

## South Warrnambool Walk: 4 January

Ramblers: Gwenda, Rosalie, Mabel, Lothar 📷, Rob 📷, Mary, Davinia (prospective member)

It was a beautiful, smoke-free Summer's morning for our walk around South Warrnambool: around Lake Pertobe, through the new Woollen Mill housing development, past the Sewerage Treatment Plant (or should that be Warrnambool Water Reclamation Plant) to Shelly Beach. The return was via Thunder Point and Pickering Point, passed Middle Island (with some Maremma spotting) to the Breakwater and finally along the Promenade to the kiosk. At this point it was a walk of 8 km. The kiosk was so busy that we decided to have our refreshments at *Fishtales*, with some driving and some walking there from the kiosk. One walker proved that over this distance, a walker can arrive faster than a car!

Gwenda



1. Walking with an empty coffee can is the last act of a desperate man
2. Dog
3. Log

## Mouth 2 Mouth: 12 January

*Walkers: Coralie, Graeme, Jim, Ken, Lothar (leader), Mabel, Mary, Rob, Shirley.*

We drove to Narrawong in two vehicles, registered and paid our fees, and hopped onto the waiting bus. At 8:30 we were on our way to the Fitzroy River end of the 14 km walk.

The crossing of the river usually entails taking off boots and socks, rolling up pants, crossing about 10 m of 20–30 cm deep water, sitting down, wiping off sand, drying feet, and then putting on socks and shoes again. It's a ritual the Warrnambool Bushwalkers have dragged out and perfected to ensure that we always come last.



The walk was pleasant as usual. Not too hot or windy, and the sand was generally firmish. A few birds about, and lots of chatting of course!

We bought our lunches and refreshments from a couple of vans then sat around, listened to speeches and live musical entertainment, and caught up with friends. Our prize for being the largest corporate entry was a beautiful tray of fresh fruit and we divided this before returning. Thank you all for a great morning out!

*Lothar*



## To a Cave: 19 January Was it Dan's or Gaul's?

*Walkers: Rosalie (leader), Rob, Dina, Jim, Kate, Mary, Coralie, Gwenda, Graeme, Shirley, Ken; visitors Claire and Lisa.*



A perfect day for beach walking—no wind, calm sea, not hot, not cold, and yes, it was low tide. From Proudfoots carpark, we headed off along the path, across the bridge, beside the Blue Hole, and to the mouth of the Hopkins River, still open with some current.

Next came Logan's Beach where the sand was less than firm, but plenty of conversation eased the strain. We were glad to reach the rocky platform and more so to find the Devil's Throat (a narrow channel up to the cliff base) readily navigable with only a few wet feet.



A short time later, the gaping mouth of the cave came into view—maybe Dan's maybe Gaul's. [Alexander Gaul](#) was a land owner who came from Scotland in 1861 and had a property near Hopkins Point. Dan Kimble lived in his cave for

almost 50 years. As an article in [The Standard](#) reports, Dan was US-born in 1819. He was a ship's cook before arriving in Geelong in 1846. After working for a while on south-west farms, he took up residence in the cave in 1854, living primarily on fish. Although desperate to spend his final days in his cave, he died in Warrnambool Hospital in 1904.



The rocky coast beyond the cave appeared to have more caves, but was inaccessible by foot even at low tide unless properly equipped. A small highlight of our return along the beach was watching Jim ascend without stopping a long set of steps up the dune to see where they headed, and being joined by Rob at the wooden 'lounge' seats at the halfway mark. Then on to the Whale Platform and thence along the footpath to the carpark where we bade farewell to some of our number before partaking of coffees, hot or iced chocolate, and the last three scones at Proudfoots. The leisurely 11.5 km took us about three hours.

Rosalie

### **Which cave did we go to? Dan's? Gaul's? Are they one and the same? Neither?**

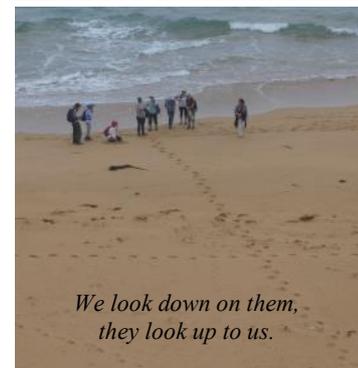
The club called them Gaul's Cave when visiting them in 2002 and 2006. Our next visit was not until 2015 when David led this walk and tried to sort out the Dan/Gaul cave name conundrum. Were they one and the same? His father had walked to Dan's Cave and told him the Crayfish story. I had a bash at unravelling things after this walk, using the National Library's [trove](#) newspaper database and, like anything to do with trove, often getting side-tracked with interesting trivia.

