

Diary of Trip to Kosciusko in 1875

WE were a party of five, Laurence Stephenson, Willie Wilkinson, Lewis Whitfield, a man named Jim Scully, who had been on the mountains with cattle six years before, and myself (G. Boyce Allen). I carried an aneroid barometer lent to me by the Revd. Mr. Scott of St. Paul's College.

Wednesday, 6th January, 1875.

Rode from Myalla to Kalkite, 35 miles.

Thursday, 7th January.

Started on horseback 7.20. Crossed Snowy River about 8. Halted about 9 on hills about 900 feet above river for breakfast. Started again at 11.15, wet through by misty rain. Passed first snow patch about 5,700 feet. Could see what we believed to be Kosciusko nearly covered with snow. Reached camping place about 4.30—a long, grassy slope about 20 miles from Kalkite and about 5,900 feet above sea. Collected wood for big fire, around which we slept. Thick mist came up about 8 p.m., temp. 45°. Hobbled our horses and let them graze.

Friday, 8th January.

Up before 5. Had some breakfast, and at 6.30 started on foot in direction of summit. No track to guide us, so had rough going and ascended and descended a succession of ridges covered with scrub in which we got wet through—so wet that when we came to one stream at bottom of a gully we walked through it as we were. The top of Kosciusko was only about 1,400 feet above our camp, but the distance was about six miles (as nearly as we could judge), and we must have climbed several thousand feet. About 11 we got on to a long and narrow ridge, which Scully said was the summit, but through the clouds we could see a rocky peak, evidently higher and apparently precipitous. To get on to it we had to descend

a steep, grassy slope into a gully with a lake at the bottom, and then climb a rough, cone-shaped hill about 800 feet above the lake. Got to the top about 12.40, after six hours' hard work. On the summit there is an enormous pile of bare rocks about 40 or 50 feet in height, and on top of the rocks a round cone of stones, built by some surveyor. The river Murray was distinctly visible on west side. The mountains and gullies on the Victorian side were pretty clear, but the whole of the low country of N.S.W. was hidden by clouds. We were very cold and hungry, and had nothing to eat but a little damper which we carried in our pockets. No wood was obtainable for a fire to make tea.

Found our way back to camp by an easier route, keeping more to the south. The only difficult bit was a very steep slope of hard snow, which we could only descend by lying on our backs and making footholds with our heels. A very thick mist rolled up after we got back to camp and it was cold, 44°, but we were all tired out and slept well.

Saturday, 9th January.

Fortunately mist cleared off and we rode back to Kalkite. Old Mr. Ryrie told us he did not know of anyone who had been on the rocky peak or beyond the ridge which Scully said was the summit.

Sunday, 10th January.

Rode back to Myalla.

[The route described in the diary is hard to follow. Kalkite is at the junction of the Snowy and Eucumbene, and it would appear that the party eventually climbed Townsend. The "easier route" back to camp may well be over Charlotte's Pass. "Old Mr. Ryrie" probably refers to Mr. Stewart Ryrie, the remnants of whose homestead may be seen near the hut on Snowy Plains.—Ed.]