

Old Beechy Line: 6 April

Walkers: *Lothar (Leader), Chris (Deputy leader), Mabel, Doris, Ann, Doug, John, Glenda & Dianne F*

The day was promising excellent weather as Lothar, Chris and I set off for our winery walk. We were only a minute down the road when lo and behold there was Mabel, complete with backpack making her way up the hill to Lothar's. Then there were four. We hot footed it to Camperdown to collect Doris and headed down the line. We had our stop at the Otway Estate Winery where we tasted the wine and Doris discovered an old mate. Didn't do her much good as we got no free wine!!!! We also ran into some old mates on the form of former president John and Glenda Montgomery. From there it was off to the start of the walk.

The walk started at a picnic area, which proved to be a great spot for coffee and cake. Doug and Ann met up with us here so we had our full contingent. The walk being the old railway line was not too taxing. I think there may have been a hill in there somewhere. It was a varied walk; a mix of bushland sidelined with farming land and more bush. It was a well formed wide track allowing some walkers to stretch their legs a little.

After the walk we had lunch in the picnic area. It was then good bye to John & Glenda before the rest of us took off to Colac for the mandatory coffee (after all, we had earned it!!). The competition here was who could fit in the biggest, the sweetest the most fattening cake. Not sure who won that one!

AGH another walk bites the dust. Certainly an interesting area, begging further exploration.

Thanks to Lothar and Chris.

Dianne F

Glenfyne to Timboon walk: 13 April



Kangaroo Island: 17–23 March

Walkers: *Dianne F & Karen*

Day 1: A very leisurely drive from Warrnambool to Cape Jervis via Mt. Gambier where we had a quick look at the blue lake (it is blue!), past the interesting sand dunes and lagoons of the Coorong and into the Fleurieu Peninsula. After catching the ferry at the pretty river crossing of Wellington we stopped at the historic township of Strathalbyn to glimpse the beautiful old stone buildings and bridges in the fading light. As we neared our destination we passed through the glamorous seaside towns of Victor Harbour and Port Elliot finally arriving at Cape Jervis in time for dinner at the pub. We stayed at Cape Jervis Station in a cosy log cabin for the night. Our hostess, Nan ensured we were comfortable and left us to enjoy the complimentary port.

Day 2: An early rise to catch the ferry from Cape Jervis to Penneshaw on Kangaroo Island. The cars and passengers were efficiently squeezed on to the ferry and we departed right on time. After the smooth ride across the Backstairs Passage we were soon on the road to explore the island. We stopped at the American River to watch the pelicans on the lagoon, then to the pretty township of Kingscote for lunch at a swish café and a wander down to the waterfront. We then set off to look at Duck Lagoon where there were ducks of course and relics of an old eucalyptus distillery. Further down the road we found Parndana Wildlife Sanctuary, full of native and exotic animals and birds. Many of these had been rescued or hand reared as orphans and could not be released into the wild. Our stop for the night was at the Cape Borda Light station, which we reached via a long and dusty track. Here we could glimpse the beautiful scenery of the Flinders Chase National Park. We reached Cape Borda in the early afternoon, in time for a walk to The Oval, a cleared area of land 2kms from the lighthouse, where the early lightkeepers had their vegetable garden and kept their livestock. Then back to the lighthouse for another little wander down to the sea to watch the sun go down. After dinner with our glasses of red wine, we sat under the lighthouse watching the bats chase the light beam (and moths). We tottered back to our cabin, dodging the many friendly kangaroos on the way.

Day 3: We walked the Ravine des Casoars hike in the morning through beautiful mallee and sugargum forests past tranquil rock pools to a lagoon. We crossed a bridge to a wide beach with sand dunes and cliffs dotted with caves. Right on the shoreline we investigated some large caves, with majestic stalactites and stalagmites. Here the local penguin population roosted each night and the sandy floor of the cave was dotted with thousands of tiny penguin tracks. A short drive took us to the Rocky River Camp ground in the Flinders Chase National Park. We had time to do the Rocky River walk, through swamplands dotted with kangaroos and cape barren geese and past an archeological dig (university researchers were digging for megafauna). The scrub here was fairly open and dotted with grass trees. This track led us to the picturesque platypus pools. We didn't see any but I have since been told that early morning is the best time to visit them. Back at the camp we had dinner with some uninvited but cute guests. The kangaroos and possums in the camp ground were determined to get a feed each night but we were determined to 'keep them wild' as the signs around the camp urged us to do.

