

PHANTOM GUNMAN FAINTS AS POLICE SWOOP

By JOHN MURPHY

NOW, the trouble with young Riley was, he picked the right place at the wrong time.

He thought that quiet little spot seven miles south of Mansfield was just the place to down a few rabbits.

He had "cased" the area over the past few weeks, seen the rabbits and yesterday morning he decided he would go hunting.

So Riley, 21, an apprentice, of West Footscray, told his boss an old aunt had died and, via the "funeral," went hunting.

A few hours later he parked on an old dirt road and, with rifle in hand, stepped on to the property owned by Mr Geoff Ritchie.

No one told Riley the place was off limits.

And seeing he hadn't read a paper for the past week he wasn't to know that Prince Charles and Princess Anne would be riding through.

He soon found out.

Rifle in hand, he stepped from the car and set foot on the property.

According to him, "from under the ground, down from the trees and behind the bushes" swooped The Law.

'We shoot'

"One move and we shoot!" they cried. "Just hand over that gun and tell us what you are doing," they barked.

Tut, tut, Tim!

IT was the clanger of the royal tour.

"Hey, Margaret!" shouted the schoolboy.

To his horror, Princess Anne quickly turned around, reddened in the face and said: "I beg your pardon."

Tim (Tiger Tim to his schoolmates) Graham, 14, with camera in hand, was stunned.

With tears in his eyes, he stammered out an "I'm sorry."

Princess Anne looked at him with a grin and said: "Tut, tut."

It happened as Prince Charles and Princess Anne were leaving Timbertop.

"Oh! What can I do?" said Tim after they had left.

"I meant to call her Anne, but I just got excited."

It's not easy to remember everything at a time like that, especially when you're trying to get a picture.

"I hope she knows I didn't mean it."

Riley was about to, but promptly fainted.

And in the 10 minutes it took to revive him he suddenly became to the press, police and Government officials "phantom gunman", "the silent assassin".

The police confiscated his rifle and ammunition as ambulance men worked to bring Riley round.

"They were not sure what they should do and decided to drop the whole affair when told by ambulance men that Riley was "one very frightened young man".

He attempted to tell police, "I suppose I need permission to shoot on the property."

But overcome by the presence of other guns, uniforms and people, he could only stammer, "Gawd! What will I say to the boss."

Revived and went home

Revived by ambulance officers and escorted by the law, he headed home.

Of course, after Riley left they were a little jittery at the property.