That Dan's and Gaul's caves were different comes from a letter written in 1902 by the son of a Panmure policeman to "Aunt Patsy" of the [Melbourne Advocate](#) about his holiday in Warrnambool. After talking about Gaul's Caves, the writer says that, from the top of the cliff, he spied another cave to the east and was told it was "Old Dan's Cave". Dan had by then been moved to the Benevolent Home.

A 1997 [Land Conservation Council](#) report makes no mention of Gaul's Cave but says that Dan's Cave's entrance had been filled in. The Historical Society has a photo of Dan at the door to his cave—into the side of a slope in a paddock not on the beach. Ditto [Matt Neal's](#) Standard article of 2016. In 1904 the *Ballarat Star* reported the death of the [WARRNAMBOOL TROGLODYTE](#) and mentions one small entrance to his cavern and a hole cut in the rocks to allow smoke to escape. A 1911 article on "[hatters](#)" mentions Dan, his cave, his curiosity value, and "*in fact he was Warrnambool's principal attraction to tourists*". I thought that a bit uncalled for. While we certainly didn't visit Dan's Cave, Dan's is still a fascinating story.

Gaul's Caves (in the plural) made it to the news every so often: tourism adverts, letters found in bottles, and requests to council for an access road to such a popular destination. More recently, the Logans Beach boating exclusion zone used Gaul's Cave as a reference point. This use implies the cave is in the cliff line away from the beach and about 300 metres west of the cave we visited. I suspect that the general area became known as Gaul's Caves and that we visited Gaul's Caves. All the same, a better look-around at the cliff line is needed next time we do the walk.

Rob



*We look down on them,  
they look up to us.*

## Mt Abrupt: 27 January

Walkers: Rob 📷, Rosalie, Graeme, and Coralie 📷

Mt Abrupt—been there, done that, nothing much else to say. Unless of course you are the editor with space to fill. Abrupt is still a nice walk which quite a few people were partaking in perfect walking weather on the last day of the long weekend. The view was hazy—no Mt Elephant to be seen, no wind farms either. A “Do not enter” sign at the hairpin bend before the last climb to the ridge indicates that something is happening on the Cassidy Gap—Signal Peak leg of the Grampians Peak Trail. No sign yet of how the GPT will descend to the camp site between Abrupt and The Picanniny although we could see what was possibly an old track leaving the summit.

A late informal lunch at the Dunkeld arboretum was followed by the formal butt book photo, a visit to the old sawmill there, a look at the name tags of some trees, and a coffee in Dunkeld. A most enjoyable day.

Rob



## The Berry Ramble: 2 February

*Pickers: Coralie & Janice (leaders, reconnoiters), Graeme, Mabel, Mary, Rosalie, Rob, Jim and Jack & Fred (guests)*

Planning the walk, Janice and I decided accessing the Great Ocean Walk path via the Ryan's Den 4WD track was the fastest way into the blackberries. Even so, this was not fast enough for some and there were rumblings about it being "a mountain goat track". Selective deafness was the method of dealing with any dissent, preferring instead to let the wonderful scenery and bountiful harvest do the talking.

In light rain we met the GOW track proper and began a very pleasant meander along this coastal strip. The weather cleared—every so often a magnificent view of a small cove, beach or expansive ocean scene become apparent.



Eventually, the berry canes came into view but were the berries ripe? In the first patch, they seemed green and hard. Would we be able to take home the promised haul? Fortunately, the closer we came to Melanesia Beach, the riper the berries became. The leaders (and date selectors) let out a collective sigh of relief.



