

Tasmania: 12–21 January

Our Qantas flight was a small 40 seater and most of us wondered if it could take off laden with our bulging backpacks, packs we could scarcely lift ourselves packed with 10 days food supply and gear to cover us in all weather conditions. The flight was uneventful, but for me amazement as I peered down on the orderly patterns on the ground below us. I hadn't flown in a plane since 1970!

Coralie & Sandra had arranged with Maxwell's Bus shuttle to pick us up at Devonport airport and transport us south to the Lyell highway where we were dropped off for the first stage of the hike.

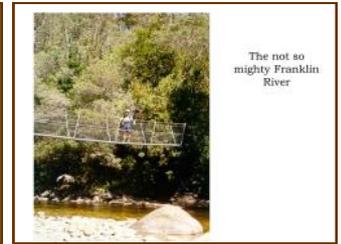
We repacked our bags storing extra food & clothes for later in this 10 day adventure. Backpacks for the walk ranged between 14 – 20 odd kg. Looking back the variations can easily be accounted for. Some of us omitted essentials – thermarest, camp sandals, camp stool, wine, fresh apples and cucumber, corned beef and fresh bread. I could go on ...

The weather was fine & hot for the walk over Mount Mullens, along the (sodden) Loddon River to Lake Vera. Coralie nearly got a photo of one of us deep in soggy black mud. Any other year it would have been too easy. However the track was relatively dry due to the drought. On to Lake Tahune by crossing Barron Pass and traversing Artichoke Valley, all the time the majestic Frechmans Cap (1443m) gradually "growing bigger" as we approached this peak. The rocks of the Cap wouldn't have looked much different in winter when it is snow covered, but we saw those huge quartzite rocks glistening white in the sunlight. I missed the stunning views from its summit but did climb high enough to see range after mountain range dotted with lakes and tarns that fills this mountainous wilderness

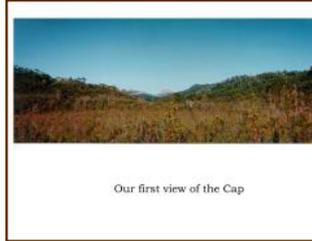
Back at the lakeside camp we swam in the cold black water of Lake Tahune, Carolyn swam its length and back, exhilarated by the coldness.



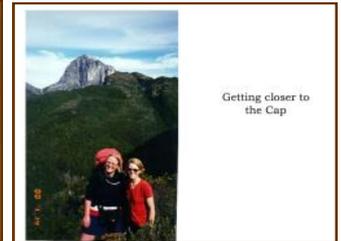
The start of Frenchmans Cap Track



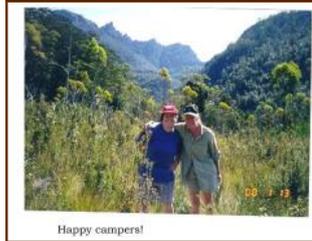
The not so mighty Franklin River



Our first view of the Cap



Getting closer to the Cap



Happy campers!



Cooling off in the Loddon



Yes it does get hot in Tassie!

Wayne, Sandy and Diane put on an impressive display of synchronized swimming.

The 25 km walk back to our pick-up point on the Lyell Highway was different as weather changes brought low cloud to mystify the landscape that we'd seen two days before.

On our fifth night we camped beside the Franklin River which was only gently flowing after the dry winter. We swam in the shallows and relaxed on the rocks. We watched rainbow trout jumping and swimming in the crystal clear water.

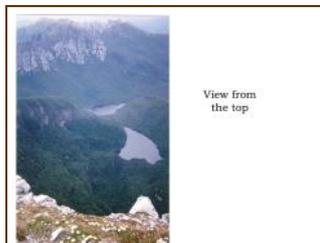
The next day at Lake St. Clair we pitched our tents at the campground and feasted in the lakeside restaurant. Swimming in the lake which is surrounded by the peaks of Mts. Reufus, Hugel, Byron, Ida and others was a treat as we'd missed the boat ride to Narcissus Bay.

Others went off on walks amid aboriginal relics and exciting wildlife like slithering snakes.

The Maxwell's Bus was there to meet us next morning and bus driver Laurie drove us north to Deloraine and on to Lake Rowallen near where we were dropped off for the walk into the Walls of Jerusalem.

