

Easter in the Grampians - Dunkeld/Halls Gap: 14–16 April

Walkers: Ken, Marg, Caroline, Lothar, Bill, Ron

Ken drove the caravan to the Dunkeld Campground and he had our camp set up by the time Carolyn and Marg arrived by bike a few hours later. Fine, calm and sunny weather made cycling a pleasant adventure for us.

Saturday we walked to the Mt Sturgeon base and the three of us climbed via the regular path. On reaching the summit where we enjoyed the stunning view and a picnic lunch, the girls chose to head back off track via the false peak; over the old stone fence that had been erected by Chinese gold seekers in the 1800's, and on to the quarry at the foot of the mount. A four-wheel drive track took us back to the Victoria Valley Road. Meanwhile Ken returned from the summit on the regular walking track.

We met Lothar as we neared Dunkeld and he'd set up camp with us and was ready to climb Sturgeon, which he did in near record time.

We skited about our days adventure as we warmed ourselves by the fire whilst cooking tea.

Next morning we drove to Halls Gap and parked near the oval. Bill and Ron were there to meet us and six of us scaled Mt Chatauqua via a dry Clematis Falls. From the rocky summit we took in views of Lake Bellfield, Lake Fyans and Stawell. Walking was pleasant in the balmy conditions and we completed the loop passing Bullacres Glen on our way back to Halls Gap. The hot cappuccino in the township was nice.

The Farrars went on to Stawell in the afternoon. Bill & Ron returned to their family camp near Dunkeld and Lothar, not content with a morning trek, set off to do another loop of Halls Gap including up Boronia Peak for excellent views.

On Sunday, to warm up and wait for the fog to lift we walked for a while along the sandy tracks at Mt Sturgeon. Here I was fascinated by the myriad of large and small linear and three dimensional spider webs that glistened in the dew-fresh bush in the early morning. Whilst the hikers slept the spiders had woven their intricate webs.

Bill was at Mt Abrupt to meet us as arranged and in good company as we climbed to the top.

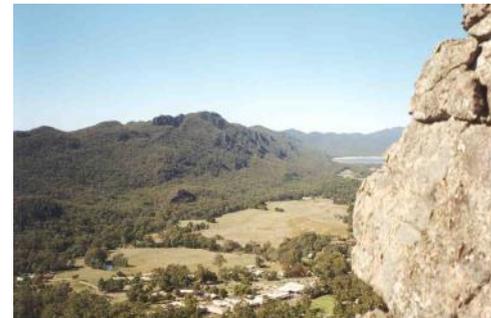


Nature was at it's best as we watched the low cloud lift and drift across the mountain range around us, Bill eager to capture the effect on film. The clouds rolled over the saddle in front of us and virtually disappeared once they hit the low-farmed plains to the east.

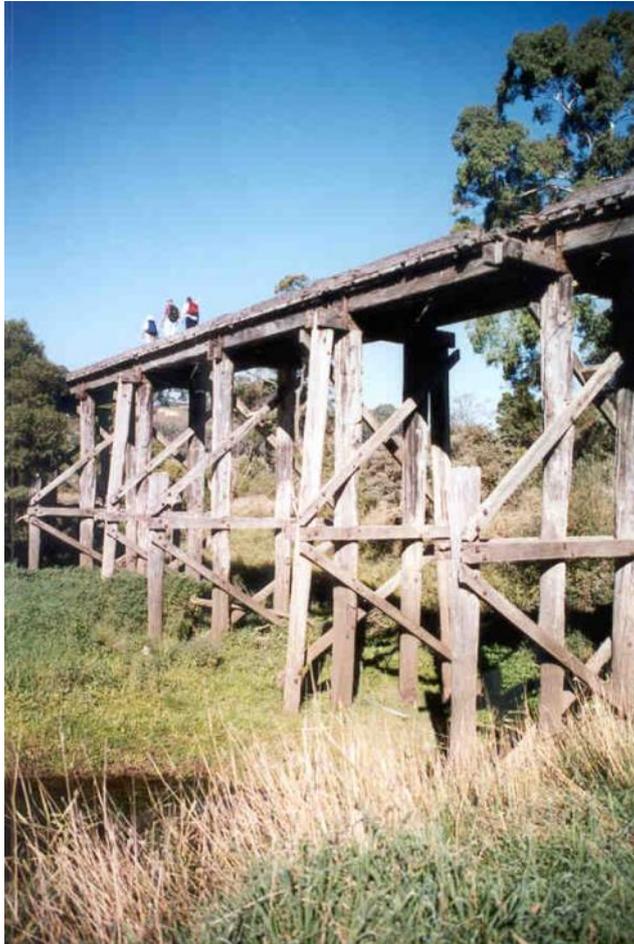
I think we saw a majestic eagle soaring effortlessly overhead (or was that on our last recent walk on Mt Abrupt?). We marvelled as we looked out along the expanse of the Serra Range and pictured the route of the All Peaks Challengers who have nearly bagged each peak. We stood and stared in wonder.

