

## Trip Reports

### Chimney Pots Track Maintenance for Parks Vic: Saturday 2 April

*Participants: Mabel, Linda, Lothar, and Rob*

Two of us travelled to the Strachan Camp ground on the Friday afternoon. The campground has been rebuilt since the last bushfires, which ravaged this area. There was a new toilet and much to our surprise a hut (right) with an open fireplace inside. This hut came in handy as the winds really whipped up the sand in the late afternoon and we were able to cook our tea inside.

The morning saw a good down pour of rain but we were cozy inside the hut again. We packed up and met Lothar, Rob, Kyle (a park ranger) and David from the Grampians Walking Tracks Support Group at the Chimney Pots at 10 am. After the briefing about safety etc., Kyle left us to it.

This was the first time the track had received any maintenance since the fires so there was a lot of work to be done. David had the chain saw, which came in handy for there were quite a few trees across the track. Lothar was cutting drainage channels for the water to run away while Rob, Mabel and myself trimmed away the scrub. With the track being so steep and the vegetation really sappy the going was tough. I think we might have to revisit later in the year to have another go.

Mabel and I left in the late afternoon while the others stayed on and finished the loop; they were camping at Strachan so they could do some walking the next day. Thanks so much to Mabel, Lothar and Rob for giving their time and doing a great job.

*Linda*



## The Fortress from the east: Sunday 3 April

*Walkers: Lothar and Rob*

After the working bee we camped at Strachan's Camp, managed the end of daylight saving, and left camp just after 8. The advice I'd received was that the 4WD Victoria Range Road should be Subaru-able to the Fortress Track junction, probably to Mt Thackeray, but definitely not thereafter. Water bars were mentioned as a possible problem. There was only one iffy bit, but cars would want to pick their day well.

It was a pleasant day for walking, but unlike Saturday, the view was very hazy. As at the Chimney Pots, all the burnt ti-trees and banksias had rotted at the base and a gentle nudge would fell them. The rutted 4WD Fortress Track became a well defined foot track that went up to the base of the cliffs at the Fortress Hiker Campsite (wrongly marked on the 1:25,000 map). We continued along the track around the cliff base and down to a sign "Oasis Camp" aka Deep Creek Hiker Campsite. We retraced our steps, lunched at the Fortress campsite, and reached the car a little after 1 pm. Honour satisfied, we headed for the eateries of Dunkeld—Mt Thackeray being left for another day and a real 4WD.

*Rob*





## Old Beechy Rail Trail: 7–8 April

*Walkers: Jim, Lothar, Linda, Ann (prospective member), Helen A, Corrine, Mabel and Gwen*

Seven of us set off from Warrnambool at 7.30 am on the Thursday, and picked up Corrine in Colac on the way.

Morning tea was had at the Gellibrand Store, before heading to our starting point at Beech Forest. A little drizzly for some of the early part of the walk, but nothing to worry us. The first section was particularly picturesque, walking through ferny gullies. The walk to Gellibrand was 18.6 km, with most of it being downhill.

Afternoon tea again at the Gellibrand Store (pictured). After our car shuffle, we checked into the Gellibrand Hotel. Only one slight hitch! The hot water switch had not been turned on, so warm showers were not possible yet. Sorry Helen and Corrine! A lovely evening with delicious meals was held at the Pub!

At breakfast time we were back at the Gellibrand Store, and on a first name basis with the owners!! We were able to set off walking by 9 am, and most of the day was spent walking uphill. An 18.4 km walk that day, ending about 8 km out of Colac. This second day was perfect for walking.

Thank you to everyone that took part in the walk. A very good 2 days of walking.

*Gwenda*



## Mt Eccles: Saturday 16 April

*Walkers: Dina, Helen A, Coralie, Mike, Liz, Rob, Rhonda, Tina (guest), and Bernie (Grampians BW)*

Despite the weather having turned (drizzle necessitating the donning of waterproofs), nine hardy souls set off on the Lava Canal walk at Mt. Eccles. A very well fed koala was one of the first sights as we set off, as well as many kangaroos. There was also a fair smattering of the “little critters”, otherwise known as leeches; some did draw blood, but nowhere near as copiously as the much cited “Jim’s Mt Eccles experience”. The weather did slowly improve, which encouraged us to walk most of the Crater Rim track for some good views of Lake Surprise. Lunch at the pretty picnic ground completed the morning. Many thanks to all the walkers for a very pleasant and sociable walk.

*Dina*



Jim's reference leech by which all others are to be compared.





## Talbert Point art appreciation: 23–25 April

*Participants: Rob, Mabel, Diane and 27 Ballarat Bushwalking and Outdoor Club walkers*

BBOC invited our club on their base camp at Brauer Annexe near Dunkeld. The weekend's purpose was, in part, to look at some of the proposed southern end of the Grampians Peaks Trail. We arrived to find an as-fit-as-ever Bill Purcell was one of the BBOC walkers.

