

I Walk the Line



I keep a close watch on this heart of mine

I keep my eyes wide open all the time

Johnny Cash



Walking the line....



Martin A Hooper

Beach Shack Publishing



Walking the line...

Walked the old bush track, some days back,
from Jan Juc to Bellbrae.

Crossed the busy Great Ocean Road
Dodged the foreign tourists driving with heads gawking!
Picked up the track. It had become more overgrown...
... as I remembered ... and even more beautiful.



Up past the Rose Restaurant – well
it's no longer there – burnt to the
ground some years back. The
wonderful old world pergola still
stands. The grandchildren loved to
play in there when Bee and I went to
tea and cakes.



Spied kangaroos, seated in a line. In a line? Then noticed they
were resting in the shade of a tree, not out walking in the heat
like some daft beggars.



On past the microwave tower and the Jan Juc water tank, the legs were working well.

Can you imagine life without either nowadays? Man has always needed water and now woman can't live without the latest mobile phone.

I touched my pocket. Ah, yes there was my hand-me-down old phone long discarded by my wife. Just in case I needed to call her to pick me up if my legs gave out.



Fearlessly I plodded on. Walking the line...



The old white line from Jan Juc to Bellbrae...

Lo behold a snake up ahead or was it only a lizard?



Advancing cautiously...
I passed the piece of bark!



Ironbarks, most knurled and twisted, were dotted along my route. The good straight ones long since taken for timber fence posts and the like.



The dead bark is not shed, like most Eucalypts but accumulates, becomes impregnated with a dark red sap, and forms a rough, dark mass with deep fissures which have an iron-like toughness. This 'iron' bark protects the tree from fire and heat.

The first white squatters in the Bellbrae district called their sheep run, the Ironbark Station. They were the Gundry family from Lopen in Somerset. Shepherds and timber cutters were the two common labouring jobs back in those early days. Then the name for Bellbrae was Jan Juc, taken from the indigenous name for the ironbark tree or forest.



Ah, there was a young ironbark standing taller and straighter.

...and there was a sawn stump. The bark proved no deterrent to predator man!



There are hundreds of species of Eucalypts and bark types range, broadly, from smooth through stringy to iron. All three barks were seen along this track. All tree shapes, too... very influenced by weather and climate.

The Australian Eucalyptus trees have a majesty all of their own.

No sameness here!



Pushed myself and my camera through the bushes,
there was the turn off to the famous Bells Beach



A little further on and I spied a line of sheep...another line of
animals.... the determining factor not shade this time
but a line of hay put out by the farmer...
Grass was brown and scarce.

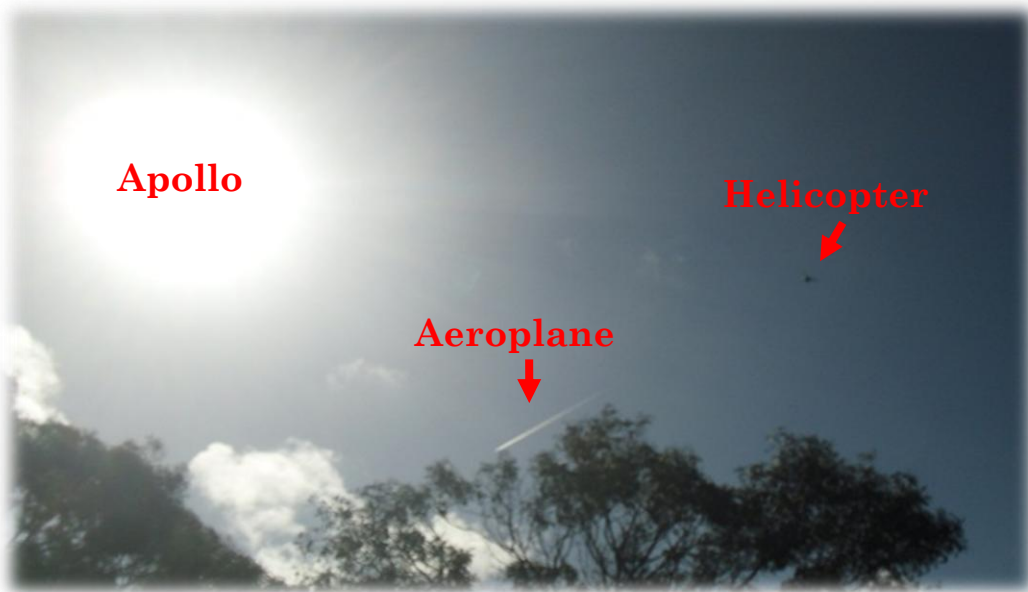


Sea views to the south and land for sale, the last block sold
for 1.6 million dollars. What would those Ironbark
pioneers think?
A bit rich for me... I kept walking.



The whirl of a helicopter caused me to pause and look up.
A black speck in the sky headed towards the coast, probably a
couple of guys checking out the surf at nearby Bells or
were they on a mission of mercy

Ah, and there was a jet liner, with its vapour trail, headed west
to who knows where. Such puny objects in the sky ... when
compared with Apollo at a distance of 150 million kilometres,
about 8 light minutes.



Yes, I hear tell the sun has been up 8 minutes before you
see it. Well, let me tell you, it has been up considerably
longer than that before I see it.

On I walked, the trees
and bushes - that lined
and overgrew the track
- provided shade and
relief from that fiery
northern sun.



From time to time with glimpses through the bush, I was conscious that I walked the ridge line between two water catchments with Spring Creek to the north and Jan Juc Creek to the south.



A look to the north and east showed Torquay in the distance



I plodded on past the Telstra Bellbrae Exchange and wondered what its status was now with the National Broadband Network being rolled out in the area.



More evidence of man, the environmental delinquent!

An old beach chair dumped!

I Walk the Line

*I find myself alone when each day is through
Yes, I'll admit that I'm a fool for you*



Because you're mine, I walk the line



Johnny Cash 🎵

A little further on and another break in the tree-lined track and there, to the north and west across Spring Creek Valley, were Grossmans Country Cottages. Bellbrae was getting close.



Stopped to admire this eucalypt-lined drive. One could not help but notice the contrast between the green of the leaves and the brown of grass. Yes there was a drought impacting our land.



At last the track crossed Cemetery Road and I turned into it. I slowed to 50.



Strode past No 35. No thought of
dropping in for a cup of tea and
homemade cake, now that the B's
have moved to town.



Bellbrae Cemetery, at last...
A welcoming seat....
No, not here to stay!
I pulled out my old phone
and organised a pick up?

The Man from Ironbark Banjo Paterson

*It was the man from Ironbark who struck the Sydney town,
He wandered over street and park, he wandered up and down.
He loitered here, he loitered there, till he was like to drop,
Until at last in sheer despair he sought a barber's shop.
"Ere! shave my beard and whiskers off, I'll be a man of mark,
I'll go and do the Sydney toff up home in Ironbark."*