Another repack of our backpacks to accommodate the colder, wet conditions that were forecast. We climbed steeply for the first couple of hours, passing Trappers Hut and when we got to Solomons Jewels we set up camp in this peaceful site among small tarns. We were now grateful for our (hired) snow tent, thermals, Polotec jackets, sturdy Gortex rainwear, mittens & beanies. The weather in this highland wilderness can offer warmth, gentle breezes and sunshine, & rain & freezing winds all on the same day. Hikers are well advised to carry the appropriate gear to be safe at these heights.

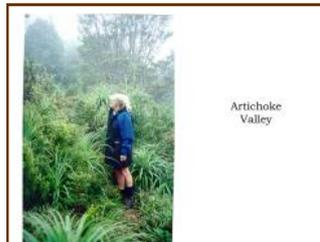
Next day we passed the imposing Herods Gate (1200m) where the wind blew strong & cold. We followed the track keeping parallel to the West



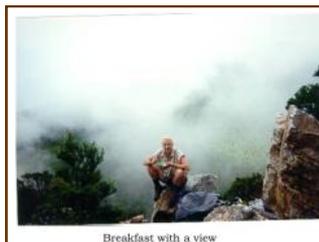
View from the top



Going back down the Cap



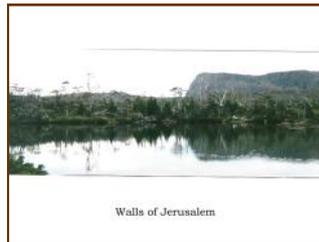
Artichoke Valley



Breakfast with a view



We did it!



Walls of Jerusalem



West Wall

Well as we passed Lake Salome and walked on to the Pool of Bethesda where we pitched tents. Here the peaks of Solomon's Throne, King David's Peak (1450m), The Temple (1446m), Mt Jerusalem and Zion Hill (1396m) looked down on us and during the next two days we were to "bag these peaks". As well we explored Dixon's Kingdom Hut further up the valley and the spot where cattle were grazed in the 1930's when the Depression caused great hardship to the Tasmanians.

Laurie- the- Legend was there to meet us on our return to the carpark four days later and he returned us to Devonport where Youth Hostel accomodation suited us as did an enjoyable meal at the pub.

Thank you to our trek leader Coralie, who not only issued us with an accurate list of gear & food needs, she'd walked the tracks some years ago & remembered the fresh water stops and she knew the condition of the tracks and huts, Coralie kindly also could offer some of us liner socks which help keep feet blister free, dry socks and stuff from the first aid kit additional to our personal kit, like imodium tablets and cream to ease itchy mozzie bites. Tasmanian mosquitoes and march flies are huge!

Stephanie & Caroline kept our spirits up as they burst into song at the mention of a key word, even if collectively all we could muster was the repetition of the first line of the song. Diane too has a good repertoire, happily entertaining our group.

Diane, Wayne & Sandy were fun at those happy hours when we relaxed at the end of a long day's backpacking. Tony, Sandra & Carolyn were generally first in when we camped by a creek or lake. We found some wonderful places in which to swim & relax.

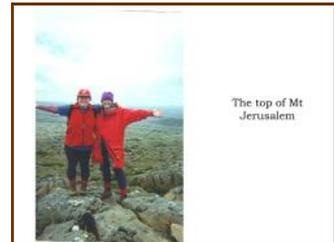
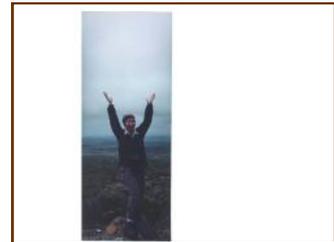
I admit that at various stages I found the going to be tough. However I am well aware of the strength one gains from a supportive group when out there together for several days. That is something special and a little hard to define.

I feel privileged and lucky to have been part of this wonderful adventure and proud and glad that Carolyn was there to share the trek with me.

Marg



Dixons Kingdom



The top of Mt Jerusalem



Happy Hour - happy people

Penola Wine Tasting Weekend: 27–28 February

Walkers: *Tony, Coralie, Diane, Irene, Ken, Linda, Margaret, Sandra & Stephanie*

Tony & I, Ken & Margaret, and Stephanie & Dianne arrived Friday night to start our Penola wine tasting weekend. We stayed at the Penola caravan park in a variety of accomodation, flat style and caraven. Saturday morning Coralie, Linda & Irene arrived and we donned our helmets and rode off to our first wineries, Lindemans, Balnaves etc, slurring my words here, and cannot remember them all???//;;---.