Fine weather and good company gave us a good holiday at Dunkeld.

Marg.



Timboon to Glenfyne: 13 May



Brisbane Ranges: 26–27 May

Walkers: Diane (Leader) Linda, Irene, Anne, Ron and Heaton

We all met at Diane's on Saturday morning and left at 7:15 am. A very scenic drive took us around the back of Geelong and eventually to Anakie Gorge Picnic area where we left Heaton's car. The six of us piled into Irene and Linda's car to head towards Boar Gully Camping area. This was OK until Irene tried to change from first to second gear and Linda ended up with the gear stick in a most unpleasant spot. We had to stop and reorganise who sat where. We drove through the bush to Boar Gully, the start of our two day walk.

The bush itself was starting to turn green, as a few weeks back they had a year's annual rainfall in one weekend, so everything was springing to life. The walking track was easy to follow with only a few small steep sections. Lunch was had beside a dry creek; we boiled the billy and relaxed in the quiet you can only experience in the bush, which is one of the reasons we all do this walking. Not long after lunch, about 2 hrs, we crossed a ford over a creek and there it was, our resting place for the night, the Little River Picnic area. A beautiful setting, the faint noise of a babbling creek in the distance, an abundance of birdlife, majestic gums and a blue plastic swimming pool. Yes you read right, a blue plastic swimming pool had been dumped by some idiot, and I make no apology for offending anyone.

We all set about pitching our tents and getting our bedding ready for the night. I have to admit I never look forward to sleeping out at night, I always find it hard to sleep, I get cold so easily, any noise outside sounds like it's right beside the tent, so I lay awake shivering and literally waiting for the boogey man to come and get me. Before this walk we purchased new down sleeping bags, and I had ear plugs, I slept nearly all night. So a word of advice to those who are about to embark into bushwalking: it is well worth the extra little bit of money right from

the start and buy good quality gear. Back to the Brisbane Ranges.

We all gathered wood for the fire that night. It only took one match, lit by our pyromaniacs, and we had a roaring fire. Dianne broke the swimming pool up and we burnt it bit by bit. After tea, and a glass of very rough red each, some of us thought it was time for bed. How wrong can you be! It was only 7:30! So we just moved closer to the fire. By 8:00 the first person went to bed and we were all in bed by 9:00.

There was no rush in the morning, so we lingered for a while. We had the luxury of a pit toilet, which is where I was when I heard the faint noise of a car door. When I opened the door of the toilet there was a line of people waiting, what a shock, in the distance there must have been about eight cars. These were all bush walkers from the Bayside club.

We followed the river downstream, then ascended along a ridge. It was a bit tough going up for those of us who had not carried a large pack for two years, but needless to say with encouragement from Diane we finally did the Rocky thing up the top. Lunch was had at the Stony Creek Picnic area. After lunch we followed the Gorge all the way back to Heaton's car. A car shuffle followed, and within an hour we were all sitting in a winery having devonshire teas, where we met up with the Bayside club again. It goes without saying that a few bottles of wine were also purchased.

