

Currango...Unique Australian Heritage December 2008

Currango is a unique location and it was our privilege to be sharing a week with Bert and Adrian Maroya. Stuart Beal and I arrived to be greeted by Arthur Adams QC and Stuart Rowland, from Melbourne. David Rylie and his two sons along with Andrew Sinclair, and Serge Pellizzoni making up the total compliment. We were to enjoy a memorable time with such a diverse group of avid fly fishing and cane rod enthusiasts.



Pine Lodge

The plan was to centre ourselves in Pine Lodge and pursue our fly fishing daily from there. The Pines is the rambling “mens’ hut”, built for the station workers in 1917.

Protected by the historic Currango pines, the building offers rustic accommodation for large groups in six rooms.



Bert topping up the Fountain

The pleasure of using this accommodation is the large living/dining/kitchen area with its an open fire complete with a traditional fountain for hot water, an adequate fridge, and a wood burning combustion stove with oven. This proved ideal for the traditional roast.

A gas barbecue is provided in a well constructed shed and a small wash-house provides old-fashioned showers at the rear of the cottage with a pit loo further afield.. Lighting is from solar power.



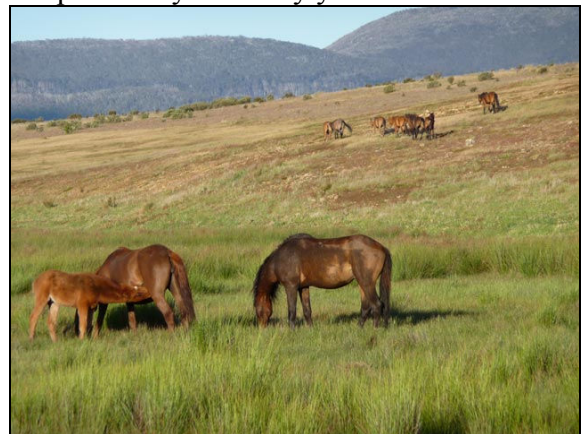
Currango Homestead

Currango is steeped in history and the individuals who lived here were exceptional bush people. Occupation of these alpine regions by the hardy souls who tended the leases in this high country required a special affinity with the country.



Currango Homestead

This was the home of caretakers Tom and Molly Taylor. Bert, Adrian and the rest of the team had known the Taylor’s personally for many years.



Currango Creek Brumbies



Kangaroos about near Currango Homestead

Currango Station's buildings include the oldest surviving continuously-occupied homestead in Australia's Kosciuszko National Park. It is also the largest and most intact example of permanent settlement above the snowline in the country, and has great historical significance as one of the most important links to the first European settlement of the area.

The Homestead and the other remaining habitable buildings are also highly significant for their architecture, and the importance of their preservation is now widely recognised. It has over twenty-five remaining buildings and ruins which span 150 years of settlement in the Park.

Currango Station is located near Tantangara Reservoir, in the Kosciuszko National Park in southern NSW. As the crow flies, it is about 30km from the township of Adaminaby to its south-east, and about 65km from Tumut to its north-west

Built in 1895, the Homestead is the centre of Currango Station and the residence of the caretakers.

An area of special significance is located on the far side of the timbered area to the north of the Lodge and Bert and Adrian were keen for us to see and feel this spot.

It is best described by Tom and Molly's son Ted in his book 'Reflections of Ted Taylor' published in 2001.

(Reproduced with approval from Ted Taylor)

When the Park bought "Currango" from Australian Estates in 1946 and we came back here to live Dad made this his headquarters while the grazing was on. At the end of the grazing in 1969 Mum and Dad acquired a life-tenancy lease at "Currango" which they relinquished in 1988, getting too old to stay here any longer. They used to go to Adaminaby in the winter time and come back out here in summer. During the time they were at "Currango" fishermen came from all over the place, from Melbourne, Sydney, and everywhere to stay and those people still come back here today. They have formed a club which they've called 'Friends of Currango' and they come here on working-bees to restore "Currango" which is a great thing.

In 1985 both Mum and Dad received the Man From Snowy River Award, the prestigious award for people in the high country who contributed a lot to the area over the years. And, not just because they were my parents, I think they really deserved this award.

Dad died in 1992. Mum passed away on 16th December 1997. I had brought her up to "Currango" in February that year, when a working-bee was here. She was able to meet all the fishermen who have been coming here for thirty-odd years. She really enjoyed the day so it was good. She loves

these mountains. I think we all do. When you are brought up in this country it sort of grows on you. It doesn't matter where you go this is still home. Mum had forty years at "Currango" and lived in these mountains nearly all her life.