We stopped for a picnic lunch on the lawn at Wynns winery, and tasted their delightful chardonnay. After lunch we peddled the backroads into Penola where the men found that they has ridden up a thirst & tasted a beer, a fine vintaged tap Coopers Pale Ale the bubble the style of an aged champagne and mellow to the lips, pleasant yeast back palate; while the ladies imbibed coffee & luscious cake at the corner coffee house. We enjoyed a barbecue tea at the caravan park that evening.

Sunday we rode our bikes 12 k's out to the Conservation Park, having passed the 100 year old school house on the way. We rode our bikes through the park then and had lunch under a grand old native cherry tree which shaded us well from the hot sun. Pushing against a head wind we sailed back into Penola before setting course for home.

Sandra

Navigation from the Moora Moora campground: 12–13 March

Participants: *Herb (leader), Lois, Carolyn and Marg.*

Three markers from the Christmas Camp exploration were out there lying dormant in the bush and it was our job to locate these elusive controls: 006, 007, and 008.

Our party arrived at the campground mid afternoon and soon after pitching the tent and tarpaulin we set out on foot along the Henham Track. In the heat of the afternoon we scoured the area Herb led us to, all to no avail. We did pass by the skull, spine and probably the entire skeletal remains of some animal, wondering if this was indeed the Moora Moora Savage. But empty-handed, we returned to camp in time for tea by our fire. The night was fine, still and clear and we stayed up reminiscing of previous walks and camps.

Breakfast of toast and coffee around the fire next morning was enjoyed before setting off in the Landrover to perhaps productive finds. But first we stopped off at the high point further up the track beyond the camp to watch two intrepid experienced Rock climbers scaling the sheer rock face and seeing their elation at completing the climb and us applauding their effort. Those two had camped at our clearing overnight.

We had important work to do ourselves and to my amazement anyway, there was 006 at grid reference 2545 8270 exactly where Herb had planted it three months ago. Mind you, we were led there by Herb who was constantly consulting his compass, GPS (global positioning system) as well as counting his measured stride as he kept his course. We just followed.

We bush bashed our way deeper into the Teatree and hakea scrub, where Herb called in glee as he located 007 hanging on the dead tree in the clearing at the summit. Carolyn navigated our way back to the Moora Moora Track using the compass and completing a triangular course.

Two out of three controls were good enough for Lois, Carolyn and I and we all returned to camp. After lunch we drove further along the Henham Track and set out to explore “A Gorge” which was depicted on the map and had Herb fascinated. We scrambled along the creek bed which was only occasionally dotted with a puddle or two after the drought of the last couple of years. The gorge turned out to be fairly unremarkable but it was an interesting challenge to venture deeper into the gorge.

Carolyn and I returned home mid afternoon whilst Herb and Lois stayed on to return to those old bones in the tea tree scrub and reset the GPS and this time locate Control 008!! Three out of three!!

Thank you to Herb and Lois for an entertaining weekend and thanks Ken for cleaning our dusty car on our return home.

Marg.

Lake St Clair to Cradle Mountain: 16–23 March

Walkers: Lothar (leader) and John.

Report 1: Lothar asked me to write this article because he won't be back in time to meet the dead-line for our April newsletter.

To begin, we crossed Lake St Clair (elevation 740 m), at the southern end of the National Park, by boat. Then we walked 63 km along the Overland Track to Waldheim, just north of Cradle Mountain, in five days. We also did ten hours worth of side trips. Lothar started two days earlier than I did, making a side trip near Lake St. Clair to a peak called the Acropolis, the view from the top of which was fantastic, he said. Lothar enjoyed fine weather for those two days. We met at the Windy Ridge hut, half a day's walk north of Lake St Clair. I walked some of it in light rain with Peter Johanson from Denmark, who left me half way to also go down the side track to the Acropolis.

The huts provide raised board floors on which to lay out your sleeping gear, tables with bench seats and a bench for cooking, a composting toilet, a coal or gas heater, and rain water from a tank. There are no showers, and, as there is no electricity, people tend to go to bed by 9 pm. There were ordinary wallabies (Bennets'), paddymelons (small round wallabies), and brush tail possums around most of the huts.

On my first full day, we carried our packs for about three hours, plus did side trips to see three waterfalls, all in bright sunshine. Unfortunately, Lothar fell and bruised his knee on a rock. The most common tree in the forest was myrtle, the same species as the beech trees at Beech Forest in the Otways, the full name being myrtle beech. Some of the other trees were similar to those in Victoria, such as snow gum, silver wattle and stringy bark. However, there were also many exclusively Tasmanian ones: sassafras, leather wood, King Billy pine, celery top pine, cedar gum and alpine yellow gum; to say nothing of the wild flowers. Peter caught up with us at the Kia Ora hut that night, collapsing into his sleeping bag without having an evening meal. He had walked for 11 ½ hours – silly so and so.

