

Our proud history

Major Clews

Overview

Major Hugh Powell Gough Clews (1890-1980), surveyor and army officer, was born on 25 December 1890 at Rotherham, Yorkshire, England, son of William Henry Clews and Helen Powell. At age 60 Major Clews was offered a five-year contract as senior surveyor with the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Authority, made by his old army colleague Bert Eggeling, the Authority's chief surveyor. Major Clews would stay to complete his investigatory work until retirement in 1958.

His courage, humanity, charm and leadership made him a man among men and a legend of the Snowy Scheme.

Timeline

1911

Major Hugh Clews left the British Army and migrated to Australia

1912

Clews joined the permanent military forces as a sergeant in the survey section of the Royal Australian Engineers. He was employed as a mapmaker in South Australia

1918

Married Alice May Reeves in Melbourne. They had one son and two daughters

1919

The Major worked with the Australian Survey Company, surveying many different locations throughout Australia, including Strathfield, Katoomba, Newnes Junction, Wollemi, Newcastle, Kyogle, Childers, Ingham, Fraser Island, Chatswood and Kosciuszko

1949

On 29 July he was placed on the retired list as an honorary Lieutenant Colonel

1950

Clews entered into a five-year contract as a senior surveyor with the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Authority. Major Clews was one of the few experienced surveyors in Australia at the time. 'Clewsie' established his first camp at Dry Dam, near Cabramurra. He had 50 men with him, working in groups of six

1958

Retired to a 40-acre (16 hectare) lease at Indi, near Khancoban, where he built a pisé house

'Clewsie' - the character, the bushman, the legend

He loved to be the first into new territory. His legendary reconnaissance surveys, carried out on-foot across harsh terrain preceded the construction of roads and tunnels, for the mighty Snowy Scheme.

For eight years his strength of character, endurance and remarkable bushmanship often found him miles away from anywhere, but led him and his team to survey Guthega, Geehi, Lobs Hole, Dry Dam, Kings Cross, Kennys Knob, Three Mile, Tumut Pond, Indi, Scammels Spur and Cowombat Flat.

There was no ceremony or fuss with 'Clewsie', often spreading his survey charts across the ground when out in the field, weighted by small stones.

The Major had an effortless way of bringing people with him, he was clear-sighted, competent and loyal. He won the admiration of the Scheme's migrant workers, direct colleagues and many others. A true legend in his own time.

Did you know?

The Major was a practical man, so while on reconnaissance surveys, he often delivered maps and precious mail for the men simultaneously. He kept his cargo safe in a rubber pouch wrapped high around his bare chest.

The picture of the man

By all accounts Major Hugh Powell Gough Clews standing at 168cm (5 feet 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches), was a wiry, white-haired fellow, sporting a well-worn, battered army (mountie) hat and a pipe. He wore his shirt tucked into baggy serge trousers with a simple, hand-made leather belt. The legs were tucked into thick woollen socks that bulged above heavy rubber-soled army General Purpose (GP) boots.

The Major disliked riding horses, so he walked. He would pack a small rucksack for his three or four-day excursions, with his bedding, billycan, mug, tea, sugar, dry bread, slab of cheese, butter, matches, pipe, tobacco and a flask of his favourite rum, Lowndes.



Did you know?

Major Clews hut and a granite cairn found at Indi stands today commemorating his work and legend.

For more information and stories about The Major, visit our [online store](#)