

Buangor Conquered: 7–8 April

In which a summit falls to the Warrnambool Bushwalkers, Rob finally bags his peak, and another Mt. conquered by a beekeeper

Expedition Members: Rob, Mabel, Marg, Ross, and Fearless Leader Janice

There have been many previous attempts to summit by the club, but this is the first attack on the final slopes to achieve the goal for many years.

“Experts say the success was largely due to the prevailing weather, combined with properly acclimatized climbers and the excellent organization and leadership.” (direct quote from NY Times July 1953, reporting on the ascent of another peak of distinction by a different beekeeper)

Arriving at Richards at 2:00 pm the day before the successful summiting, the expedition had carefully assessed the risks that lay ahead. Calculations were made about water availability, both sunset and last light times, as well as the likelihood of meeting that black piglet spotted several years ago.

Views from vantage points across the Western Plains in the soft late afternoon light were enjoyed as the cooling autumn air provided ideal conditions for walking, High level observation skills resulted in the spotting of Mount Elephant in the distance, and up close, a small tiger snake which barred the way along the track and which had to be precariously bypassed.

The team took advantage of the long march in to adjust to heavy load-carrying and to accustom themselves to the terrain and demands of the local altitude. That supplementary oxygen was not used is a testament to this careful acclimatisation and superior team preparation.

The smell of wood smoke was a fine welcome as the crew arrived at the busy base camp. All fire places were roaring in action and camp sites were scratched out amongst the many earlier arrivals. Of interest was the golden labrador accompanying another group of two adults and three children on a school holiday adventure in a state park.



The ascent was made on day two from the Beeripmo Track by following the route from the campsite to the base of Mugwamp Hill and the side trip to the Buangor Lookout. Finally, at times pioneering a new route, the party navigated ever upwards off-track to the summit cairn. It was fortunate that good weather allowed the ascent without the need to bivvy on an exposed face.

Following celebrations on the top, the team descended to Mugwamp camp for fire suppression duties, sidled around Dawson Rock, and down, down, down Long Gully. They arrived at the cars in time for Sunday lunch, which was enjoyed despite the hoards of wasps buzzing around the picnic ground. In keeping with the hallowed traditions of the club, coffee was enjoyed in Beaufort before heading home.

There have been many previous attempts to summit by the club, but this is the first attack on the final slopes to achieve the goal for many years. It was expected the Bushwalking club's achievement would help to solve at least one long-standing problem about Mount Buangor: its actual height. Wikipedia and the survey map cite 987 m, but the Bonzles Mountains and Hills site claims 965 m. Rob's phone measured 978 m as the highest point. Converting Bonzles's summit location from degrees to grid reference suggests that, like the expedition to climb the highest mountain in the world (viz Rumdoodle), they have the wrong location.

Janice



Port Fairy Walk: Saturday 14 April

Grampians Peak Trail Stage 1: 14–16 April

Both of these walks became virtual walks, with the participants comfortably warm in their respective homes thinking about what it would have been like and marvelling at their sensibility of taking notice of the weather bureau's forecast for a very wet weekend. Hence a good time was had by all.

Great South West Walk from Fitzroy to Inkpot: Saturday 21 April

Participants: David (leader, 📷), Lothar, Linda, Jim and Rob

Two cars left Warrnambool at 7.30 am for the Lower Glenelg National Park. After a coffee reviver at the Heywood Bakery, we went through Winnap and left one vehicle at the Inkpot, our end point. We then drove to our starting point in the Cobboboonee National Park where Mt Deception Rd crosses the GSWW. We started walking at 10 am and soon reached the Fitzroy hikers camp.

The walking conditions were most pleasant and we saw abundant wildlife and birds. Numerous grey kangaroos and black wallabies were seen, and an emu. Lothar stopped us in our tracks to view a 4-foot tiger snake basking on the path in the sunshine. The screech of sulphur crested cockatoos pierced the serenity of the walk at times and we were dazzled by the vibrant colours of the crimson rosellas.

