Chapter 5
Images in context – the stories behind the pictures

... the context is often the key to the image.¹

Introduction

Stephen Spurling is one of Tasmania’s forgotten explorers, yet few men, if any, have done more than he has done to foster an appreciation and knowledge of Tasmania’s rugged and beautiful scenery.²

This chapter aims to provide a context for Stephen Spurling’s photographs by detailing a series of treks he undertook into some of Tasmania’s wildest and remotest regions. Stephen undertook these feats of endurance using equipment that by today’s standards would appear hopelessly inadequate. Apart from having to lug a heavy camera and fragile glass plates, his clothing and camping gear provided little protection against the changeable conditions in Tasmania’s highlands. Although during his treks Stephen endured extreme conditions, named a number of landmarks and even discovered an unmapped lake, as the second quote illustrates, these feats rarely rate a mention in the literature. Evidence of this is provided by the photography curator and writer Helen Ennis, who stated in her book, Intersections that ‘[p]rofessional photographers from the 1880s onwards were not associated with exploration and adventuring (not that this had ever proved to be a robust tradition in Australia)’.³ Clearly, the dearth of information about Stephen and his contribution to Tasmanian wilderness photography has meant that his achievements have slipped from the consciousness of many experts and, consequently, the public at large.

This chapter aims to address these issues. However, to provide an in-depth account of all Stephen’s journeys and examine the thousands of images he took is beyond the scope of this thesis. Therefore this chapter deals with some significant wilderness trips, and examines a selection of photographs. This chapter also discusses intrigues surrounding various images, and investigates the impact Stephen’s photography had on the subsequent appreciation of wilderness areas in Tasmania. Finally, this chapter evaluates Stephen’s contribution to pioneer bushwalking, and discusses whether there is evidence to support Roberts’ claim that he is a ‘forgotten explorer’.

Westward Ho – the Mole Creek track

One of Stephen’s early assignments was to photograph the progress on the construction of the Mole Creek track. Northern Tasmanians began campaigning for this track, to link Launceston and the west coast, in the 1890s. The editor of the Examiner newspaper F J Prichard spearheaded the campaign with the slogan ‘Westward Ho’, and from 1896 the support of the North and West Direct Route Association.4 Proponents argued that the new route would improve communications and enable stock movements. However, the overriding consideration was the lure of mineral wealth.5 The construction of a series of huts would, they argued, make the journey less arduous in inclement weather, and enable a man to travel by train and horseback, from Launceston to the west coast, in two and a half days.6 Proponents envisaged that eventually a rail link would follow a similar, lower altitude route.7 In response to this campaign the government allocated £1500 to survey a route linking Mole Creek and Mount Black.8 Surveyor E G Innes carried out his assessment

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5 Haygarth, A View to Cradle, p. 75; Illustrated Supplement to Launceston Examiner, 9 July 1898, p. 1 c. 1-2; Our Special, ‘Westward Ho – The Mole Creek Track’, no. 4, Examiner, 25 March 1898, p. 5 c. 1.
6 Haygarth, A View to Cradle, p. 75-77; Our Special, ‘Westward Ho – The Mole Creek Track’, no. 4, Examiner, 25 March 1898, p. 5 c. 1.
7 Our Special, ‘Westward Ho – The Mole Creek Track’, no. 3, Examiner, 24 March 1898, p. 5.
8 Haygarth, A View to Cradle, p. 76. Mount Black is near the present-day township of Rosebery.
between October 1896 and May 1897,⁹ and a further allocation of £3000 allowed
construction to begin on two fronts – from the west and north.¹⁰ By early 1898 work
had progressed sufficiently for the Examiner to organise an inspection.

The inspection party, which included Prichard, and Stephen 3rd as the photographer,
left Launceston by train on Monday 14 March 1898.¹¹ At Chudleigh the main group
transferred to a chaise-cart, with Stephen 3rd and the Examiner correspondent on
horseback. That evening they halted at Liena, and early next morning Stephen 3rd
photographed the Mersey Bridge and the group outside their boarding house.¹² Then
they departed for the Borradale Plains, via Gads Hill and Lemonthyme Hill. En
route they crossed Ration Tree Creek, so-named for a huge hollow tree, where rations
were once stowed for local stockmen.¹³

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⁹ C J Binks, Explorers of Western Tasmania (Launceston, Tasmania, 1980) pp. 242-244; Examiner, 4
August 1897, p. 6.
¹⁰ Haygarth, A View to Cradle, pp. 76-77.
¹¹ Our Special, ‘Westward Ho – The Mole Creek Track’, no. 1, Examiner, 22 March 1898, p. 5.
¹² Our Special, ‘Westward Ho – The Mole Creek Track’, no. 1, Examiner, 22 March 1898, p. 5;
Illustrated Supplement to Launceston Examiner, 9 July 1898, p. 2.
¹³ Our Special, ‘Westward Ho – The Mole Creek Track’, no. 1, Examiner, 22 March 1898, p. 5.
¹⁴ Illustrated Supplement to Launceston Examiner, 9 July 1898, p. 3.
Finally, they reached their second night’s accommodation – a somewhat less commodious hunter’s hut. Early next morning they started for the February Plains, but howling winds forced them to return to the hut, and wait for the weather to abate. The following day looked more promising and they resumed their journey. While crossing the February Plains they met a construction overseer by the name of Broomhall, who escorted Stephen 3rd and the Examiner correspondent over a section of new track, while the remainder of the party continued along the old track. Just past the Oakley Divide Stephen 3rd photographed ‘a magnificent view of the upper valley of the Mersey backed by the bare cliffs’. On reaching the end of the newly constructed track they continued overland towards Lake Ayr, where they rendezvoused with the rest of the party, and proceeded to a camp at Mount Pelion. They spent the next day here, inspecting the coal and copper outcrops.

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15 Our Special, ‘Westward Ho – The Mole Creek Track’, no. 1, Examiner, 22 March 1898, p. 5; Our Special, ‘Westward Ho – The Mole Creek Track’, no. 2, Examiner, 23 March 1898, p. 5.
16 Our Special, ‘Westward Ho – The Mole Creek Track’, no. 2, Examiner, 23 March 1898, p. 5.
17 Our Special, ‘Westward Ho – The Mole Creek Track’, no. 2, Examiner, 23 March 1898, p. 5; Our Special, ‘Westward Ho – The Mole Creek Track’ no. 3, Examiner, 24 March 1898, p. 5.
18 Illustrated Supplement to Launceston Examiner, 9 July 1898, p. 3.
The following morning they explored the country around the base of Mount Pelion West and then headed for Barn Bluff. As the survey line for the new track was rudimentary they took the old track, but here fallen trees impeded their progress, and forced them to ‘shoulder their swags’ and proceed on foot.\textsuperscript{19} The going proved arduous and involved some steep climbs. Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd}, despite his heavy burden, was ‘plodding along with his camera and rugs like an experienced bushman’.\textsuperscript{20} They trudged in a northerly direction, noting that ‘so far, there has been no great obstacle to either a track or a railway’.\textsuperscript{21} That evening they camped at Barn Bluff, but, as the weather the next morning looked ominous, they decided to return to the Pelion camp. Their decision proved fortuitous. The rain began to pelt down and when, in the late afternoon, they finally reached Mount Pelion, they were completely drenched. Shortly after their arrival it began to snow and ‘in a couple of hours the surface was covered with a white mantle’.\textsuperscript{22}

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\textit{Stephen Spurling 3\textsuperscript{rd}, Mount Pelion Huts, Mole Creek Track, 1898, lantern slide.}

\textsuperscript{22} Our Special, ‘Westward Ho – The Mole Creek Track’, no. 3, \textit{Examiner}, 24 March 1898, p. 5.
Next morning they harnessed their horses and commenced the homeward trek, via Mount Oakley, Liena and Mole Creek. The journey from Mount Pelion took less than twelve hours, but they had another three hours of train travel to reach Launceston.\textsuperscript{23} The detailed accounts of their trip, which appeared in the \textit{Examiner} in March 1898, fuelled the high expectations for the future of the project.\textsuperscript{24} Since very few people had actually visited the area, Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd}'s images provided an invaluable visual record. In June Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} showed a selection of his son’s lantern slides at a meeting of the Northern Tasmanian Camera Club,\textsuperscript{25} and in July the \textit{Examiner} published a spread of photographs, some of which re-appeared in the \textit{Examiner Christmas Supplement} in 1900.\textsuperscript{26}

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Stephen Spurling 3\textsuperscript{rd}, \textit{Mt Oakley, Forth Gorge}, 1898, gelatin silver photograph.
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\textsuperscript{24} Our Special, ‘Westward Ho – The Mole Creek Track’, nos. 1, 2, 3, 4; \textit{Examiner}, 22 March 1898, p. 5; \textit{Examiner}, 23 March 1898, p. 5; \textit{Examiner}, 24 March 1898, p. 5; \textit{Examiner}, 25 March 1898, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{25} Northern Tasmanian Camera Club, \textit{Minute Book no. 2}, 17 June 1898; \textit{Australian Photographic Journal}, 20 July 1898 (Sydney) p. 177.
\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Illustrated Supplement to Launceston Examiner}, 9 July 1898, pp. 1-3, 6, 8; \textit{Examiner Christmas Supplement}, 19 December 1900, pp. 23-25.
Of all the images taken on this trip, Stephen 3rd’s image of Mount Oakley is probably the best known. Somewhat intriguingly, this image bears a remarkable resemblance to the artist Haughton Forrest’s oil painting, *Mount Oxley.* Art historian George Deas Brown has described how Forrest used photographer John Watt Beattie’s images to inspire his works, so possibly Forrest made similar use of Stephen 3rd’s image. If this is the case, the question arises as to whether the name change was inadvertent, or deliberate.

According to photo-historian Jack Cato and academic Roslynn Haynes, Stephen 3rd’s pictorial record of this trip included a photograph of Mount Ossa. Any photograph taken of this mountain around this time would have historical significance, as nearly sixty years later Mount Ossa was officially declared Tasmania’s highest peak. While at the present time no Spurling photograph from this trip entitled ‘Mount Ossa’ is known to exist, academic Peter Roberts-Thomson points out that the image *Mount Pelion Mine* ‘clearly shows Ossa in the background’. Robert-Thomson, who has researched the history of this region, believes this image is the earliest known published photograph of Mount Ossa.

Nearly three years after Stephen 3rd’s images first appeared in newspapers, the Hobart-based photographer John Watt Beattie traversed the Mole Creek track. It proved an arduous journey, and he subsequently laid claim to being the first photographer to visit the area. Beattie’s claim, in a report of a presentation to the Royal Society, appeared in Hobart-based *Mercury* in May 1901. The Launceston

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31 *Illustrated Supplement to Launceston Examiner*, 9 July 1898, p. 1; *Examiner Christmas Supplement*, 19 December 1900, p. 23.
32 Email from Peter Roberts-Thomson to Christine Burgess, 16 February 2009.
33 Email from Peter Roberts-Thomson to Christine Burgess, 16 February 2009.
34 *Mercury*, 28 May 1901, p. 4 c. 2-4.
Examiner reprinted the article a few days later. The publication of this report in the northern paper created some controversy. Beattie claimed the Mole Creek track, ‘as far as pictorial representation is concerned, presents the charm of fresh, unbroken ground’, and described the scenery as, ‘good, but not good enough to lure the tourist over the Innes track’. He further fuelled north-south rivalries by contending that the scenery nowhere near equalled the beauty of areas in the southern part of the island.

Beattie’s statements demanded rebuttals. In a letter to the editor Stephen 3rd pointed out, ‘I myself was the pioneer photographer of the Mole Creek track as far as Barn Bluff, when in March, 1898, I … secured a series of views illustrating the scenic magnificence of this portion of Tasmania’. Stephen 3rd also challenged Beattie’s assessment of the beauty and tourist potential of the region. In his opinion the area ‘will compare in scenic excellence with any part of Tasmania, and will amply repay the tourist for any hardships he may endure in getting there’.

In 2004 historian Nic Haygarth documented Stephen 3rd’s rebuttal of Beattie’s claim to be the first photographer to transverse the Mole Creek track. It is therefore disappointing that three years later historian Melissa Harper, in her examination of the history of bushwalking in Australia, details Beattie’s Barn Bluff trip, but does not mention Stephen 3rd’s earlier excursion. She describes Beattie as being ‘especially intrepid’, and quotes from the published notes of his lantern slide presentation. She also mentions how Beattie recounted the appalling conditions he endured and quotes his ‘keen feeling of pleasurable excitement in the photographic exploration of new country’. Interestingly, Beattie did not repeat his claim when he subsequently

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35 Examiner, 1 June 1901, p. 13 c. 1-4.
36 ‘Some interesting notes’, Examiner, 1 June 1901, p. 13 c. 1.
37 Examiner, 1 June 1901, p. 13 c. 4. The Mole Creek track was also known as the Innes track. Haygarth, A View to Cradle, p. 211.
38 Examiner, 1 June 1901, p. 13 c. 4.
39 S Spurling Jun., ‘Mole Creek Track’, Examiner, 10 June 1901, p. 3 c. 4 -5.
40 Spurling, ‘Mole Creek Track’, Examiner, 10 June 1901, p. 3 c. 5.
43 Harper, The ways of the bushwalker, p. 38; Mercury, 28 May 1901, p. 4 c. 2; Examiner, 1 June 1901, p. 13 c. 1.
submitted his revised account to the Royal Society for publication in its *Papers and Proceedings*. In this version, Beattie reiterated the hardships he endured and outlined what he believed were the region’s major assets. Although Beattie eulogised the ‘weird sublimity’\(^{44}\) of the Forth River Gorge, he described the February Plains as a ‘veritable barren, howling wilderness’.\(^{45}\) He concluded his paper with his assessments for the region’s prospects. In his opinion its future lay in the exploitation of the copper and coal deposits and the harnessing of the ‘splendid water facilities for the generation of power’.\(^{46}\) To facilitate this development, he recommended the upgrading of access routes and the possible construction of a rail link.\(^{47}\)

The coal and copper deposits proved unfeasible to mine; the rail link failed to eventuate; and the Mole Creek track, which had generated so much enthusiasm proved unusable for much of the year.\(^{48}\) Although some sections eventually fell into disrepair, other sections were incorporated into the Overland Track, which today transverses the area from Cradle Mountain to Lake St. Clair.\(^{49}\) The popularity and worldwide renown of this track belies Beattie’s unenthusiastic appraisal of the region’s scenic attractions,\(^{50}\) and his opinion that its future lay in mining and hydro-electric power generation.


