

# Bushwalking

CATTLEMEN'S huts are most intimately associated with the high country of the north-east but for very many years there was also such a hut near Marysville. From 1939 until 1983 Keppels hut stood deep in alpine ash forest north-east of the town, at the head of a tributary of the Taggerty River, between Mount Margaret and Mount Bullfight.

John and Jerry Keppel were granted the first grazing licence in the area a century ago and they and Jerry's sons Maurice and Frank ran sheep and cattle between Marysville and Lake Mountain until 1963. The hut was one of at least three they built in their grazing country. The name Keppel is probably already familiar to walkers who know Marysville — in the Falls and Lookout.

Over the years Keppels hut was also used and appreciated by members of the Melbourne Walking Club, Melbourne Women's Walking Club, Scouts, Rovers and many others. Unfortunately it was accidentally burnt down in 1983.

Thanks to the initiative taken by local officers of the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands, the hut has been rebuilt on the site of its predecessor. It was officially opened by the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, Mrs Kirner, in early autumn in the presence of Miss Clare Keppel, sister of Frank (whom she joined in the last muster) and a large crowd.

Departmental staff received invaluable help from Gould's Sawmills of Marysville, the Marysville Historical Society (of which Miss Keppel is president) and local community groups. The new hut is slightly larger and has a stone rather than the former wooden chimney, but otherwise is virtually identical to the old structure. Local timber was used throughout, and was prepared by traditional methods; of particular note is the shingle roof. The single room (no more than 3.5 metres by 4 metres) is furnished simply with a small table and two single bunks (of timber instead of the original chaff bags slung between saplings):

Horse yards have been built, also in traditional style, but well separated from the hut. Water is drawn from the small, myrtle beech-lined stream nearby, at a point carefully protected by a stone pavement. There is ample space around for tents to be pitched and a fireplace has been provided for campers.

Horse riders are probably the most numerous among hut users in summer, mainly during the Christmas-New Year holidays and over long weekends. During the rest of the year, walkers on the way between Lake Mountain and Cathedral Range State Park, or other destinations, will find that the hut is conveniently located, as will ski tourers venturing beyond the well-known routes on Lake Mountain. In winter, roads providing direct access to the hut will be closed at Quartz Creek Road and Upper Taggerty Road.

Commercial horse-riding groups cooperate in the summer use of the hut; at other times, it is first-come first-served. Inquiries should be directed to the Alexandra regional office, Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands, Aitken Street, Alexandra, 3714; telephone (057) 72 1633.

The Algona topographical map sheet "Lake Mountain, Marysville, Mt Bullfight" (1:50 000 and 1:15 000) is ideal for trips in this area.

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