegetation, and scores of species of trees in the forest area. Some of these are blackbutt, tallow wood, brush box, kauri pine, hoop pine, cypress pine, red stringybark, white mahogany, white beech, scribbly gum. The zamia palm is very plentiful and the red satinay grows to 120 feet with an 18 ft. girth. About 15% of the 393,000 acres carries commercial forest. A re-forestation programme was commenced in 1882, and the history of forestry on the island is a fascinating one. The facts and figures go out of mind, however, when one walks along the old timber trails. The peace and stillness are unforgettable. On the island we had time to sit and listen to the birds in the forest, to stand and look at the way a shaft of light threw the shadow of a zamia palm on to the trunk of a kauri pine, to feel unhurried.

The cottage accommodated the eight of us quite comfortably. We even had a bathroom, and instead of bathing in running streams as we originally expected, we had hot showers. There was no outlet pipe for the water; however, one stood in a round tin bathtub and soon learned how much water it was wise to use. We also had a snake in the bathroom, only a carpet snake, it is true, but we didn't notice it - under a table and halfway through a hole in the wall - until about the third day. Another hole was made so it had an exit as well as an entrance, and we didn't see it again, but I'm sure most of us looked under that table every time we showered.

One evening we saw a very beautiful display of phosphorescence in the water. The long white rollers, about 50 yards out, were positively glowing in the starlight. Where the waves finally broke on the shore were millions of sparkling points of light. A hand or foot dipped in this appeared to come up dripping with diamonds. A foot dragged across the sand also left a trail of gleaming points of light - something like glowworms.

The wonderful fishing available, the interest in finding so many aboriginal middens, and at all times the sight of the surf breaking on this long stretch of beach, cannot be described now. Incidentally,

some of Sidney Nolan's paintings depict Fraser Island. To anyone interested in this fascinating island I would recommend reading a report in the Queensland Geographical Journal (Vol. 52 pp. 75 - 98) of an address given by Jules L. Tardent in May 1948, covering information he had gleaned from many sources over a period of 30 years.

At present there are probably less than 30 huts on the island, apart from the Forestry stations, but it is worth a trip now before its mineral sands and tourist potential are 'developed' and its present atmosphere of space, peace, isolation and beauty vanishes.

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#### HOW TO RIDE A BICYCLE IN ONE EASY LESSON

By "G'ma".

First find your bike, the smaller the better; then secure the advice of an instructor (preferably an 8-year-old, they are unbiased). Select a grassy park and - presto! - you're away! Or are you?

To get started is a problem, but how to stop is more important. Falling over is not recommended, it's too hard on the knees, let alone the bike. Disregard pedestrians (it's remarkable how agile even elderly ladies can be when the necessity arises). It's the trees you have to watch - they have a fatal allure for bicycles. Shutting one's eyes and lifting the hands from the handlebars often avoids damaging the tree.

To practice a turn, fix your eyes on an object such as a park bench and endeavour to circle it. This may be a little disconcerting to a courting couple, but keep trying; determination will win the day - they will move before you do!

Finally, do not be discouraged if at last your long-suffering instructor says resignedly, as mine did (he had generously given up an afternoon's play and only his nimble legs had saved him from being run down on several occasions) - "What you really need, Nan, is confidence!"

(N.B. I eventually did acquire the necessary ingredient, the hard way, on my holiday, but that's another story).

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#### THE WANDERER BUTTERFLY

This pretty orange, brown and black butterfly found its way to Australia from North and South America by way of the Pacific islands about the year 1890. Since then it has thrived and multiplied. In America it is known as the Monarch butterfly, but the scientific name is Danaus Plexippus.

It is always found in association with the wild cotton or milkweed plant (*Gomphocarpus*), and as these plants grow in profusion on the south coast, particularly near Otford and Lilyvale, it is in these localities that the butterflies are to be found from February until September or October.

The caterpillar stage of the butterfly lasts for several weeks. We saw some of these black, green and yellow striped little grubs busily eating away at the wild cotton plant's leaves, at Otford the other Sunday. The chrysalis period lasts for from 12 to 15 days and then the beautiful butterfly emerges. All through autumn and winter it flies about looking for good feeding spots and a safe place to lay its eggs in the spring. After this culminating period of the butterfly's life, it dies, but the species lives on and new generations come forth every summer.

(The above information was kindly supplied by the Sydney Museum).

D. Bryant

## ESCAPE TO LORD HOWE ISLAND

By N. Stillman.

Our party of 24 enjoyed a launch trip round the Island - a pearly morning, the weather conditions perfect for small boats. Mt. Gower and Mt. Lidgbird looked impressive and rather terrifying to would-be climbers as we crept round their bases with their sheer rock cliffs rising 2,800 ft. from the breakers, and no sign of even a foothold. Sunshine, sea and colour were all far better than any brochure could convey - but it was rather late for the guest house Sunday dinner when we reached the jetty again.