\(^{45}\) Beattie, ‘Notes on a trip to the Barn Bluff Country’, p. xxvii.

\(^{46}\) Beattie, ‘Notes on a trip to the Barn Bluff Country’, p. xxxii.

\(^{47}\) Beattie, ‘Notes on a trip to the Barn Bluff Country’, p. xxxii.


\(^{49}\) Haygarth, *A View to Cradle*, pp. 77, 164.

\(^{50}\) Haygarth, ‘Spurling’s wild Tasmania’, pp. 7-10.
Ben Lomond – first winter photographs

Two years prior to the Mole Creek track excursion, in mid-autumn 1896, Stephen 3rd and three companions had ascended Ben Lomond from the northern slopes.\(^{51}\) They were not the first to climb this mountain. For thousands of years Tasmanian Aboriginal tribes had visited the plateau during the summer months.\(^{52}\) While it is uncertain who might have been the first European to make an ascent, historian N J B Plomley believes the settler John Batman was an early visitor. He states ‘Batman’s visits to Ben Lomond must date from the 1820s’.\(^{53}\) Others soon followed; surveyors, scientists, artists, miners, hunters and excursionists.\(^{54}\) Early artists included the assistant surveyor, Thomas Scott, who painted *Ben Lomond from Fletchers Hut* in 1823,\(^{55}\) and John Glover, who produced a series of sketches and paintings from the 1830s.\(^{56}\) However, up until 1903 most people believed ‘it was impossible to get to the summit of Ben Lomond after a heavy snowfall’.\(^{57}\) This was the challenge that lured Stephen 3rd and his companions. Could they ascend the mountain in winter, and could Stephen 3rd be the first to photograph it blanketed with snow? It was not an easy task. Apart from the logistics of finding a suitable route and enduring extreme weather conditions, he planned to carry his heavy camera\(^{58}\) and glass plates.

\(^{51}\) Union Jack [Stephen Spurling 3rd], ‘Launceston to Ben Lomond: an enjoyable trip’, *Examiner*, 14 April 1896, p. 7 c. 1-3. His companions on this occasion were William J Sheehan, Leslie H Lakin and Charles M Weatherhead.


\(^{54}\) Plomley, ‘Ben Lomond: history and science’, pp. 140-142; Julia Horne, *The pursuit of wonder: how Australia’s landscape was explored, nature discovered and tourism unleashed* (Carlton, Victoria, 2005) p. 217.


\(^{57}\) Kerry Pink, ‘Spurling captured an unseen Tasmania’, *Advocate Weekender*, 26 October 1991, p. 8 c. 5; Kerry Pink, ‘Photography was an art – in the good old days!’, *Advocate*, 30 September 1961, p. 13 c. 3.

\(^{58}\) The camera was a 12 x 10 inch camera, with slides holding five glass plates. S Spurling Jnr, ‘Tasmanian Scenes’, *Harringtons’ Photographic Journal*, v. 30, 2 May 1921, p. 13.
The first problem was timing. He and two friends, Charles Mayhead and Galt Lithgow waited for some weeks hoping for snow on Ben Lomond. Finally, in August 1903\(^{59}\) word arrived of heavy snowfalls. As they intended approaching the mountain from the south, they set off for Avoca. From there they plodded a further twenty kilometres towards the foothills, where they set up camp in the abandoned Ben Lomond Hotel.\(^{60}\)

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\(^{59}\) It is uncertain whether Stephen 3rd made this trip in 1902 or 1903. In Stephen 3rd’s scrapbook ‘21/8/1902’ is handwritten beside the first instalment of this story. Likewise Kerry Pink, in newspaper articles based on an interview with Stephen 3rd cites the date as 1902. However, the account and photographs of this trip appeared in the *Weekly Courier* in 1903. Since the Bureau of Meteorology has no records for the Ben Lomond area in the early 1900s, it is impossible to tell whether there was snow in August 1902 or 1903. However, on Saturday 22 August 1903 the *Examiner* reported, ‘[b]oisterous weather prevailed on Thursday night [20 August] and 44 points of rain were recorded for the 24 hours ending 9 am yesterday’. If there was a storm in Launceston on 20 August 1903, then it is likely that snow fell in the Ben Lomond area during the same period. This would be consistent with the date for the start of the trip being 21 August 1903. Plomley’s date of 1908 is presumably a typographical error. See also, David M Harvey, *The Ben Lomond story* (Launceston, Tasmania, 2000) p. 9.

\(^{60}\) This two-storey hotel was built by a local property owner, J F Rigney. The complex included a store, a bake house and stables, and had once provided facilities for the miners and tourists. Plomley, ‘Ben Lomond: History and Science’, p. 142.
The Ben Lomond Hotel had once been a busy and prosperous concern, but when Stephen 3rd and his companions visited, ‘the place stood empty and deserted, the picture of desolation’. Above the hotel loomed the Butts of Ben Lomond, which ‘in solemn grandeur seem[ed] to almost overhang the old building’. Nic Haygarth has noted the similarities between Stephen 3rd’s image of this scene, and artist William Charles Piguenit’s painting, *Butts of Ben Lomond, Tasmania* (1878).

During their stay, Stephen 3rd and his companions explored the mountain over a period of four days. They set out on their first excursion after a heavy, overnight snowfall, and discovered a vista ‘of snow upon the foliage, which converted the usual woodlands into a veritable fairyland, every tree, leaf and sprig of heather bearing a glistening load of whiteness’. They climbed further, and found a huge expanse of broken rocks, which the locals called the Ploughed Fields. Here icy winds prevented them from proceeding, so ‘slid[ing] and crunch[ing] through the snow’, they sought shelter in a wooded gully. Hoping to take some photographs, they edged along the slopes, but the conditions deteriorated and battling a blizzard, they returned to their camp.

The next morning they made an early start, aiming to reach the mountain peaks via what was known as the ‘Camping Ground Route’. As they ascended the snow became deeper, and they repeatedly sunk to their waists in the soft snowdrifts. They started to crawl, and, when this strategy proved useless, they tied saplings together to form a temporary bridge. After two hours of struggling they reached some frozen snow, which although slippery was somewhat easier to traverse. Finally, after

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62 James Sprent’s 1859 map shows the trig station marked at ‘Butts’. The name was in use until 1915, when it was renamed ‘Stacks Bluff’.
63 Spurling, ‘Ben Lomond in Winter’, no. I, p. 26 c. 2
65 Spurling, ‘Ben Lomond in Winter’, no. I, p. 26 c. 2
66 As the Nomenclature Board has no record of ‘Ploughed Fields’, this name appears lost to posterity. The term ‘Ploughed fields’ often refers to a scree or rocky slope. These scree slopes were created by glacial action during the ice age. See Harvey, *The Ben Lomond story*, p. 12 (fn. 10).
negotiating their way between two rocky walls, they reached the mountain plateau. Here they paused to admire:

one huge glistening sheet of snow and ice; magnificent clouds were hanging above it, through which the sun was bursting, and with startling brilliancy lighting up the large patches of gleaming whiteness. These contrasted with the points of black rock jutting up in every direction, and backed up by the white peaks of the northern end of the mountain, made a landscape which the wondrous effects of light and shade had to be seen to be realised.\(^6\)

Stephen Spurling 3\(^{rd}\), *The Plateau, Ben Lomond*, 1903, gelatin silver photograph.

Stephen 3\(^{rd}\)'s photograph, with its contrasts of light and dark, combined with the rocky outcrops framing the right-hand side, exhibits elements of the picturesque. However, the minute figures of his companions in the middle distance help emphasise the vast and awe-inspiring aspects of the scene, and contribute to the overwhelming sense of the sublime. Just as Stephen 3\(^{rd}\) exposed his last glass plate, a fierce westerly increased to gale-force, and the temperature dropped below freezing. He and his companions abandoned the plateau and clambered down the mountain, carefully avoiding ‘the snow-drifts that had proved so disastrous earlier in the day’.\(^7\)

The following day they decided to scale the peaks via Storys Creek. Here Stephen 3rd photographed ‘a glorious view of the southern face of the mountain … [which] being thickly covered in snow, formed a panorama that would be hard to beat for picturesqueness anywhere in Tasmania’. 70 Perhaps it is not co-incidental that his photograph is also reminiscent of Pignenit’s Butts of Ben Lomond, Tasmania (1878). 71 Both images evoke the same feeling of desolate beauty with stark, ghostly trees framing the peaks. However, Pignenit’s painting has plains with cattle grazing in the foreground, while Stephen 3rd’s image depicts the mountain peaks reflected in the creek. In addition, Pignenit painted the mountain from a different angle, and exaggerated its height to suggest the sublime. By contrast, Stephen 3rd’s image is, as he suggests in the above quote, more in the tradition of the picturesque.

![Image of Ben Lomond from Story's Creek, 1903, gelatin silver photograph.](image)

71 Radford and Hylton, Australian Colonial Art, p. 67; Plomley, ‘Ben Lomond: history and science’, p. 139.
After an uneventful climb, they were once again on the plateau, ‘surrounded by mountain peaks … [and] the gleaming slopes of snow seemed to sweep down in unbroken curves’.\textsuperscript{72} The weather was fine and Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} took a number of photographs. On reaching the summit, they discovered a panorama that extended eastwards to the coast and southward almost to Mount Wellington.

The next day they planned a third attempt on the summit. This time they approached by a shorter, but steeper route. Once past the tree line, the snow was thick and frozen. They crossed a ‘stretch of huge rocks lying about in shapeless profusion … [and found themselves] … at the base of a perpendicular cliff, which towered some 500 or 600 feet sheer above’.\textsuperscript{73} Turning left they climbed a ravine, but found that the precipitous slopes and hard-crusted snow forced them to kick holes for every step. One tiny mistake would have meant a fall of hundreds of metres.

\textbf{Collection of National Library of Australia}

Stephen Spurling 3\textsuperscript{rd}, \textit{The Cliffs, Ben Lomond}, 1903, gelatin silver photograph.


Eventually they reached the top, only to discover another ravine separated them from their intended destination. Forced to backtrack, their leader tumbled, camera and all, nearly thirty metres into a hollow. To avoid further disasters, they roped themselves together, and, with just one person moving at a time, they inched forward. Finally, they reached the pinnacle, and here they discovered the ‘logs forming the trigonometrical station were completely covered with great bunches of icicles, several feet in thickness … [creating] fantastic designs glittering in the sunlight’. 74


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74 Spurling, ‘Ben Lomond in Winter’, no. IV, p. 35 c. 1. Known locally as ‘The Stockade’, the cairn as was built c. 1852, to mark a triangulation survey point. A yard of logs (hauled up the mountain by convicts) was constructed around the cairn. Plomley, ‘Ben Lomond: history and science’, pp. 140-141.
As they gazed, ‘a soft, white mist … slowly enveloped the mountain’.75 When this dissipated, they continued their exploration. The huge volume of snow on the summit made it dangerous to venture close to the escarpment, but they found some areas where they could ‘crawl to the edge and gaze into the depths, which, with a sheer drop of over 1000 feet, were enough to make the steadiest nerves shacy’.76 From here they trekked about five kilometres to Lake Youl,77 which lay silent and frozen. After photographing the scene, they retraced their steps over the plateau and returned to the old hotel via the Camping Ground Route. In all, they had spent five-and-a-half hours on the mountain, but now they found the reflected glare from the snow had affected their eyesight, ‘causing the white clouds to appear yellow and the blue sky quite green’.78

Stephen 3rd ended his account with a plea for more tracks and a call for a tourist association. He believed with improved facilities, Ben Lomond ‘would rapidly become one of the great attractions of the garden state’.79 His belief in Ben Lomond’s potential took years to reach fruition, but ‘[e]ventually other bushwalkers ventured to Ben Lomond in winter and it wasn’t long before it became a popular ski field’.80 The images taken on this trip and subsequently published in the Weekly Courier no doubt played a significant role in encouraging people to experience the delights of the mountain in winter.

75 Spurling, ‘Ben Lomond in Winter’, no. IV, p. 35 c. 1.
77 Stephen 3rd referred to this lake as ‘Youl’s Lake’. Today it is known as ‘Lake Youl’. It was named after James Arndell Youl, who owned much of the land north of the plateau. Youl died in 1904.
79 Spurling, ‘Ben Lomond in Winter’, no. IV, p. 35 c. 2.
80 Pink, ‘Spurling captured an unseen Tasmania’, p. 8 c. 5; Pink, ‘Photography was an art’, p. 13 c. 3; Plomley, ‘Ben Lomond: history and science’, p. 143.
Chudleigh Lakes – a winter wonderland

Stephen 3rd’s trip to Ben Lomond in mid-winter was a remarkable photographic achievement, and a feat of physical endurance – made even more difficult given his inadequate clothing and equipment. Since venturing into alpine regions in mid-winter was unusual in this era, Stephen 3rd and his companions had to manage with the only protection available, namely, the bushmen’s bluey, boots and some form of leg protection such as leggings or puttees.81 Leggings were made from leather, canvas or some other similar material and were strapped, buttoned or buckled in place. Puttees were strips of firm fabric (such as wool) wound around the legs (over trousers and socks) from the ankle to below the knee and secured with a pin.82 Boots were leather, often with iron-tipped toes, and were usually hobnailed. A bluey was a blanket-like black overcoat weighing over two kilograms. Although partially waterproof, in wet conditions these garments soon became sodden. Repeatedly dried beside a campfire, blueys acquired an aroma of smoky dampness. Bushmen believed this impregnated smoke acted as a waterproofing agent.83 Although such items were standard equipment for prospectors on Tasmania’s west coast, it soon became apparent to Stephen 3rd that they provided inadequate protection in the Tasmanian highlands in mid-winter. When he contemplated his next winter expedition in July 1904, he and his two companions packed ‘specially warm clothing, the strongest of strong boots, caps with earflaps, thick puttees, and snow shoes’.84 The snowshoes were Stephen 3rd’s own invention. These ‘[w]eird and wonderful looking objects’85 would, he hoped, prevent the party from sinking waist-deep in soft snow.