We found the path in good condition as we walked amongst the light bush with nice stands of eucalypts. We also noted the different vegetation as we passed through different soil types. The few flowering plants were sparsely distributed and limited to banksia and epacris with one patch of correa. Much of the forest showed signs of a bushfire some recent years previous, giving a stark contrast of colours between the blackened trees and green bracken fern. Twice we crossed the upper Fitzroy River, although it was only a dry riverbed. We finished the walk at the Inkpot, a black waterhole, at 3 pm after walking 18 km. Another stop at Heywood for refreshments on the return trip home kept our energy levels up.

David



Beech Forest to Gellibrand: Saturday 28 April

Participants: Coralie 📷, Jim, Lothar (leader 📷), Mabel, Mary, Rob 📷

We left Warrnambool at 7 am and drove the back way to Colac and then Gellibrand. After a cuppa we dropped off one car and drove to Beech Forest in the other two.

It was a glorious day for walking: no rain and not hot. I'd forgotten about the beautiful ferns and the tall straight trees and distant views. The early stages had a fair bit of steep up and down but that became mostly gently downhill along the old railway track. We read the railway info signs and inspected rusty relics. A couple of old bridges. Too late in the year for blackberries unfortunately. We had lunch along the way.

When we reached the car at the Gellibrand the drivers went to Beech Forest to retrieve cars and located Ferguson "station", it being the end of the 4 km rail trail extension beyond Beech Forest. The non-drivers had to walk the final kilometre to Gellibrand's general store, where afternoon tea was had by all.

Rob returned to KFC literally a couple of minutes earlier than Jim and I—proving that if you have slow moving traffic in front of you on the Princes Highway, the back road through Colac is slightly faster. Thanks to all for a great day out!

Lothar



Thunder Point to Levy's Point and back: Saturday 5 May

Satisfied walkers: Rob, Lothar, Jim, Dina and Ross

We met at Thunder Point at 8:30 and were soon heading westward on a lovely day for walking. After 600 metres we turned right along a track that passes the sewerage works, then went through the golf course, and across the new foot bridge over the Merri to reach our target to follow, the rail trail. There were lots and lots of ducks on and beside the river, easily outnumbering the other species. Surprising no rabbits were seen in the usual spots across the river, just lot numbers counting down from 37. A few cyclists were also using the trail, and they inevitably wondered if we were heading to Koroit. Which of course we weren't.

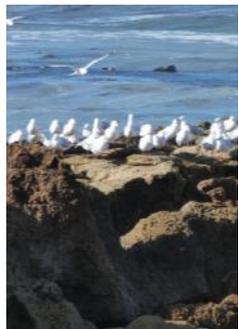


After a break at the Levy's Point carpark we headed to the beach for the eastward leg of the walk: since low tide had been around 8 am, there was lots of firm sand despite the swell. It would appear my camera has added a new trick to its repertoire. It's just possible that some of you might have noticed that the second I turn it on to photograph a bird, the ungrateful blighter flies away. Today, when I wanted to take some photos of gulls taking off, nothing moved—they sat on their rock oblivious to the power of my camera. It was only when the rest of party got too near, that uplift was achieved.

Reader's of last month's previews might recollect that Lothar found and lost a nurdle on Clean Up Australia Day. He found 13 more in his search for it. The other beach find was a dead seal with flippers and nose eaten (and showing impressive teeth). Which leads to the mandatory food comment: post-walk coffee was at the shop near Lake Pertobe.



Rob



Track Clearing—Chimney Pots: Saturday 12 May

Participants: Rob, Coralie, Mabel, and from the Grampians Walking Tracks Support Group, Graham (foreman)

A smaller group than usual because three of the regulars were either interstate or keeping their newly inserted stitches dry. Some rain and strong winds were a possibility that didn't eventuate—about the only wind was at the lookout point, and a hardly noticeable mist came and went for most of the day. In short, a perfect day for track maintenance.