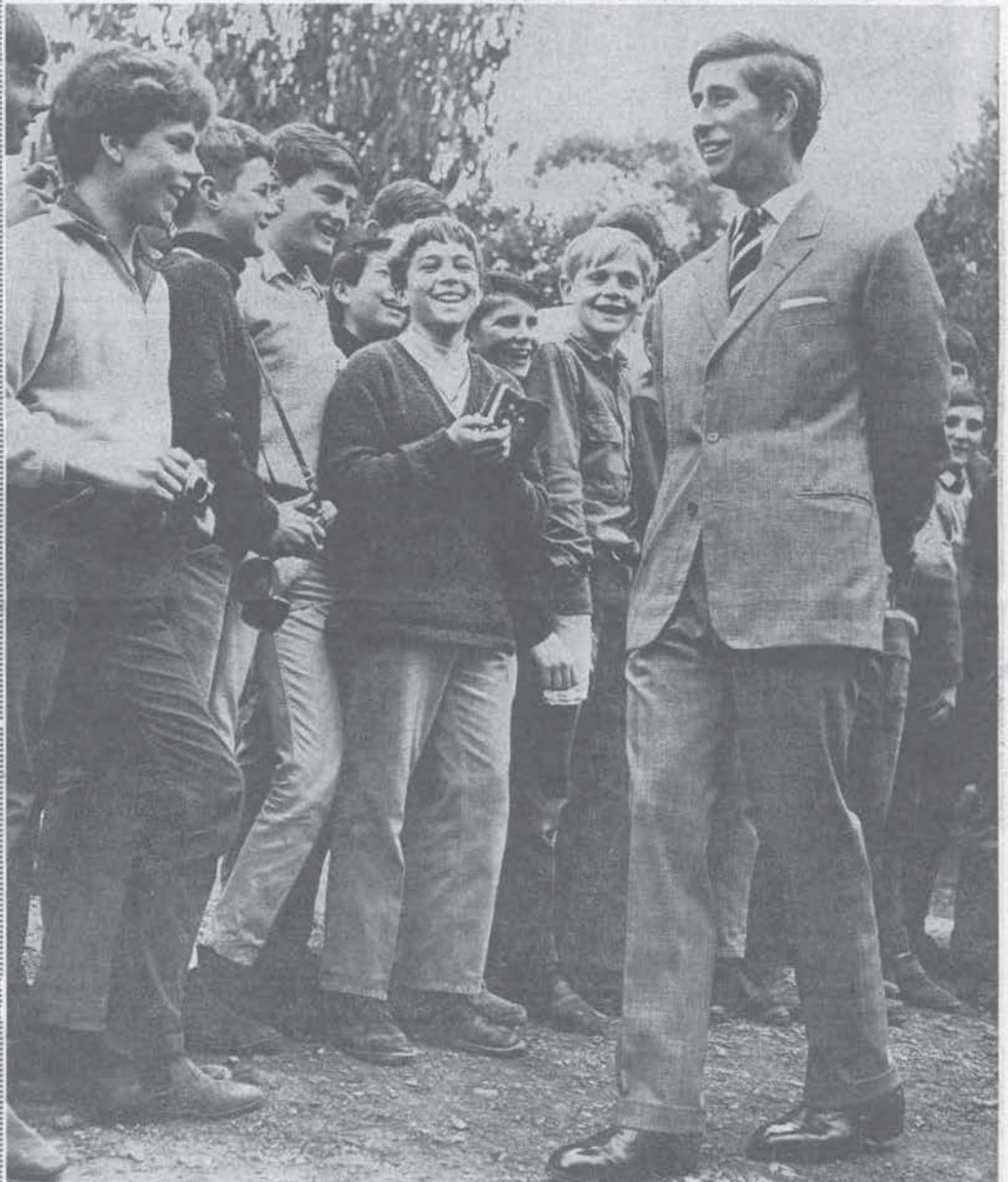
Within seconds, police had a second "gunman" in their sights.

But whether frightened by the capture of Riley or astounded by the performance of the police he quickly vanished.

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THE rifle that was confiscated during the search.



ABOVE: The old boy returns . . . Prince Charles talks to students at Timbertop yesterday.

BELOW: As a student with Stuart McGregor.

Marvellous to be back — Charles

"IT'S an odd feeling to be back," Prince Charles said on his return to Timbertop yesterday.

"I guess four years is a long time . . . I wish it could have been sooner."

Prince Charles and Princess Anne spent nearly an hour looking over his old school.

Prince Charles spent most of the time pointing out the places he went and the quarters he lived and studied in during his two terms there.

"It's marvellous to be back," he was saying until he spotted a woodpile complete with axe and bandsaw.

"What's this? A re-enactment," he joked and, despite encouragement, declined to have a go at the logs.

"Not this time, thank you," he said, I think I did my share before."

For Princess Anne it was the wish she wanted . . . to be out of the cities and into the country.

Obviously enjoying the visit, she continually asked Prince Charles what he did there and wanted details of the school.

When she saw the school chapel she grabbed him by the arm and said, "There it is."

"Oh, it looks just the

same as those pictures you sent me."

Prince Charles then told her a story that whenever someone attempted to preach in the church it rained and the pounding on its roof drowned the speaker out.

Princess Anne pointed to a map of the Timbertop area and asked if the boys at the school really hiked through its 18,000 acres.

"Of course," said Charles. "I did it many times myself."

"Well, you must be fitter than I thought," she laughed back.

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