

Groundhog day in Cobden: Saturday, April 11

Riders: (Cobden to Timboon and return) Jim (leader), Bob (guest) and Rob; (one way) Linda and Irene; (Cobden to Glenfyne and return) Mabel

Mabel and Linda were doing their Timboon car shuffle. After finishing her appointment with the Cobden bakery, Irene joined the other three of us on the opposite side of the road. We gossiped, waiting, waiting, waiting ...

Mabel and Linda arrived from the west, pulled up on the other side of the street in front of the bakery, and waved. But then, they continued east.

We waited for them to turn round and return. We waited some more.

Where were Mabel and Linda? Cobden isn't that big! "Two lost in Cobden" sprung to mind, first as a headline, then as a novel, albeit only a short but no doubt award winning one as befits such a topic. We waited some more. "Abducted by aliens?" We wondered and waited some more.

Mabel and Linda arrived from the west, pulled up on the other side of the street in front of the bakery and waved. "They came from the west?"

"Déjà vu?" "It's like that scene from *Back to the Future*!" "Oh, no, it's Groundhog Day" we worried, checking our shadows and watches. We could have wondered some more, but then philosophised why bother philosophising when we could be riding. And so we set off, admittedly glancing every so often to see if Mabel and Linda were growing antennae.

Jim had organised both glorious weather and a much firmer surface than last year's muddy ride along the rail trail. A large huntsman made shutting one gate tricky. The apple tree between Curdies River and Timboon would have provided even more fruit for us had we been 4 metres tall. On Mabel's return leg, she saw a snake that showed no intention of moving off the track when she hurtled passed. Bob's snake had the decency to decamp into a drain pipe, leaving the three of us to pick and eat many blackberries. Otherwise, it was an incident free, pleasant ride.

Rob



Trip Reports

Dan's Cave: April 25

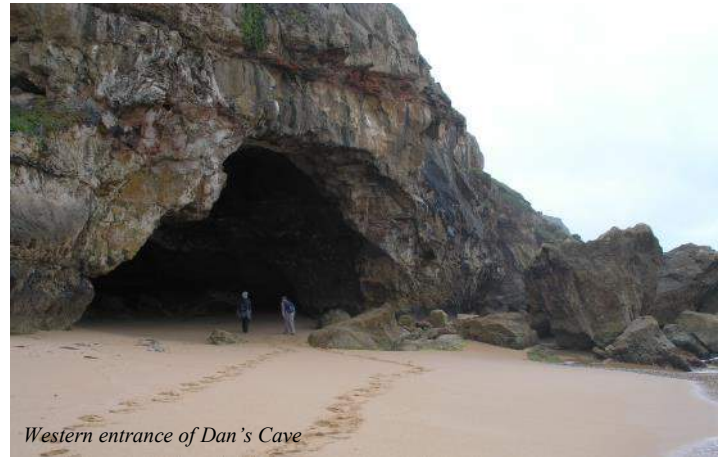
Adventurers: David (leader), Dina and Rob

Surrounded by dark clouds threatening rain, the three of us set off at a good pace and a silent prayer hoping that we would escape the rain. We left Proudfoot's Carpark at 8.30 am and reached the Hopkins' mouth 15 minutes later.

Great thought and preparation had gone into choosing the date for the walk as low tide was desirable, as this would make the crossing of Devils Throat easier and it was hoped the sand would be firmer. Low tide was at 8.30 am and the plan had worked—the sand was firm.

We headed east looking into the misty distance, trying to judge where our destination lay. After half an hour of pleasant walking on the beach, the geology begins to change. The high sand hummocks gradually give way to rocky outcrops and then change to limestone cliffs. After passing Skull Rock, we begin to walk on the rocky reef and it was at that point we realised how rough the sea was. Even though it was low tide, large waves were crashing onto the reef. We pressed on, enjoying the change in scenery and looking for that elusive cave.

We were walking against the rock cliff-face to a rocky outcrop and reached Devils Throat—an open channel about a metre wide which runs up to the cliff-face and which we had to cross. The large waves made the narrow crossing interesting, while we stepped on slippery stones with the water rushing at us. We all got wet (some more than others) as we cautiously crossed to the other side.