The next morning, Lothar, Peter and I set off in light rain. Lothar fell again, receiving a second bruise near the first. When we approached the Pelion gap, the highest point on the main track at 1126 m, we had to don gloves and beanies or hoods to protect our fingers and ears from the cold. The top of Mt Ossa, Tasmania's tallest mountain, was covered in mist. Peter went on, while Lothar and I walked up the smaller Mt Doris but stopped at the bottom of the mist on the saddle between the two mountains. Even that bit was worth doing to experience the alpine environment.

The weather fined up by the time we descended to Pelion hut in the afternoon. However, there was a heavy frost that night. You're not supposed to start the heater unless it's below 10 degrees C, so they have thermometers on the wall. Next morning, it was -1 inside the hut above the coal heater, which had of course



gone out - would have been lower still in the normal box. Ruth, a jolly young woman from England, emerged from her frosty tent to join us on the next leg of our walk.

This took 7 ½ hours, including 1 ½ hours rest and 6 hours carrying our 20 kg packs. The sun had returned. The first half of the day was through forest, including a long, up hill stretch. Then we emerged onto Pine Forest moor, which is a long open plateau covered in button grass tussocks, with a small forest of pencil pine in the middle. Before this forest, we could see Mt Ossa and all the other peaks that we had passed ringed around the horizon behind us. After the pine forest, we could see Barn Bluff and Cradle Mountain in the distance before us. It was quite a sight. The mountains in the park are made up of dolerite, a type of rock that is forced up in molten fingers under the earth's crust, during its formation. Erosion later exposes these (1 km depth of erosion in this area). Dolerite is made up of numerous columns of rock, so that the mountains stick up like bunches of straws or uncooked noodles. The land in between was gouged by glaciers in various ice ages, resulting in flat valley floors with steep sides, rather than the usual V shape. On Pine Forest Moor, we looked out over one such U shaped valley – that of the Forth River – a great spectacle. All this makes the National Park look different to the Grampians and the ranges of NE Victoria. It's quite striking. Our first step on the moor was almost on a snake, if only a small one. Much of the track there was on board walk to protect the vegetation.

The next day the mist and rain returned for our morning walk from Windermere hut to Waterfall Valley hut. Had it been fine, we would have climbed Barn Bluff in the afternoon. Given that it was wet, Lothar rested his knee by playing cards (king's corner) with several others in the hut. One of these was Cecile, a mysterious French woman who passed us on the track when the weather was fine, but whom we overtook when it was wet because she didn't like walking in the rain. As Ruth decided to go on to another hut on a side route that afternoon, I accompanied her for something to do, then returned. The weather on the lip of Cradle cirque was a wonder to behold. (A cirque, pronounced "surk", is a bowl shaped depression, formed on the lee side of a mountain top when ice accumulated there becomes too heavy and sinks down, gouging the hole as it does so. This leaves a semi circular rim around the top of the cirque, the diameter being about a kilometre in this case.) That afternoon, the wind and mist ripped across the ridge hard enough to blow us off balance, and we couldn't see a thing except for a few metres of the track in front of us. Then it would clear up for a few seconds, giving a glimpse of a chasm that we hadn't known was there – somewhat exhilarating.

That night, a storm with buffeting winds and heavy rain went on from about 10 pm to midnight. Given the hour, we were in the hut at the time. (I met an American boy who wasn't so lucky on the previous Saturday when a storm ripped the fly off his tent. He had to retrieve it in his pyjamas. Then, soaked, on all fours inside the tent, he had to hold the pegs down to stop the tent from blowing away too.) Next morning, the nearby stream was more noisy and half the ground was white with ice. The thermometer, outside the hut in this case, read zero degrees. Lothar and I started out in sleet and occasional snow. This kept up throughout our two hour walk to



the north end of Cradle Mountain, though visibility was better, and the wind lighter, than on the previous day. The top of the mountain was shrouded in mist, which depressed Lothar and me because we wanted to climb it. We decided to have lunch, just in case it cleared. To our delight, within half an hour, all the moisture blew away to be replaced by bright sunshine. We got to the top (1547 m) in regulation time (2 ½ hours return), most of it occupied by clambering over rocks using hands and feet on steep inclines. The view met our expectations, a circular plaque being provided to identify all the peaks, including some outside the park like Frenchman's Cap.