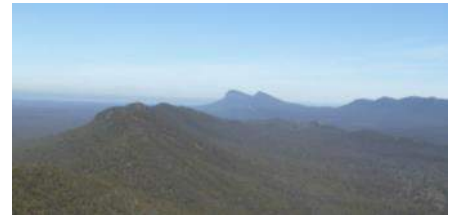
Day 1 saw half of us going south from Yarram Gap on a lightly-vegetated ridge-top roller coaster walk—glorious weather, glorious views. We made good time unlike the other half who were following pink markers showing the likely GPT route in the valley below: they were in very thick scrub. They gave up and climbed to our ridge. We waited 100 minutes before they reached us. All of us followed the ridge to an old fire trail and hence to the never-finished Christobel “house”. The cars were unshuffled, and we arrived at camp later than expected.

Not surprisingly, WBs declined the Mt Sturgeon option on day 2 and chose art appreciation. In 1859 Eugen von Guerard visited a knob between Yarram Gap and Talbert Point—just the spot to recover our breath and listen to Margaret, BBOC's resident art expert, give an informative talk about E von G. Eight of us went on to visit Talbert Point: our maps gave two choices, both were bagged! Another glorious 6-hour ridge walk in perfect weather with a 360° panorama.

Day 3 started with cleaning up before either home or the Picaninny for most. Some hearty souls followed the almost immediately-lost old track up Abrupt to the spot proposed for the Abrupt Hikers camp. Another two most gratifying hours in perfect weather with a view over the Picaninny, Sturgeon, Dunkeld, and the plains as a reward. Finally it was Brauer for lunch, Dunkeld for coffee, and then home.

Thanks to BBOC for being so welcoming to us and being such good company. Special thanks to John Petheram for organising a thoroughly enjoyable weekend of walking along rarely used off-track routes.

*Rob*



## Trip Reports

### Tower Hill's Rim: Saturday 7 May

*Participants: Rob, Mabel, Diane, Steve, Jim and guest Eli*

Advertised as a three hour walk, our clockwise circumnavigation started at 8:30 from the entrance on the Princes Highway. If you were hop(p)ing to see kangaroos you wouldn't have been disappointed—oodles of them bounced on in front of us as we followed the ridge line down to the lowest point on the rim. Then, obviously it was up, along the ridge that forms the western rim towards suburbia. It was a smoky day but the weather was pleasantly warm and windless and the clouds were reflected in what little water was left in the lakes. Much oh-ing and ah-ing.

While the road verge on the north-west quarter of the rim is not unpleasant walking, an alternate route would improve this walk. Considerable thought was given to whether there was a practical alternate within the crater, courtesy of track-making roos. Time will tell, we hope without S&R having to be called out during any exploration. The halfway nibbles stop looked over a virtually dry eastern half of the crater.

A little more road-bashing before taking the track that goes just below the rim. This was followed passed a “human” skeleton made out of kangaroo bones and on to the trig point celebrating gliding in the area. After a hundred metres on the road and two nervous emus, we went through the exit gate and followed the rim back to the cars. Trip finished at 11:29.

*Rob*



## Portland to Cape Nelson: Saturday 14 May

*Logistics and reporting: Rob; co-driver: David; technical advisor: Lothar; affable companions: Jim, Diane, Tina (guest), but unfortunately not Kate, because no rain had been forecast and so house painting took precedence.*

On reaching Portland we had coffee and remarked on the large number of boats at anchor and docked. The grand design had the non-drivers being left to start walking along the GSWW while the car shuffle was underway. Lothar suggested the gannet rookery, a prudent choice that involved much less walking than the over-ambitious leader had planned. And so it was that both the pedestrian and motorised parts of the party reached Quarry Road about the same time, after a half an hour's separation.

It was a very untypical May day: sunny cloudless sky, a moderate wind that stopped us from getting overheated, and a fairly smooth bright blue sea whose moderate swells still managed to create large patches of white froth when they hit the cliffs. It was, in short, a perfect day for walking. The views were impressive. Walking away from Portland reduced the need to study the town's industries. The only downside was the dull roar from the myriad of wind turbines—one reason this most enjoyable walk is not on the program more frequently.

We made good time as we followed the undulating GSWW track, stopping dutifully at each lookout to admire the view and to note the changing distances to the starting and ending points. We had lunch at a convenient lookout in the Enchanted Forest, again based on the sage advice of our advisor. Our arrival at the lighthouse was rewarded with coffee and cakes at *Isabella's Cafe*. After reuniting cars with owners, we reached Warrnambool at 5:30 under an expansive pink sunset that celebrated a grand day out.