Thus equipped, the trio waited for snow to fall in the Chudleigh lakes district – their next intended winter conquest. When a telegram arrived advising ‘[d]o not come this

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82 Email from Chris Binks to Christine Burgess, 23 February 2009.
week; weather too bad’, they realised their hosts were unable to comprehend their intentions, and they caught the next train. By the time they reached Deloraine the countryside was blanketed in a white mantle – the heaviest snowfall in years. At Chudleigh the Parson brothers, who were to act as guides, escorted the party to their home at the foot of the Tiers. There were further snowfalls overnight, and they awoke to a strong, northwesterly wind, and the promise of more snow.

Undeterred, they started on ‘what proved to be one of the most arduous journeys’ any of them had ever undertaken.87 There were now six in the group; Stephen 3rd, his two friends, the Parson brothers and a local called Sheen. A short distance up the track they paused at Lee’s farm. Here they weighed their packs, and discovered they were carrying between twenty-seven to thirty-two kilograms apiece. Weighed down by their gear, they spent next few hours struggling up the steep gradient. Gradually the snow became deeper, and at times they forged their way through snowdrifts.88

![Image of snow-covered landscape](Collection of George Eastman House, Rochester, NY)

Stephen Spurling 3rd, **Snowbank, Western Tiers, winter**, 1904, transparency, gelatin silver on glass, 3 ¼ x 3 ¼ inches.

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88 For another photograph of a snowdrift the party encountered see Haygarth, *The Wild Ride*, p. 51.
Shortly after lunch they reached the summit of the Tiers, and gazed upon ‘large surfaces of smooth snow, free from rocks’. It seemed the ideal opportunity to try their snowshoes, but they ‘were doomed to disappointment’. After stumbling a short distance the netting broke. The strips of raw hide, used in construction, were insufficient to take the combined weights of a body and swag. They resumed their toiling, dragging the errant snowshoes behind them. Although near exhaustion, they had to struggle on for a further four kilometres to their accommodation. It was only when they finally arrived and compared notes that they realised how close they had come to seeking oblivion by throwing themselves into the snowdrifts.

Their accommodation was the tourists’ hut at Sandy Beach Lake. It was hardly luxurious. Not only were there metre-high snowdrifts at the front and back, but snow had blown under the doors, through a broken window and gaps in the roof shingles. The nearby lake was frozen. After making one room habitable, they settled down for a sleep. Now ‘the wind veered round to the westward and increased to the fury of a gale, which flung itself against the hut in gusts that shook the building, and seemed as if about to tear the roof off’. The storm continued to vent its fury next morning, so they occupied their time mending their snowshoes, and during the intervals when the storm abated they dashed outside for some snowshoe test runs. After a series of tumbles they eventually achieved some proficiency. When the weather finally cleared they donned their snowshoes and successfully negotiated the frozen Sandy Beach Lake, circumnavigated part of Lake McKenzie and explored a section of the Fisher River.

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92 This hut was opened in December 1903. Jetson, The Roof of Tasmania, p. 81. Sandy Beach Lake or Sandy Lake was later incorporated into Lake McKenzie during a hydro-electric development. Roberts, ‘Stephen Spurling – Adventurer’, pp. 42-43.
The following day the Parson brothers guided the party along a track they had just completed to Parsons Falls on the Fisher River. Here Stephen 3rd described how:

> the stream leaps in a heavy foaming mass into a deep, gloomy-looking pool, bounded by precipitous rocks on all sides except the lower, where the waters rush away with terrific speed. The snow-topped rocks around, the spray and mist rising from the fall, made a most imposing spectacle.\(^{95}\)

On the third day they returned to Parsons Falls for more photographs, and then, while heading towards Balmoral Plains, they came upon a log hut, built some years previously by the Parsons for use during hunting expeditions.

\(^{94}\) *Weekly Courier*, 8 October 1904, p. 23.


The next day dawned fine, and they decided to undertake the arduous trek across Balmoral Plains to Devils Gullet, otherwise known as the Gulf. On arrival they could only marvel at the vista below. Stephen 3rd enthused that while:

[t]he Gulf is a magnificent sight in summer, … in winter the scenic effects are superb; the striking contrast of brilliant snow-fields and black precipitous walls of rock, the wealth of foliage, the distant glittering masses of snow-clad mountains, and the marvellous cloud formations form a subject which would tax the ability of even a Piguenit to faithfully depict. 96

Stephen 3rd and his assistant started taking photographs. They soon discovered ‘that working on the brink of such cliffs, with hands and feet benumbed with cold, and the strong wind rushing by, was anything but safe’. 97 Stephen 3rd eventually secured some shots, but only after taking the precaution of being tied to a tree.

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That evening, while admiring the beauty of their surroundings during a moonlight stroll, the ice on the lake suddenly fractured. By the time they were ready to retire ‘the ice was cracking from end to end of the lake with a noise suggestive of artillery, the loud reports reverberating from peak to peak in a most impressive manner’. This incident led them to wonder if they had stumbled upon the reason for the weird echoes that others had reported emanating from the Western Tiers.

During this trip Stephen 3rd secured a pioneering series of photographs, many of which subsequently appeared in the Weekly Courier. Some of his images included his companions, and others the huts in the region, but many were devoid of humanity. His written accounts emphasised his incredulity at the scenery he had witnessed. Although he acknowledged the limitations of his photographs to express the complexity of these scenes, he attempted to convey some of their grandeur. These images inspired awe and wonderment – the sublime aspects of nature.

The images Stephen 3rd took during this, and his Ben Lomond winter trip, were physical and technical achievements. He and his companions battled freezing weather using improvised equipment. In addition, Stephen 3rd solved the technical difficulties of photographing snow and ice. Photography expert Roger W Hicks has explained that under such conditions high reflectivity can make it difficult to calculate exposure times. According to Hicks, additional problems include heavy equipment, which causes the photographer to overbalance in soft snow, and the combined effects of sub-zero conditions and exertion, which can make the photographer’s hands tremble. Further complications include the tripod sinking into the snow, and fingers freezing to the equipment. Hicks only considered the problems associated with

modern photographic equipment. He did not elaborate on the difficulties early twentieth century photographers encountered when using heavy cameras and fragile glass plates. However, Stephen 3rd managed to overcome all these difficulties, and create a series of images that introduced Tasmanians to the wonders of their highlands in the depths of winter.

**Cradle Mountain – searching for paradise**

Having procured two series of photographs of the Tasmanian highlands in mid-winter, Stephen 3rd now turned his attention to Cradle Mountain. As already discussed, he had visited the area south of Cradle Mountain in 1898, when he accompanied the Examiner party along the Mole Creek track.

Seven years later, during the Easter break, he set out to approach the region from the north.101 His companions on this occasion were Gordon Dodery, Gault Lithgow and the two Roberts brothers, Richard and Knyvet.102 In this era there was no direct access route to Cradle Mountain, so they travelled by train to Railton and then by horse-drawn coach to Wilmot. After an overnight stay, they set out on horseback for Hounsloew Heath, where they set up their camp. On their first morning in the highlands they awoke to a thick mist enveloping the peaks. Forced to abandon their plans to ascend the mountain, they set out to explore a portion of Little Dove River instead.103 Here Stephen 3rd photographed two cascades, which they duly named Knyvet Falls and Robert’s Fall [sic].104

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102 The two Roberts brothers had visited the area in 1897, when they climbed Cradle Mountain. Roberts, ‘Stephen Spurling – Adventurer’, p. 41; Pink, ‘Spurling captured an unseen Tasmania’, p. 8 c. 6; Pink, ‘Photography was an art’, p. 13 c. 4.
103 Now known as Pencil Pine Creek.
104 Roberts Fall is probably a little known cascade downstream from Knyvet Falls. Email from Nic Haygarth to Christine Burgess, 18 March 2005; Roberts, ‘Stephen Spurling – Adventurer’, p. 41.

The following day the weather had cleared sufficiently to attempt an ascent of Cradle Mountain. They trudged through button-grass and then tramped across a grassy plain. By midday they had reached Cradle Valley. From here they forged their way through a stand of fire-wizened fagus, and then scrambled up to a steep plateau. En route they encountered a lake, which they named Crater Lake in the mistaken belief that its shape resembled the pit of an extinct volcano. Stephen 3rd described it as ‘a huge basin depressed below the level of the plateau some 600 to 700 feet, with walls of precipitous rock, which were reflected in a black, gloomy lake in the depths below’.

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105 *Nothofagus gunnii* – an endemic, deciduous beech found in Tasmania’s highlands.
106 It is now generally agreed that Crater Lake was formed by glacial action. Haygarth, *A View to Cradle*, p. 10.
By early afternoon they had reached the foot of the mountain and from this point they paused to admire the view of another lake, which they named Dove Lake – presumably as it was the source of the Dove River.\textsuperscript{109} They then commenced their final assault on the mist-shrouded Big Horn.\textsuperscript{110} Scrambling over loose rocks, they clambered steadily upwards, until finally in the late afternoon they stood triumphant on the pinnacle. Nearby was James Sprent’s trig point. The surveyor had left this tangible reminder of his visit when he calculated the peak’s height at 5069 feet in the 1850s. This claim would remain unchallenged for more than half a century, and until

\textsuperscript{108} Weekly Courier, 3 June 1905, p. 18 (1).
\textsuperscript{109} Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} referred to this lake as Dove Lake and Lake Dove in his 1905 report. For a while it was known as Lake Dove, but was re-gazetted as Dove Lake on 8 June 1994. Email from Tony Naughton, Nomenclature Board, Tasmania, to Christine Burgess, 7 March 2003. See Appendix 3.
\textsuperscript{110} The two peaks of Cradle Mountain were known as Big Horn and Little Horn. Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} popularised the use of Little Horn in his report of this trip. Haygarth, A View to Cradle, p. 205.
the early 1900s, Cradle Mountain was widely regarded as being the highest peak in Tasmania. However, when Stephen 3rd and his companions reached its summit, swirling mists obliterated the distant mountains. Nevertheless, their surroundings were still spectacular, and they ‘were lost in wonder at the chaotic confusion and fantastic shapes of the huge rocks’.

As they began their descent, it started to drizzle. Then a fog enveloped the mountain, obliterating the landmarks. They stumbled on, and neglecting to consult their compass, they came perilously close to the cliffs around Crater Lake. This enforced a detour, and with the light fading, they faced the possibility of spending the night on the snow-covered, wind-swept plateau with limited food. They fumbled on, now using a match to consult their compass. Despite frequent falls, they gradually felt their way down the mountain. Eventually they came to a button-grass plain, and after half an hour of tramping they exclaimed with delight when they reached Grass Tree Creek.

Their exuberance was short-lived. Moments later one of the party, complete with a camera, plunged into the creek, dragging his companion with him. Although they escaped serious injury, they emerged dripping wet and at risk of developing hypothermia. Forced to stop and light two fires to dry their clothes, an onlooker might have observed ‘a group of five individuals attired in very early English costumes (date about the stone age), whose chief interest in life seemed centred in [sic] a collection of steaming garments around the flames’. As they consumed the last of their rations the mists cleared, allowing the Easter moon to shed sufficient light for them to continue on their way. They finally staggered into their camp early next morning, vowing never to forget ‘the night that they crawled off the Cradle’.

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After four hours sleep they awoke to sparkling sunshine. Although two of the party had to return home, the others determined to revisit the mountains. The fresh mountain air and the balmy weather revived their aching limbs, and they soon reached Cradle Valley. Deviating from their previous route, they came upon a plain ‘dotted with numerous lagoons, through which the Dove River winds’. Skirting the high ground for a kilometre or so, they chanced upon a lake ‘of goodly size, and surrounded by open button-grass country on three sides, and a forest of miniature pines on the fourth. This lake, with the surrounding rugged country, made a very picturesque scene’. Enchanted, Stephen 3rd named the lake after his sister Lilla.\footnote{Spurling, ‘A trip to Cradle Mountain’, III, p. 37.}

![Collection of the National Library of Australia](image)

Stephen Spurling 3rd, Lake Lilla, Cradle Mountain, 1905, gelatin silver photograph.

Tramping on to Dove Lake, Stephen 3rd observed how ‘the tiny wooded islets of the lake, the silver threads of waterfalls splashing down the cliffs; the sparkle of the wavelets, and the white quartz beaches’ combined to form one of ‘the grandest of Tasmania’s grand scenes’.\footnote{Lilla Emily Dineen (née Spurling), 28 December 1883 – 19 May 1971. Birth certificate (Rgd. no. 33/ 63 Registration no. 1226, Launceston, 1884, Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office – hereafter TAHO); Record of death: Carr Villa Memorial Park, Launceston; Examiner, 20 May 1971, p. 35 c. 7.}

\footnote{Spurling, ‘A trip to Cradle Mountain’, III, p. 37.}
Stephen Spurling 3rd, ‘Evening Shadows’, (Cradle Mountain from Dove Lake), 1905, postcard, hand colouring, 9 x 14 cm.  