Western entrance of Dan's Cave



Eastern entrance

Once passed the Devils Throat we were greeted with another small sandy beach and we could see the cave. It took one hour to reach the cave from the river mouth. The cave is huge with one wall opening up into another huge cave that goes to a different beach. It is said that Dan Kimble lived in the cave for several years about 1900, living off the fish he caught off the reef. To many of the locals it is known as Dan's Cave. President Rob uncovered interesting and hair-raising information about the cave by Googling *Dan's Cave Warrnambool*.

Satisfied with what we had seen and having taken a few photos, the decision was made to make a retreat and cross the Devils Throat before the incoming tide made our crossing more difficult. Once safely across we again made good progress along the sand while watching the ever blackening sky, seeing the rain come towards us from the east.

After climbing the steps of the whale watching platform, we enjoyed the view over where we had walked until the rain finally caught up with us. Brollies & raincoats were hastily engaged and we continued along the footpath, over the Hopkins Bridge to arrive back at Proudfoot's carpark at 11 am.

A most enjoyable and interesting walk but for future reference: it is best done at low tide with a reasonably calm sea.

David



Progressive day or marathon munch: Saturday May 9

Participants: Linda, Irene, Lothar, Coralie, Rob, Mabel, Jim, Everard (to Badhams Lane) and Chris (breakfast only)

Despite the weather predictions I decided to go ahead with the day. Irene and I invented a shelter, which was a tarp over the car held up with long tent poles. It worked a treat this way at the start of the rail trail in Port Fairy. Breakfast got underway and everyone enjoyed their bacon and egg McMuffins followed by tea and

Fashions in the field is the highlight of Warrnambool's race week. The decision on the winner was unanimous.



coffee. We left Chris, Coralie and Irene to pack up while we headed towards Badhams Lane.

Rain was intermittent but we all needed our raincoats to keep us dry. Two hours later we were met at Badhams Lane with the tarp and car again, this time with scones [*and very nice they were too—Ed*], jam, cream, tea and coffee. We thoroughly enjoyed the break.

We continued on to Koroit where we met Irene and Coralie for lunch at the Commercial Hotel, a fabulous feast. Over lunch there was great discussion about whether Lothar and Jim should catch the bus into Port Fairy to pick up Jim's car. Lothar thought he could fill in 45 minutes until the bus came at Poppies with coffee and a vanilla slice. In the end, Mabel took them back.

This was a very enjoyable day with great company, food and walking.

Linda



Mt Abrupt track working bee: Saturday, May 16



Horticultural landscapers: Linda (co-ordinator, who got to wear the orange vest), Irene, Mabel, Lothar, Jim, David, Rob; Sigrid & Charlie (BWV Bushwalking Tracks and Conservation Projects Coordinator); Kyle (Parks Victoria, the real OIC)

Coffee at Dunkeld. Arrived at the Mt Abrupt carpark at 9:00 as per schedule. Collected our plant attack weapons from Kyle's armoury. Did the paperwork. Received the OHS spiel. Donned fluoro vests. Modelled same. Set off up the hill.

The big question: to start clearing from the road and work up or from the top and work down? Linda and Irene chose the former, the other five the latter. Rewarded ourselves with Irene's fruitcake at the summit. Our planned meeting together for a 12:30 lunch found us much later at three separate lunch sites.

Too busy snipping to do too much snapping. Aside from that, a perfect day to be in the Grampians—temperature just right, view good, and a few heaths in flower. Finished around 4, just as the evening cold started flowing down into the valley. Coffee at Dunkeld.

Rob



Trip Reports

Arapiles – Tooan State Park: 22–23 May

Participants: Coralie, Kate, David, Linda and Janice

Saturday 22: The Arapiles Big Sky Bike Ride

It wasn't the best of starts! "Isn't that Mitre Rock over there" says Kate. Well, yes, it was and we were supposed to be heading directly for it. A quick consultation of the brochure established that we had indeed taken the wrong road from the car park at the Pines Campground, our starting point.