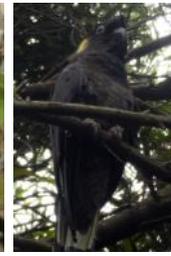
Lunch was eaten on the grass near the private cottage at Melanesia Cove. Then it was straight back along the track where the motto was “every man/woman for him/herself” in the hunt for the juiciest and biggest blackberries. The group spread out and the various collection tactics were revealed. Mary, more concerned about conquering the hills, headed for home, Jim and Fred formed a successful picking team, those who possessed poles used them to reach further into the bushes and Graeme’s technique of one gloved hand to grasp the canes, the other un-gloved to pick seemed to pay dividends.

Eventually we regrouped at the Ryan’s Den Track turn off with enough in our buckets to justify encounters with thorny berry canes, rogue waves, snakes, leeches, March flies and bull ants. Though no tiger snake thought it worth its while to attack any member of the party (weren’t you fortunate Rob!), wounds from other hazards were on display. Afternoon tea in Port Campbell completed this successful outing.

In the week following, tales of the berries’ fate were traded. Some had become jam in less than 24 hours (nice one Graeme!), others found their way onto breakfast cereal, into smoothies, given away to neighbours, desserts with ice cream, or into the freezer for future consumption.

If you missed this year’s bonanza, make sure you put it into your 2021 summer calendar. It is likely to become an annual event.

*Coralie*



## Hawkesdale's Historic Culvert 🚲: 5 February

How many times have we hurtled through Hawkesdale and not looked at its historic culvert. This Wednesday ride was a pleasant 74 km along quiet bitumen roads (a 54 km version possible). We pedalled north-west from Hawkesdale to the MacArthur wind farm where not one turbine was turning. Our easterly leg via Minhamite had glimpses of the Grampians. Bicycles can't be too



common since every herd and flock scampered as we passed. Going south we walked our bikes across the tyre-gobbling wooden decking of Spring Creek's bridge before the final westerly stretch. Chanced upon Maxine as I was loading the bike into the car—she was busy and well. After an icy pole from the post office (shuts at 1:30), there being no excuse not to, I visited the culvert. *Rob*



## Lake Elingamite to Lake Purrumbete 🚲: 10 February

*(WBW) Rob 📷, Coralie 📷; Jim, Mabel and Graeme;  
(Friends of WBW) Linda, Irene, Clive, Jack and David;  
(C'down) Bob, Fiona and Jenny*

We met at Lake Elingamite at 8:30, unloaded bikes, posed, and were soon on the rail trail.



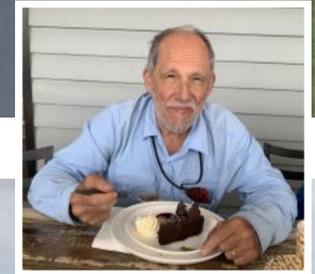
The Camperdown Bushwalkers invited us on their ride in exchange for us inviting them on our Timboon Rail Trail walk the week before—you know the walk, the one we cancelled so we could gluttonously go black-berrying at Melanesia Beach. Oops. They had 7 walkers do “our” walk. C’est la vie.

We followed the rail trail to the Cobden golf course (new bridge being built) and a bit further before starting our east then north then east then north then east then north then east then south ride along roads to the Lake Edge Café on Lake Purrumbete. The alternating directions gave short respites from the strong east wind. Coffee/lunch/cakes at the café as desired, in the outside windswept area, because the inside was full and/or booked. No worries, we’re tough, and only a few succumbed to the rugs provided by the café.

The return ride was the same distance but had fewer turns: straight up County Boundary Rd (at a cracking pace, I might add, thanks to the east wind), a left turn at the rail trail and straight down it until we could reverse the morning’s

route back to the cars. An enjoyable ride despite the wind.

*Rob, who noted much cake envy around him*



## Clifton Beach—Gibsons Steps: 16 February

*Walkers: Rob (waxing lyrical scribe), Rosalie, and visitor Lisa*

Can you walk at sea level from Clifton Beach to Gibson's Steps, its western neighbour? Only one way to find out: pick a day with a much lower-than-normal low tide and try it. After walking two km along the Great Ocean Walk from at its old finish we left the cliff top by a well defined sandy track leading through the bush to Clifton Beach. The answer to our question came soon after: "yes".

The sand was firm with only one minor set of rocks to slightly impede our progress beside the towering cliffs—pleasant walking indeed and from a different perspective. The number of humans on the beach increased as we passed Gibson's Steps and decreased to just us again as we passed Gog and Magog on our way to the end of beach, immediately below the 12 Apostles Lookout.