Day 4: Up early for a big 18km hike to Hanson Bay. This was a beautiful walk through changing scenery. We started along a track dotted with grass trees and dense scrub and mallee trees. There were lots of birds and wildlife here and the wildflowers were in bloom. The track passed a couple of large dry lagoons and continued along the Southwest River then on to sand dunes with views over the bay. We reached the beach in time for lunch. The water was inviting although absolutely freezing but that didn't bother Dianne as she slipped in for a quick and invigorating dip. Reluctantly we left

this beautiful area and returned to Rocky River. We had been told the Remarkable Rocks were best seen at sunset, so we set off along the coast to find this spectacular formation of sculptured rocks sitting on top of a rocky dome. The sun gave them a warm orange glow. Our trip back to camp was slow as the wildlife had started to come out for the night and we had to chase them off the roads. We then had three pesky possums as dinner guest and entertainment that night.

Day 5: We visited the Cape du Coedec lightstation in the morning. A walk around the coast took us to the remains of a stone hut where food stores were kept for the three families who ran the lighthouse. The building had been divided into three sections. Provisions were hauled from the coast via a jetty and by winching the goods up a tall steep cliff. Further along near the beautiful lighthouse were three large cottages, now accommodation for tourists. Around the coast we followed a track to Admirals Arch, a stone formation framing picturesque views of the sea and the New Zealand fur seals lounging on the rocks. Then on to Little Sahara, an untouched area of native scrub and gigantic sand dunes that seemed to go on forever. We climbed several dunes only to find more and more going for miles down to the coast. Next stop was Seal Bay where we took a guided tour of the sea lions basking on the beach. The older seals basked in the sun whilst the young males bickered and fought amongst each other. A couple of seal mums were feeding their pups. The tour guide was very informative and gave us some interesting insights into seal behaviour, well worth a look. In the afternoon we returned to Rocky River for a 4km walk along the Snake Lagoon Hike. This was another pretty walk through dry forest and along a rocky river surrounded by cliffs dotted with caves. The track took us right down to the beach to watch the sun set. After such an adventure packed day we decided to eat out at the Rocky River Resort for some of the local seafood. Yum.

Day 6: After a visit to the Rocky River Visitor Centre, we set off for Murray Lagoon. We had thought of camping here overnight but it turned out to be very dry and barren here. After the rains the birdlife is reported to be spectacular but when we arrived the lagoons had dried up. After a couple of short walks around the lagoon we headed back to our camp at Rocky River. We had been well looked after by our hosts at the campsite who greeted us each morning and evening and gave advice on places to visit. The so-called wildlife had kept us entertained each night and we were sad that our wonderful trip was coming to an end.

Day 7: We had all day to drive back to Penneshaw for the ferry ride to the mainland. We stopped at Clifford's honey farm where they kept Ligurian bees (from Italy), supposedly the most purebred colony on the globe. We sampled the honey and bought some of the many varieties. They produce three different types of honey each season, according to the plants that are in flower at the time. We headed to Pelican Lagoon on the far side of American River for a short walk along the sand flats and to the pub at Penneshaw for lunch – fresh Kangaroo Island whiting. We still had a few hours to spend before the ferry arrived so we took a trip down to the Cape Willoughby lighthouse. There, along a rugged and picturesque coast was another collection of cottages and lighthouse. The cottages here were also available for tourist accommodation. Along the way back we stopped at a very swish café on the clifftop for a relaxing coffee. Soon it was time to meet the ferry and we were sadly on our way back home. The drive home was long and tiring, a thick fog blanketed the highway all the way.

