**Essays on Mount Crosby - Moreton Bay Ash**

When I was about ten, I liked to walk along the old railway between the weir and Allawah (more so at Melon Hut between the two). I did it often enough to notice the little things, which the walkers of our suburb will attest is a nice thing that happens at walking pace.

Near Melon Hut I knew of some small trees that were different to the others of the paddock, being thin in the leaf and generally greener and more upright. When I first met these old friends they were about as thick as your arm and had taken advantage of the space left open by the taken up railway (then on maps as the "old permanent way", which is amusing because I've turned out to be much more permanent - touch wood).

For some reason, and it strikes me as one of Nature's mistakes, it was their seeds that found the disturbed ground most suitable, and a little thicket of them has struggled to grow there ever since.

What I find remarkable about them is that even now they are only about as thick as a leg, which is an important thing to remember about the mature native trees of our district - that there are really only two types: those that are old and those that are nearly ancient.

My old friends in the thicket are Moreton Bay Ash; about the prettiest gum tree that grows in these parts. They are characterised by the dark tessellated socks they wear on their trunks, above which there bark is as smooth as skin, and the merest amateur can have no trouble identifying them. If you are the type of person who would like to know all the local native trees, but doesn't know where to start, I say start with the Moreton Bay Ash and soon you'll find it's not that hard (because there aren't many types and they all have a way of telling you who they are).

It is nice to stamp around at Melon Hut, but if you want to see good examples of the Moreton Bay Ash much closer, the best group are on the fenceline of the old Mount Crosby school. Those ones watched over generations of kids as they high-jumped in the nearby pit, sensibly using the "scissors" technique that pre-dated the jumping mattress, and I think they provided the cross bar too - since it was certainly made of a straight sapling suspended between two old valve stems.

I wasn't much good at jumping myself, but I once saw an older Brady jump something approaching five feet, which should have brought him the nickname "Valvesprings" but instead he went on happily with "Brades" so far as I can tell.

Col Hester