We set off with our chosen weapon of destruction. Graham had the petrol driven universal cutter for fighting the wiry vegetation by the track and Rob had an entrenching tool for the drains. Coralie and Mabel had loppers, snips and saws for encroaching branches and trees: their proudest achievement was removing a nest of four small trees from across the track. We were eventually spread out over most of the kilometre of track before the junction, but converged there for lunch.

Some more of the same after lunch as we completed the loop walk—the eastern side needed little done to it, though that might have been because we were tiring and getting less picky. All the same, it doesn't have the same amount of vegetation as the western side. It did have, however, two large goats. Only an occasional epacris was in flower. There were more correas flowering but otherwise it was just the fresh green of the bush following the rain in the previous two days. Hence, not surprisingly, the small waterfall by the track was flowing well.

Rob



Major Mitchell Plateau: 15–16 May

Sticky beaks *Mabel (leader), Janice and Rob* left Jimmy's Creek to look at the new stone work on the recently re-opened track over the Major Mitchell. It was bitterly cold, windy and wet and we met three track workers scuttling back to their campsite. Not daunted we persisted to reach the top of Durd Durd where the trip started to resemble a stroll down Bunnings' aisles. Crowbars, chisels, picks, mallets, a hand winch, and many more implements lay beside the track for the next kilometre at spots where track-work was still being done. Some of the steps are admittedly a little high but it's fair to say that the new stone work is most impressive. Not just the steps, but also the smooth terraced path that has replaced some of the rocky parts of the track. All the same, there has to be a twinge of sadness that the character of the track was being gentrified. Lots of the old track still remains, but who knows for how long. The rain had gone by Wednesday, but the wind and low cloud remained. As it turned out, despite the weather, the timing of the trip was perfect: we finished by passing under "it wasn't there when we left" yellow tape banning entry to the area because of planned burns.

Rob



From Jimmy's Creek: the first new steps,



much as before but a bit wider,



the first new mesh walkway,



and the first of some more formal steps.



Bunnings, sorry Durd Durd,



Aisle 11,



some of the big steps down to Boundary Gap, and the waiting bay for new walkways



Boroka Lookout and Mt Rosea: 19–20 May

Participants: Coralie (leader), Janice and Rob

The weekend although planned for the Koorooya State Park morphed into a base camp at Borough Huts. The Koorooya/Melville Caves trip will be re-scheduled for Spring.

On the Saturday, we walked the Boroka Track from the Wonderland Carpark enjoying the steady climb in cool conditions. After a pleasant night cooking around the camp fire we set off early next morning to tackle the Cathcart Chislett Track which starts behind the campground.

This track is not well maintained in places and has a few steep, rough sections. Eventually we popped out onto the GPT route and took this to the summit of Mt Rosea. The view was a stunning wall of grey—not long was spent admiring it. We lunched in a sheltered spot on the side of the track before descending to Borough Huts. Rain began as we approached the cars and continued while driving, quite heavily until Jimmy's Creek.

Coralie

Background: view from Mt Rosea viz Mt William, Halls Gap, etc



Rail trail working bee: Monday 28 May

It was a pleasant day as Linda and Lothar mowed for a couple of hours while Rob fed the fire. The result was a very kempt section of the rail trail and a good excuse to lunch at the Nursery Café.

That place incidentally was where Lothar had lunched the previous day after one of his ad hoc Sunday morning Tower Hill walks. Which in turn provides a convenient segue to one of the photos on this page: even emus like to look their best, and that morning, there had been five emus bathing in the Wagon Bay Pond. I guess their challenge is to find a large enough bird bath to splash in.



Back of Lorne: Saturday 3 June

Participants: David, Jim, Lothar (leader), Mabel, Rob

We left Warrnambool shortly after 7 and met David for coffee in Lorne at about 9:15. The weather was glorious. Since Qdos and its carpark were closed for another week we had to leave one vehicle at the track above Qdos. We then drove to the Sheoak Picnic area, the start of our walk.

There are lots of ferns and very tall trees in the first part of the walk. The five of us would NOT have been able to join hands and encircle the biggest...it was just so big.

