

Tasmania—Pine Valley and the Labyrinth: 9–15 January

Walkers: John L (Leader), Liz, Michael, Dianne, Karen and Marg and joined by Coralie, Mabel and Janice for the Labyrinth.

Wednesday The "Ida Clair" skimmed across the deep waters of Lake St Clair delivering us to the jetty at Narcissus. On the walking track, we stopped frequently to "adjust" our laden packs, discard jackets, drink and apply sunscreen. We soon found our rhythm.

We followed the Overland Track to the turn-off to Pine Valley to reach the hut. As John had predicted, the hut was overflowing and many tent sites were already claimed. We found room to set up our tents for two nights.

Thursday Day walk to the Acropolis (1471m)

On the low slopes, we walked through a garden of flowering scoparia - cream, orange, pink and red and "families" of pandani stood tall to tiny. When the going got tough and we faced huge boulders, some of us decided to be content to remain at that height and to take in the magnificent view from that vantage point. It was a great lunch spot whilst Karen and Michael deftly climbed on. Later, they called from the summit, way up there among the dolerite columns.

On our return to the tents late in the afternoon - Janice, Mabel and Coralie walked in to join us. It was a happy reunion! They had been trekking for three days via Junction Lake and the DuCane Gap where they met the Overland Track.

Friday As usual, we were up at 7 AM. We packed up to move our camp to the Labyrinth (1150m). The steep climb was tackled with care. The reward was a landscape of beautiful tarns and wildflowers among the low vegetation on a plateau surrounded by distinctive peaks. Our way was directed by cairns artistically arranged.

On reaching Lake Elysia, we spread out choosing our tent sites- which we shared with hundreds and thousands of biting mosquitoes and ants. (Repellent with DEET was on our list of essential items.)

We circumnavigated the extensive lake just as drizzle came in and grey clouds lowered. Then we cooked tea in light rain.



Saturday Day walk to Walled Mountain (1431m)

The track was overgrown and muddy in places. The ascent was easier but we took care to avoid treading on delicate cushion plants. At the high point, there was a surprise feature - the cliff face was interrupted by a huge sharp chasm where rocks had plunged down to the gully. There should be some great photos of us perched and posed on rocky outcrops (those who dared!) We explored the plateau, pretty with scoparia, cushion plants and tarns reflecting the blue sky.

Returning to camp, the girls met two lasses who had shared the drop-off bus four days ago. Keen to compare track notes, they walked back to our camp with us for coffee and cake. It was Liz's birthday. Karen had an iced Christmas cake baked by her Mum for us to share. What a treat!

The day ended on a glorious note. The last of the sun's rays lit up the majestic peaks of Mt Geryon and the Acropolis and their changing colours reflected in the still waters of Lake Elysia

Sunday Day walk onto the DuCane Range.

Another wonderful long day walk and climb. The route took us past the Pool of Memories at the foot of Mt Geryon. We would not get lost easily. Looking back, we could see Lake Elysia and on the bank, an orange beacon - Dianne's orange tent, just the size of a pinhead but still visible from the range.

Janice spread out her map that indicated the peaks of the region which included Barn Bluff and Mt Ossa to the North, the Eldon Range (SW), Falling Mountain on the opposite side of the Overland Track and Frenchman's Cap, though part shrouded in cloud was recognised on the southern horizon. The generally clear conditions gave us an amazing vista of this wilderness wonderland.

Monday As planned, we awoke at 5 AM. A crescent moon and a few stars lit a pale pink sky just before sunrise. We were ready to leave two hours later for the quite difficult descent. Second breakfast and a good break at the Pine Valley Hut then the delightful walk through the ancient forest before meeting the familiar Overland Track. It was a hot day and we relieved our feet by bathing them in the creek at the lunch stop and again on reaching Narcissus Hut.

We were in good time to catch the 3.30 PM ferry to Cynthia Bay marking the end of a marvellous walk exploring this region of Tasmania. It was a privilege to be on this trip. Thank you John for your careful leadership and to everybody for the friendship and fun of it.

Marg



Warrnambool MS Challenge—Killarney to Warrnambool: 21 January

Walkers: Fiona, Linda, Lothar

30+ cars, 130+ cheery participants, and SES with their 2 quad bikes assembled at the Killarney Beach car park for a 9am start to the MS "RAIN, HAIL or SHINE" walkathon fundraiser. Many people were ill prepared - they were wearing only skimpy outfits and had no raincoats. This was suitable for 25-30 degree heat but not for the freezing, windy and wet day that it was. After the registrations and speech were complete we headed out.