## Trip Reports

### Byaduk Caves, Mts Napier and Rouse: Saturday 4 June

Seven walkers participated in a mini tour of this volcanic area on an overcast day. Probably the most used muscle groups were those necessary for speech and laughter!! There were numerous questions posed and much discussion about how the caves and lava flow areas came to be, though not too many conclusions were reached. The pronunciation of local place names was much debated (Napier being a case in point). And many solutions were proposed to manage the loss of the outer soles of one walker's boots ten minutes into our first walk!

Lunch was taken at the picnic area at Mt. Rouse where the main debating topic was the curious construction of the toilet block. Coffee and cake were ingested (we did, after all, do some walking) at the Bagdad Cafe in Penshurst, whilst checking out its bric-a-brac.

Many thanks to Rob, Gwen, David, Rhonda, Mabel and Glenda (visitor) for a very enjoyable day.

*Dina*





## Wyperfeld base camp: 10–13 June

*Organiser and evening chef: Lothar; morning chef: Linda; sated participants: Mabel, Helen A, Coralie, Gwenda and Rob* had these thoughts on this celebrated weekend ...

**Gwenda:** The Queen's Birthday Weekend saw seven of us drive to the Wyperfeld National Park. On arrival tents were pitched and vans were set up. We had two full days of walking—all in dry sand!! The desert looked stunning with lots of green grass and shrubs, water lying on the ground and colourful birds to be seen everywhere.

Lothar and Linda did a wonderful job of fuelling our starving bodies with gourmet breakfasts and dinners. Thank you both so much for all your hard work. A thoroughly enjoyable long weekend!

**Rob:** Came back from three glorious days at Wyperfeld to find the bathroom scales were reading heavy. There were fewer campers, birds and flowering plants this visit, but what regrowth there had been in the burnt part of the Desert Walk was doing well. We eventually found *The Hole* about 50 metres from our starting point on Lake Brambruk.



**Linda:** It astounded me the huge difference in the vegetation on this weekend compared to previous visits. The vegetation was green with new growth everywhere, compared to previous years where the landscape was dry and barren. As usual Lothar's cook ups were a resounding success. A fantastic time, thank you Lothar.

**Coralie:** After a deliberate absence of many years, my return to Wyperfeld was a pleasant surprise. When I last visited the park, it was in the deadly grip of a drought; greys and browns were the only hues visible on the landscape. I much enjoyed the return of the greens, yellows and flashes of red, scarlet and orange as the desert plants burst back into life after a much needed watering. The bird life was prolific too, especially in the mornings and kept Rob happy trying for the perfect shot to show the parrots in all their magnificence. A hearty thanks to all those who made the trip and added to its success. A special thanks must go to Lothar for the concept, organisation and the food.

**Helen:** Ah, the serenity! I really enjoyed relaxing around the campfire (despite the smoke ), dining on the gourmet food, and chatting with my fellow campers. The freezing nights and chilly mornings created ideal conditions for warming walks. I was saddened by the sight of dead kangaroos close to the walk tracks and which the rangers said had been culled.

**Mabel:** Cold!! Cold!!. Great company and fabulous food. Good walks. Interesting to see the desert country recovering from the fires a couple of years ago.

**Lothar:** I always love Wyperfeld for the open bush, the bird life, sitting around the campfire, excellent breakfasts!, and camp oven cooked meals. The nights were cold but the days were glorious. Thanks to all for making it a great weekend!



*Down, but not out!*

*Linda models her new headgear  
... but not to be outdone in the umbrella stakes  
... well, actually Lothar had to be egged on considerably for this pose.*



### Twelve Apostles to Princetown gourmet walk: Saturday 18 June

Gastronomes: Helen A, Linda, Lothar, Rhonda, David, Jim, Rob and Glenda

*Helen had thoughtfully provided refreshments for the rest of the party while she and Jim did the car shuffle from the Twelve Apostles carpark to Princetown. A pleasant walk was followed by coffee at Princetown while the cars were retrieved. The next stop was the chocolate shop, and soon a whey to the cheese factory we went. Lulled into a false sense of security by the lunchtime cheese platters we were forced to jot down our thoughts:*

It is difficult to put a collection of thoughts into a succinct report but here goes. The route from the Twelve Apostles to Princetown offered a variety of scenery from coastal vistas, canopies of arched tea-trees to estuarine reed beds. The relaxing coffee at the end of the walk was much appreciated before the start of the tasting onslaught. Gorge Chocolates started this indulgence—or gave inspiration for a birthday gift! The cheese sampling and the lunch platters proved that we all loved this dairy product, even though some was 'contaminated with bacteria'! The venue provided an opportunity for much chatting—once the plates were empty. The company, the walk, and the gourmet delights culminated in a very enjoyable day had by all.

Helen