The surprise there was finding a closed-by-a-grate tunnel that went to the beach on the other side of the promontory. The tunnel was built in the 1880s by Hugh Gibson of Glenample homestead fame. Finding that tunnel prompted us to extend our walk to the 12 Apostle Lookout to see where it might come out. This also gave us the opportunity to buy an ice-cream at the info centre, not step on a snake that stretched across the path, and glimpse four dolphins. A thoroughly recommended 10 km four-hour stroll for a low tide.





A 1997 Land Conservation Council report has that “Gibson’s steps and tunnel date back to the 1880s, when they were constructed to provide access through a cliff to the beach. The steps have recently been upgraded, but the original tunnel in the cliff is extant, though a locked gate prevents access except for management purposes.” You would need more than a key to pass through the tunnel today.

Hugh Gibson built Glenample homestead around 1869. He and a Peter McArthur bought the property in 1866. The 1978 book *A young man from Ayr, Hugh Hamilton Gibson of Glenample* by Innes Cameron “describes the life of this Scottish born settler who owned the property called 'Glenample', famous for sheltering the two survivors of the 'Loch Ard' shipwreck.”

Some modern tourist guides state that the steps were initially cut by the aboriginal inhabitants, the Kirrae Whurrong, to gain access for fishing on the shores and that, in the 1870s, Hugh Gibson improved on that by cutting steps straight down through the lime stones. An article in *The Australasian* of 1884 extolling the wonders of Port Campbell as a holiday destination was the earliest reference to the steps that I found via [Trove](#). The earliest article found referring to the tunnel was from 1891 (below). It suggested the Mr Gibson liked to build access points to various scenic attractions so people could get to them. Given the Glenample and Loch Ard connection one could have a sneaking suspicion the steps and tunnel were also to provide a way for shipwrecked people to get up the cliffs. Rob

off the rocks. A little longer excursion is the one to Gibson's steps. Mr. Gibson who owned the station in this district was a great enthusiast in the matter of making accessible the beauties of the coast scenery, and so he had steps cut down the side of the cliff, where a smooth stretch of sand made it pleasant walking, and where waves and wind had worn the crags into strange shapes. Here are two great rocks, standing like hewn monuments far out at sea, against which the waves thunder continuously; then turning round by a vast overhanging cliff the visitor finds a narrow tunnel cut through the solid rock which leads in a few yards to a veritable fairy bay. The cliffs hang over the

The Age 17 January 1891

A drive of six miles from Port Campbell towards Princetown brings the ramble to Gibson's Steps—so called from a former squatter in the district, who cut these steps in the face of the cliff in order to make the descent to the rocks below. One winds steeply down the precipitous sides clinging to tufts of grass and avoiding the sight of the breakers below; half way down a narrow ledge is reached, about a foot wide and a dozen feet long, without any protection whatever, and crumbling on its outer edge. Along this one walks sideways with a vertical unscalable cliff on one hand and a foaming mass of water directly under—a thrilling moment when one has the feeling of invading an eagle's eyrie—where one does well not to get giddy, for there is no possible escape if footing is once lost.

through the tunnel. A walk of three-quarters of a mile brings one to an artificial tunnel cut through a narrow neck of land. This was excavated by the Gibson who made the steps. On going through a fine view is obtained of the Twelve Apostles—fantastic remains now in deep water of what had once been part of the mainland. In the rocks at the mouth of this tunnel fossil shells are thickly embedded, but in so iron a grasp that they cannot be detached without injury.

Some fourteen miles from Port Campbell

Leader (a Melbourne paper) 1 June 1907  
Possibly the Steps were more of an adventure than now.

## Lake Pertobe Kiosk ↔ Hopkins River: 22 February

Walkers: Gwenda, Coralie 📷, Lothar, Chris, Rosalie, Graeme, Mary, and visitors Christine, Andi and Deb. Oh, yes, and not to forget, Hugo.

A perfect summer morning for a stroll through the caravan park and the sand dunes to the Hopkins River. Magnificent views were had at the mouth of the Hopkins and from the Point Richie (or Moyjil) Lookout<sup>#</sup>.

The return was along the boardwalk proper. A very pleasant morning's walk, with the usual refreshments at the kiosk afterwards.