A big thank you to Diane for leading this walk, for us beginners it is great to go with someone who is so understanding and supportive. Even the next morning when you fall out of bed because your calves give way, you can still reflect on a wonderful weekend. And we will definitely be doing some training carrying full packs.

Linda



Nelson base camp: 9–11 June

Walkers: Linda (leader), Irene, John, Lothar

Linda, Irene & I left Port Fairy at about 10am and reached Nelson before 12. Along the way, and from a distance, we saw the giant new windmills at Codrington. Magic wind power! They'll also act as a big tourist attraction in the future.

We'd just put our gear into one of the Casuarina Cabins (CC) when John arrived. We had lunch and then travelled in convoy to Moleside Camp along the Nelson-Winnap Road. We left one vehicle there and travelled in the other to what we thought was the Post & Rail Camp. No signposts of course! We started walking east (from what we now suspect was Skipworth Springs) along The Great South West Walk track back towards Moleside Camp. All except John were carrying packs as we were "training" for upcoming backpacking overnights.

After about an hour we reached the Post & Rail Camp site. This extra hour was to push us into the darkness at the end of the day. Further on, we had afternoon tea at Saunders Landing. In between light drizzle patches we boiled water on a Trangia and had hot cuppas for afternoon tea.

On the final leg it got darker and darker and increasingly difficult to see the path. Eventually we stopped and switched on our two torches. We spent the last 15-30 minutes completing the walk by torch light. We then drove to Skipworth Springs to pick up the other car. John bid us farewell (he was only there for the day) and the rest of us returned to our CC to change for dinner. Yes, we had booked into the pub, and when we arrived there our table was waiting. We had reds & whites while our dinners were being prepared. I don't remember what the others had ... I only had eyes for my 3cm thick "Thumper" Steak. It was tender, cooked to medium perfection, and delicious!

Next morning (Sunday) the 3 of us drove to Battersby Camp. We had decided to have an easier day. We walked west towards Forest Camp (in the Nelson direction) and where the track met the road we stopped and returned along the same path. Along the way we had lunch at Popeyes (or thereabouts). We cooked soups, had tea/coffee, etc.

Once back at Battersby we headed east until we again neared the road. We then retraced



our steps to Battersby. Sunday had been a more leisurely walk than Saturday and we had taken many more photos of the scenic areas along the river, and listened to and watched more of the wildlife.

We drove back to Nelson to have ice creams. Later that day Irene and I drove to the mouth of the Glenelg River and scouted the area. Later too we checked out the boat launching area near the General Store - being a Queen's Birthday long weekend, there was plenty of activity and a real boat traffic jam!

We had a BBQ tea (thanks to Linda & Irene). Steak, onions, tomatoes, fried potatoes ... wonderful! I dropped my dried stuff immediately! It was hard resisting their other food offers - bacon & eggs one morning and pancakes the next. I think I put on weight!

Monday morning we packed and headed for Port Fairy in the rain. With the aid of modern technology I arranged for Chris and Catherine to pick me up at a cafe. When they arrived they had Ken & Marg in tow - they'd been caravanning in Port Fairy. The 7 of us then had drinks and cakes. A very pleasant way to end a WW weekend. And I definitely put on weight!

Many thanks to Linda & Irene for organising such a great and well stocked weekend. The walks along the river were excellent, and I'm already looking forward to the next leg of The Great South West Walk.

Lothar

Rogaining at Daylesford: 17 June

Commencing at the pine-treed surrounds of Victoria Park, Daylesford, I engaged in my first real rogaine. Novice Carolyn was placed with a group of experienced rogainers. Two members of the group had competed in numerous endurance events such as Winter Classics, Mountain to Surf and Blur Rock Classics.