They then headed towards the plateau, hoping to photograph Crater Lake. After an exhausting scramble up a rock-face they arrived as the last rays of sunlight illuminated the lake. Their photographs secured, they faced another descent in darkness. By the time they reached their camp they had spent almost thirty of the previous forty-eight hours trekking and climbing.  

The images taken on this trip proved to be particularly significant. As well as being the first publicly exhibited images of the Cradle Mountain area, they also played a crucial role in the region’s development. Many years later Stephen 3rd recalled this trip in the Waldheim Visitors Book. He wrote:

I can hardly realise that this is the same valley that caused us such discomforts on a pioneering trip made 17 years ago, but all the hardships met with on that occasion have been amply compensated for by the fact that the pictures secured in 1905 attracted Mr

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119 Weekly Courier, 27 May 1905, p. 20 (1).
121 Pink, ‘Spurling captured an unseen Tasmania’, p. 8 c. 7; Pink, ‘Photography was an art’, p. 13 c. 4. The earliest known photographs of Cradle Mountain were taken by ‘Kletterer’ in 1898, using a pocket Kodak camera. Tasmanian Mail, 2 April 1898, p. 4 c. 1-4.
Weindorfer’s attention to the locality and led up to ‘Waldheim’ being established.122

The story of how the Austrian immigrant, Gustav Weindorfer established Waldheim has been recounted by a number of authors. Of these, Jack Cato, Roslynn Haynes, Nic Haygarth and journalist Ron Williams123 mention it was Stephen 3rd’s photographs that first attracted Weindorfer to Cradle Mountain.

Having viewed Stephen 3rd’s images, Gustav Weindorfer made his first visit to Cradle Mountain in January 1909. He returned twelve months later, and on 4 January 1910 his party scaled Cradle Mountain. On reaching the summit Weindorfer spread out his arms and proclaimed that the area should be declared a National Park.124 Two years later Weindorfer commenced the construction of Waldheim Chalet. For a time he, and his wife Kate, attempted to run both the chalet and their farm at Roland Lea, but the workload proved exhausting and eventually they agreed on a share-farm arrangement, which enabled them to devote their energies to the chalet.125 Within a couple of years Kate’s health started to decline and she died on 29 April 1916. Weindorfer arranged for her to be buried in a cemetery at Don near Devonport, and then retreated to his mountain. His sorrow compounded when soon afterwards he learnt of the deaths in Austria of his mother, brother and father.126 Despite his grief, Weindorfer continued to make improvements to Waldheim, and over the next few years he attracted a succession of visitors.127

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For Stephen 3rd a trip to Waldheim represented a chance to enjoy the mountains and an opportunity to take further wilderness images. His 1922 trip proved particularly fruitful on both counts. According to Gustav Weindorfer’s diary, Stephen 3rd and his bushwalking companion, George Perrin arrived on 5 February and departed on 9 February. However, Perrin’s recollections of their journey provide more detail. According to Perrin, during their journey the pair twice became bogged. On the first occasion they prevailed on some timber men and their bullocks to haul them out. The second time the timber men only extricated them. At this point they decided to shoulder their gear and trek to Waldheim, but with darkness descending they missed the track. After a night spent camping under the pandani, they returned to the valley and relocated the route. Then, in the distance they heard Weindorfer firing his gun, and finally they met up with their host.

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128 Papers of James ‘Philosopher’ Smith (NS 234/27/1/8, Gustav Weindorfer Diary, 1 January 1921-14 April 1923, TAHO).

129 According to researcher Anton Lade, when Perrin states ‘we set off on the cases’, he was referring to the kerosene cases Stephen 3rd used as seats in his Hupmobile car. Anton Lade, ‘The caterpillar crawls by night April 1924’, (Unpublished document, c. 2005, copy held by Christine Burgess) p. 1.

130 Letter written by George Perrin to Hazel McCammon, (née Spurling), 8 February 1968 (Copy held by Christine Burgess) pp. 3-4.
Stephen 3rd’s entry in the Waldheim Visitors’ Book records how they had spent ‘five glorious days doing “the Cradle” trips under the modern, ideal conditions evolved by Host Weindorfer’. Amongst the guests staying at Waldheim during Stephen 3rd and Perrin’s stay were the watercolour artist, Charles Hills and his wife, Beulah. Stephen 3rd’s images reveal that during his stay he climbed Cradle Mountain, and photographed Lake Lilla, Mount Campbell, the Artists Pool and Flynns Tarn.

Collection of the National Library of Australia

Stephen Spurling 3rd, Cradle Mountain from the North, 1922, gelatin silver photograph.

Collection of the National Library of Australia


131 Spurling, Waldheim Visitors’ Book, 7 February 1921 [sic].


Stephen Spurling 3rd, Cradle Mountain – from Flynn's Tarn, 1922, gelatin silver photograph.
On their final day at Waldheim, a number of guests, including Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd}, George Perrin and Beulah Hills explored Dove Lake. Perrin recollected how ‘Steve wanted a picture of Cradle and the Little Horn from the Lake, so we made a raft of Pine driftwood’.\textsuperscript{132} The raft had other uses. Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} recorded that he had ‘had the honour thrust upon him of piloting the first lady visitor to the Honeymoon Islands – Dove Lake. Mrs Charles Hills (Beulah) having the record of making the first landing from the raft “Beulah”’. The image of the scene below, as well as some of the above landscapes, includes one or more figures, either reclining, or surveying the scenery. Like the artist Conrad Martens, Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} has depicted these figures as comfortable, and appreciating the beauty of their surroundings.\textsuperscript{133} Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd}’s stay at Waldheim was enjoyable, and he concluded his entry in the visitors’ book with ‘Waldheim (The Grand Hotel of the Mountains) is ideal absolutely ideal and so is our host’.\textsuperscript{134}

![Image of Cradle Mountain from the Honeymoon Islands, Dove Lake, 1922, gelatin silver photograph.](Collection of the National Library of Australia)

\textsuperscript{132} Letter written by George Perrin to Hazel McCammon, 8 February 1968, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{133} Tim Bonyhady, \textit{Images in opposition: Australian landscape painting 1801-1890} (Melbourne, 1985) p. 75.
\textsuperscript{134} Spurling, \textit{Waldheim Visitors’ Book}, 7 February 1921 [sic].
Most of the above images exhibit strong elements of the picturesque. However, the image *Cradle Mountain – Hidden Lake*, which depicts a steep cliff and a distant lake nestled in a valley, has more in common with the sublime. Other images are worth probing for the story behind the picture. For example, the image *The Artist's Pool* depicts a tarn that the artist Charles Hills named and painted during his honeymoon at Waldheim in 1912. In addition, the image *Cradle Mountain – from Flynn’s Tarn*, depicts the lakelet named after Professor T Thomas Flynn, a biologist at the University of Tasmania from 1909 to 1931. Flynn stayed at Waldheim in December 1915. Despite his distinguished academic career, his actor-son Errol probably achieved greater public recognition.

Stephen 3rd’s attraction to the Cradle Mountain area continued. Apart from the 1924 car trip to Waldheim Chalet with his friends in the bizarre Citroën-Kégresse, he also visited Waldheim with his family. Their daughter Hazel would later relate Marie’s tales of ‘how unusual it was to come to Waldheim which was so completely cut off from civilisation and hear the strains of a full orchestra playing Beethoven or Bach’. Hazel also recalled Weindorfer visiting the Spurling home in Launceston. The attraction was their new pianola. According to Hazel, Weindorfer ‘didn’t speak – [he] just listened to the hand played rolls’.

Their friendship had extended over many years and when Weindorfer died, on 5 May 1932, Stephen 3rd was grief-stricken. Weindorfer had died alone on the mountains and that knowledge plagued Stephen 3rd for the rest of his life. Although

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135 Haygarth, *A View to Cradle*, p. 203; Giordano, *A Man and a Mountain*, p. 69; Email from Tony Naughton to Christine Burgess, Nomenclature Board, Tasmania, 30 June 2005.
138 *Examiner*, 19 April 1924, p. 7 c. 2-5; *Advocate*, 19 April 1924, p. 10 c. 2-4. See Chapter 4.
139 Hazel McCammon, Notes (Undated, copy held by Christine Burgess).
140 Hazel McCammon, Notes.
142 Hazel McCammon, Recollections.
many of Weindorfer’s friends gathered to attend his funeral and burial ‘on the edge of the forest, close to “Waldheim”’, Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} was not amongst the attendees.\textsuperscript{143} In a final tragic twist, his friends disagreed as to where Weindorfer should be buried. Should he be interred beside his wife in the churchyard at Don near Devonport, or on the mountain that had once brought him joy, but in later years had been the source of his extreme loneliness?\textsuperscript{144} The division between people who had been companions for so long compounded the loss they felt at Weindorfer’s passing.

Despite his devastation at Weindorfer’s death, Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} still longed to revisit this jewel of Tasmanian highland scenery. Four years after Weindorfer’s death, he and Marie returned to Waldheim. During this stay they spent five days with the new proprietors, the Connell family. Their entry in the visitors’ book on 9 March 1936 was succinct, but poignant: ‘Mr & Mrs Spurling, Launceston. Have enjoyed immensely being in “Paradise” for an all too short a period. Recommend as worthy of a visit the Canyons of the Cradle’.\textsuperscript{145} Although Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} believed the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair area was equitable with paradise, there was another jewel of Tasmanian scenery that was close to his heart.

**Gordon and Franklin Rivers – reflections**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd}’s pictorial record of his 1906\textsuperscript{146} trip to Tasmania’s west coast included images of settlements, mining activity and the Gordon and Franklin Rivers. While his images of man-built structures had historical value, his images of these rivers would in future years become important for their

\textsuperscript{143} *Examiner*, 11 May 1932, p. 8 c. 6. Those who attended the funeral included Charles Monds, George Perrin, Jack Branagan and Frederick Smithies.


\textsuperscript{145} Stephen Spurling 3\textsuperscript{rd}, *Waldheim Visitors’ Book*, v. 2, 5-9 March 1936, p. 42.

\textsuperscript{146} This date is based on the fact that the images from this trip started appearing in the *Weekly Courier* in May 1906, suggesting Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} undertook his journey earlier that year. The claim that the trip took place in 1901 is hard to explain given that one of the images taken on this trip, *Magnet Tram at Arthur River*, features the ‘new’ tramway built in 1902. *Weekly Courier*, 9 June 1906, p. 20.
aesthetic qualities, and value in environmental campaigns. Although Stephen 3rd did not record an in-depth account of this trip, a newspaper report subsequently described it as being undertaken in ‘difficult circumstances’. Many years later, in an article for Harringtons’ Photographic Journal, Stephen 3rd wrote:

[n]ever will I forget my first impressions of this magnificent stream. Hiring at Strahan a smart 20 foot fishing boat and her skipper, we sailed the length of Macquarie Harbour, and spent some days photographing and exploring the gems of scenery which abound at every turn of the windings of the 20 odd navigable miles of the Gordon River. The charm of the river is undoubtedly the magnificent setting provided by the steep gorges through which it winds, the hills on both sides being clad from water’s edge to lofty summit with a wealth of verdant foliage. On a still day the reflections are indescribable.

While his pen might have failed him, his camera was a different matter.

Stephen Spurling 3rd, Grasstree Bend, Gordon River, c. 1906, gelatin silver photograph.

147 Mercury, 13 March 1907, p. 3.

Each of these images depicts the waterway on calm, clear days when the thickly wooded hills created perfect reflections in the tannin-stained waters. The image, *Grasstree Bend*, was taken just past the First Gorge on the Gordon River. This is less than two kilometres upstream from where the grasstree or pandani (*Richea pandanifolia*) first appears on the riverbanks. The image *Evening on the Gordon River, Tas*, was taken a little further upstream, at a spot known as Pine Landing or Boom Camp. Here the piners once set their boom nets to catch the huon pine logs as they floated down the river.

![Image of a boat along the Gordon River.](Private Collection)

*Stephen Spurling 3rd, Piner’s Landing, c. 1906, gelatin silver photograph.*

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149 Somewhat confusingly, this image first appeared in the *Weekly Courier*, 9 April 1908 as *Logger’s Bend*. A different image, initially called *Grasstree Bend*, appeared in the *Weekly Courier*, 29 June 1907, p. 21.

150 Email from Trevor Norton, West Coast Yacht Charters, Strahan, to Christine Burgess, 21 January 2009.

151 Information provided by Trevor Norton, West Coast Yacht Charters, Strahan, March 2005.
As discussed in Chapter 3, a slightly modified and cropped version of Stephen 3rd’s *Evening on the Gordon River* image, along with his image, *A Peep on Gordon River, W Coast, Tas*, have become part of the repertoire of Beattie’s Studio images. It is possible *Evening on the Gordon River* was also the basis for the Haughton Forrest oil painting *Forest Landscape with River Valley*. However, the image *Franklin River, Near Gordon River*, is perhaps the most significant image in this series – it may well be the earliest known photograph of this river. It was taken looking upstream, possibly from Pyramid Island; situated at the convergence of the two rivers. This area would have been inundated, had the Hydro Electric Commission’s planned damming of the Gordon and Franklin Rivers proceeded in the early 1980s.

Other Stephen 3rd images would subsequently have associations with the anti-dam protest. As mentioned in the Introduction, the image *Rocky Reach* was used in one of the publications denouncing the proposed hydro-electric development. Another image, *Gordon River, Butler Island* depicts the area, which in September 1982 became the centre of a vigil to protest the building of the dam. Stephen 3rd’s image of this monolith bears a certain resemblance to photographer Peter Dombrovskis’ image *Rock Island Bend, Franklin River*. However, it is not clear if Dombrovskis was aware of the Spurling image when he took his photograph. Although the two rocks are similar in appearance, they are actually some distance apart. Butler Island,
named after a former commandant on Sarah Island, Captain Butler,\textsuperscript{162} lies sentinel-like in the lower reaches of the Gordon River, upstream from the Marble Cliffs. However, Rock Island withstands the swirling torrents in the Franklin, before its convergence with the Gordon.\textsuperscript{163}

![Image of Gordon River and Rock Island.](Collection of the National Library of Australia)

Stephen Spurling 3\textsuperscript{rd}, \textit{Gordon River, Butler Island}, c. 1906, gelatin silver photograph.