Henderson falls were as cute as ever. The canyon as amazing as ever. There wasn't much water going over Phantom Falls but they were well worth the descent ... and ascent.

We crossed the nearby creek and headed for Allen Dam. As we got closer to it there were "Do not enter the worksite" signs but we pressed on. Fortunately for us the workmen working on the dam wall had just finished work and allowed us through. We sat on a nearby retaining wall and had lunch overlooking the lake.

From here it was a few kilometres of dirt road back to the car. After picking up the second vehicle we headed straight to Birregurra for c & c. Many thanks to all for a great day out!

Lothar



Three Volcanoes: Sunday 10 June

Walkers: Rob 📷, Jim, Coralie 📷, Mabel, Janice and her sister Terri

The ground mist, that had settled the night before had well and truly gone when we set off for the first volcano, 310 m Mt Noorat. However, the ground mist between Noorat and Camperdown was still there and added to the magnificent view we had from the windless summit. The other highlight was Coralie testing her new camera stand. Eventually there was a group photo that didn't have unwanted fingers, etc.

The debate over where to have our Camperdown coffee proved academic since most of the coffee shops were shut. The knitters of the town had been busy however. Sugarloaf and 313 m Mt Leura were our next challenges, with another 360° view at the trig lunch spot.

There were more glorious 360° views as we circled the rim of our last volcano, Mt Elephant, reaching 380 m—the map's 240 m is the crater bottom. As you can see from the photos, it was a perfect day for our three short strolls which nonetheless added up to 11.5 km walking and 550 m of climbing.

Janice provided the perfect ending for the walk with a lemon-based yummy homestead afternoon tea for us all. A truly grand day out.

Rob



Major Mitchell Plateau or Not: 16–17 June

Leader Janice, participants Rob and Coralie.

Of this third Plateau Walk for the season much was promised but not delivered. A risk assessment suggested that wise and experienced bushwalkers would not attempt to camp on the Major Mitchell Plateau in the forecast conditions without Expedition tents. Wisely it was decided to stay in warm and dry conditions where we could join in the spirit of International Gin Day celebrations and make this a succession of day walks.

On day 1 we Forded Free Flowing Fyans Creek, Sauntered up Sheephills track to the Mount William Carpark, and bitumen bashed even higher to the Major Mitchell Hiking Track. Lunch was taken in the relative shelter of low bushes in the lee of the weather station which provided minimal protection against strong winds. We carefully chose our spot to avoid the large chunks of ice that were crashing to the ground from the anemometer and radio towers. Braving winds and snow flurries we continued towards Boundary Gap, where there were one or two glimpses through the Wall of White and Grey Gloom towards paddocks below. At the 10 km mark our Route Reversed, still through rain, hail, sleet, and snow flurries. We met several groups coming up the road in the hope of making snow balls and snowmen up on the summit having heard at the service station that snow was falling on Mount William. We tried to let them down gently. Down, down, down until we retrieved our creek crossing footwear from a hidey hole behind bushes,. We crossed the creek—now a little more freely flowing—and headed towards the Halls Gap YHA where heating, hot showers, a roaring wood heater, and drying racks awaited.

Next day, after leaving the road near Jimmy Creek, Sweating our way up long flights of Steps, and Slipping and Sliding up the Steep Slopes we reached Banksia Point for lunch, again had huddled behind rocks for shelter. The new track works made short work of the Storming of Durg Durg, equal in height to Mount William. Bursting through the Cover of Cloud there was time for a quick photo opportunity at the summit, before Descending into the Drizzle. Gliding Gracefully down the Grand Staircase, we warmed up enough to consider taking off our waterproofs, but only for a short time.

The 20 km and 800 m on day 1, and 16 km and 1000 m on day 2 provided good training for Rob's European trip and tested gear for an upcoming Winter Traverse of the Overland for the other two. It is fortunate that a further trip across the Plateau is Planned on the Program. Maybe there will be views then.

Janice