Over 500 people competed in the rogaining event, including a large proportion of scouts. Despite the large numbers of participants, we hardly saw another person after the first 2 or 3 checkpoints. We were reminded about the 500 rogainers at the food tent after the event!

To complete a rogaine each team (2-5 members) is given a map of the area with checkpoints marked. Together as a team the direction of travel is determined. Each checkpoint is worth an allocated amount of points from 10-80. The timing of the event is particularly important as each group is given 6 hours – each minute the team is late deducts 10 points from the total score. (6,12, and 24 hour rogaines also exist!) We arrived in at the finish at 3-53pm, 7 minutes prior to the finish time. We had to be careful of mineshafts over the course; fortunately most were marked on the map. I did not make an acquaintance with any, which was good!

Our team chose a route that remained in the pine forest occasionally skirting on the edge of the denser forest. Map reading skills and compass familiarity were a bonus as many of the checkpoints have clues attached to them such as “the knoll” or “the gully”. City people were also catered for eg. One clue was “the telephone pole”. We set a team rule of running down all hills, this helped us cover more ground and gain a respectable score.

The experience of rogaining was great and I encourage anyone to have an attempt. No experience is necessary as all levels are catered for. The Victorian Rogaining Association holds regular events- on foot, bike, in snow and in kayaks. These events can be found at their website <http://vra.rogaine.asn.au>.

Carolyn

Mt Abrupt: 23 June

Leaders: *Ken & Marg*

On the morning of Saturday, 23rd June 9 intrepid Warrnambool Walkers met at Dunkeld. Undeterred by the windy weather of the fact that our destination was enshrouded in cloud we then proceeded to our destination- Mt. Abrupt. The weather was cool and overcast at the base of the mountain but became somewhat “fresher” as we climbed higher.

Everybody made good time to the top where there was a magnificent view. Well there was one last time I was there anyway. We didn't actually see it this time, but there was a very picturesque mist swirling around the summit. On the way down however, the cloud cleared and we did get some good views from the top of the cliff.

After lunch our intrepid leaders decided it was time to tackle the second peak of the day- The Picaninny. Here we discovered some interesting ant holes and some amazing orchids. This time we got a view from the summit!

Thank you Marg & Ken for leading the walk and to Carolyn, Lynda, Irene, Trevor, David and Tim for your company.

Jan

Bike ride, Wangoom circuit: 30 June

Leader: Coralie

On a gloriously sunny day Coralie, Judy, Peter and family set off for a short bike ride. It's been some time since I had ridden my bike any distance, or ridden it at all for that matter, even so, I felt with Peter pulling Samuel and Joshua in the bike trailer and Kate in the bike seat I'd be able to keep up reasonably well. How wrong I was.

We began our ride by climbing up the Mortlake road hill and then turning right onto the Wangoom road. This section of road was quite flat and easy to peddle. We then turned right again at the Pony farm and followed the road around to a junction giving us a couple of different routes to take. I suggested the one with no hills would be great. Alas, this was not an option. Putting my bike into low gear I laboured up the hills as we followed the river on our right around to the Hopkins Falls. We alighted from our bikes and watched the water spilling over the falls as the children played hide and seek in the shrubbery.

My legs now feeling recovered from the efforts of uphill cycling. I felt prepared to tackle the return journey. We completed our circuit by riding past the Wangoom tip. It was a steady ascent to the top of the hill, but what a thrill I felt as I hurtled down the other side almost out of control. Coralie assured me the Wangoom tearooms were not far away. Eager for a cappuccino and cake I needed no further incentive to get there.

Refreshed from our afternoon tea stop we began to peddle back home. By now the air had become quite chilly and I was very pleased to have brought my windcheater with me. The boys looking for a bit of entertainment egged Coralie & Peter on to a bike race. Chants of "Go Dad go" emitted from the bike trailer. Soon we were back in Warrnambool having completed about 30 kilometres for the afternoon. With relief I hopped of my bicycle, nevertheless very pleased with my days efforts.