Just beyond Butler Island a small tributary, known as Cataract Creek, enters the Gordon River. Here, ‘beneath a canopy of overhanging vegetation, the traveller emerges into a pool of troubled water, into which with a resounding roar, the Sir John Falls plunge’.\textsuperscript{164} When Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} visited these falls there was some uncertainty as to their name, so he named them Sir John Falls after Sir John Dodds of Hobart.\textsuperscript{165}


\textsuperscript{163} Letter written by Max Heinz, Wilderness Society Editor, to Christine Burgess, 6 May 2004.

\textsuperscript{164} \textit{Mercury}, 1 September 1932, p. 13 c. 5.

\textsuperscript{165} \textit{Mercury}, 13 March 1907, p. 3; Email from Tony Naughton, Nomenclature Board, Tasmania, to Christine Burgess, 7 March 2003. The falls were not named after Sir John Franklin, Lieutenant Governor of Van Diemen’s Land, as is sometimes claimed. Sir John Dodds was a prominent Hobart lawyer, judge and politician.

These photographs represent a small fraction of Stephen 3rd's Gordon River images. Apart from appearing in publications such as John Ware’s *Tasmania’s Eldorado* and the *Weekly Courier*, the Spurling studio reproduced these images as postcards, mounted prints and lantern slides.

However, Stephen 3rd was not the first photographer to venture up the Gordon River. Others, such as Frank E Pousty and L Gray Williams, had photographs published in the *Weekly Courier* prior to the appearance of Stephen 3rd's images. Nevertheless, Stephen 3rd's images were, at that time, probably the most successful and comprehensive collection of images featuring these rivers. Fellow photographer John Watt Beattie was not so fortunate. As mentioned in the Introduction, when Beattie visited the Gordon River in the late 1890s, he appears to have taken very few photographs. When he returned in April 1908, he endured extremely wet conditions, and, although he spent just over a week in the vicinity, only two days proved suitable taking photographs. The evidence suggests Beattie returned with only a handful of images.

The Central Plateau – ‘terror incognito’

Two years after his Gordon River trip, Stephen 3rd undertook a very different photographic mission. One overcast February morning in 1908, he and his companions H Scott and Knyvet Roberts set off along the Higgs track to climb the Western Tiers. It was an inauspicious start. Strapped to their backs were thirty-kilogram swags, and, despite enquiries, they had been unable to learn specific details.

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166 John Ware, Strahan, Macquarie Harbour: the commercial port of the western mineral fields; *Tasmania’s Eldorado* (Strahan, 1909?) pp. 39, 41, 43?, 45, 51, 53, 55, 57, 58; *Weekly Courier*, 7 July 1906, p. 22; 25 May 1907, p. 22; 1 June 1907, pp. 20, 21; 8 June 1907, pp. 20, 21, 22; 15 June 1907, pp. 19, 20, 21; 22 June 1907, pp. 20, 21; 29 June 1907, pp. 20, 21; 6 July 1907, p. 20; 9 April 1908, p. 17; *Weekly Courier Annual Special Number*, 7 November 1907, pp. 2, 13, 20, 29, 34.


169 Date based on the fact that the photographs from this trip appeared in the *Weekly Courier* in 1908.
of the country ahead.\textsuperscript{170} The little information they had gleaned suggested their intended route was through a nearly impenetrable wilderness – ‘a terror incognito’.\textsuperscript{171}

On reaching the plateau they encountered wild winds, sleet and rain – making further progress impossible. Forced to seek shelter, they left the track and set up camp near Lake Balmoral.\textsuperscript{172} Here they spent a restless night, with their lightweight blankets providing little protection against the elements. By morning the weather had cleared and they resumed their trek, now navigating by compass and map. They passed between Lake Lucy Long and Ironstone Mountain, and then headed in a southwesterly direction towards Mount Olympus. They spent the next four days toiling over the plateau, battling obstacles and detouring around countless miniature lakes. At times they sloshed through hundreds of metres of spongy ground, and in other places the undergrowth was so thick they had to protect their legs. Once, while wading across a shallow lake, one of the party started sinking into some quicksand. Somewhat fortuitously, he was wearing little more than a pair of leggings slung around his neck, and after a frenetic struggle, he managed to extricate himself unscathed.

Eventually they reached a high point of the plateau. Here ‘the timber and scrub all bore that sparse stunted appearance familiar on mountain tops, and bird and animal life excepting a species of small green snakes there seemed to be practically none’.\textsuperscript{173} The country then sloped away towards thickly timbered valleys and more lakelets. The journey seemed interminable. They started early and tramped until after dark, but their goal remained elusive. At one stage they crossed some button-grass plains interspersed with stands of gum. Here there were birds in abundance and kangaroos

\textsuperscript{170} Although Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} had been unable to obtain accurate information about their planned route, there had been previous expeditions to this area. Haygarth, ‘The summit of our ambition’, pp. 212, 222. However, the route taken by Weston in 1886 was someone different to the one Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} proposed. Email from Nic Haygarth to Christine Burgess, 18 December 2009.

\textsuperscript{172} Spurling, Jun., ‘Across the Plateau’, (c. 1908, Unpublished document in Stephen Spurling 3\textsuperscript{rd}’s scrapbook – copies of several drafts held by Christine Burgess). Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} enjoyed a pun on ‘terra’.

leapt away as they approached. On the morning of the fourth day they clambered along a rocky outcrop and spied a lake glistening in the depths below. It appeared to be nearly five kilometres long and up to a kilometre wide, and, as it was un-named and un-marked on their maps, they named it Lake Spurling.\footnote{Believed to be the lake now known as Lake Rengeena. Although their estimated dimensions suggest a somewhat larger lake, the simplest explanation is that they were mistaken about its size. Roberts, ‘Stephen Spurling – Adventurer’, p. 44; Binks, ‘Stephen Spurling’s Plateau Journey – 1908’.}

From this point, the terrain appeared exceedingly rough. They dumped their swags and scrambled up a nearby peak, hoping that the higher elevation would enable them to determine the best route. From the summit, they gazed down into a deep valley ‘of beautiful green plains which led the eye up to a magnificent panorama of the rugged serrated masses of the Du Cane Range, looming very big in the summer haze’.\footnote{Spurling, ‘Across the Plateau’, p. 3.}

Most probably they were standing within the vicinity the peak that would one day bear Stephen 3rd’s name – Mount Spurling.\footnote{Named by the Nomenclature Board in 1955.}
The next day they negotiated their way around an un-named mountain and finally they glimpsed Mount Olympus. Somewhat cheered now their goal was in sight, they made plans to camp at Lake St Clair. Their exuberance proved premature. Late that afternoon they discovered they would have to descend an almost precipitous, 600-metre drop to Lake Laura, which proved:

as severe a battle through the scrub as any of the party [could] wish for. Every few yards was a miniature cliff clothed to the brink with every form of scrub and creepers through which we forced our way, crawling under or over obstacles, sliding and falling over moss covered trunks, wading through and down creeks, and tearing our way through small scrub, we battled every foot of the way until, at last darkness … [found] us in a myrtle forest along side of Lake Laura.\footnote{According to researcher Chris Binks their most likely route was through the Walls of Jerusalem, past the Ling Roth Lakes, on to the Mountains of Jupiter, and then south to Lake Rengeena. Then they probably made their descent down the escarpment from the northern end of Lake Laura. Emails from Chris Binks to Christine Burgess, 19 May 2005; 14 December 2005; 2 February 2009; Binks, ‘Stephen Spurling’s Plateau Journey – 1908’. Email from Chris Binks to Christine Burgess, 22 February 2010. Spurling, ‘Across the Plateau’, p. 4.}
There was no hope of reaching Lake St Clair that evening, so they set about preparing a camp. However, they first they had to spend half-an-hour clearing a site.


Stephen Spurling 3rd, *Mt Olympus from Lake Laura*, 1908, gelatin silver photograph.
Early next morning they discovered the dangers of sleeping in a myrtle forest. Just as they finished their breakfast a giant myrtle came crashing to the ground, perilously close to their camp. Severely shaken, they packed up and struggled through the tangle of vegetation to the shores of Lake St Clair. Here they paused ‘to admire this lovely sheet of water and various surrounding mountain peaks’, before selecting a spot, near to where the Narcissus River flows into the lake, to make a new camp.

That evening, as they ‘watched the shadow of Olympus creeping out over the sun-lit water’, they reflected they ‘were in no-wise ashamed of our performance’ and that their ‘torn and dishevelled clothing, worn boots, and aching limbs, … [as well as] sundry sprains and scars bore eloquent testimony to the gruelling we had en route’.  

Now they faced a new problem – hunger. With their food supplies nearing exhaustion, they set some snares hoping to replenish their larder. In the meantime they transformed a two-day dead echidna into a stew. Somewhat sated, they settled down for a sleep. It was not to be. During the night a snake entered their tent and

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179 Spurling, ‘Across the Plateau’, p. 4. Thirty years later the Hydro Electric Commission constructed a weir at the point where the Derwent River flows from the lake, thereby raising the lake’s height by 2.4 metres. Email from John Marriott, Hydro Tasmania, to Christine Burgess, 22 November 2004.
caused havoc when it flicked one of the party.\textsuperscript{181} There were more shouts early next morning, when they discovered misty clouds shrouding Mount Olympus. By the time Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} had grabbed his camera and made his way to the lake, the mists had started to disperse,\textsuperscript{182} creating a drift of clouds somewhat reminiscent to those in William Charles Piguenit’s \textit{Butts of Ben Lomond} (1878).\textsuperscript{183} Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} took his photograph, and in doing so captured what was to become one of his favourite images.\textsuperscript{184} This photograph bears certain similarities to some Piguenit paintings of the same scene – such as \textit{Mount Olympus, Lake St Clair} (1875) and \textit{Mount Olympus and Lake St Clair} (1887).\textsuperscript{185} These paintings picture the lake and mountain from a similar angle, and feature the same ‘serene water [and] craggy peaks … [however] Piguenit embellished his landscape with romantic sensibility’.\textsuperscript{186} By contrast, Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd}’s image depicted the scene as it was, without embellishment.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image}
\caption{Collection of the McCammon family}
\end{figure}

\textbf{Stephen Spurling 3\textsuperscript{rd}, ‘Drifting Mists’, Mount Olympus, Lake St Clair, 1908, gelatin silver photograph, hand colouring.}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{181} Spurling, ‘Across the Plateau’, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{183} Binks, \textit{Explorers of Western Tasmania}, opposite p. 144; Radford and Hylton, \textit{Australian Colonial Art}, p. 67.
\textsuperscript{184} For many years Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd}’s son Ted, and daughter Hazel, had copies of this image in their homes.
\textsuperscript{186} Horne, \textit{The pursuit of wonder}, p. 40.
\end{flushleft}
The next day the adventurers decided to scale Mt Olympus. It proved an arduous climb, but by midday they had reached a sandstone ridge that led to a grassy plain. On clambering up some huge blocks of basalt, they discovered a stunning view of Lake St Clair and the surrounding mountains.  

Stephen Spurling 3rd, *From Mt Olympus, Lake St Clair*, 1908, gelatin silver photograph.

The next day they moved their camp closer to Byron Saddle. They re-set their snares, hoping the new location would prove more bountiful than their previous futile attempt. Their hopes were in vain. When one of the party checked the traps, not only did he discover that they were empty, but he was nearly bitten by a large black snake. With their situation now desperate, they reduced their meals to half-rations. The following day, despite their hunger, they decided to explore Lake Marion. After a tramp of eleven kilometres they reached a ‘charming lake ... situated right in under a part of the Du Cane Range and ... flanked on one side by the lofty slopes of Mt Gould’. From here they scrambled up a slope beneath an overhanging cliff, and at the summit they gazed at possibly ‘the finest mountain panorama of Tasmania’.

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With hunger gnawing at their stomachs, they made a weary return to camp. Their
snares were still empty, so early next morning they decided to head towards the
southern end of Lake St Clair, in the forlorn hope that they might encounter a tourist
party. They struck camp and headed across the Byron Saddle towards Lake Petrarch.

Here they divided their last scraps of food and continued southwards. With the
afternoon sun scorching their backs, they staggered onwards, over a seemly endless
sea of button-grass. Their journey seemed interminable, but eventually they
discerned a line of pegs, which marked the Lake St Clair to Zeehan track. After days
in the wilderness, this was their first indication that they were close to civilisation.\textsuperscript{190}

\textsuperscript{190} Spurling, ‘Across the Plateau’, p. 6.
Finally, in the early evening they arrived footsore, weary and famished at the accommodation house near Cynthia Bay. A frantic search for something edible produced one small packet of flour, from which they concocted a miniature damper, which they put aside for their breakfast. Although this marble-like morsel did little to sustain them, they set out next morning on the twenty-kilometre march to the Pearce family settlement.191 With ‘the morning sun … blazing hot and water scarce’, this trek would stay etched in their memories as ‘the hardest gruelling of the trip’.192 Eventually, around midday they reached their destination, where the redoubtable Mrs Pearce produced a veritable feast. Replete, they headed towards Bronte.