We had the wind at our backs but the going was tough. We had several showers and the driving rain ran down our backs and pants and into our shoes. Many walkers wore their raincoats the whole time. The walkathon was not timed around 8 pm low tide so the soft sand made it harder walking. The SES's Quad bikes were kept busy ferrying tired/injured walkers to the Levy's Point car park. And no one seemed to be interested in taking any sort of break —drinks and nibbles were had on the run. The walkers were also spread out over many kilometres.

After 2 hrs 45 mins we reached Levy's Point car park — no more soft sand! Fiona and Linda phoned for lifts home but I trudged on the designated path through the back streets of Warrnambool and the Lake Pertobe walking track to the Little Athletics Centre — the end of the walk. After wolfing down a couple of BBQ sausages and a large Latte I then walked home.

Lothar



Grampians Jazz Festival Weekend 10–11 February

Walkers: Saturday: Irene, Ken, Linda, Lothar (leader), Mabel, Marg, Steff.

Sunday: Ken, Lothar (leader), Marg, Steff.

We left Warrnambool shortly after 8am on Saturday. When we arrived in Halls Gap we set up our tents in the camping ground. We then went to see the 11am parade - a lively event with lots of musicians playing Jazz, and many participants dressed up in 1920s gear, etc. Shortly afterwards we left on our clockwise circuit.

It took us a good 2 hours to walk up to Boronia Peak. The views of the surrounding country were stunning. However the bush has as yet not fully recovered from the fires 13 months ago. We had lunch at the top before heading back down. Once back in Halls Gap we stocked up on vanilla slices, ice creams, drinks, etc. Linda, Irene and Mabel then left.

It was a very pleasant evening. We walked to Venus Baths and back, had a few drinks and nibbles, and listened to Jazz before retiring to our tents for a good night's sleep.

Next morning we breakfasted, packed up the tents, and reparked the cars before heading out towards Chatauqua Peak on an anticlockwise circuit. The bush here was also burnt and struggling to recover. At the top we admired the views, took pictures, listened to Jazz, and made those all important phone calls.

As we looped back to Halls Gap we dropped in at the Sunday Market where Marg couldn't resist the fresh veges and I couldn't resist the egg and bacon roll..... We then walked back to the cars, dropped off the gear and headed for the bakery for more Jazz, vanilla slices, apple scrolls, drinks, etc. Needless to say we dropped in to Madigan's in Penshurst on the way home.....a fitting end to a great weekend. *Lothar*



Relay for Life: 16–17 February

Walkers: Coralie G, Helen A, John L, Mabel M, Marg F, Mike H, Linda H, Liz C, Liz H, Lothar S

It was a very hot weekend at the Deakin Uni Oval but fortunately a cool change went through Friday night and made that evening cool weather wise. After setting up Linda & Irene's "Taj Mahal" tent we relaxed with drinks and snacks. After the Opening Ceremony and the Survivors and Caregivers lap the various teams then joined in. Our baton(s) were a range of walking poles and the original "kiddies boot on a length of rubber hose". Dinner was a mixture of takeaways from the various RFL stalls and/or a quick drive to the nearby Gateway Plaza.

We all had rosters of 2x1hr or 1x2hr stints but many of us joined in to do extra laps. My 2hr stint (between 1–3pm) was very pleasant - it's not often that one is out walking at this time of the night/morning.

Saturday was very hot and the walk was called off early, finishing at about 12:30 pm. It was then time for the closing ceremony, the awards and presentations, and the release of many balloons!

Many thanks to all team members for your fundraising efforts throughout the previous 12 months and for a great Friday/Saturday walk. All up we raised about \$1,800. I would also like to thank Heather P and her musical friends for organising the "Nonsense" Broadway variety review —we raised \$900 on that night alone —and to Mabel M for again organising the "Blue Illusions" fundraiser.

The \$200 wine raffle was won this year by Michael McCall — one of Sandra D's sons.

Lothar



Beeripmo: 24 February

Walkers: Coralie (leader), Di F, Janice, Liz H, Lothar, Mike H

Six happy souls met at Richard's campground, thermos's and home made? goodies in hand. Naturally after such a long drive (and such an early Saturday morning start) we needed proper nourishment before our walk.

