

Tasmania: South West Cape 10–17 Jan 2008

Walkers: *Mabel M, Michael J and Coralie G*

Our adventure began with spectacular fly over of the eastern and southern coasts of Tasmania in brilliant sunshine. The South Coast Track, Precipitous Bluff and the Ironbound Range were stand out features to those who had slogged over them in years gone by.

We landed at the tiny, gravel runway at Melaleuca in hot, humid conditions and after a short tour of the surrounds set off for New Harbour. The first 5 kilometres were easily covered; the valley floor had been board walked a few years back so mud was not a feature. That changed somewhat at the intersection of New Harbour and Cox Bight where we left the main track and headed off towards the Cape. However, because of the dry conditions, the bogs were not as difficult to negotiate as in previous seasons.

We were soon walking on the blindingly white sands of New Harbour, gazing out on the emerald green sea. It was warm enough for a swim and some of our dozen or so neighbours in camp that night took the plunge. We confined ourselves to a leisurely paddle as we explored the western end of the beach. Sea stars, limpets, anemones and a variety of shelled molluscs were to be found around the rocks lining the shore.

The next morning we took the well-contoured track over the headland to the next cove, Hidden Bay. Here we watched a family of plovers with 2 chicks scurrying about trying to hide in the sea weed clumps that lay on the sand. Rain set in after lunch and we decided to strike camp in the sheltered campsites beside the river.

Day 3 dawned with none of the rain of the previous twelve hours and we set off for Ketchem Bay in glorious sunshine. The views as we descended into Ketchem were stunning and many photographs were taken. After a knee deep river crossing and another climb and descent we arrived at Wilson Bight, the site of the last camp before South West Cape.

There are 3 potential campsites at Wilson Bight; we selected the choice, unoccupied middle ground behind the sand dunes. This was sheltered from the strengthening gales but sadly not from the driving rain. We awoke to wet patches around and under the tents. Michael's ground sheet unfortunately trapped water and although he was quite dry inside, he had the sensation of sleeping in a water bed. Undeterred he set off with daypack and GPS to attempt Mt Karamu and the South West Cape. Mabel and I set about securing the campsite, moving tents and sand filling uneven surfaces of the tent sites. We had just called a halt for morning tea when Michael reappeared. The horizontal rain and gales of up to 120km/hr had prevented him from continuing beyond Mt Karamu.

Over the next two days we retraced our steps and returned to the main trail. Here we decided to spend a night at Cox Bight which is usually the first or last night on the South Coast Track. In the bushes not far from our camp, Mabel discovered a cache of goods. Later we found this was ready to be air lifted back to Hobart and belonged to the legendary 'pancake man'. Most summers, he and a mate sit

on the beach at Cox Bight and greet passing walkers with a lemon and sugar pancake and a cup of coffee. Unfortunately, we met him back at Melaleuca in walking, not pancake, mode.

Back at Melaleuca, after Michael had flown home, Mabel and I spent two delightful days winding down. Orange-bellied parrots were frequently spotted on the feed tray at the bird hide. We sometimes disturbed ground parrots on our meanderings over the button grass plains. Pygmy possums nested in the bird hide and aerodrome shed. Bennett's wallabies and ring tailed possums played around the campground. We had conversations with the descendants of Deny King, an important pioneer in the Port Davy area who still spend time each year in Deny's original home.

An unexpected boat trip in brooding weather to Bathurst Harbour along the Melaleuca River was another great thrill. As we flew back to Hobart, the pilot circled the harbour and we were able to glimpse the dreaded "Narrows". This treacherous stretch of water often beset with tricky currents and choppy winds must be rowed 3 times by bushwalkers completing the Port Davy Track. We heard a number of harrowing stories in our time at Melaleuca and were quite glad to see it from a safe distance.

All too soon, we were back in Hobart and our south west adventure was over. Ah well, there's always next year!

Coralie

GSWW—Glenelg River Gorge Walk: 10 Feb 2008

Walkers: Coralie, Helen, Linda C, Linda H, Lothar, Mabel (leader)

How fortunate we are to have such a lovely area in a reasonable driving distance from Warrnambool. The morning was overcast but warm with a slight breeze, making ideal conditions for walking. Mabel and Coralie had thoughtfully provided tea and cakes for us whilst they did a car shuffle.

The river was very peaceful with a few fisherman and a houseboat leisurely making their way downstream. The highlight of the trip was the spotting of a “baby lizard nest” in the middle of the walk track! The majority of the youngsters were just emerging from a couple of holes protected by some small rocks. We were all amazed as to how well camouflaged they were and the fact that they remained perfectly still despite us walking within centimetres of them. The grey and black lizards ere yet to be identified, though with the excellent photos Mabel took, we hope to find out soon.

After a leisurely lunch, we continued towards Nelson. Lothar had modelled his new hat with fly netting much to the amusement of the group.

At Simsons Camp we read in the walkers notebook a comment about killer wild bees. Unfortunately some of the group encountered them shortly after with Coralie being stung near the eye. Mabel quickly came to the rescue though Coralie’s cheek was quite red and painful for the rest of the walk.