My thanks to Dianne for organising the all the accommodation, itinerary and ferry transfers. She also did a great job on the weather, 25 degrees every day. A very memorable trip and one we hope to repeat next year.

Karen

Le Cantina Camminare—The Daylesford Swiss/Italian festival weekend: 2 May

Walkers: Girls cabin: Di F (leader??) Karen, Val, Helen, Lyn Watson (guest); Boys cabin: Lothar, Gary, Bill

The convoy left Warrnambool at 2pm for the long haul to Daylesford via Woolsthorpe to collect Bill. With Di & crew taking the lead leaving Gary & Lothar in the slipstream it was all roads lead to Daylesford. . . . eventually! It was an uneventful trip to Scarsdale where a phonecall necessitated an impromptu stop at the Yellowglen Winery for some bubbly. Naturally we had to sample the entire range to ensure we purchased wisely. It seems this set the tone for the remainder of the trip (for some that is). It is a long way from Smythesdale to Daylesford so in keeping with the TAC break the drive we broke our trip with a stop at the Olive Grove at Ballarat for (strong) coffee and cake.

We arrived in Daylesford just in time to dump our belongings in our respective cabins – one for boys and one for girls, and hit the ‘local’ for dinner (is there a picture forming here!?). Then, while some went back to the cabins to sample the wines a few of the members were temporarily kidnapped by a little green coffee waiter and forced to try his coffee. Fortunately they escaped in time to join the others to taste the various winery purchases before bed.

Seeing this was a bushwalking weekend we set the tone by walking down to the Food Gallery for Breakfast on Saturday morning – yes all three kilometres! Of course this worked up quite an appetite that just had to be properly sated. Bacon, eggs, mushrooms, smoked salmon and the like did the trick. After a hasty exit due to the misbehaviour of a particular farmer member. However that roll did look a bit like a We headed to Hepburn Springs to watch the Swiss/Italian Parade. Watching this was hard work, we needed more coffee to recuperate before we thought about starting our walk. Yes folks, this was a bushwalking weekend and we actually did manage to fit in a bushwalk and what a lovely walk it was! We walked from the Blowhole all the way to The Boathouse Café for lunch . . . and you guessed it. . . more coffee! Then we took time to browse through the book barn and other wonderful shops in the town before meeting up at Frangos & Frangos for wine and of course coffee. We were actually forced to have more wine and coffee while we waited for the famous Sweet Decadence to open. We were well entertained by the street performers while we waited though.

As soon as Sweet Decadence opened we made a bee line in to try the delicious chocolates. We decided to have tea there as well, and no, we did not pig out on chocolates for tea – they actually do have real food there too. But their chocolates are better than their food one must admit! Then after tea we decided to make our way back to the cabins where Lothar promised to teach us all how to play other card games than fish or snap. Problem: Eight people, one car. Solution: four people go in the car and four people walk back. Dilemma: Pub directly (well. . almost) on route back. Solution: Call in to pub for quick drink to provide sustenance for long 3 km walk back. Three kilometres requires lots and lots of sustenance it seems. By 1.00 am the four decided they were well sustained to complete the **five** kilometre stagger back to camp. Of course it was only manners to reassure everyone (in the campground) of one’s safe return. Don’t think this was appreciated by all though!

The sun rose bright and early the next morning and us hardy (if somewhat weary) bushwalkers started the day with a leisurely stroll around Jubilee Lake. This worked up an appetite for breakfast so it was back to the Food Gallery for more bacon, eggs, smoked salmon etc etc etc. Fortunately our errant farmer member had learnt the error of his ways and was a picture of good manners.

Unfortunately all good weekends come to an end so we said our good-byes to Daylesford to head for home. In keeping with the theme of the weekend we managed to fit in a visit to Dulcinea Winery to sample their entire range. Some of us helped ourselves (Literally – this is a self service winery, you even operate the till yourself!) to a few bottles as momentos! We arrived in Ballarat in time to return to the Olive Grove for a very enjoyable lunch.