We were on the track by 10am – right on schedule! Beeripmo is a lovely easy overnight walk but is a good workout to do it in the day. We decided to get the hills over first – before the heat of the day. The track was very dry – dryer than I have seen it before. We kept our eyes and ears open for snakes. No snakes to be seen, but one vigilant member did spot a solitary leech. Poor skinny thing it was – must be one tough cookie to survive the drought! Yes, it was desperately making its way towards human warmth but no, it was not successful in it's quest!

We finished in good time – must be one fit bunch of walkers and headed into Beaufort for the mandatory (proper) coffee! We were delighted to discover a little French café – with a real French owner. They had beautiful home made pies – which were snapped up for an easy tea by some. Lovely coffee, with an array of cakes (for the porkers among us) and Miss Personality plus serving! Talk about service with a smile! Between his lovely French accent and her wit, we were thoroughly entertained while we imbibed!

The perfect day – a great workout, great weather, great company, beautiful coffee and amusing entertainment! Who could ask for more!

Well done Coralie – thank you!

Di



Clean Up Australia at Wangoom: 4 March

Walkers: Coralie, Di F, Helen, John, Linda, Marg

At 8.30 am a small band of 'Walkers' registered for the Clean Up Australia Day on the veranda of the Wangoom store. Last to arrive was Marg F who made the journey from Warrnambool via pedal power.

The Hopkins Falls viewing area was the first to receive our attention. Although it appeared relatively clean at a glance, it soon became apparent that cigarette butts, drink containers and paper waste were scattered throughout the site. Then Marg and Helen ventured into the cypress pines and discovered stashes of cans and bottles left by revellers intent on 'having a good time'.

The Framlingham roadside between O'Sullivan's Road and Warrumlea Roads was being 'autumn cleaned' when we were hit with a sudden rain shower. The consensus was that this would be a good time to adjourn to the store for our coffee break. Over tea and cookies the rain cleared and we returned to finish the section of roadside started earlier.

Ten official rubbish collection bags were lodged with the Wangoom Transfer and Recycling Station at the conclusion of our activities. Thanks to Linda, Marg, Dianne, and John for their beautification efforts and to Helen who helped gather the refuse, transport it to the tip and liaise with the City Council.

Coralie



Tasmania— Penguin Cradle Trail: 9–13 March

Walkers: *six walkers from Launceston, and Michael J and Marg F*

This 80km track was developed by the North West WC of Tasmania between 1974 – 1984 to link with the Overland Track. It takes in the Dial Range, Gunn's Plains, Loongana Range, crosses Black Bluff Range and Speeler Plains and finishes at Cradle Mountain visitors' centre. There are no facilities after a campground on the first night. Camp fires are permitted at some sites. Water is not always available at these sites.

We had great Autumnal weather, clear skies, little wind, great company, lots of laughs, and put in plenty of effort. But no lingering aches or pains or blisters. Just a good bruise or two...for me anyway.

Day three took us all day to cautiously traverse the Leven Canyon, all 7 km of it. We faced a thick rope climb up an embankment which looked impossible to me, carrying a pack. But the rope which must be climbed would be climbed...with a bit of help from friends (thank you) confidence emerged.

At other points steep ladders, a set of stairs and a tethered chain assisted us.

On day four we were up at 6am, eating breakfast by moonlight as it would be a long walk and steep climb to 1200m. We lunched by the deep waters of the mountain tarn Paddy's Lake. Black Bluff (1339m) towered above. Michael, Carolyn, Rodney and Harvey scaled the Bluff for a magic view of the wilderness. We others rested at the saddle, content to gaze up looking for eagles and to take in the clear view of Cradle Mountain and Barn Bluff on the southern horizon.

We reached our final campsite at Bare Mountain not long before the sun went down with an orange and pink glow. Then stars appeared as the sky darkened. We rugged up to combat the frosty atmosphere.

In the morning our tents were coated in frost and ice. There seemed to be no hurry to finish the walk next day as we basked in the fine weather, never tiring of the landscape. There were no clouds to shroud Cradle or Barny.

It was a privilege to walk the trail, a remarkable experience and adventure. I was in good company to be guided through the tough spots.