Gwenda

<sup>#</sup>Research is ongoing into shell remains found at Moyjil: [www.moyjil.com.au](http://www.moyjil.com.au) and [www.publish.csiro.au/rs/pdf/RS18003](http://www.publish.csiro.au/rs/pdf/RS18003). Are they 60,000 or 120,000 years old? If the latter, that could change the theory on when *Homo sapiens* left Africa and how fast the spread was. Or perhaps add to our ideas on *Homo erectus* eg [www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/fossils-some-last-homo-erectus-hint-end-long-lived-species-180973816/](http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/fossils-some-last-homo-erectus-hint-end-long-lived-species-180973816/). Whatever, it's fascinating—Rob.



## Rail Trail Working Bee: 23 February

Manicurists: Rob 📷, Coralie 📷, Linda, Irene and Ross

Ross, having double booked the day, opted to move a niece's goods and chattels but redeemed himself the Friday before by cutting up those of our trees that had fallen.

The starting point was the Rail Trail Committee's containers at the Koroit Station. Last November we didn't discover until too late that we had a pull cord deficient mower: we checked that the hand mower and brush cutter started. No such late discovery for the ride-on mowers—if they don't start, they can't be driven out of the container. Soon after, as you can see, Irene and Linda set off down the trail in all their glory on the ride-ons. Coralie opted to walk to our area rather than join the over-fuelled mower and the spare fuel in Rob's car.

The main act followed with Linda mowing the eastern side of the trail, being careful to go in a direction that meant the cut grass didn't go on to the trail. Irene did the western side. Coralie picked up sticks, quite a lot of sticks in fact, from the southern end and then hand-mowed the area. Rob removed the overhanging branches on the western side before brush-cutting the long grass on that fence line.

While the grass didn't quite need to be mowed, it certainly looked spick and span afterwards. The new burn pile grew a lot. With a bit of luck our mowing should last a few months.

Thank you all for coming.

Rob



## 🚲 Linton ↔ Ballarat on the rail trail: 26 February

Jim attracted 15 people from the various morning riding groups, including 3 from WBW, on his ride. The weather followed the forecast: rain as we left Warrnambool, a couple of sprinkles in the first hour of riding from Linton, and an overcast sky that gave way to sunshine in the afternoon. We went a couple of kilometres past the “zero” start point of the rail trail to reach Lake Wendouree for lunch. It had been a while since I’d done trail. It was still as pleasant as ever, especially the wooded section south-east of Linton (which had the only flowers, a few Epacris). From Nimmons Bridge the mounds of earth, the scenery, and the bridge itself were impressive as usual. Lots of apples on trees by the trail. However, the southern outskirts of Ballarat are getting closer. Relive the ride [here](#) courtesy of Mike.

Rob



## Bomjinna to Kalyrna Falls: 9 March

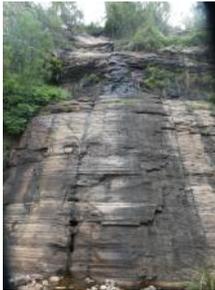
*Walkers: (WBW) Rob (leader), Janice, Diane, Coralie, guest Kirsty; (Grampians) Julie, Marg, Gareth.*

We passed a large tent city in the bush south of Moyston on our way to our meeting point at the Kalyrna Falls Campground. Janice had camped there overnight and was serenaded until 4 am with doof doof music as part of a 5-day Pitch music festival.

We abandoned a few cars and drove 8 km to the starting point at the old Bomjinna campground. The track from there to the end of the Mt William Road is not maintained but was easy to follow. There were a couple of minor “which way now” questions that were quickly resolved and a slightly longer diversion near the top, solved in part by our friend pink plastic ribbon. It took three hours for the climb from road to road.

From there on it was familiar territory done in perfect weather: the bitumen to the top of Mt William, lunch at the start of the foot track to Boundary Gap, and finally down the jeep track to the Campground. Only two visited the Kalyrna Falls Drip.

*Rob*



## Levy's Point to Port Fairy beach walk: 15 March

Group: Mary, Marg,, Rob, Rosalie (stand-in leader), (visitors) Lisa and Loretta

Lothar had organised this walk to coincide with a very low tide but was unwell and withdrew, so it was six of us who met outside the Centrelink office and car-pooled to Levy's carpark.