Ever eager to make up time, we took a 'short cut' across some open ground at the Lower Gums Camp Site. This led us to a 4WD track and David set off ahead to scout the junction. The rest of us followed but when we seemed to be heading away from the base of Arapiles, it was every man & bike for himself as we pushed through the thick scrub, dragging or carrying our bikes as best we could.

Eventually a well-formed road was reached. Phew! Confidently we set off; *it was bound to be easy riding from here on*. After a left hand turn we were dismayed to find a steady climb awaited us. It was then onto another rocky, log-strewn 4WD track and across the highway before we were in front of Mitre Rock. The bike path at the back of this landmark had us winging our way downhill to the shores of Mitre Lake.

This deceptively flat track soon had us at its mercy. Thick, sticky mud clung to the tyres. We all found progress somewhat hampered but those with mud guards soon found it impossible to move. At one stage it looked likely that Linda's clogged bike would be left on the lake's edge to graceful decay into an ancient relic.

Slowly, painfully we pushed or wobbled our way around the lake and to the base of Vinegar Hill where here at last it was worth the effort of scraping the mud off. Note to future participants—take the higher, wet weather track option or remove mud guards before attempting this section.



Vinegar Hill, though small, required early and careful gear selection if one hoped to make it to the top astride one's mount. The view back to Arapiles, Mitre Rock and the lake, however, was stunning in the beautiful, autumnal sun.

The route then took us down country lanes, through wooded easements between farms and onto the western shores of Lake Natimuk. Although this was devoid of any water, the path took as alongside Natimuk Creek which started as a dry depression but closer to town water gathered in foetid pools. Somewhere in this section Kate was able to perfect the art of the *selfie-whilst-riding* photo.

With most of the ride completed, we celebrated with a coffee at a café in Natimuk and then undertook the last leg of the journey on specially formed bike lanes. Willing on our tired legs we undertook the final rise to the campground slowly and met Janice driving in to camp the evening with us, near to the turn-off.

See <http://www.arapilesbiketrail.com.au/about-the-trail.html> for maps and information about the bike trail.

Sunday 24: *The mounting of Mt Arapiles*

After a cold night we emerged from our tents to a grey day. Undeterred four of us set off for the 'walkers gully' scramble to the top of the Arapiles cliff line. Some rock climbers were already on the rock face attempting their first pitch for the day.

At the top we soon picked up the cairned walking track and followed it to the summit road. From here we visited the lookout and the summit before retracing our steps to the Central Gully Centenary Track. This steep track led us back to the Pines Campground and after lunch at the café we headed off to find our way home.

Coralie



Glenelg River Gorge: Saturday 13 June

Ramblers: Lothar, Kate, David, Linda, Mike, Liz, and Rob (leader)

We met at the Port Fairy service station, six outside and one inside drinking coffee. Not much traffic on the drive to the Nelson kiosk, our first stopping point. We picked up David from his *Caravan Awning Theory and Practice 101* course at the camping ground and drove the final few kilometres to our starting point above the river. It was a perfect day for walking.

Having lunch at Hirth's Landing provided the only descent for the day and, less pleasant, our only ascent. The river level was fairly high. There were a few ducks on the water, include a male musk duck with his large, leathery, pendulous lobe of skin dangling below his bill. Only a couple of species were in flower: *Astroloma conostephioides*, commonly called (as Liz pointed out) the flame heath, a few banksias, and near the end of the walk, hibbertias.

The track passed besides an area of controlled burns before we reached Simsons Landing. From there the three drivers walked to the caravan park to complete the car retrieval exercise, while the other four continued along the GSWW to the Nelson kiosk. I can thoroughly recommend the generous serving size of the ice creams at the kiosk. It was a very pleasant 16 km walk. Thank you all for coming.