Well folks, it is not over till the fat lady sings and after all the (over) indulgence of the weekend the fat lady was singing her heart out. It was a much more subdued trip back home. We were welcomed at Woolsthorpe by the drovers cattle who were (over) indulging on the lovely green grass and nice trees that Bill had very kindly planted there for them!

A fun weekend was had by all (I hope) apologies to Lothar who made numerous attempts to rescue the wayward four on Saturday night, next time try the pub instead of the coffee shop! It is probably fortunate that the Swiss Italia Festa is only on once per year – it will take a year to recover I am sure. However next year we will stay closer to town. 5.3 kilometres is a long way to stagger!

Dianne F

Mt. Difficult / Briggs Bluff: 10 May

Walkers: Coralie (leader), Helen, Linda, Diane D, Liz, Mike, Karen, and Brian.

To tackle the rugged and steep terrain of Mt. Difficult, first you need a hearty meal and a good night sleep. The happy campers arrived at the Emu Holiday Park at Wartook on Friday afternoon and set up the camp fire, nibblies and drinks. As we filled up on cheeses, Helen's home made dips and crackers we soon realised there was still dinner and dessert to come! Main course consisted of a variety of casseroles – beef, chicken, lamb and a vegetable and noodle stir-fry. When the possums raided our camp, we contemplated possum stew but lucky for them, we had to leave room for dessert. We had an apple crumble and berry pudding with custard, followed by coffee and Lothar's wicked chocolate fudge. To cap off the night, we were serenaded by our own choir – Chris, Steff, Diane and Irene, with accompaniments from around the fire. With stomachs full and ears ringing we slipped off to a good night sleep – 2 cabins and 2 tents.

Saturday morning we were all bursting with energy. One group would walk to Mt. Difficult and Briggs Bluff; the second group would do various walks around Hollow Mountain (and finish off the day with a cappuccino).

The Mt. Difficult walk started at the Troopers Creek camp ground so named for the Troopers who protected this route from South Australia to the Victorian goldfields. Very soon we were on the steep climb up the rocky track through dry forest. We could see the rugged clifftops a long long way above. The cliffs were carved out by the winds creating wonderful sculptures and spectacular caves. We stopped for morning tea at the aptly named Wind Cave. We reached the top of the treeline just below the cliff top and were rewarded with splendid views of Roses Gap and beyond. A bit more climbing and rock scrambling (and words of encouragement from Coralie) and we could see the top of Mt. Difficult. Coralie pointed out that we were standing above the Tilwinda Falls but there was little water flowing in the creek running into it. This spot is a favourite for campers because of the year round water supply but the drought had dried up much of it. Most of the hard work was done and we could enjoy the views and the wildflowers miraculously blooming in this parched landscape. There were pink and white heath, flame heath, correa, yellow goodenia and delicate white daisies. Just a hop and a skip from the Mt. Difficult turn off and we were at the top. From here we could see beyond Roses Gap to the Black Range and the dry landscape towards Mt. Arapiles in the distance.

We retraced our steps to the junction and it was onwards to Briggs Bluff. The going was easier with a bit of rock scrambling winding through the burnt out forest now regenerating after the 1999 bushfires. A sunny rock platform with more views over the Mt. Difficult range was chosen for lunch (could we fit any more food in after last night?). Well rested, we continued on to the Briggs Bluff turn off where part of the group would return to the cars and Coralie would lead the rest up to the top. The landscape from here opened up, you could see the valley below that had once been burnt out but was now quite green, and on the other side rows of sculpted cliffs. A quick scramble along the rocky route and we were up the top. We could now look back at the Mt. Difficult Range, north to Horsham and Lake Buloke and behind us Lake Wartook.

The walk back to Roses Gap would be all downhill from here. We retraced our steps to the turnoff then raced across the plains where we had earlier seen the rest of the party making their way back to the cars. We slowed down on the steep climb down into the Beehive Falls. The afternoon sun was bringing out the gold colours of the surrounding cliffs. The falls had dried up to a trickle and only a small pool at the bottom remained. After a short rest we continued along the track through lush, green bush to the finish at the Roses Gap carpark.