Judy

Major Mitchell Plateau: 30 June to 1 July

Saturday, Halls Gap Road. The sun is beaming down on the Grampians, as Lothar and I head to Jimmy Creek carpark. The wildlife spotting had begun prior to the hike: kangaroos, wallabies – skirting the road with careless abandon, emus on the plains and a majestic Wedge Tailed eagle soaring the sky, all against the always impressive peaks of the mountains.

The Mt William carpark started the hike. Six pumped up and keen hikers (Marg and Carolyn, John and Glenda, Lothar & Laaland) ascended the road to the summit, filled up with homebaked cake and tea, courtesy of Marg. It was great to be out in the fresh air and fresher breeze, taking in a 360 degree crystal clear view of the surrounding panorama. Today one could see for miles (Mt Elephant, the Fortress, and Stawell). A short stop at the summit and then onto the Major Mitchell Plateau track, where Lothar pointed out the approximate location of the overnight camp spot. (I knew he was telling fibs). It looked a gradual ascent. I had not attempted an overnight hike off a bitumen road for fifteen years, but lots of day hikes, so I was unsure how much of a car battery my pack would become. At least losing myself would prove difficult in black and white striped leggings.

The track was typical Grampians, gnarly, ankle twisting boulders, track ruts from small rivers, thorny trees, spots of mud – all good fun, but careful ground observation required. The gradual ascent soon became a series of valleys and gullies and I believe we all started to sweat. The second valley ascent was a beauty, a rock climber's warmup. Steep boulders to scramble up with the scattered spindly tree to grab for life support. The views back to the Mt. William radio towers were still sensational.

Reaching the last valley summit, things became easier, thick woodland and scrub, but still not on a plateau. Five hours after launch, we reached the campsite, relieved that we could relax in the final hour of sunshine.

The campsite was cool, and becoming cooler so we pitched tents and gathered firewood. Firewood gathering was saved by John, who coaxed me into pulling half a wet slimy tree out of other wet slimy trees, down a wet slimy track to our cosy well paddocked camp, no mishaps.



The fire was a ripper, and the tree saved us from the abominable snowman, who I'm sure was lurking just outside our ring of radiant heat. It was pretty chilly. Dinner was pretty good, 8/10 for Lothar's Deb and fish recipe, 7/10 for my satay noodle with Hungarian salami, ingredients I wouldn't combine at home. I think everyone else's bellies were also filled with gourmet grub. The stars were mesmerising, the silence was golden and by 10pm we were all pooped and in our tents, listening to each other's breathing patterns and not a lot else, drifting off to sleep. I awoke in the night, my ears like Dr Spock's, with icy stalactites hanging from them. I was shivering like I had seen the abominable snowman. I searched frantically in blackness for my beanie, put on another jumper, adjusted my sore numb sleeping hip and eventually returned to slumber. The morning dawned a crisp sunny winter's day. My water bottle had turned to ice, but everyone was in good spirits and ready for the last leg of the hike.

We were on the plateau shortly after setting off. The scenery was real nice, button grass, heathland, the trickling of hidden creeks and a nice boardwalk underfoot. Further on, the track precariously clung to the escarpment edge. The awesome views of the surrounding ranges and plains below were definitely the best I've seen in the Grampians or anywhere else for that matter. Onwards we hiked, eventually away from the escarpment and back into wooded hilly country to the top of a stand alone hill. We were all starting to feel like we'd done a good weekend of walking, so stopped for lunch. Some hikers passed us. They had started at our destination and kindly informed us it was three hours away. It was a hard slog for weary bodies, down a very steep incline, across rocky dry hills, scattered with blackboys and finally to the road, 7 hours after leaving camp. I think we were all very glad to be at the end (my feet feeling like Pigs trotters in a boiling pot). The walk had been a top challenge, with a diverse range of scenery, a good hiking crew and the great Australian outdoors all around.

Laaland