191 The Pearces were district pioneers, and renowned for their hospitality. Binks, ‘Stephen Spurling’s Plateau Journey – 1908’; Email from Chris Binks to Christine Burgess, 23 April 2005.
They now faced a new problem. For some days one of the party had been walking with twisted ankles (the result of broken boots), and now they needed to accelerate their pace. They struggled on, with their companion in agony. That evening they camped on the banks of the Serpentine River and the following night they curled up on the floor of a shepherd’s hut near Great Lake. On their final day they trekked a further thirty kilometres up the east side of the lake. After a brief stop to boil their billy, they set off for Jackeys Marsh and their pre-arranged rendezvous with transport back to Deloraine.193 Stephen 3rd recalled ‘after doing an 80 mile walk in three days over a rough track, the luxury of driving was unspeakable’.194

Some years later Stephen 3rd referred to this trip as ‘a remarkable trek through some of the most rugged parts of our central mountain heritage’.195 Despite this claim, his account failed to attract a publisher. In 1978 author (and son of Knyvet) Barney Roberts, went further, describing Stephen 3rd’s trip as ‘perhaps the most gruelling … trek that he made’.196 Little has changed. Even today, much of the plateau country remains a ‘terror incognito’. In 1995, bushwalkers John Pottage, Phil Staff and Colin Cody trekked through some of this terrain during their trip from Mount Ida, past Lakes Rim and Payanna to Lake Chalice. Cody described this region as a ‘trackless wilderness’. He continued: ‘there are few visible signs of where anyone has actually been … the elements must be respected at all times; plateau country is particularly exposed. … Fitness … is essential’.197

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193 Some days earlier they had paid a shepherd to travel thirty kilometres and send a telegram requesting transport from Jackeys Marsh.
194 Spurling, ‘Across the Plateau’, p. 7. ‘The “road” from Derwent to Marlborough was rough, but not bad for walking. The route through Bronte to Great Lake was largely a stock route. The track from the N end of Great Lake to Jackeys Marsh still exists’. Binks, ‘Stephen Spurling’s Plateau Journey – 1908’.
195 Stephen Spurling 3rd made this reference in a covering letter written to a potential publisher (Undated, found in Stephen Spurling 3rd’s scrapbook – copy held by Christine Burgess).
While Stephen 3rd’s journey proved a battle against the odds, it was also a photographic achievement. However, when considering the images taken, it becomes apparent that there are very few recording the first few days of the trek. As Stephen 3rd offers no explanation, either these images have been lost; or bad weather, combined with the rough terrain, made photography impossible. Alternatively, perhaps some of his exposed glass plates broke during the descent to Lake Laura. Whatever the reason, Stephen 3rd lost no time in making a photographic record of the trip from Lake Laura onwards.

Another interesting feature of the photographs taken on this trip is the general lack of a human presence. Apart from a few images that depict either their tent and/or figures, the majority of images portray landscapes devoid of humanity. Was this happenstance, or was this a deliberate ploy to move away from the nineteenth strategy, as exemplified by William Charles Piguenit, of depicting a small human figure to indicate ‘the immensity of scale … and visually lay claim to the land they survey’? Whatever the reason, the majority of images taken on this trip obey the picturesque conventions, and feature foliage framing the image, a central point of interest and distant peaks. However, a few images, such as On Du Cane Range, which features rugged mountain ranges and moody cloud formations, evoke aspects of the sublime.

Despite the deprivations suffered on this trip, Stephen 3rd still yearned to spend more time in the Tasmania’s wild places. Over the following years he, and various companions, undertook further excursions to the central highlands.

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198 Images from this trip appeared in the Weekly Courier on 23 April 1908, p. 19; 30 April 1908, p. 17; 14 May 1908, p. 17; 21 May 1908, pp. 21, 22; 28 May 1908, p. 17; 2 July 1908, p. 17; 9 July 1908, pp. 17, 23; 16 July 1908, p. 22; 6 August 1908, pp. 20, 24; 2 September 1908, p. 23; 31 December 1908, p. 21, 24; 11 August 1910, p. 21; Weekly Courier Special Number, 10 November 1908, pp. 18, 35; 18 February 1909, p. 20; Tasmanian Mail, 12 September 1912, p. 24.

199 Haynes, Tasmanian Visions, pp. 155-158.
The Forth Valley to Barn Bluff and the Mersey Valley to Lake St Clair – peaks beyond Cradle

One year after his trip across the Central Plateau, Stephen 3rd decided to explore the peaks beyond Cradle. His companion on this occasion was George Perrin, and this would be the first of many trips the pair made together. Perrin and his wife Florence later became noted Tasmanian bushwalkers in their own right. They visited many remote Tasmanian highland areas, and Paddy Harnett named Perrins Bluff in recognition of their ascent of this peak.200

In late March 1909, Perrin’s father cranked up his Napier car and drove his son George and Stephen 3rd to Liena.201 Here they met a packer who assisted in transporting their gear. They strapped their supplies to two horses, and began their climb. According to historian Chris Binks, they probably followed the old Van Diemen’s Land Company road to Lorinna. From here, they trekked up the Forth Valley, across Sloane’s Bridge and up Razorback Hill – so-named for its 530-metre climb and up to one in three gradient.202 At one stage the steepness of their route caused one of the horses to topple backwards. According to Perrin, they ‘swung him round and tucked his feet under and all three hanging on up he got’.203 Finally, they reached their accommodation – ‘a deserted prospector’s hut, near Barn Bluff’.204

Almost as soon as the packer departed it started to snow, forcing Perrin and Stephen 3rd to spend the next eight days confined to the hut. Their only visitors during this period were native animals seeking shelter from the wintry blasts. When storm

201 Spurling, ‘Tasmanian Scenes’, p. 13 c. 1. In his letter Perrin states the date was ‘1916(? )’. However, the photographs from this trip appeared in the *Weekly Courier* in 1909.
clouds finally abated and the snow began to thaw, the pair set out to explore the region.205 Once, while attempting to cross a river on horizontal scrub, Stephen 3rd stumbled and lost his tomahawk, prompting him to name a nearby cascade Tomahawk Falls.206 On another ‘glorious morning’, they trekked ‘across the plateau bathed in sunshine’.207 Stephen 3rd later extolled ‘[o]nly those who have experienced it can realize the exhilaration of such a day in the mountains’.208

![Image of a landscape with mountains and trees.](Collection of the Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office, State Library of Tasmania)

**Stephen Spurling 3rd, *Mount Ossa from the Pelion Saddle*, 1909, gelatin silver photograph.**209

Another challenge that they were unable to resist was the lure of scaling nearby Barn Bluff. Stephen 3rd regarded the tor as ‘one of the most striking of the many peaks which rise abruptly from the central plateau’,210 but George Perrin was more

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206 In his letter George Perrin refers to the waterway Commonwealth Creek. However, Tomahawk Falls are on Bluff River. Since Stephen 3rd also photographed nearby Tumbledown Falls, it seems this was the more likely waterway, and that George Perrin was mistaken about the name.
209 Pelion Saddle was the early name of a saddle near to Pine Forest Moor, and is some distance from Pelion Gap. Email from Nic Haygarth to Christine Burgess, 29 October 2008; Email from Peter Roberts-Thomson to Christine Burgess, 27 January 2009; Email from Chris Binks to Christine Burgess, 31 January 2009; Our Special, ‘Westward Ho – The Mole Creek Track’, no. 3, *Examiner*, 24 March 1898, p. 5.
dubious, believing it to be ‘unclimbed unclimbable’. Despite Perrin’s apprehension, they achieved their goal. To record their visit, Stephen 3rd wrote a note, which he placed in a tin matchbox. Searching around for somewhere to stow it, he turned over a stone, and discovered a similar tin containing a note from a survey party who had scaled the peak three weeks earlier.

During the course of their stay Stephen 3rd took a series of whole-plate negatives. Many of these later appeared in the *Weekly Courier*. However, in his opinion, the most successful shot taken during this trip was his image (pictured above) of Barn Bluff. This photograph was probably taken from near to where today’s track to

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211 Letter written by George Perrin to Hazel McCammon, 8 February 1968, p. 2.
212 Letter written by George Perrin to Hazel McCammon, 8 February 1968, p. 2.
Lake Will leaves the Overland Track.\textsuperscript{215} With a foreground of foliage, a background peak reflected in a tranquil tarn, and a small figure surveying the scene, this image exhibits strong elements of the picturesque as well as aspects of the sublime.

Four years later, in 1913, Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} and George Perrin made another trip to the peaks beyond Cradle. According to Perrin, their party also included insurance agent Fred Smithies, American dentist Ray McClinton\textsuperscript{216} and prospector, Paddy Hartnett.\textsuperscript{217} As discussed in the previous chapter, they once again used pack horses to transport their equipment. This was something of a gamble because pack horses had not been taken into this part of the highlands before, and at one stage one of the animals lurched into a mud-bath.\textsuperscript{218} Although little has been recorded about their journey, it seems their most likely route was up the Mersey Valley, past Howells Bluff and Lees Paddocks and then on to Hartnett’s hut in the Du Cane Range.\textsuperscript{219} En route they visited, named and photographed Hartnett Falls.\textsuperscript{220} The journey took two days and when they finally reached the hut it was an hour past midnight. According to Perrin, ‘the horses were tired and we were worse’.\textsuperscript{221} After taking a day to recover, they made a series of excursions to nearby areas. These included a visit to Lake St Clair, and a particularly arduous trek up Mount Gould, with Hartnett carrying their heavy photographic gear. Perrin recalled spotting snakes and a platypus. It was, as he said, their ‘biggest day’.\textsuperscript{222}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[216] Letter written by George Perrin to Hazel McCammon, 8 February 1968, p. 2; Haygarth, \textit{A View to Cradle}, p. 108.
\item[219] Haygarth, \textit{A View to Cradle}, pp. 98, 150.
\item[220] See Chapter 4.
\item[221] Letter written by George Perrin to Hazel McCammon, 8 February 1968, p. 2.
\item[222] Letter written by George Perrin to Hazel McCammon, 8 February 1968, p. 2.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}

While the principal reason for this trip was to secure “movie” pictures of some especially rugged country north of Lake St Clair, Stephen 3rd also took a series of still images. Apart from his depiction of their attempts to extricate their horse wallowing in mud, other photographs included Hartnett Falls and a piners’ camp. Another image featuring cattle grazing in a paddock, behind which loomed a chain of mountains once known to the local bushmen as ‘Rugged Mountain’. Today these peaks bear ecclesiastical names. Chris Binks has identified the two peaks in the centre of the image below as the Twin Spires, with Cathedral Mountain on the far right. The area in the foreground was formally known as ‘The Paddocks’, but is now called ‘Lees Paddocks’. Binks describes the spot as ‘a delightful place … the Mersey River flows gently through the trees on the edge of the plain beyond the

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224 Email from Nic Haygarth to Christine Burgess, 30 March 2005. Images of this trip appeared in the *Weekly Courier* on 3 April 1913, p. 17; 24 June 1913, p. 19; 7 August 1913, pp. 21, 22.
225 Email from Chris Binks to Christine Burgess, 31 March 2005.
226 In this era wild cattle roamed throughout the highlands. Emails from Nic Haygarth to Christine Burgess, 31 March 2005; 12 April 2005.
cattle, overhung by myrtles’. While Stephen 3rd only occasionally photographed animals, he did refer to native animals and birds in his writing and sporadically mentioned introduced species. For example, in his account of his 1905 trip to Cradle Mountain he described seeing ‘herds of magnificent half-wild cattle which roamed through the woods’. His inclusion of cattle in this scene is reminiscent of William Charles Piguenit’s *Butts of Ben Lomond, Tasmania* (1878).

Other notable images taken during this trip include several of Lake St Clair. One of these images, *Mount Olympus, Lake St Clair*, depicted Paddy Hartnett and his dog in a rowboat, not far from the shore. Above them loomed the snow-capped peaks of Mount Olympus. Nic Haygarth suggests the inclusion of ‘human figures seem to have been more often compositional or indicative of scale than evocative of the

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227 Email from Chris Binks to Christine Burgess, 31 March 2005.
231 Email from Nic Haygarth to Christine Burgess, 17 September 2003.
Sublime’. There is also the element, described by Helen Ennis and employed by the photographer Charles Bayliss, of going ‘beyond the picturesque’ in his ‘relationship with the landscape … and with his imagined viewer’. According to Ennis, the depiction of a rowboat, path, stairway or jetty in the foreground provided an entry point for the viewer. She believes Bayliss used such motifs to invite the viewer into the image and ‘to be transported into another realm by the viewing experience’. Stephen 3rd had used boat images before. Examples include his images Piner’s Landing and Rocky Reach taken during his circa 1906 trip up the Gordon River. Although Stephen 3rd’s image Rocky Reach is similar to Bayliss’ Warragamba River (c. 1876), it is not known whether he was familiar with Bayliss’ work.

![Collection of the National Library of Australia](image)

Stephen Spurling 3rd, Mt Olympus, Lake St Clair, 1913, gelatin silver photograph.

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235 See Introduction.
236 Ennis, *Intersections*, p. 94.
In recalling this trip, Stephen 3rd described Lake St Clair as:

easily the gem of Tasmanian highland scenery … Between the reed-beds, where the Derwent River takes its rise in the south, and the placid waters of the Narcissus in the north, there are nine miles of magnificent scenery. … Mount Olympus overshadows the lake for many miles on the western side, and the labyrinth of forest that leads up steeply from the dark waters to the beetling crags 2000 feet above combines to make scenery ideal as a camera subject … 237

While he revelled in the opportunities the lake presented for photography, Stephen 3rd’s days of treks in the wilds of Tasmania were nearly over. His marriage the following year brought increased family and business commitments, and less time for extended treks into remote regions. However, the lure of the mountains remained, and in early 1920 he set out on his final assault on the Tasmanian highlands.