Linda and Coralie drove home whilst the rest of us stopped off at Portland to see the giant oil rig.

A very pleasant walk – thank you Mabel and Coralie for your organization.

Helen

Warrnambool to Port Fairy: 17 Feb 2008

Walkers: *Lothar (leader), Marg, Peter and Rosalie M*

We started the walk at 8:15am - earlier than originally scheduled, thinking it was going to be a stinking hot day. It was bright and sunny but as it turned out we had a cool breeze behind us most of the day. The low tide also meant that we were able to walk on sections that were normally underwater.

We followed the paths from Thunder Point to the Shelly Beach and then walked along the sand. We tackled a few rocky areas and then hit the long beach beyond Levy's Point. The sand got firmer and the going easier. Beyond the cutting there were quite a few people about – fishing and the like.

At Killarney we had lunch in the BBQ/picnic area beside the oval/campground. And visited the new toilet facilities of course! From there it was only another 1.5 hours to Port Fairy. We saw some lovely (and inviting) rock pools, and quite a few birds.

Marg's husband Ken joined us just before Port Fairy – and then we all went on to Rebecca's for a well earned drink and cake.

Many thanks to all for a great walk!

Lothar

The Grampians—three peaks in two days: 23–24 Feb 2008

Walkers: (Saturday) Coralie G, Helen A, Linda H (Leader) and Linda C ; (Sunday) Linda, Linda, Helen, Lothar, Viviane.

Saturday, The Piccaninny and Sturgeon: After the obligatory coffee at the Dunkeld “Mountain View Café” we proceeded to the Piccaninny Car Park and were walking before 10 am. Linda H and Helen shouldered full overnight packs in preparation for their Tasmanian Overland adventure in March. Without too much difficulty we were soon at the summit of The Piccaninny enjoying the views of the Dunkeld Township and the Western Plains.

Although the weather was overcast and the day cool we soon warmed up on the ascent of Sturgeon. Our way was lined with an array of wildflowers. Correa, the flame grevillea and pink and white heath were some of the bushes still blooming. On the lower, sandy slopes the grass trees were abundant and looking in good condition.

Lunch on top of Sturgeon took a whole 16 minutes as the cloud descended and the resulting drizzle made us scramble for our raincoats. Once on our feet, we decided to resume our trek and retrace our steps back to the cars. At the Victoria Valley Road, Linda’s vehicle had been left to allow the group to swap between day and overnight packs. Indecision about which pack to use and the resulting swapping around items of gear saw Helen arrive back at her vehicle without ... you guessed it ... her car keys. Luckily she was nice enough to those with vehicles and keys and the situation was able to be rectified before we adjourned to the Gourmet Pantry, for coffee and cake.

Coralie

Saturday evening, Dunkeld Caravan Park: After pitching tents in the caravan park the 3 of us struggled with the wind, whilst we read the papers, especially Linda and The Age. Our tummies told us that it was close to tea time so we wandered over to The Royal Mail, via the beautiful gardens at the back. We had a drink and bar meal, which was very nice. We returned to the Caravan Park and had cuppas and then bed.

Sunday, Mt Abrupt: After meeting up with Lothar and Viviane we started our climb of Mt Abrupt. When we started the rain was pouring down, however within ½ hr it had cleared and we were removing our coats. The climb was slow as most of the rocks were quite slippery, 2 of us managed to land on our rears but we had soft landings. It was quite interesting walking with someone who had not climbed this area before, every turn had wonderful views, different vegetation etc. all of which the rest of us had taken for granted. At the summit the wind was icy so we decided not to stay to long. Lothar took a couple of happy snaps and we headed down. When we reached the bottom it was a unanimous decision to go to the Kitchen Gallery for lunch (even though we all had a packed lunch) and meals there were certainly divine but not too expensive.

Thanks to everyone who came for the day or weekend, we all had a lovely time and enjoyed the walking.

Linda

Clean Up Australia Day: 2 Mar 2008

Garbologists: Helen A, Di P, Val R, Peter & Rosalie M, Mabel M, Marg F, Lothar S and Coralie G

Warrnambool Bushwalking Club continues to support the nation-wide clean.

Nine members reported for duty at Von Guerard's Lookout at 8 am on a cool Sunday morning. Here we were met by ranger Peter Coverdale who took us through the necessary formalities for anyone working on Parks land.

Armed with gloves and large collection bags we followed the track down below the former quarry areas on the eastern side of Tower Hill. A large amount of the rubbish collected here was dumped - we soon found our bags full of foam rubber, bottles and wire. A broken safe (alas no ill-gotten gains left inside), a dilapidated old blind and a suitcase lid also made up the strange assortment of trash retrieved from the area.

