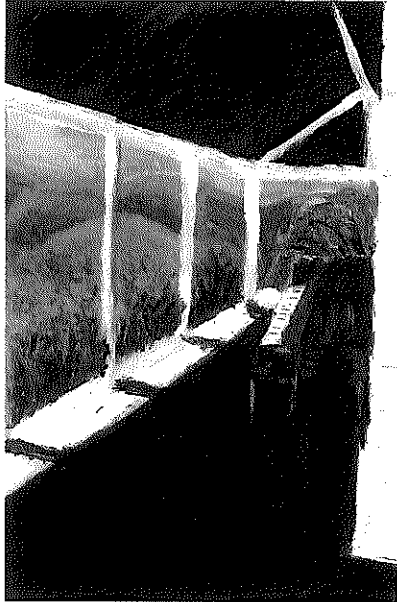


## Winter and Summer in Bannockburn

*Oliver Miller – Logan Park High School – Year 11*



On clear summer mornings in Bannockburn, the birds are so loud it sounds like a symphony orchestra. Frogs burp in the swamp at the base of the cliff in front of the lawn, and lizards, the length of pencils, bask on the pile of flat white stones by the hot tub. In the hazy distance, bald brown hills hunch like the bare bones of Gollum's back.

There is an old bathtub made of tin, which is always full of dirty rainwater and leaves, and it sits in the corner of the lawn. Tadpoles live in the bathtub, so sometimes, very early in the morning, a small neon-blue kingfisher comes and perches on the rim, dipping into the grubby water with his long, blade-shaped beak.

Beside the bathtub is a new, varnished, wooden hot tub, which is barely ever used in summer, so it sits there, dormant like a volcano.

The wooden single-storied house has a large verandah, which is always full of odds and ends. An ancient out-of-tune piano, getting more so in the summer heat; a little tricycle covered in spider webs. There are beds with enormous mosquito nets hanging above them like ominous, grey rainclouds and boxes and boxes of tinned peaches lining the edge of the house.

When there has been a clear night, a heavy dew coats the grass, freezing desperate feet running for the out-house dunny. Later, on a hot day, a warm northerly wind starts to blow, and the tall poplars, on a ridge behind the house, shake and rustle their silvery leaves as if in jealousy of the sheltered, dusty pine down the drive.

Bannockburn is a place visited all year round. In winter the verandah is filled with boxes of driftwood and pinecones for the fire. Frost coats everything in the early morning and the birds are too cold to sing their songs. The old bathtub is frozen and the tadpoles are long gone, pursuing froggy futures in the swamp. Wet clothes left out on the line are turned to cardboard.

In the morning the kitchen is a bustle of activity, full of people wrapped up in colourful skigear, warming toes by the fire or gobbling a breakfast of hot bacon and eggs at the table.

At night the dormant hot tub erupts into action, sending clouds of warm steam into the freezing air. When filled to the brim with hot, glittering water, it thaws out cold toes and hands from a day's skiing. The hot tub has been the site of many shivering and giggly grundy runs in wet togs. These are followed by a swift beating, with a rock-solid frozen T-shirt, of the people who laughed at the victim.

Late at night, when the hot tub is empty and the water gone cold, the house sheds deliciously golden light over the icy lawn and verandah. People sit around inside, sleepily basking in the warmth of the driftwood fire, playing cards or reading some of the vast collection of comics.

People always enjoy themselves at Bannockburn, no matter what the season.

