Sam Main

Good morning Headmaster, Boys, Staff and Parents.

This morning we are speaking about our experiences of the Bibbulmun Track, that time of year when Scotch is that little bit quieter, due to lack of boarders. Every year, we set off to tackle the expansive, beautiful, yet sometimes tedious environment WA’s South West has to offer. Our Destination was Albany.

Any normal person would take the 4hr trip on the Albany Highway from Perth to Albany; with a travelling distance of about 400km. Staying true to the generalization of boarders, the easy way is not the only way.

Instead, we take a five year journey, of around 1000 kilometers to get from Perth to Albany.

On the bib everyone takes a turn at leading and navigating the group. Navigation is a priority for all of the boys, as a wrong turn can set us back hours, and in a case such as this, it is often followed by a silent treatment towards the navigator, this as an incentive, few mistakes are made. Whilst navigating, the statement, ‘we have 3kms to go, as the crow flies’, is forbidden, as this dampens the mood, because a direct path to the next hut is non-existent on the bib.

This sometimes tedious looping characteristic of the track got boys thinking about how the track was made, one suggesting that a bulldozer followed a butterfly from Perth to Albany and due to a lack of walking tracks in WA, the bib track was named.

My first memory of a bib track experience was in year 8, when we were awoken in the early hours of the morning in the boarding house by Mr Williams’ infamous handheld siren. We jumped out of bed, ecstatic to be going on our first practice walk. Many boys, whose egos were at large, piled encyclopedias into their packs, naïve to the problems to come.

On return of our practice walk, blisters, sore backs and exhaustion were some of the setbacks we had encountered. But the most vivid memory, a quote from Mr Williams,

‘That was only 2km, your first week on the track is ………………’.

Despite the Bib Tracks physical and mental strain, something about the track kept me and 12 other boys signing our names year after year to tackle another section of the journey. The culture, friendships and memories produced on the track are second to none. As we walked into the southern terminus of the bib track I was overwhelmed with the satisfaction I felt of finishing this journey, but at the same time sad that it was over. At the end of track, we as a group know that taking the 1000km walk over mountains and beaches, beats driving on the Albany highway any day.
Andrew Richardson

To give you and idea of what the Bibb track was all about I’d like to give you an insight into a slightly above average day. Take for instance our first day of our last leg.

It all started as usual with a 5:30 wake up and assembly outside the dining hall. We packed a few things, woke up Teke, who had still been sleeping and put our packs in the trailer. We were ready to go. Then, we looked at the tyres. Mr Menage had run over the only sharp object on the road and given the bus a flat tyre. We left the job of changing it in the good hands of the insteppers, or, so we thought. After getting bigger and bigger levers the wheel nut still wouldn’t budge. So, after breaking one bus we got the dreaded Merc, and, more then an hour behind schedule we finally set off.

The road trip was just as eventful, we bought breakfast and lunch with the trustee school credit card and as Scotch preaches we took full advantage of the opportunity. We reached Walpole, where we were approached by a motorist who told us the bus had been billowing black smoke, something our slippery Mauritian friend Mr Menage failed to spot in the rear vision mirror. A quick look under the bus and it was clear that we had broken yet, another bus, this time probably for good.

Luckily, we were in Walpole, now home to the highly esteemed Mr Peck. Using his extensive contacts he managed to find us another bus, and you’ll be pleased to know we didn’t break this one. Probably, due to the fact that slippery wasn’t driving. We finally got to our start point Peaceful Bay at 3pm and began the long and arduous walk ahead. Spanning over sand dunes the size of the Himalayas, rivers flowing faster then the Niagara and enduring scorching heat in the shadeless wastelands of the coast.

As night fell on the first day the clouds began rolling in over the Southern Ocean, a worrying fact especially for Tom Godfrey as he hadn’t bought any wet weather gear. After tripping and stumbling through the dark (literally for Matt Maitland who had lost his head torch,) we eventually got to camp at 9pm. Dinner was cooked quickly and some fell asleep in the luxury of the hut, while others, were kept awake by the manic sounds of Josh Biglin’s snoring. It was our last first day of the Bibbulmun Track and it had been our most eventful, I for one, fell asleep wondering what the track still had in store for us on our last meander towards Albany.
Steele Hathway

Well as you can see we had a few interesting times on the track and it all came to an end in Albany. Walking that last 100m was an awesome experience. Together we had walked 967kms through rain, shine, many hardships and good times. It is an achievement that will be with us for the rest of our lives. We may have done it at first to have a week off school, but at the end I’m sure that everyone was there to prove something to their peers, family and most importantly themselves.

As well as the participants putting their time into the track the staff members who make it all possible have committed huge amounts of theirs. I’d like to thank Messers Sullivan, Brogden, Picknoll, Webb, Loosemore, Gunter, Meachem, Menage, Aaron Gale, Vahndel, Walter and Mark Gossage. Also Mrs Priest, Jenkins, Simpson for walking it with us along with numerous gappies. From the boarding staff I’d like to thank Mr Bennet, Mr Williams and Mr Peck for driving the bus all that way just so that we could walk back again and Mr and Mrs Freitag for coming down to Albany for the end.

I’d like to encourage all upcoming Keys House boys to continue with this amazing opportunity. It is a one off experience and a fulfilling adventure which has built a strong brotherhood among the boys who completed the longest walking trail in the Southern Hemisphere, the Bibbulmun.