After descending, we continued north. Marion's look-out gave us a bird's eye view of Dove Lake. However, the feature of that segment was Crater Lake, which is not the usual volcanic crater because there has been no volcanic activity in the park. It looked more like another cirque to me, with the lake in the bottom of the hole. In any case, it was breath takingly beautiful, reminiscent of Loch Ness in Scotland. The track descends steeply down the side of the rim, which must be a daunting start for walkers going in the normal direction. Lothar and I finally reached the end of the walk at Waldheim, eight hours after we had set out from Waterfall Valley hut in the sleet. We saw a wombat near the end, just to complete the picture.

When Lothar took the band-aid off his knee at the end of the walk, he found that it had become infected. By the time he checked it with the doctor at Launceston next day, it had improved, not requiring antibiotics, just anti-inflammatories. No doubt it's fully recovered by now. As our bus left at lunch time on that day, Lothar and I spent the morning in the Visitor Centre, where all aspects of the Park are explained in full. This includes a ten minute forest walk with all tree species labelled, and a water fall on the only bit of basalt in the area.

I would like to conclude by thanking Lothar for his general tutelage (though I have been walking through the bush ever since I was a kid I have never carried a pack till this year), and for sharing his experience of having done the reverse walk last year.

John

Report 2:

John's report is fairly extensive, so I'll only include a few extra comments.

Overall I had a fantastic time. I was able to do most of the climbs and extra side trips that I'd missed out on the first time. Highs, as far as the scenery was concerned, were climbing the Acropolis (see [1-16a](#), [2-1](#)), climbing Cradle Mountain (see [3-11a](#), [3-18a](#)), and the walk between Pelion Hut and Windermere Hut (see [2-22a](#), [2-23a](#), [2-24a](#)). The "top of the world" views just took my breath away! My lows centered around my left knee. On the 4th day out my right foot slipped on a plank and I fell heavily onto the side of my left knee. My left knee area ended up bruised and sore every night and, being weakened, caused me to have a couple more spills and near misses. It's still not 100% even now. I also missed out on climbing Mt Ossa because of the weather, but climbing 2 peaks ain't bad!



And there were other highs as well. Meeting fellow walkers along the track and in the huts at night was also a buzz. I met some really nice and interesting people - such as Ruth/Rooth from England (see [2-23a](#), [2-24a](#)). She was so talented that not only was she able to win at cards but on the same night she was also able to land a temporary job in Canberra with a computer consultant - and he was one of the people she had beaten at cards! It was a night of many laughs. I only saw one leech the whole trip - and when someone pointed it out crawling up Ruth's jumper she very calmly went outside the hut, lifted it off and squashed it. Amazing! Wonder how good she is with her Cello and her singing?

Over the 8 days I also left contact details with a number of other travellers - hope they all drop in to Warrnambool on their trips around Australia.

As you can see from John's report he has a wealth of knowledge and interest in geology and plants and animals. This made him an excellent walking companion.

My count of the number of days is one more than John's: 6 for John and 8 for me - I'm including catching the bus in Hobart at 7:30am on Thursday 16th, being driven to Lake St Clair, catching the ferry, and walking over 3 hours to Pine Valley hut. John would have had a similar day 2 days later but instead going to Windy Ridge hut. We both finished the walk at about 6pm on Thursday 23rd when we hitch hiked from Waldheim to the Cradle Mountain campground. Not included in the count is the day getting to Tassie and the day or two getting back to Launceston and then to Warrnambool.

I enjoyed the "against the tide" south to north direction more than the conventional north to south route. You tend to build up more slowly and your body eases into it - whereas when you start at Waldheim you have a few hours of sheer uphill agony with a full pack on the very first day - and you may not feel like climbing Cradle Mountain when you get to Kitchen hut. But then, I'm just splitting hairs. The walk is fantastic either way!

Lothar

PS. A couple of days after the walk Chris (who had flown to Launceston to meet me) and I went back to Cradle Mountain to stay at one of the NP cabins at Waldheim - we walked to the beautiful Crater lake (see [4-6](#)), and also did a circuit of Dove Lake (which is at the foot of Cradle Mountain). It was just lovely.

PPS. And a few days later still Chris and I were waiting to catch the ferry to Maria Island National Park for a day trip when a bus pulled up and a lone backpacker got out. It was Cecile, the mysterious French woman, out to explore the island for a few days.