**Frenchmans Cap – thwarted by nature**

When Stephen 3rd decided to trek to Frenchmans Cap in 1920, it was less than eighty years since Lieutenant-Governor Franklin, his wife Jane and their entourage had passed that way during their journey westward to ‘Transylvania’. 238 It was also less than seventy years since the first successful recorded attempt to scale this peak. 239 Although surveyors had subsequently visited the area, according to the researcher Simon Kleinig:

[...]he 1920 Spurling trip … was a pivotal and ambitious undertaking, the first attempt to reach the [Frenchmans] Cap from the east (from the Linda Track) since Tully, Spong and Glover in 1857, and the first by a bushwalking party from that direction. As such it pre-dates attempts by Fred Smithies and Jack Thwaites … 240

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238 See Chapter 1. In 1842 Tasmania’s west coast was marked as ‘Transylvania’ on the maps.
240 Email from Simon Kleinig to Christine Burgess, 18 November 2008. See also Binks, *Explorers of Western Tasmania*, p. 165 (fn. 8).
Despite Kleinig’s appraisal of the significance of Stephen 3rd’s trip, Melissa Harper makes no mention of him in her discussion of bushwalking in Australia. Somewhat curiously, she does mention Thwaites and Smithies.241 Yet Stephen 3rd recorded this trip in words and pictures, both of which appeared in the Weekly Courier during April, May and June 1920.

Stephen 3rd set out to conquer the Cap on Monday 2 February 1920. His companions on this trip were his old friend George Perrin and ‘their man’ Syd Yard.242 Travelling in Stephen 3rd’s Hupmobile car they followed the main road from Launceston to Melton Mowbray, and a secondary road to Ouse. From here their route progressively degenerated into a bush track strewn with boulders, exposed roots, sandpits and steep inclines. When they reached Nive Bridge late that evening, they had travelled nearly 270 kilometres. After camping overnight, they resumed their journey, finally reaching the southern end of Lake St Clair in mid-afternoon. Here they discovered Ray McClinton’s Chevrolet car and trailer, and their impressively equipped camp. As the doctor and his companions, Fred Smithies and Charles Monds, were enjoying the lake from the comfort of the Government dingy, Perrin set about preparing an evening meal.243 Monds recalled:

our worthy hosts soon set before us a most excellent meal of Curried Rabbit and rice, followed by a noble Plum Pudding designed and built by Mrs S Spurling. For quite a while scarcely a word was spoken, we were hard at work enjoying one of the best meals we have had here.244

242 C F Monds, Log of trip to Lake St Clair: Being a brief account of the experiences befalling a jolly party of three: – the pilot (Dr R McClinton) Engineer (F Smithies) & Quartermaster (the writer) ably assisted by “Sandy” the dog (Unpublished, January-February 1920, copy held by TAHO) p. 21. In his account Stephen 3rd gives each member of the party a pseudonym. The most likely identities of the characters are: ‘The Skip’ [Stephen Spurling 3rd], ‘The Cook’ [George Perrin] and ‘Chips’ [Syd Yard].
243 Monds, Log of trip to Lake St Clair, p. 20; S Spurling, Jun., ‘A Trip to Frenchman’s Cap’, no. 1, Weekly Courier, 3 June 1920, p. 37 c. 5.
244 Monds, Log of trip to Lake St Clair, pp. 21, 22.

Stephen Spurling 3\textsuperscript{rd}, *A Hazy Morning – Lake St Clair*, 1920, gelatin silver photograph.
The following day Stephen 3rd, George Perrin and Syd Yard loaded their rucksacks with eight days’ provisions and started along 1883 T.B Moore’s Linda track.245 Their plan was to leave caches of food en route so they would have provisions on their return journey.246 By nightfall, on this their first day of tramping, they had reached the Iron Store. Constructed by the government to provide food and shelter for early prospectors, the hut appeared to be in reasonable condition when the trio arrived. They pushed through the tangle of apple trees, hollyhocks and berry bushes in what had once been the garden, and stepped inside. However, a quick survey soon persuaded them that their tent offered preferable accommodation.247

Collection of the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery

Creator unknown, George Perrin, Syd Yard and Stephen Spurling 3rd (‘The Bushrangers’) departing for Frenchman’s Cap, 1920, gelatin silver photograph.248

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245 Lou Rae, ‘Lost province: exploration, isolation, innovation and dominion in the Mount Lyell region 1859-1935’, (PhD thesis, University of Tasmania, 2005) p. 212; Simon Kleinig, Jack Thwaites: pioneer bushwalker and conservationist (Lindisfarne, Tasmania, c. 2008) p. 18. Binks, Explorers of Western Tasmania, pp. 236, 247. According to Chris Binks, the track was so-named because it ended at the west coast town of Linda. Email from Chris Binks to Christine Burgess, 23 February 2009. However, in their accounts Stephen 3rd refers to this track as the Overland track, and George Perrin refers to it as the Old West Coast track.
246 Letter written by George Perrin to Hazel McCammon, 8 February 1968, p. 3.
248 Monds, Log of trip to Lake St Clair, p. 22.
The following morning they trudged up Mount Arrowsmith, battling intermittent showers of rain. On reaching the summit they discovered that the track, which up to this point had passed mainly through open button-grass plains, was now blocked by undergrowth that in places was so dense it was ‘almost impossible to force a way through’.\textsuperscript{249} They gradually made their descent, climbing over and under obstructions, and sporadically employing an axe to cut a pathway. Eventually they reached the foot of the north face of the mountain. From here they crossed a small plain, and then once again the vegetation all but obliterated the track. Now the only indication of their way forward was the occasional post from the old telegraph line.\textsuperscript{250} Eventually they reached the Franklin River, which they crossed on an old, decaying footbridge. At this stage it started to rain. Apart from the bucketing from above, they were repeatedly drenched as they forced their way through the saturated scrub. Finally, in the late afternoon, they made camp. Their waterlogged clothing and blankets provided small comfort, and an onslaught of bulldog ants did little improve matters. As Perrin remarked, it was a ‘typical West Coast summer’s day’.\textsuperscript{251}

Dawn brought little respite from the weather. Despite the rain, they continued their battle through the scrub, which once again obstructed the track. Around midday, with considerable relief, they reached a button-grass plain near to Artist Hill.\textsuperscript{252} They consulted their map and decided to veer away from the Linda track in the hope of locating the route marked out by T B Moore’s brother, J L Moore in 1900.\textsuperscript{253} After failing to find any indications of this track, they wended their way to a spot where they could wade across the Franklin River.

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\textsuperscript{249} Spurling, ‘A Trip to Frenchman’s Cap’, no. 2, p. 37 c. 5.
\textsuperscript{250} The old telegraph line (c. 1890) from Lake St Clair to the west coast followed the Linda track. \textit{Mercury}, 1 September 1932, p. 10 c. 8, p. 12 c. 4; Rae, ‘Lost province’, p. 213.
\textsuperscript{251} Spurling, ‘A Trip to Frenchman’s Cap’, no. 2, p. 37 c. 5.
\textsuperscript{252} Stephen 3rd identifies the spot as Artist’s Hill, but the name has since been simplified to Artist Hill. Email from Chris Binks to Christine Burgess, 24 February 2009.
Stephen Spurling 3rd, *Crossing the Franklin River near Mount Mullins* [sic], 1920, gelatin silver photograph. 254

Before long they were battling ‘the gloomy depths of a very fair sample of West Coast bush, where fallen logs, horizontal tea-tree bogs, and cutting grass, made progress tedious’. They struggled on through stands of ‘stately myrtles and sassafras, huge gums and leatherwood, glorious with its wealth of sweet-scented flowers’. 255

Finally, they reached open country and after more tramping found a suitable site to pitch their tent on the slopes of Mount Mullens.

The bad weather continued into the following day, so leaving their camp in situ they trekked to the summits of Mount Mullens and Junction Peak. Between these two landmarks they discerned signs of J L Moore’s track. Occasionally, when the mists dispersed, they caught glimpses of the country ahead, and they realised the route they had chosen led to some extremely inhospitable terrain. Having made this discovery, they decided to take what they hoped would be a less demanding course across the foothills of Mount Mullens. At midday the next day the mists lifted and they caught their first glimpses of Frenchmans Cap, ‘revealed in all its rugged grandeur’. 256

254 *Weekly Courier*, 13 May 1920, p. 21 (3).
Stephen Spurling 3rd, *The Frenchman’s Cap from Mt Mullins* [sic], 1920, gelatin silver photograph.

Their goal was still some distance away, so they decided to descend Mount Mullens and proceed straight towards the Cap. However, some densely forested ravines forced them to change direction and head to the Lodden Plains.257 That evening they marvelled as ‘the serrated skyline of “the Frenchman” blacken[ed] into a fantastic silhouette against the western afterglow’.258 Hoping for some photographs the next day, they turned their attention to their provisions. The inclement weather and wild terrain, which had forced them to spend longer than expected on their journey, combined with a lack of opportunities to supplement their supplies with bush tucker, meant they now they had less than one day’s food. In the circumstances, it seemed injudicious to proceed to the Cap. As a compromise, they agreed that the next day they would scale a rounded hill (probably Pickaxe Ridge) to take photographs.259 With this intention, they set off early next morning to cross the northern end of the Lodden Plains and then ford the Lodden River.

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257 According to Chris Binks their route would have been close to Tully’s 1859 route. Email from Chris Binks to Christine Burgess, 23 February 2009. Binks, *Explorers of Western Tasmania*, p. 166.
259 Email from Chris Binks to Christine Burgess, 23 February 2009.

Once across the Lodden, they began a climb ‘up steep button grass slopes, crossed occasionally by belts of dense scrub and overhung by immense granite rocks. The day was intensely hot, and a thick fog hung over hills and valleys’.260 Around midday they paused for lunch beside a mountain creek and then continued their struggle to the summit. Stephen 3rd recalled:

[from our feet the hill fell away in a precipitous slope sheer down for several thousand feet to where a tributary of the Lodden River threaded its way through a rocky gorge several miles in length. The further side reached away up by steep scarred slopes, cliffs, broken with rugged ravines, to where the weathering of ages had left the granite peaks eroded into the most fantastic shapes that rock could assume. Above these towered that quaintly formed peak … the likeness of which to a French soldier’s cap suggested the name of the range.261

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261 Spurling, ‘A Trip to Frenchman’s Cap’, no. 3, p. 37 c. 5. Although there are several theories as to the naming of the peak, as Stephen 3rd suggested, the most likely explanation is that it was due to its likeness to the French freedom or liberty cap. Several other landmarks in the Macquarie Harbour precinct bear ‘liberty’ names. These names were probably bestowed ironically when the region was a penal settlement. Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore* (Great Britain, 1987) p. 373; Simon Kleing, *Frenchmans Cap: what’s in a name* (Unpublished document, c. 2003, copy held by Christine Burgess).
The vista would have been perfect for photographs, but for one obstacle. It was now obvious that the ‘fog’ resulted from bushfires and ‘a veil of yellow haze’ shrouded the scene. Sorely disappointed, they ‘gloomily realised that the weighty implements [sic]262 carried for so many weary miles was, under the conditions, absolutely useless’263. Despite battling hordes of March flies, they lingered until mid-afternoon, hoping the wind would clear the air, but the visibility worsened. Disconsolate, they trudged back to their camp, arriving in the early evening. As there was scant food here, they plodded on across Mount Mullens to their previous site. With the light fading they struggled towards the summit, but in their exhausted state their ‘descent over the rough button-grass provided some unrehearsed tumbling feats. Startling crashes were heard … [when] the cook came to earth with his billies and tinware’.264 Finally, they reached their old camp and their precious store of food.

They resumed their homeward trek at first light, wending their way through the forests and crossing the Franklin River. By late morning they had reached the Linda track and then began another battle through the scrub. By evening they had reached the foot of Mount Arrowsmith and according to George Perrin they paused for a meal of rolled oats mixed with cold water. They then commenced their climb up the mountain. Cautiously, they edged their way through the darkness by following the fallen telegraph wire. Borrowing the old bushman’s ploy of knotting a rag around a dog’s tail to keep him in sight, they tied a handkerchief to their front man, whose task it was to locate the wire.265 They reached the summit just before midnight, and, after locating their cache of food, they set up camp beside a stream.

The next morning they awoke early to witness the sunrise from the pinnacle. As they watched the ‘panorama of mountain peaks and smoke-filled valleys change[d] from a steely grey to vivid pinks and the sun’s rays slanted across the rugged scene

262 George Perrin claims in his letter (p. 3) that the camera was 40 pounds [18 kilograms] in weight.
265 Letter written by George Perrin to Hazel McCammon, 8 February 1968, p. 3.
dominated by the peak of The Frenchman'. During their tramp that day they made a detour to Lake George and the following day they headed back to civilization.

Stephen 3rd recalled this trip the following year in his article for Harringtons' Photographic Journal. He wrote:

[m]id-summer weather in the plateau is usually fairly reliable for a few weeks, but even at that period disappointment may come, as on a recent outing to the Trenchman's [sic] Cap, when our party spent six strenuous days battling our way there, only to be driven back by want of provisions, with hardly a picture owing to smoke haze from bush fires blotting out best subjects.

Although Stephen 3rd claimed he took ‘hardly a picture’, between April and June 1920 some eighteen images from this trip appeared in the Weekly Courier. He had probably also underestimated his achievements from a bushwalking perspective. According to researcher Lou Rae, by 1918 the Linda track was almost impassable. Chris Binks claims that ‘Steve and his friends put in a really good effort in reaching the summit of … [Pickaxe] ridge, which is separated from the Cap by a deep gorge’. There was, however, a further ironic twist to their journey. According to Binks:

there was a good track right to Lake Tahune, at the foot of the Cap, which had been cut by J E Philp in 1912, but neither Steve nor anyone else knew of its existence until it was re-discovered by bushwalkers in the 1930s.

