

## Eric Bogle

# "The Waltzing Matilda Waltz"

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"WALTZING MATILDA WALTZ"

- Eric Bogle

Well, once jolly swagmen\* went humping their swags  
And stuffed jolly jumbucks\* down in their tucker bags  
These days, jolly junkies go on house-breaking jags  
And steal to buy the poison they need  
While the swaggie, he just wanted a feed

And who'll come a-Waltzing Matilda with me?  
Hey Banjo\*, this country's not what it used to be  
We've changed all your words, and re-written your  
score  
And it's "Waltzing Matilda" no more.

Once Henry and Mary, on a warm afternoon  
Rowed down Reedy River to the broad bright lagoon  
The song of the river is a long vanished tune  
Since they built the uranium mine  
And what's left is just toxic slime

And who'll come a-walting Matilda with me?  
Oh, Henry, this country's not what it used to be  
Days pass with a whimper, and not with a roar  
And it's "Waltzing Matilda" no more.

Well, we cut down the trees, and the land we reclaimed  
We ploughed and we planted, then we ploughed it  
again  
And again and again, and again and again  
So that now on a hot windy day  
We can watch our topsoil blow away

And who'll come a-walting Matilda with me?  
The desert is marching down to the sea  
On the day that it stretches  
From shore to shining shore  
We'll go waltzing Matilda no more

Saturday night outside a King's Cross hotel  
There stands our future, and it's halfway to hell  
Kids with hard drugs and young bodies to sell

Hey Australia, what progress we've made!  
We've come a long way, since Diamond day

And who'll come a-waiting Matilda with me?  
Hey Anzac\*, is this what you fought to keep free?  
A land fit for heroes, or junkies and whores?  
And it's "Waltzing Matilda" no more.

And who'll come a-waiting Matilda with me?  
This country could still be what we want it to be  
Perhaps one day soon, the dream will be restored  
And we'll go Waltzing Matilda once more  
We'll go Waltzing Matilda once more

NOTES:

ANZAC:

The combined Australia/New Zealand armies that  
fought in both World Wars

"Banjo" Patterson:

Author of "The Man From Snowy River" and "Waltzing  
Matilda"

Billabong:

A watering hole, specifically the curved meander of a  
winding stream  
That has been isolated due to sand bar deposition

Swagman:

I believe in the US you refer to them as "hobos", though  
a swaggy is not  
Always someone financially down on their luck or On  
The Run. Some  
Swagmen are just fed up with city life and want to  
spend their time  
Exploring the country on foot, living off the land and  
the charity of  
Passers-by as best they can.

Coolibah tree:

The Eucalyptus Coolibah is a species of Eucalyptus tree  
commonly found  
In inland parts of the Australian continent.

Billy:

A billy is a tin, often an old used fruit tin or other steel

container,

Used to boil water to make tea. Often they have a piece of wire

Across their top used as a handle, whereupon after the water is boiling,

One holds the wire, places the desired amount of tea leaves in said

Water, stands up, and swings the whole billy in a circular motion

Vigorously in order to force the tea leaves to the bottom of the tin. A

Rather nice touch is to crush a Coolibah leaf into the water too, giving

The tea a hint of eucalyptus.

Jumbuck;

A sheep (usually refers to a ram)

Tucker-bag;

A knapsack. "Tucker" means "food".

Squatter:

In Australia in the 19th century, large swathes of outback land were

Divided up and mostly allocated to "squatters" - often wealthy

Land-owners from Britain, who could afford the prices the government was

Asking. There were also freehold selections free for the taking (all you

Had to do was sign on the dotted line) made available to anyone who

Would try to exploit the land, but the freehold lots tended to be poorer

Land where it was a battle to earn to living. Squatters became fairly

Wealthy from their allocations even taking over freehold selections in

The process of expanding their lots, reflected in the fact that this one

Is riding on his thoroughbred horse.

Troopers:

The troopers are law enforcement. The squatter would have called

Them in because the swagman has stolen a sheep from the squatter's property.

Matilda:

Given the lonely life of a swaggy, they tend to become quite

Affectionate for things that are fairly important to their immediate

Existence. In this case, AIUI "Matilda" is the swagman's sleeping gear -

Typically a bedroll.

Cockie:

Small time family farmer/rancher in rural Australia, usually on marginal land

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