Canoe trip, Merri River: March 18

Participants: Val, Evie, Bill & Geoff.

We set out from Cassidys Bridge to explore the unknown depths of the Merri River to the mouth. The day was a pleasant sunny day with a light southeast breeze. Bill and Evie paddled together and Val and I. We paddled through farmland to the north of Warrnambool arriving at the Kayak Club where we had a cuppa and Val shared some nibbles which were given to her by an exchange student. We then paddled on through the Merri cutting, this flows between Merrivale and the sea and on past the golf club the woollen mill finishing at the Stanley St. Bridge. We carried the canoes across Stanley St. to Ron Darts's house where we left them while Ron drove us back to collect our cars. Thank you Ron.

Geoff.

Great South West Walk: March

As some of you will know, last year I walked the first 7 days of a 14 day walk, which starts and ends at Portland. This year I walked the last 7 days to complete the whole 250 km circuit. My day 1 is the walk's day 8, so you will have some idea where the other walkers in the group were.

DAY 1 - Nelson to Mombeong

After a short distance on the road we reached the beach and walked onto Discovery Bay. Thankfully the sand was nice and hard which made walking quite easy. We passed a rock which looked like a shipwreck. Sam was waiting for us with chairs out and water boiling for lunch. After lunch we took the inland route to Mombeong. It was a good wide track and quite scenic. Once at camp and after the tent was pitched, I had a swim in the lake. Distance was 23 km.

DAY 2 - Mombeong to Swan Lake

Today was sunny with light winds. We again walked on Discovery Bay beach which was hard until lunch, then the sand got soft which made it very hard work for awhile. The sea was calm and a lovely blue. We were all glad to reach our camp site and solid ground to walk on. Distance was 16.5 km.

DAY 3 - Swan Lake to Tarragal

Today was cloudy but fine. After walking past pine plantations and up a few hills, you had a magnificent view of the extensive sand dunes at Swan Lake. Lunch was in the Mt Richmond National Park, with Sam waiting for us with his usual services. Distance was 20 kms.

DAY 4 - Tarragal to Springs

Today was cloudy but fine with light winds. Our first views of Bridgewater Lakes were seen today, which were impressive. After a rest and use of a flushing toilet we pushed onto the cliffs where spectacular views of Discovery Bay unfolded. We passed White's Beach which has a cairn to recognise the deaths of passengers from the "Marie" in 1851. Gordon, our leader, took us down to the fresh water springs, which in the past watered cattle. After rock hopping, we reached Green Pools. Distance was 12 km.

DAY 5 - Springs to Trewalla

Today was cloudy but fine with a light wind. We are all grateful for the good weather. Along the cliff line today. The views were spectacular and numerous stops were needed to look at the ocean and the steep cliffs. This was a photographers heaven. The blowholes were quiet and the Petrified Forest was well worth a stop. The seals with their antics were a pleasure to watch. Lunch was at the Bridgewater Café and the food tasted great. Sam left us here and Monty has taken over. Along the Bridgewater Bay beach after lunch, until the newly constructed staircase was reached. Distance was 15 km.

DAY 6 - Trewalla to Mallee

Today was cool and cloudy. After going through the sand dunes we walked on the beach. The sand was hard which was just as well, if you could see the size of the sand dune we had to get up at the end of the beach. After struggling up that big dune we had a well earned rest. As we were about to move off, the rain came down. On went the raincoats and off we went. Lunch was at the Cape Nelson lighthouse. We were allowed to climb up to the top and walk around the outside of the lighthouse. The 360 degree views were worth the 123 steps you had to get up. On we went to camp. Once there, the Portland Observer photographer arrived and took some photos of the group. We were also given our certificates by Gwen Bennett. Distance was 15 km.

DAY 7 - Mallee to Portland.

Along the cliff line today. The sea was wild with huge white waves. It rained steadily but cleared up later in the day. The Enchanted Forest is an old but stable land slip with dense vegetation, very pretty. Yellow Rock has an extensive boardwalk and the views from it are good. Along we continued to the Smelter Walks, then down to the Portland Tourist Information Centre. A long awaited caffeine hit was thoroughly enjoyed. Distance was 16.5 km.

The walk was organised by The Friends Of The Great South West Walk and the next one is in 2 years time, if you are interested book soon or you will miss out. The cost covers some food and transport of your camping gear. You will get an experienced guide and a camp helper who provides a lovely fire and heaps of boiling water. You will need to be reasonably fit and wear well broken in shoes. I really enjoyed the walk and would recommend it.

Ann