Rob



Mt Eccles, the Tumuli, and Byaduk Caves: Saturday 20 June

Lava addicts: Marg, Fiona H (guest), and Rob (leader)

Stone fences, big holes, tumuli, and bright white gambolling lambs were the highlights of this walk. The morning's stroll at Mt Eccles started by following the very green mossy lava canal, mainly looking upwards since Marg had offered to shout coffee for the first person to spot a koala. There was no prize for spotting kangaroos and wallabies. Nor, other than self interest blood-wise, for spotting leeches, fortunately for two of us at least, found only on Fiona.

We emerged from under the Natural Bridge to find that a light drizzle had started: not enough to put parkas on but enough to bypass the summit on our walk around the crater rim of the scoria-coloured Lake Surprise.

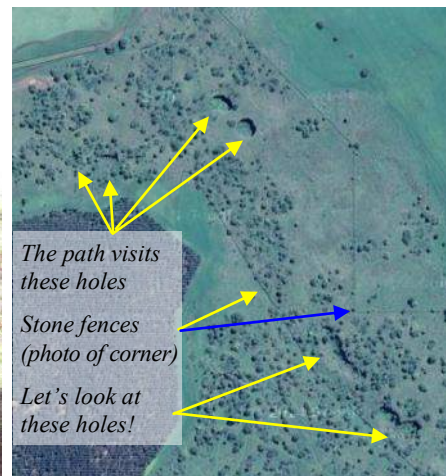
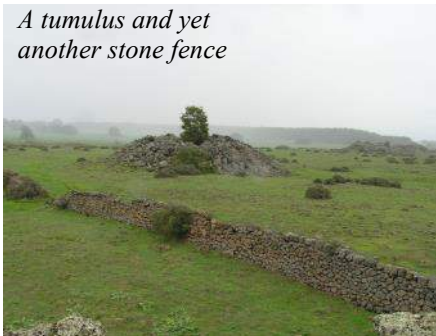
After lunch at the picnic area we entered full tourist mode: the tumuli besides Old Crusher Road and the Harmon Valley explanation signs provided us with two more geology lessons on our drive to the Byaduk Caves. Once there we left the standard walk half way to look for some of the holes that I'd noticed on Google's satellite image of the area. After 350 metres of reasonably easy walking over uneven ground we reached two impressive holes (the longer 100 metres one is on page 1), disturbed a large herd of feral goats, and twigged that the straight lines on the satellite image were not tracks but the impressive stone fences.

Rob

PS: Marg has to buy herself a coffee.



A tumulus and yet another stone fence



Stage One of the Grampians Peak trail: **World First for Warrnambool Bushwalkers!!**

Reporter: Janice; accomplice: Coralie

Inspired by the images of our premier basking in the sun on a tent platform after opening the first section of the Grampians Peak trail (referred to as the GPT), I was compelled to check out the latest internet information on Park Web and—lo and behold—found that Stage One was indeed open for business and campsites could be booked!

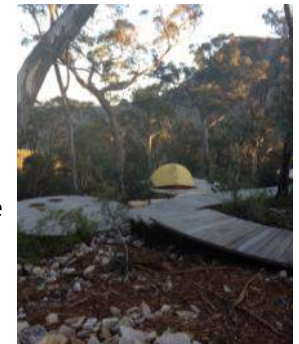
Your intrepid reporter studied weather forecasts with baited breath and finally a window of mild weather presented itself—Sunday and Monday of the long weekend were forecast to be mild. Not deterred by the \$30 booking fee, I lined up an accomplice and sallied forth.

Knowing we had only 8.6 km of familiar country ahead of us on day 1 and under the bad influence of my companion, we dallied in Halls Gap over coffee and cake before heading off at the relaxed time of 11:15 to the Pinnacle via Venus Baths. After a quick bite on the track we decided to take the less scenic, longer but much less busy 2.2 km detour to the Pinnacle. This was a good plan as we hit our stride and marched off away for the crowds to arrive at Sundial Car park about 2:30 pm. With camp close by it was too early to be setting up tents so we dropped packs and headed off on a side trip to the Sundial Peak lookout (about 1 hr return and not on the GPT) but were a little disappointed to find it closed for refurbishment.