Our thanks to Coralie for leading such a rewarding walk with all its spectacular scenery.

Karen

Wyperfeld NP: 7–9 June

Walkers: *Chris, Lothar, Mabel, Karen, Val, Helen, Liz, Mike, Brian, Glenda, Shirley and Terry*

Friday 6th June: Chris, Lothar, Mabel and Karen left the rain and wind of the south and headed north. Chris and Lothar leaving the early afternoon to find Wyperfeld drenched by heavy, constant rain which did not stop until 7pm that night. Lothar kindly put up our tents in the rain while Chris supervised from the dry interior of the car. Mabel and Karen arrived at 11pm to find clear skies and two snug tents. After hooning around the Wonga Park campsite looking for Lothar and Chris we sighted a little yellow lighthouse in another part of the camping ground. Lothar had heard our car and wisely thought that flashing his torch to light up the tent would catch our eye. It was a curious but comforting sight. We had finally arrived.

Saturday 7th June: We woke up to a symphony of birdcall, first the flocks of cockatoos, then galahs, and then the corellas each passing over the campsite. A more soothing magpie serenade accompanied breakfast. It was a very crisp morning with beautiful blue skies and so we set off on a walk to warm up. Mabel and I started out for the Black Flat carpark where we met Lothar and Chris to do the Tyakil walk. The 4.5km walk led us through dry swamps, mallee forests and sand dunes dotted with a huge variety of shrubs. We followed kangaroos, emus, a variety of parrots, cockatoos and small forest dwelling birds as they led us around the tracks. The Black Flat Lake was dry, the last flood that had filled it was in 1975 and it would be years before it would fill again. For such a dry area the plant life was lush and abundant with mallee eucalypts, native cypress pines, banksias, tea trees, and dozens of small flowering shrubs as well as the curious porcupine grass mounds. The walk led us through a variety of landscapes and gave us a tantalising taste of this wonderful place.

We returned to the campsite to enjoy lunch with the rest of the group who had arrived after leaving a miserably wet morning in Warrnambool. After lunch, another 4km walk on the Discovery loop, an equally varied walk through mallee and redgum, around and over the top of the sand dunes and out to the Mattingley Lookout for a great view over the forests and dunes of Wyperfeld. We could appreciate how vast and wild the surrounding country was from here. We had an early dinner and settled down to a quiet night around the warm glow of our campfire, one by one drifting off to a restful night's sleep.

Sunday 8th June: We woke again to birdsong and a mild morning for a longer trek along the Black Flat track to the Western Lookout dune for morning tea. One group left the campsite to follow the track through the redgum forests where we could see evidence of the aborigines who once lived here and cut out their canoes and implements from the tree bark. The Western Lookout was spectacular, with views over vast forests and sand dunes, a real wilderness. Mike helped us identify the winter flowering shrubs. This area would be worth visiting again in spring when most of the plants are in bloom. We met the second group of walkers at the Black Flat carpark for a quick lunch and a stroll along the Desert Walk loop. One group then headed back to the camp by car. The remainder walked back along the Outlet Creek track where there were different birds, including the pretty, pink Major Mitchell cockatoos and sighing coughs. The most intrepid walkers had covered about 25kms and were looking forward to a hearty dinner by the fire. Lothar, Chris and their helpers dished up a splendid meal of roast vegies and chicken. Bottles of wine were uncorked, boots kicked off and a massive campfire lit to keep us from the cool of the evening. It was hard to leave the warmth of the fire which was stoked with a huge tree stump which I could have sworn was part of the campfire furniture. It was quite late by the time we all tottered off to bed.

Monday 9th June: After a leisurely breakfast, we packed up and very reluctantly left this beautiful place. To keep up the club reputation as 'gourmet walkers', we met up in Horsham for lunch and coffee in the trendy Jas Café. The range of meals was extensive, their cakes were ten feet high and they have a wine bar! They also provided paper tablecloths and crayons to amuse patrons, so our group put their artistic talents and wonderful memories of the weekend to paper. Thanks to Lothar and Chris for yet another excellent weekend!

Karen