The next area to receive our attention was the lookout at the entrance. More conventional rubbish such as drink bottles, fast food containers and cigarette butts and packets littered the car park. Mabel, however, was unfortunate enough to locate two large plastic bags full of very smelly chicken bones. Further along the road at a truck stop, Val and Marg surprised a snake enjoying a Sunday morning sleep in. Tactically they withdrew leaving the reptile to continue dozing and moved to safer ground.

Afterwards Linda joined us for a convivial morning tea at Seaclaid Café in Koroit.

Coralie

The Overland Track: 5–13 Mar 2008

Walkers: Diane, Helen, Karen, Linda, Marg and Michael

Remarkably we walked in glorious weather for the six days we hiked on the Overland Track. Our Gore-Tex raincoats, overpants and gaiters remained neatly rolled up at the bottom of our packs.

It was well after 3pm when we reached the junction at Kitchen Hut to make the ascent of Cradle Mountain. We were rewarded by a magical panorama of the Cradle Mountain – Lake St Clair wilderness from the summit.

Although there were many other hikers on the trail, we generally had the tracks to ourselves and had company at the overnight huts. The tent sites were well used so often we were the only ones sleeping in the huts.

Barn Bluff was scaled with exhilaration by Karen, Michael and Diane.

On reaching the New Pelion Hut—Oakleigh View, we marvelled at the changing mood of the landscape as the sun went down in a colourful blaze, to re-emerge in the mist under multicoloured pastel sky in the morning.

On Sunday we shared the track with athletes competing in the *Cradle to Coast Marathon*. As we admired the runners we were happy backpacking the track in our own style. That day Helen and Linda forged ahead, eager to enjoy the refreshing cascades at Kia Ora whilst Karen, Marg, Michael and Di Climbed Mt Ossa for yet another glorious spectacle. We picked out Lake St Clair and Frenchmans Cap (to namedrop a couple of features). On our descent, Di and Michael scampered ahead to also climb Mt Pelion East.

At Narcissus Hut, Helen and Linda took the IdaClair launch to Cynthia Bay whilst the others continued on to Echo Point where we had the hut to ourselves by the tranquil shore of the lake. In the morning we were up before dawn to make sure that we would be at Cynthia Bay in time to catch the Tassielink bus to Hobart.

We had a marvellous Overland Walk which I will remember for the very good company, sunny weather to capture the beautiful landscape, and the joy of spending those days out there in the Tassie wilderness with my friends. Thank you!

Marg

Beeripmo Overnight walk: 29–30 Mar 2008

Walkers: Janice, Mabel and Marg.

Despite a less than encouraging weather forecast of showers and cold, and previous experience of Mount Cole in less than optimal conditions, three hearty and optimistic walkers met in Beaufort and headed off for another Beeripmo adventure. It was chilly enough to make a boil up before we started a no brainer, and thus fortified and dressed for anticipated blizzards we headed off about 11.00.

Disrobing stops were debated all the way to the top of Raglan Falls. Gradually the layers were thrown off. Discarded coats, waterproof pants, fleeces, gloves and hats were stowed carefully for quick access it needed. The falls were disappointingly dry, despite the torrential downpour and floods in Ararat only three days earlier.

Now more suitably attired, we made steady progress with only a minimal stop to avoid being snapfrozen whilst eating lunch. Despite the weather being cold enough to deter even the bravest leech, it remained dry. We continued on at a steady pace to keep warm, and arrived at camp, leech free, at 2:30.

We spent our time in usual porker fashion: catching up with all of Marg's news from Ararat whilst drinking hot cups of soup, enjoying a new range of light, seasoned garlic and black pepper rice rounds for pre-dinner snacks and experimenting with a very nice light red from the Brique (highly recommended 1 litre tetra pack). With all the frivolous stuff out of the way we settled down to serious eating: Thai green curry, dhal and rice, and a Mediterranean chick pea casserole to keep the cold at bay. The abundant firewood strewn all over the campsites was cleaned up and kept us warm, with the cosy fire keeping dark of earth hour at bay. The cold evening conditions did not eventuate and we retired to bed totally relaxed.

Warm and toasty, we slept well all night and arose ready for a 8:45 departure. Again making fast progress, we took the Mount Buangor scenic route, enjoyed morning tea at Mugwamp at 11:00 and detoured to the Glut picnic ground for lunch. This diversion is highly recommended for its fresh water, tables, and toilets, all at only about 15 mins off the main route. We arrived back at Richards before 2:00, plenty of time for coffee and indulgence at ParisJour, our absolute fave French café in Beaufort. (See last years' Beeripmo walk report) Fortified with take home supplies of quiche, tart, pasties and the best meat pies outside the famed Warrabara bakery, we headed home, much satisfied.

The Beeripmo walk takes hikers through beautiful forests and past impressive moss covered rocks to a walkers only campsite with toilets, tank water, tables, and fireplaces. It is one of the few overnight walks where the abundance of fire wood makes the permitted campfire an enjoyable reality. The walker can enjoy expansive views and challenging conditions in a short two days. Add the obvious attractions of the Beaufort Cafes, you can understand why it is a favourite.

Janice, Mabel and Marg.