

3.2 Mending a wagon wheel.....Jericho Village and other small settlements....a robbery, maybe murder..

....Mending a wagon wheel...

“Hurry up you two,” sang out “The Boss!”

The Boss was nominated by all the men to lead the small expedition to Jericho on the Jordan River. We had two wagons of different make. One looked like a Mormon wagon and the other a bit like an American wagon.



Anyway we had them piled high with individual’s personal things as well as implements stores and food. Our party was six men including my Dad, myself and Giacomo.

The second wagon had just had a wheel wrenched between a couple of rocks and the steel rim had come of the outside timbers and several spokes had shattered. To continue forward we had to mend the wheel.



“Okay Boss,’ I sang out. Giaco and I had been using his Fathers spoke shaving blades. We were trying shape the ends of several spokes so that the other men could fit the spokes into the outer wooden wheel then they could heat up the steel outer rim and re fit it over the outside of the wheel.



Oh Oh! Others in difficulty.

He had to ask the questions in his funny English and by waving his arms about.

It was lucky for us that Giacomo's Dad knew about timber and had lots of timber working tools on the dray.

Giacomo's Dad had quickly felled, and shaped some tree branches that we could use to re build the wheel. Giacomo muttered to his Dad in Italian. His Dad, Pietro then sang out, "Itsa finished! quickly banga on the outa rim!"

Some of the men had been heating the big iron ring in a fire to make it expand. When the ring was banged on the wood wheel some one quickly threw some water over it to make it cool quickly and contract to grip the wood.

During the trek, I noticed that Giacomo's Dad was constantly asking anyone if they new of the fishing village of King's Creek at Westernport the big area of water to the east of Port Phillip Bay. Did they know anyone there, and how far was it, could he avoid the bad swamps at Koo We Rup, and so on?.

The road from Bald Hills to Jericho was called McEvoy's track, and constant travelling of pack horses, horses dragging small carts, men tramping, had defined the track but not the surface. Without any further incident we all arrived at Jericho. Exhausted!

....Jericho Village and other small settlements....

What a depressing site. Crushed in between large trees, small bushes, tents, gunyahs, some caves, habitations of wood either slabs or weatherboard, a couple of Hotels, and some small businesses in little shacks. Piles of dirt, little puddles of dirty water. Men were everywhere.



Part of the village.

Dad's first thoughts were how to sell our small stock of miners boots and other equipment. He managed to find an older miners shack the we shared with its owner. Then he laid out our goods for sale



A humpy, but our first shop at Jericho.

"Ian, its important that I stay here to sell our goods, Giaco's Father will also be looking around to find out he can use his trade. Why don't you and Giaco make sure our horse and dray are looked after, then explore the area?"

Over the next few weeks I sometimes, with or without Giaco, explored the area, from Jericho to Red Jacket, Blue Jacket, B.B. Creek and a little bit on the way to Woods Point. It wasn't always easy though.

The small ravines, bigger spurs, and bush everywhere made the village of Jericho seem good after all. Daily I had to feed the horse, then feed Dad, then try and get small amounts of rations from sellers. I became quite good at bargaining. Dad was very pleased. I soon learn't to quickly side step drunks or dangerous looking men. Anyway I was as big as most.



Panning along a creek.

....a robbery- maybe a murder!...

I quickly noticed that there were quite a few Chinese men in and around the villages. They were distinctive with their hair pulled back tightly and what we called pig tails dangling from the back of their heads. They also wore long baggy trousers and long baggy shirts, they appeared to stick together in the village, in their camps and when they worked an area.

Their names were funny as well. Ving Quorn, Ah Tong, Ah Chin, Ah Ying, Ah Ming, Ah Chuck, Ah Chew, Ah Ching, Sing Fong and Jamie Ah Chew just to mention some that I knew by site.

One shop owner was called Johnny Ah Fat. He always winked at me and smiled whenever we saw each other. Particularly, after I alerted him that there was a shop lifter in his shop.

I did come to know a Chinese bloke who called himself Robert Ah Lim. This man Robert seemed to be a lonely figure in the Village, with very few friends, not mixing and staying with the Chinese much. He always wore a large floppy hat with the usual Chinese top and floppy trousers.

Maybe Johnny Ah Fat, said I could be trusted, at first we just nodded to each other then he slowly, in bad English asked me questions and told me things about himself and the Chinese.

His questions were like, "How far to Port Melbourne...how long would it take to walk there...when do big sea winds come from the south..could the Police Sargeant be trusted...and so on.

I couldn't answer all his questions or how to find out the answers.

He slowly over time told me all about himself.

He said that the Head Man of his Village and Clan Leader decided in Canton, that Robert would join with other young men and go to the Australian Goldfields. Find a lot of gold and then take it back to Canton. He would give the Village Headman and other a share of the gold, before his family and relatives got any.

Chinese men acting as agents for the Head man, arranged berths on ships, with white Shipping Agents, from Canton to Melbourne or Robe, and would also find ships that went back to Canton when the men were rich with gold.

Robert and several others were getting ready to leave the Ballarat gold fields with some small amounts of gold nuggets and gold dust that was sewn into his clothes, and return to Canton, when he and the others were attacked and robbed by white men who must have been observing the Chinese and anticipating their departure to Port Melbourne. The men grabbed him by the hair and pulled out his cue with lumps of his skin, leaving a bald patch on the back of his head. He was afraid of the disgrace of being without his cue when he got back to Canton.

Anyway, now he figured it out after talks with a Chinese agent, that if he didn't get a lot of gold in fossicking or panning here at Jericho he was to go to Port Melbourne where a Chinese man would arrange to have him sent to work for the Chinese owners of a Tin Mill in Van Diemens Land.

But what I now saw was horrifying!

“Hey Giaco, look over there. Shush! be quiet, keep very still.”

Alongside me Giacomo, froze.

We had been exploring, and stumbling around a small creek, near Blue Jacket. It ran between two heavily wooded hillsides, and we were looking for lumps of gold. We saw about 20 yards away a big bloke bash another bloke who looked like my Chinese friend Robert Ah Lim. The fellow being bashed quickly fell down and appeared to be unconscious. The other fellow then began rifling in the bags that were lying on the ground. He must have found something, because he quickly stuffed it into a small bag he had tied around his neck.

He then furtively glanced all around the creek and the hills, gave the fellow on the ground a kick, then quickly disappeared up into the bushes and trees out of our sight.



The robbery site?.

“Crikey Eano, that was a robbery!” said Giaco.

“It was. Let’s see if that bloke is alright.”

Well the bloke wasn’t alright. In fact Robert was lying all still and not breathing.

“Giaco, I think we had better find the Police Sarge, and tell him about this.”