Bringing us alongside very neatly, our cheerful boatman addressed us en masse -

"Sorry you're a bit late back - tell them it was my fault. That'll be 15/- each, thanks. Now, you won't all have the right change and I haven't any, and what's more I'm captain of the cricket team and we're due to start our challenge match with the Navy in about 20 minutes and I have to moor the boat, have a shower and a bit of lunch before that. So would you all please call at our place some time and pay the wife - she won't be there this afternoon though, she'll be at the cricket - but call round any time you're passing. Thanks very much!"

As we cycled past the village green on our way to Sunday dinner a few minutes later, the cricket fans were already gathering and mingled with the salty fresh air was the unforgettable scent of freshly mown grass! Mmmmmm . . . Lord Howe Island!

-----oOo-----

We were invited to the Weather Station to see the Balloon Go Up. The guest house kindly provided transport in the little blue truck, which we accepted because we had to be there promptly or miss the Balloon, and by the time we'd have pushed our bicycles up the very steep hill to the Weather Station we would probably have been too late.

The Balloon was tethered in a small three-sided apartment - it was hairless and white, slightly restless, as a strong gusty breeze was making a fine stir of white horses along the shore below the cliffs. As to size, think of the very largest white pig you have ever seen - only a different shape. If you can think of a bigger black pig than white pig, then the black pig will be fine.

The Balloon gets bloated with a special sort of gas - dangerous gas, I think - I have a vague recollection of notices. We did not see it gorging on the gas. It wore a little harness to which was fastened a container with some electronic equipment in it. At a given time each day a balloon like this, complete, was released from the Weather Station on the high side of the Island. Presently it was taken from its apartment, struggling violently, out on to the grass, where it had every appearance of attacking its jailers, until with a swoosh the monster leaped into the atmosphere and disappeared miles up among the racing clouds.

The onlookers were now invited into the Weather Station to inspect the doings. I am not Good at Front Row Viewing - and figures and statistics have a numbing effect, so I have only a very hazy idea that signals and messages are received from this balloon on very expensive equipment in the Weather Station. I heard no mention of any messages or greetings being passed back to the balloon, and I think it both rude and

unkind not to acknowledge the messages. One-sided conversations are a bit inhibiting, I would have thought.

I drifted out and lay on the sweet turf near the cliff edge - listening to the waves on the rocks below and watching the seabirds wheel and hover and the clouds tearing past. Why, I idly wondered, worry about the whereabouts of a hairless baboon, hairy balloon, or whatever, and where it goes, when we don't even know where we come from or where we go to ourselves. What are these messages anyway? - something to do with the weather, I suppose - that age old topic of polite society - perhaps that is all Weather Stations are interested in anyway. No wonder the monster was dying to get away! I seemed to hear some talk of little baboons being released too - the sky must be chock full of big and little baboons. . balloons . . . messages . . . and messages.

One thing I did notice was the particularly good quality twine they used for balloon wear - and if any of you think I was never at that Weather Station, just you have a gaze at my bushwalking hat and see what keeps it on.

-----oOo-----

Flora and I walked along the track through the palms until we came to a saddle and a cross track, which led out to a wide view of a lagoon littering in the late afternoon light - and breakers rolling in to the coral reef.

We became aware of two fairly large dogs snuffling through the undergrowth - never quite visible - but obvious nevertheless, and indicated by waving grass and bushes and a flash of coat among the leaves - or a tail or an ear to be seen over a bush.

The track led downwards to the flats below. The view was hidden by palms again, until we came to a creek, then an open paddock and a fence and gate. About a hundred yards away from the track was an old truck and a man loading tools into the back.

We opened the gate when we heard the truck coming and held it wide for him to pass through - whereupon we greeted each other with smiles and he offered us a ride home. We explained that we had bicycles in the hedge close by - but he made short work of loading those on to the back of the truck also.

When the dogs heard the truck start up they came tearing across the creek and arrived with wagging tails and smiles (they were happy L.H.I. dogs). When we opened the door to get in beside the driver they surged in also - wet, muddy, hot and happy. We were tired and happy too, and the man, sun-tanned and relaxed, rolled a cigarette and mentioned that he had done a good day's work and was ready to knock off. So it was a very happy party that bumped along in that rusty old truck - the springs showing through the upholstery and a general air of being the pick-up bus for muddy dogs.

Someone was cooking us a good dinner, and we would just have time for a quick dive into the lagoon, a shower and a beer before we enjoyed it.

I think of that little treat sometimes at the entrance to Wynyard - 5.30 p.m. peak hour.

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Books are the treasured wealth of the world,  
and the inheritance of generations and nations.

- H.D. Thoreau

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