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THE BOB TURNER TRACK

by- Ian Harvey

The Bob Turner Track from Colo Heights to the Colo River is in reality the restoration of a pack horse trail built by an explorer, George William Townshend.

Townshend used the track to survey the Colo Gorge in 1883-84 for a possible alternative railway route over the Blue Mountains to replace the Lithgow Zig Zag. It was used again in 1899 to gain access to the Colo Gorge above Tootie Creek to survey the area for a dam to generate hydro electricity. (1)

Robert Sutherland Turner lived at Turramurra and ran his own Veterinary Practice at Pymble. He was a man of immense drive, energy, vision and possessing a strong respect and feel for the bush and the environment.

Having read about Townshend, his exploits and his track, Bob set out to discover and reopen his track in 1970. He obtained copies of his old maps and notes from the Lands Department.

I was fortunate enough to have met Bob around this time through my parents. When Bob asked if I would like to help him with his fascinating project, I jumped at the opportunity. Unfortunately I was in my second year at Wagga Agricultural College and could only help at the occasional weekends and vacations.

However I will never forget the excitement in finding parts of the original track and joining them together like a jigsaw puzzle. The only tools used were mattocks, brush-hooks, bowsaw and axe. Several times we camped out overnight on the track, talking for hours around the fire about his plans to opt out eventually to a plot of ground further up the Colo. He would always take a couple of bottles of his home made red wine, made from his own grapes. It tasted like paint stripper but it sure was a good nightcap.

I remember the excitement in reaching the final zig zag section leading down to the Colo at the junction of Hungryway Creek in late 1971.

In 1972 I went to Western Australia as a Jackaroo. Whilst over there it was with much sadness that I learnt that Bob had cancer. He passed away in February 1973, aged 60.


When this area was included in the Wollemi National Park, it was only fitting that Bob's efforts were recognised by naming the track after him.

For the above reasons it was particularly nostalgic to join Phil Foster and his group on the walk on Bob's track on 16th December.

Many thanks to Les Lawrenson for asking me to write this article, I trust that it does justice to Bob and his track and is responsible for greater use and appreciation of the track and the Colo by members.

(1) "Colo Wilderness"., Henry Gold, Peter Prineas, Kalianna Press. P88-89

Best wishes for '91.



(Ian Harvey joined our trip to the Colo via Bob Turner's Track in the last programme. He provided us with some fascinating insights to the history of the track and we extend our thanks to him for this and also for the above article.)