



(photo taken in 1973)

**Terri Allen's notes  
on Eagle's Nest  
Settlement  
1920s to 1948  
edited by C. Landon**

Sometime in the early 1930s, keen fisherman, Bert Allen, joined his mates, Phil Blackley, Possum Moon and Bobby (Dazzler) Hedley, to establish a beach shack in the waterfall gully at Undertow Bay east of Cape Paterson. They made their hut of galvanised iron and timber, with a tin roof, wooden flooring and open fire outside.

Each weekend the boys would take the horse-and-cart track up to Cape and on to the gully. It was like paradise until Albie and Jimmie Donovan began crayfishing from Undertow Bay. They left their boat and bait on the nearby dune. The bait was rotten horsemeat that hung from a pole suspended between two "Y" posts and soon became most aromatic. This, together with increasing traffic due to the popularity of Cape Paterson, led to the boys decamping.

Bert knew Eagle's Nest (today's Shack Bay) well because in his younger days he had often accompanied the Norwegian bachelor, Kris Olsen, who was staying at Campbell's Boarding House on Broome Crescent near where Bert lived, to his beach hut at Eagle's Nest where they

would spend their time fishing and exploring. From the mid 1920s, Kris had been the original settler at Eagle's Nest and had made a nice little camp for himself. By the creek some distance from his hut, he had built a corral, in which he planted a solitary cypress tree to shelter the horses; often only one horse was left there so it could be used to round up the others which were allowed to roam in the bush out from the cliff line. Kris had a boat shed there, as well, dug back into the sand. He had put a metal beacon post out on the rocks (part of which remains today) and a cable with block-and-tackle to haul his boat from the waterline over the sand and sand shelf into the shed. Kris used to invite his mates – Tom Last (miner), Mr Patterson (mine office), Mr Cook (miner), and Snobby Studham (bookmaker) – to join him fishing. Young Bert Allen was included as well.

Consequently, the boys decided to relocate there. The track back then was today's coast road, not the later track nosing around the cliff above the waterfall. Back then the land was fenced through the scrub down to the cliffs, and so the track crossed the creek (much shallower then) through a gate there and through a further gate at Reid's Bay (today's Twin Reefs). The track was rough and boggy and ended at the hut bay with no access to Inverloch.

To relocate, the boys dismantled their hut and transported it by cart past The Oaks where Beckerlegs, Martins, Jupps and Blundells were already hut dwellers and on to their newly chosen site at Eagle's Nest two bays past Reid's Bay where Bobbie and Charlie Reid, two mining brothers from Pommie Town, had situated their hut on a ledge half-way down the cliff face. (The track to Reid's old hut was visible until just recently and an explorer can still find the wormwood that the brothers had planted around the hut all those years ago.)

Once the boys got to Eagle's Nest they still had to get their dismantled hut down a steep track that made its way down the cliff to Kris Olsen's boat shed, something they did not manage to do without damaging their load somewhat. Undaunted, they soon erected a fine hut just south of the creek between the cliff and sandy foreshore, directly beneath where the platform on the steps erected by DCNR in 1993 is now. The new hut was much more substantial than the first because three other lads – Joe Richards, Syd Coe, and Jimmy Rowe – joined forces with the first four. Aligned east-west, the new hut was of timber frame, gabled roof and lined with hessian and paper calcimined over; it contained five bunks,

makeshift furniture of boxes and kerosene cases and an open fire with a chimney. A lean-to skillion of iron walls contained the kitchen with its stove. Later a water tank was added when the creek was contaminated by a dead horse, but before that drinking and washing water came from the stream. Large sandstone blocks were used to pave the hut's surroundings to keep the interior clean; deck broom often seems to be part of flotsam on the beach. Driftwood was sometimes used for fuel, but mainly coal was brought out in the spring cart from Wonthaggi. Bedding was in the form of wagga rugs and old blankets with hessian sewn between, these on top of chaff-bag mattresses stuffed with bracken or straw. Outside there were two tin toilets, each with handles and thus portable. As the holes filled up, they were packed with sand, new holes dug and the conveniences moved over them.

Because Eagle's Nest proved to be a snug and sheltered spot, soon more hut dwellers established their camps there, and a second zig-zag track was established that was an

easier descent than the original one. The place consisted of a sandy-bedded channel cut through rocks, two spurs of rock platform and a safe swimming bay. Cliffs circled the little cluster of huts that eventually formed a small community and a creek trickled clear water. Sheoaks and coastal banksias gave shade and shelter while the lower shrubbery (boobyalla, kagaroo apple, coast beardheath, seaberry saltbush, coast teatree, variable groundsel, pigface, coast wattle, searocket, knobby clubrush, running postman and sea celery) provided sustenance for a variety of birds (little and red wattlebirds, honeyeaters, grey fantails, wren, willy wagtail). A flock of Cape Barren geese grazed the cliff tops one year amid large patches of kangaroo grass and lomandra. Wallabies, kangaroos, possums, echidnas and goannas abounded beyond the cliffs. Seabirds, such as silver and Pacific gulls, cormorants, dotterels, oyster catchers and white-faced herons frequented the bay.

Fishing and the free and easy life was the main occupation of the hut dwellers. Using Limpets for bait, they caught whiting, parrot fish, bluenose, leatherjacket, butterfly, and barred bream off the rocks at Parrot Point. Yet, crayfishing, using cut up parroties as bait, was the most favoured and crays could be caught anywhere. The main method was to have a stout cord attached to a stick, the cord being weighted with a sinker wrapped in bait such as parroties or mutton fish (abalone). This was dropped in a hole and the cord slowly hauled up so that a net could be inserted under the dangling cray as it emerged from the water. A sugar bag was always carried to transport crays and they were cooked in kerosene tins on the beach and hung up to dry by their tails over a rail in front of the huts.

What a Life!

Other hut dwellers at Eagles Nest were: Bob Calder Sr., Stan Fullerton, Trapper Williams, George Keily, Abe Perry. For More stories about these fellows, ask Terri Allen.

## EAGLE'S NESTS HUTS 1930