John Chapman details the track and features coloured maps and elevation charts. NWWC has walk notes (and a map) which can be accessed via www.nwwc.org.au

Marg

GOW—Johanna Beach to Moonlight Head: 18 March

Walkers: Coralie, Doris, Liz H, Mabel (leader), Mike H

We drove down to Port Campbell with Mabel, Coralie and Eliz and met with Doris to have a quick cuppa with choc chip bikkies before driving on to Moonlight Head to drop one car, and then onto Johanna Beach car park to the start of the walk. We first walked up to the Walkers Campsite at Johanna Beach, and then along a four wheel drive track and walkers track to the first views of the coastline. The walk is a nice mixture of bush track past weekender properties with magnificent ocean views, and walking tracks through coastal bush and forest. A hospitable fellow traveller offered us a seat and water along the road to Milanesia Beach. We climbed over robust fence and gate to the four-wheel track down to Milanesia Beach, wondering just how the complicated locking mechanism works. Access to the beach is down a steep and rutted four wheel drive track. We confirmed that the gate and fence had been built by the owners of the old fishing shack located just off the beach.

Climbing out of Milanesia Beach up well-built stairs was challenging, but rewarded us with more magnificent ocean views as we trekked around the coastline. Lunch on the track under some shade was a welcome rest, and then on to Ryan's Den walkers camp and three-sided shelter. The walk to Moonlight Head was along more rutted tracks providing access to fishermen, and then to more sheltered and shady walking tracks. Finally we reached Moonlight Head, and were rewarded with afternoon tea of cake, more bikkies. Thankyou Mabel for leading a very rewarding walk with wonderful views.

Mike



Thunder Point to Port Fairy 24 March

Walkers:

Saturday: Dianne F, Doug M, Helen, John L, Liz, Marg (leader), Sandra

Sunday: Doug M, Ken, Liz H, Marg (leader), Michael H, Sandra

We met at Thunder Point Saturday AM and headed off to Killarney, with great gusto, prompt at 9 am. **WIND**, it would have blown a black dog off the chain. A couple of sharp showers and the promise of more made us think we were in for a rough day. Luckily, the promised rain went across in front of us and apart from the **WIND** it was quite a pleasant day.

Marg had arranged with King Neptune for a very low tide and hard sand to walk on (well done). After a while and a bit of a natter Marg led us off the beach and on to the Mahogany Trail behind the dunes. The track was undulating and, in places, cut up to loose sand by trail bike riders but no **WIND**.

Arriving at Killarney camping ground, we pitched tents and did all the camping type things, then had tea (Vince arrived to have tea with us). After tea Dianne F, Helen, and John L departed for better lodgings and more comfy beds than we had, leaving Marg, Sandra and self to camp the night.

For Sunday's walk Michael and Liz H and Ken arrived for the walk to Port Fairy and back to Killarney. A beaut day, cool breeze and again low tide. Lovely walk to Port Fairy to be greeted by 1650 *Murray to Moyne* cyclists (*The Standard's* figure - I didn't count them). A picnic lunch on the Green, coffee, ice cream, whatever, and back on the beach for the walk back to Killarney. Again, Marg's influence with King Neptune, we had mostly hard sand to walk on both ways.

Killarney. Coffee and cake. For those of us who drank black tea - a little fortification per favour of Sandra.

Home. For the fit, the satisfaction of a good solid walk. For us, not so fit, the same satisfaction but a couple of days needed to sort out a few kinks.

To all who walked: thank you for your company, and a special thanks to Margaret for being her usual caring self.

Doug M

Tower Hill BBQ and night walk: 30 March

Walkers: *Ken and Marg, John and Mary and Liz and Mike*

On Friday evening 30th March we had a small group partake in a BBQ at Tower Hill. The group included Ken and Marg, John and Mary and Liz and Mike. We enjoyed a delicious BBQ together with a few curious Emus wandering around and checking us out. Mary and Michael celebrated the end of the working week with a bottle of bubbly; the rest of us enjoyed an ale.

It was a beautiful evening as the wind had dropped, the stars appeared and a ¾ moon appeared to guide us on our walk along the road and then the boardwalk. Michael had led the Hash House Harriers on a commando course in Tower Hill the previous month, so he led us on the same walk; up the hills, up the steep volcano walk to see the views of the coastline and views of Port Fairy and the lights of Warrnambool. We returned to the BBQ area by about 9.15 pm, and all agreed to enjoy more moonlit evening walks. On the way out of Tower Hill we stopped the car to observe a juvenile koala in the car lights sauntering across the road, so we shepherded it back towards the safety of the trees.

Mike & Eliz H