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266 Spurling, ‘A Trip to Frenchman’s Cap’, no. 3, p. 37 c. 5.
267 In this letter to Hazel McCammon George Perrin refers to the lake as Lake King William. However, this lake did not exist at the time of their trip – it was created in the 1950s during a Hydro Electric Commission development. It is more likely Perrin was referring to Lake George. Emails from Chris Binks to Christine Burgess, 25 March 2005; 24 February 2009. Fact Sheet for Lake King William, at http://www.ifis.tas.gov.au/ifx/IFSDatabaseManager/WatersDatabase/lake-king-william. 22/02/2009; Lupton, Lifeblood, p. 195.
269 Weekly Courier, 1 April 1920, p. 17; 8 April 1920, p. 17; 15 April 1920, p. 17; 13 May 1920, pp. 18, 20, 21; 3 June 1920, p. 17; 10 June 1920, p. 24; 17 June 1920, p. 24.
270 Rae, ‘Lost province’, p. 216.
271 Email from Chris Binks to Christine Burgess, 23 February 2009.
272 Email from Chris Binks to Christine Burgess, 24 February 2009; Kleinig, Jack Thwaites, p. 71.
The photographs taken on this trip represent some departures from Stephen 3ʳᵈ’s usual images. In addition, a series of images, taken by various photographers, which depict the camp at Lake St Clair with Charles Monds, Fred Smithies and Ray McClinton, and further images taken next morning as Stephen 3ʳᵈ, George Perrin and Syd Yard began their trek, appear in family albums and in Monds Log of trip to Lake St Clair.²⁷³ These images are of personal and historical interest. They also provide contextual information about their camping facilities, equipment and provisions. The photograph, At Lake St Clair, for example, depicts the men sitting on benzine (fuel) boxes and their tent in the background. Their provisions on their table include IXL jam, what appears to be Lactogen (powdered milk) and Arnott’s biscuits. This photograph also sheds light on their attire. While some of the party chose clothing that appears suitable for bushwalking, others appear to be wearing old business suits.

The image depicting George Perrin, Syd Yard and Stephen 3ʳᵈ setting off on their trek also provides further detail on their outfits and equipment. According to Chris Binks, Stephen 3ʳᵈ and Yard had canvas leggings, while Perrin appears to have leather leggings.²⁷⁴ Their rucksacks were a considerable improvement over the clumsy swag Stephen 3ʳᵈ used during his 1905 Cradle Mountain trip.²⁷⁵ Binks believes the trio had probably designed and constructed these rucksacks. He claims: ‘Steve’s looks as though it is basically a canvas bag with reinforced strips, shoulder straps and lid sewn on. It would not look out of place today’.²⁷⁶

Of his eighteen images in the Weekly Courier, a significant number included Stephen 3ʳᵈ’s companions. In these photographs man appeared, not as a small figure awed by nature, or as integral to the overall composition, but rather as a device to illustrate the story behind the pictures. For example, the images depicting figures foraging the Franklin and Lodden rivers show them pursuing their quest to reach the Cap. Another example, The Frenchman’s Cap from Mt Mullins [sic], depicts George

²⁷³ Monds, Log of trip to Lake St Clair, p. 22.
²⁷⁴ Email from Chris Binks to Christine Burgess, 25 February 2009.
²⁷⁵ See photograph in Chapter 4, which depicts Stephen 3ʳᵈ at Middlesex Plains.
²⁷⁶ Email from Chris Binks to Christine Burgess, 25 February 2009.
Perrin\textsuperscript{277} gazing at an empty billy and the elusive Cap visible in the distance. Given that their provisions were, by this stage, perilously low and they would shortly abandon their quest, this photograph is not about man overwhelmed by the wonders of nature, but man thwarted by nature. This image also bears similarities to William Charles Piguenit’s \textit{Frenchman’s Cap from Mt Arrowsmith}. Piguenit’s picture, which records his 1887 journey with C P Sprent, depicts Frenchmans Peak in the distance, and in the foreground a man with packhorses wending his way along the Linda track.\textsuperscript{278} While the figures indicate the scale of the surroundings, they also serve another function. They tell the story behind the picture. Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} employed the same device when he photographed his comrades in the area thirty-three years later.

Other Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} images taken on this trip depict nature devoid of human activity. For example, his image of Lake George, with a foreground of vegetation and Mount King William in the distance, has many features in common with the picturesque.

![Lake George image](image)

Stephen Spurling 3\textsuperscript{rd}, \textit{Mt King William from Lake George}, 1920, gelatin silver photograph.

\textsuperscript{277} George Perrin was their cook. See Monds, \textit{Log of trip to Lake St Clair}, p. 21.
\textsuperscript{278} Binks, \textit{Explorers of Western Tasmania}, p. 164.
This image also bears a remarkable resemblance to William Charles Piguenit’s painting of the same scene, although John Watt Beattie’s image *Lake George – Mt King William* probably bears a closer resemblance to Piguenit’s work. While Piguenit evoked the sublime by exaggerating the height of the mountains, and added drama by depicting storm clouds swirling around the peaks, Stephen 3rd’s image suggests an atmosphere of calm and tranquility – a complete departure from Piguenit’s depiction of the scene.

![Image of Mount King William from Lake George](image)

*Collection of National Library of Australia*

William Charles Piguenit (1836-1914), *Mount King William from Lake George, Tasmania*, 1887, oil on academy board, 46.7 x 62 cm.

During this trip the trio had lugged photographic equipment over some of the state’s most rugged and inhospitable terrain. They had survived appalling weather and hunger, but the vicissitudes of nature had prevented them from achieving their goal. Despite the conditions, which proved less than ideal for photography, Stephen 3rd produced a number of memorable images. However, his recollections of this trip would be particularly poignant, for this was to be the last of his wilderness adventures. From this time onwards, family and business responsibilities would preclude him from undertaking lengthy and challenging trips into remote areas.
Conclusions

The trips described in this chapter constitute approximately a third of Stephen 3rd’s expeditions into the Tasmanian wilderness. Similarly, the photographs are a representative sample of his many hundreds of wilderness images. It was no easy task for Stephen 3rd to obtain these images. Apart from the fact that his improvised clothing and equipment provided little protection from the extremes of Tasmanian weather, the weight of his camera and glass plates meant he was unable to carry sufficient food for the duration of his journeys. Consequently, he set out on his treks knowing he would have to depend on the availability of bush tucker for survival.

In the course of his expeditions Stephen 3rd often ventured into trackless regions, where he had to rely on a compass and rudimentary maps for directions. Sometimes he had to force his way through undergrowth that reduced his clothing to shreds. On other occasions he tumbled down precipices and plunged into icy creeks. He found his way through fogs, smoke-laden air and pitch-black nights. He clambered up cliffs, floundered in soft snow and struggled through snowdrifts. He endured freezing temperatures and searing heat, biting winds, torrential rain, blizzards, attacks from snakes and insects, near impenetrable scrub and quicksand. In addition, he narrowly missed falling over the cliffs into Crater Lake, being struck by an ancient myrtle crashing close to his tent, and starvation. The motivations that drove him onwards were a love of adventure, a quest for photographs, and the lure of the unknown. His efforts were not in vain. He achieved many photographic firsts, named a number of landmarks, and discovered a lake. His images appeared in local newspapers, on postcards and in pictorial booklets about Tasmania. His lantern slides were used in public presentations, and his movies were shown in theatres in Tasmania and interstate. Despite these achievements, Barney Roberts’ claim that Stephen 3rd is ‘one of Tasmania’s forgotten explorers’, 279 perhaps requires examination.

While Melissa Harper believes ‘[t]he lines between exploration, travel and tourism are blurry’, Chris Binks unequivocally defines an explorer as:

one who has penetrated new country and who has left an accessible record of the area he has visited such as a report to the Survey Department, newspaper article or some other account which was available to others going into that part of the country.

Do Stephen 3rd’s treks into the Tasmanian wilderness qualify him as an explorer within Binks’ definition? Although Tasmania had been inhabited by indigenous Tasmanians for thousands of years, when Stephen 3rd set out into the Tasmanian wilderness there were still parts of the island that were only partially mapped by Europeans. However, the only geographical feature that Stephen 3rd discovered was Lake Spurling – later to be re-named Lake Renggeena. Although his detailed account of this trip failed to attract a publisher, his photographs did appear in publications, and provided a visual record to others. In other words, at least on this occasion, Stephen 3rd penetrated inadequately mapped country, discovered an unrecorded landmark, and recorded his visit.

While Aristotle’s argument ‘[o]ne swallow does not make a summer’, could well apply, there were at least two other occasions Stephen 3rd did assist in documenting the discovery of geographical features. The first of these occasions was in 1908, when he and his companions ventured beyond the already discovered chambers in Gunns Plains caves. Stephen 3rd recorded this trip with an article and photographs, both of which appeared in the local press. The second occasion was in 1913 when he helped name, and subsequently photographed Hartnett Falls.

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281 Binks, Explorers of Western Tasmania, p. 5.
283 Examiner, 20 November 1908, p. 7; Weekly Courier, 3 December 1908, p. 21; Weekly Courier, 10 December 1908, p. 24.
284 Haygarth, ‘cars & cameras’, p. 16. See discussion in Chapter 4, and earlier in this chapter.
On other occasions, such as his 1905 Cradle Mountain trip, and his 1906 west coast trip, Stephen 3rd lugged his camera to areas that had been traversed by government surveyors, timber-getters, miners, trappers and, in the case of the west coast, convicts and even a vice-regal party. Although these areas were familiar to a variety of people, many of the geographical features remained un-named and inadequately mapped. Stephen 3rd named and photographed many of these landforms, and wrote accounts of his journeys, which subsequently appeared in the press, thereby adding to the information they. Historian Raymond John Howgego believes that to be regarded as significant, the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century explorer needed to venture beyond ‘occupied and mapped’ areas and add to the knowledge about that region. Reviewer Ian Morrison summarises Howgego argument thus: ‘if an expedition is not documented, if no information was disseminated as a result of it, it can be argued that it made no contribution to human knowledge’. Stephen 3rd’s published accounts of his journeys, his extensive and often groundbreaking photographic record, and his naming of a number of landforms clearly made a significant contribution to the fund of information about wilderness regions in Tasmania. Despite his achievements, some might argue that to claim Stephen 3rd was an explorer is something of an overstatement. Nevertheless, Binks believes ‘this does not detract from his stature’. Binks continues:

Steve is in a very respected category of pioneer walkers. He probably designed and made some of his own equipment, he pushed into country beyond existing tracks, navigated successfully in the absence of accurate maps, and left a record both in writing and in fine photographs. He belongs to a band of people who were also undertaking long walks into little known areas of the island, a band that included Ronald Smith, Geoff Chapman, Jack Murray, Len Livingston, Leicester McAulay and others …

285 See discussion in Chapter 1 of Sir John and Lady Jane Franklin’s epic journey to the west coast.
288 Email from Chris Binks to Christine Burgess, 27 February 2009.
The issue as to whether or not early photographers were also explorers is more complex than first appears. While Stephen 3rd both headed and photographed his expeditions, often photographers did not undertake their own expeditions of discovery, but accompanied exploration parties as official photographers. These photographers are generally recognised as being integral to the exploration team. Examples include wet plate cameramen such as Carleton Watkins, Timothy H O’Sullivan and William Henry Jackson who photographed the exploration of the western United States. Later, in the early twentieth century, the photographers Englishman Herbert G Ponting, and the Australian Frank Hurley both accompanied expeditions to Antarctica.

In the case of intrepid bushwalkers the situation becomes less clear. In her book on this subject Melissa Harper discusses how bushwalking enthusiasts in the 1930s saw themselves as a new breed of explorers. She also quotes from William Charles Pigenit’s 1887 article, ‘The western highlands of Tasmania’, in which he refers to his journeys as ‘explorations’, and describes the ‘difficulties which beset the explorer in his researches’. As Harper points out, the use of such terms allows Pigenit to ‘[define] himself as an explorer without making any explicit claim’. In 1955 Jack Cato referred to his cousin-by-marriage, John Watt Beattie as ‘an explorer-photographer’, and twenty years later author Max Angus made a similar claim for Olegas Truchanas, when he referred to the iconic photographer as making a ‘singlehanded exploration of wilderness’.

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292 Mercury, 24 September 1887, p. 3 c. 6.


Branagan had no qualms about the claims he made for Frederick Smithies when he entitled his biography, *Frederick Smithies, OBE: explorer, mountaineer, photographer: a great Tasmanian*. In his book, Branagan details a number of Smithies’ forays into the Tasmanian wilderness. One of Smithies’ most gruelling and courageous journeys was his 1931 successful ascent of Frenchmans Cap. Branagan’s inclusion of Smithies’ account of this journey (which also mentions his unsuccessful attempt in 1928) makes an interesting comparison with Stephen 3rd’s 1920 attempt to scale this peak.296 However, despite his achievements, Nic Haygarth argues Smithies does not fulfil the essential conditions of an explorer.297

Clearly the term ‘explorer’ is one that many authors use indiscriminately to cover a range of feats. Perhaps, rather than draw a dichotomy between explorer and bushwalker, the concepts can more usefully be viewed as being part of a continuum. When seen from this perspective, it is perhaps reasonable to claim that while Stephen 3rd’s achievements do not necessarily qualify him as an explorer within a strict definition of the term, Roberts’ claim that Stephen 3rd is a forgotten explorer is to some degree justifiable.

This thesis will now investigate the issues behind the images. Topics to be considered include a discussion of the impact the Spurling images had on the promotion of Tasmanian tourism, and an analysis of the artistic and photographic conventions that influenced the way Stephen 2nd and 3rd photographed the Tasmanian landscape. Other topics will include a discussion as to whether the Spurling images influenced later Tasmanian wilderness photographers, and an analysis of Stephen 3rd’s attitudes towards the environment. Finally, some suggestions will be advanced as to why and how the Spurling legacy came close to being forgotten.