We reached the beach to start walking at 7.30 under a gloomy and barely light sky. Four pairs of bare feet, while two pairs remained shod. The sand was firm (Lothar's stipulation) and the sea beautiful with fairly boisterous waves. We made rapid progress to the Cutting (1.25 hours) and ventured towards the water in Kelly's swamp – but some of us were nearly sucked into it, by quicksand! Quite a sight!



Progress was slower as we negotiated our way between seaweed with piles of Giant kelp, small boulders and flat volcanic rocks, and shelly sand. Plenty of seabirds—flocks of sanderlings, gulls, oystercatchers and a few hooded plover. And a stranded tiny octopus which shrank when touched—was it still alive? Not sure, but it was returned to the sea never to be seen again. Clear, calm bays

towards Killarney, a couple of horses, dog walkers and fishermen. And then a string of runners as we joined the course of the season-final triathlon of the Warrnambool Tri Club, as they ran toward the endpoint at the Killarney Recreation Ground (with toilet stop).

After a break we increased speed again for the last section as we had an appointment with the afternoon bus and wanted lunch beforehand. We reached the Surf Club about 12.30, washed and clad our feet, walked into town, verified bus times and headed for the bakery recommended by Loretta for their delicious scallop pies. A very pleasant morning's walk of 5 hours and about 21 km in lovely weather for walking; the sun finally emerged as our bus approached Warrnambool.

*Rosalie*



## Budj Bim, Byaduk Caves, and Mt Napier: 21 March

Walkers: Rosalie (leader), Rob (Guide) and Mary

The intended program changed: Budj Bim was deemed a more interesting prospect than Mt Rouse. Rosalie travelled with Rob (possibly last carpool for some time), Mary drove independently. We met at Macarthur and thence to Budj Bim National Park.

Fire in January had impacted much of the park, some parts fiercely, other parts unaffected, so some tracks were closed or partly re-routed. We decided on the Crater Rim track which took us first to the modest summit of Budj Bim then around and well above Lake Surprise where the lower track was closed. It was very interesting noting how the top of the crater had obviously burned fiercely and hot leaving deep beds of red-brown and even white ash, while the immediate lake surrounds were less touched.

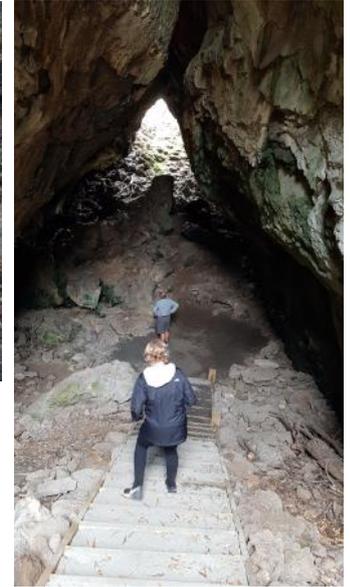
The paddock on the other side of the fence seemed unaffected and was grazed by contented cattle. The track itself was not burnt probably because it has been clear of leaf litter. Trees were starting to regenerate, as were weeds and bracken. A white stain on a cliff 300 m away above the lake was proven (by Rob's telephoto lens) to be bird droppings with the current owner observing us below the stain.



Back to the cars, and a short drive to the Natural Bridge and a walk through it—again the lava rocks were very much exposed as all the undergrowth had burned. The visit to this park was longer than anticipated but so fascinating due to the exposure of much of the volcanic landscape as a result of the fire, and indeed the fire's impact on the forest.



En route to Byaduk Caves, we stopped at the Tumuli (lava blisters) where Napier's lava had burst through the surface and then at the Harman Valley Lookout, both places depicting the course of Napier's main lava flow.



Byaduk caves were caused by the collapse of huge lava tubes that flowed from Napier. We walked to Harman 1 Cave (Rob and Rosalie scrambled briefly into the mouth), Harman 2 Cave and Bridge 1 Cave. We ate lunch overlooking it on the bridge between it and Bridge 2 cave—daylight shows where the two sinkholes join.

Finally on to Mt Napier. A fairly pleasant walk to the summit amidst attractive forest and sunshine. And then a brief sojourn on the southern side of the crater rim, but time and energy precluded further exploration this time.

A great day out, and thanks to Rob for so many explanations.

*Rosalie*

