

## Boys Camp – Rubicon ....

Friday 9 August 2019

Submitted by Alan Layton.

The Rubicon Boys' Camp was one of a number of camps set up in Victoria by the Forests Commission for young boys to experience life and work with other boys in a bush setting.

It is thought that the site was originally used as the Rubicon Forest Pound, where straying stock and horses were kept until claimed. It was likely a paddock and possibly a small structure at this time.

Around June 1927, The Argus reported how unemployed men were being used to create fire breaks at Rubicon. It is possible that their camp was at the site of what later became the Boys' Camp, but this has not been confirmed. Around 1933 (during the Great Depression) a camp for boys was set up at Noojee. This was seen as a success and resulted in a number of new camps being established, including one north of Bairnsdale at the Grampians, Macedon, Anglesea and Rubicon.

It is thought that the Boys' Camp was used as a place to take young men and give them a year or two of work in the bush where they could develop greater life skills and abilities.

In 1935 Ron Hovenden was employed as Supervisor of the boys at the camp, remaining there for few years. Ron died in Burma during WWII, and his photo album passed to his brother, then to Julie and Hugh Duncan of Taggerty, and later to the Artworkz group, and we are indebted to them for the accompanying photos. FCV forester Herbert FitzRoy was in charge of the works programme carried out by the boys.

It is not known when the Rubicon Camp ended, though it was likely after the Great Depression (1929-1939) had ended (mid 1940s). An article in the Argus Newspaper 7 January 1943 reported on how boys were cutting wood at camps including Rubicon. By the mid-1950s, the area was being operated as the Forest Commission Work Camp. A small water pipe took water from further up the water race-line, providing water for showers, taps and cooking etc.

By the mid-1970s, the area was deserted with just a semi-open shed remaining. It is possible that this was the remains of the large Mess Hall used during the time of the Boys' Camp, though this has not been confirmed.

The shed was fitted out with chicken-wire shelving all around. They would bring in eucalypt branches to dry on the shelves and drop their seeds. It is thought that the seeds were then collected from sheets of hessian that had been laid underneath. Today the process is more scientific and carried out under climate-controlled conditions.

By around the time of the 1980s, the area was being used as a very basic informal camping ground. Kendalls and Tin Hut areas were also being used for camping by this time. (The name Kendall's Camp Area was suggested to Forest Commission by Rubicon local Bill Musgrove, as the Kendalls were the last family to have lived there before giving up the lease.)

However, the Boys' Camp was always known as just that by the Rubicon and Lower Rubicon community. Some people from outside the area, mistakenly referred to it as Boys' Town - presumably not knowing the full history and probably confusing it with an American movie from 1938 of that name!

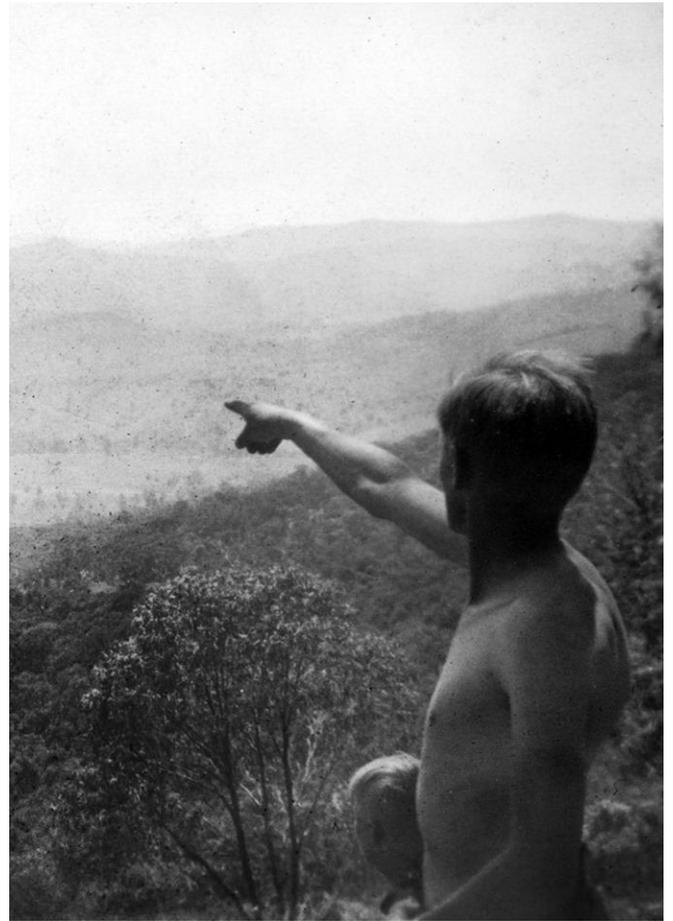
From the late 1970s onwards, both Kendall's and Boys' Camp areas started to get more attention from Forest Authorities. This included being occasionally slashed and cleared. The camping areas were officially named and sign-posted, fire pits and drop toilets were installed. The Boys' Camp toilet - being close to the river - has a large buried storage tank to hold the waste. This is periodically pumped out and taken to Alexandra for treatment by Goulburn Valley Water. Walking tracks were also constructed joining the two camps together.

The name Boys Camp disappeared for a short period, as Forest Authorities renamed the camp 'Kendall's B', with the Kendall's Camp becoming 'Kendall's A'. The decision was never popular and was confusing to many. In more recent years the names (and signposts) were restored back to Kendall's Camp and Boys' Camp.

In 2013-2014 further works were done to lift the quality of the camping areas along the Rubicon River between Lower Rubicon and Rubicon (Tin Hut). This included work at the Boys' Camp Ground."



*Cook Jack Jackson at right*



*Forester Herbert FitzRoy at right*



*Left Ron Hovenden, right forester Herbert FitzRoy, circa 1935*





*Left Ron Hovenden, right forester Herbert FitzRoy, circa 1935*