I put in a memorial plaque for Mum and Dad down beyond the Round Yard, looking out across the plain. The inscription on the plaque is - "In Loving Memory of Tom Taylor and Mollie Taylor" - with their dates of birth and death beside them. Underneath is written - "Two Great Mountain Legends who left a Legacy of Love and Optimism", which they did. They had love for everybody and were always optimistic about things. That will stand there until the end of time, I presume.

Some Friends of Currango were there. People who have been coming here for about thirty-eight years. They all came down to the plaque after we'd set it in. Kim Jellbart gave a talk which was very hard for him and there was no way I could have said anything. It upsets me now, to talk about it. When I went down one morning to pull the boxing off the concrete work round the memorial, and looked out across the plain there were thirteen brumbies there, it was great to see them. I only wished I'd had a tape recorder another morning because on the other side of the plain, there were three or four dingos howling so it was a great tribute. Mum and Dad would have loved it.

Tom was a Ranger for the NSW Department of Lands. Currango was the central location for his work, and Tom monitored the stock numbers on the high plains, overseeing the gradual reduction of grazing, until it ceased altogether in 1969.

The Taylors witnessed the construction of Tantangara Reservoir, and the flooding of much of the Currango Plain. This is the highest part of the Snowy Mountains Scheme.

Stuart and Chan Garner, commenced as caretakers in 2003.

Warrigal Reigns Supreme at Currango

The conditions could not have been better, a rainbow arced above and the gathering mist subdued the light and absorbed the sound.



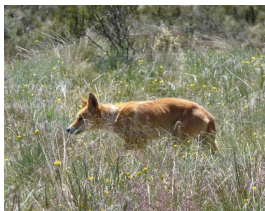
The mist was light but the visibility good for the spectacle we were about to witness.

The hunt was on.

Suddenly the big old man eruption from the wet foliage, of the prolific kerosene bush, surrounding us.

He came crashing through, seemingly oblivious to our presence, and quickly departed into the scrub on the other side of the track, his upper body visible for some distance in the chest high scrub.

While not the main participant in the scene that was being played out before us, he had decided not to wait around and went past us almost within touching distance without realizing we were there, so intent was his focus on getting away.



The reason for his sudden departure appeared. Loping at an easy but purposeful gait, the golden Warrigal, with head pushed forward and all senses alert, crossed a clearing in the scrub. He was intensely focused on the fleeing doe just ahead.

Another golden missile closed ranks while a third skirted out a little wider.

This pursuit would have an inevitable end. Warrigal had selected the weakest and most vulnerable, and nature, in its most basic form, had revealed itself to us today.

We felt somewhat in awe and privileged to have been witness to an event very rarely seen in Australia.

We are accustomed to seeing TV documentaries of big cats hunting game in the tundra, showing rather graphically the predator prey relationship.

Our Australian bush, appearing as an outwardly docile environment, often disguises the reality of raw nature at work. Most Australians can only ever imagine it.

The opportunity to witness this is rarely achieved.



Warrigal is an elusive creature, preferring to remain hidden from view.

He occupies the top echelon in the predatory world of the Australian bush, and claims it with authority.

Warrigal on the Currango Plains

Henry Kendall's...The Warrigal.

The warrigal's lair is pent in bare,
Black rocks at the gorge's mouth;
It is set in ways where Summer strays
With the sprites of flame and drouth;
But when the heights are touched with lights
Of hoar-frost, sleet, and shine,
His bed is made of the dead grass-blade
And the leaves of the windy pine.

Through forest boles the storm-wind rolls,
Vext of the sea-driv'n rain;
And, up in the clift, through many a rift,
The voices of torrents complain.
The sad marsh-fowl and the lonely owl
Are heard in the fog-wreaths grey,
When the warrigal wakes, and listens, and takes
To the woods that shelter the prey.

In the gully-deeps the blind creek sleeps,
And the silver, showery moon
Glides over the hills, and floats, and fills,
And dreams in the dark lagoon;
While halting hard by the station yard,
Aghast at the hut-flame nigh,
The warrigal yells, and flats and fells
Are loud with his dismal cry.

On the topmost peak of mountains bleak
The south wind sobs, and strays
Through moaning pine and turpentine,
And the rippling runnel ways;
And strong streams flow, and great mists go,
Where the warrigal starts to hear
The watch-dog's bark break sharp in the dark,
And flees like a phantom of fear!

The swift rains beat, and the thunders fleet
On the wings of the fiery gale,
And down in the glen of pool and fen,
The wild gums whistle and wail,
As over the plains and past the chains
Of waterholes glimmering deep,
The warrigal flies from the shepherd's cries,
And the clamour of dogs and sheep.

He roves through the lands of sultry sands,
He hunts in the iron range,
Untamed as surge of the far sea verge,
And fierce and fickle and strange.
The white man's track and the haunts of the black
He shuns, and shudders to see;
For his joy he tastes in lonely wastes
Where his mates are torrent and tree.

Brian Quinn