

Chapter 1 Westernport

1.1. The beginning.

"Hey Phill, I'm ready." Chris was 10 metres up the big gum tree. He had two feet on a branch close to the trunk, and one arm wrapped around another branch at face height. In his right hand he held several metres of looped thin cord, with a heavy bolt tied to the end.

"Okay, chuck it over the big branch. Try and get it at least halfway along the branch."

If the rope was not close enough to the tip of the branch to get leverage, when it was attached to the back of the Land Rover Discovery, it would not tear out from the main trunk, and drop to the ground.

Both grandson Chris, a 13-year-old, and grandfather Phill were engaged in a rough way in pruning a very large gum tree. The tree was part of a stand of trees along the southern property fence line. Some of the trees and branches looked as if they would fall down in the next high wind. If the branches destroyed the fences Phill's horses could escape.

"Okay, got it. You can tie the end to the towing ball now."

"Done! Hug the tree so the falling branch doesn't drag you off. I'm going to start the Discovery."

Phill started and inched forwards, taking up the slack. CRACK !!!! The branch dropped, swishing through the air.

"Hey! that just missed me," Chris said loudly. Now the branch was down, Chris had time to look over the countryside. His views included the valley

down Jones Road, the surrounding small hills and parts of Westernport Bay that were exposed.

"Phill!" he shouted down. "You know the creek that runs past Tristan's school; it looks like it runs down the side of the airfield and goes on to the footy ground at Hastings."

Still standing below Chris, Phill shouted up: "Sounds possible. Maybe one day we should walk it. Anyway, can you shin down and jump onto the shed roof, then onto the ground?"

"Okay, but can we go and look at the pipe-laying equipment parked on the land opposite the school grounds?"

"Yup!"

The pipe-laying operation was to lay new gas pipes underground that would connect the Bass Strait gas stored at Hastings to a distribution area at Mornington.

After a quick sanger, Chris and Phill went out the property gate, turned left and went down the steep hill to the bottom to where the creek ran under the road. They jumped the fence and got close to the equipment.

"Hey Phill, look at the size of the big drill lying on its side."

"That must be the underground auger. Wonder how far it can be pushed when it is underground?"

Chris peered into a big hole, and saw where the drill had been working horizontally underground

"I'll bet I can jump down and look along the tunnel."

With that, Chris stepped over the edge and dropped three metres to the bottom of the hole.

"Gee, it's a big tunnel and dark. If I shout maybe the sound might come out at Mornington."

"Okay, Chris, come on up, we might get into trouble."

"I've just tripped over a funny long lump of clay, with a bit of steel sticking out the end. I'll pass it up."

"All right, but get out of the hole pronto!"

"What do you think it is? Let me get a bit of stick and push away the dirt"

The object was about 80 centimetres long, and in various thicknesses from about 30 centimetres to 15 centimetres. At the very end a triangular bit of rusty steel, about the size of a matchbox, stuck out.

At this moment a car horn sounded very close. The fellows looked about and saw it was Phill's other 13-year-old grandson Tristan, who was shouting out of the window of his Mum's car.

"Hi Phill, hi Chris. What's up?"

Chris explained.

"Sounds good, but Chris, do you want to come to my place and ride the mote bikes?' Tristan asked.

"Yes! but, Phill what about the lump?"

"Look I'll carry it home and soak it for a week then we can see what it is. Okay? You go with Tristan and his Mum."

With 'see ya!' all round, they left the site.



Could the creek run all the way to Hastings?



View of the creek at the bottom of the hill after years of erosion.