Pretty excited by the prospect of a new *hiker's only* campsite we flew down the new alignment toward Rosea car park and took the diversion into the Bugiga campsite, arriving around 4 pm. This time we were not disappointed – the very stylish walker's shelter, boardwalks, tent platforms and stone work drew appreciative oohs and aahhs as they were sighted through the bush. Very Nice. Worth visiting for the design work alone, as the pictures show!

The new 4 m circumference platforms are equipped with a single cable running round the sides and call for a little creativity when pitching tents. We passed this intelligence test with flying colours and we were both snug in our tents despite the very windy conditions overnight. Next task—christen the shelter with a cup of tea—just in time for a welcoming visit by our friendly ranger who dropped by to congratulate us on being the **first hikers to book into the camp!** (<http://www.parkstay.vic.gov.au/grampians-peaks-trail> for bookings)

Bugiga is a prototype for future hiker's camps and the Ranger was interested in our thoughts about the track as well as the camp. I think he got more than he bargained for.



The next day dawned windy and cloudy with Rosea hidden from view. Off we marched, detouring to check out the Stony Creek Road Group Camp site (no improvements as yet) and headed up and over in the mist. We met a group of young European tourists who were most concerned that we mightn't be prepared with wet weather gear. (I wonder what they thought we were carrying in our big overnight packs!) Rugged up, we found the climb exhilarating but were pleased to get back below the tree line and find a sheltered spot for lunch along the new 8 km route before arriving at Borough Huts about 2:30. I had plenty of time after farewelling my offsider to get a fire going and to scrounge every last rock in the campsite to build wind proof reinforcements around my tent before the wind and rain forced me inside about 6:30 pm.

Tuesday morning's cold sunny weather was ideal for the return loop to Halls Gap. I crossed the road to follow a new foot track to the Bellfield Track along the southern edge of the lake, then up and down through the bush along the Terraces fire line before exiting at Tandarra Road and reaching the town around 11 am.

This first three day stage of the GPT was a really enjoyable walk. The first and last days are short and allow travelling time. The walk includes the spectacular Wonderland and Rosea landscapes and will provide excellent views in good conditions. The new camp is pretty flash and modifications to tent platforms are in hand to make them more user-friendly. Overnighters will need to be equipped with extra ropes and attachments, and to bring extra drinking water as there is limited tank supply. The route is not accurately marked on any current maps, but is very well signposted and takes walkers through varied country. A descriptive pamphlet is available online. The new tracks are well contoured (perhaps a little long as a result) and the bridge into Borough Huts replaces that dash through the icy cold creek. Borough Huts is being used until a hiker only camp is constructed over towards the lake as part of the next stage which has received funding in the 2015 state budget.

Ranger Mark has since confirmed that this trip was officially the first traverse of this stage of the GPT !

Try it for yourself: the Halls Gap-Wonderland-Sundial-Bugiga-Rosea-Borough Huts section is being offered as a day walk on July 19.

Janice



Trip Reports

Tower Hill circumnavigation: 27 June

Participants: Rob (leader), Coralie, David, and guests Ann, Rod, Jan

An 8:30 start from the gateway to Tower Hill went clockwise for this circuit. Overcast, with a few spots of moisture. We followed the ridgeline towards the west, looking across to the sea and down to a sea of kangaroos. The lake level must have been a little lower this time since the roo track through the reeds and box thorn at the lowest part of the crater was passable.

More roo tracks were followed as we climbed along the rim to the back of the houses on the western edge, pausing for some more view appreciation and to be as interested in some alpacas as they were in us. Then it was a road verge bash. More good views with only a minor complaint about coffee-less-ness were had at our stop halfway round the walk.

We left the road through a convenient gate and followed the foot track that runs along the base of the cliffs on the north-eastern side of the crater. After that track petered out below Cairn Lookout, we returned to the rim and strolled through a casuarina walkway to reach the fence. We followed this and then the road for a few hundred metres before we entered the exit for the final leg of the crater rim walk back to the cars. The walk took three hours.

Rob

