

## Loch Ard: Saturday 1 October

*Participants: Coralie, Katrina, Pauline, Christine, Graeme, Lothar, Gwenda and Dina*

After a month of grey skies and rain, it was a relief to have a fine day to visit this beautiful area of the coast.

At Port Campbell, the group decided not to risk crossing the Sherbrooke River as the incoming tide would have made our return problematic. Hence, the starting point was the most westerly carpark at the Loch Ard site. From here we made our way to the mouth of the River to find it would have been possible, but probably wiser and drier not, to cross.

We visited and photographed all the designated features including Broken Head, Thunder Cave, and two of the Mutton Bird Island viewing platforms. Somewhere beyond this island in 1878 the iron clipper, the Loch Ard and those aboard, foundered.

We continued the story of the Loch Ard at the cemetery where a plaque lists all those who perished. The story of the survivors Eva Carmichael and Tom Pearce was told. The fate of the cargo and the Minton earthenware peacock bound for the 1880 Exhibition in Melbourne but now residing at Flagstaff Hill was relayed by those present to those unfamiliar with the story. A visit to the Sound and Light Show in October organised by Lothar will complete the tale. The steps to the Loch Ard Cove were duly descended and then it was onto the Tom & Eva Lookout which afforded great views of the stacks and beaches of this area.

The morning's educational lecture was conducted by Prof G Ward who expounded on the geology and hydrology of the



surrounding area to an appreciative audience who peppered the resident Ag Scientist with numerous questions at the impressive Razorback.

After lunch and coffees at Port Campbell the group was keen to tackle the suspension bridge over Campbell's Creek and the many steps to the start of the Port Campbell Discovery Walk. This followed a spectacular path through the heathland and along the clifftop. Great views back to the harbour and a sunbathing snake were the highlights of this section.

We returned home via the Peterborough route to take in the stacks of the Bays of Martyrs and the Bay of Islands, well satisfied with the 12 km walked that day.

*Coralie*



### **Around Childers Cove: Saturday 8 October**

*Participants: Katrina, Lothar (leader), Pauline, Rosalie*

We rendezvoused at Murnanes Bay with only Katrina—who was 10 minutes early—experiencing rain and hail on her way there. The wind was chilling and weather a bit uncertain so we donned raincoats before starting.

We descended to the lookout at Childers Cove for a squiz before ascending again and following the management track westwards for a kilometre or two. We passed a small lake then followed a faint track south before turning east along the cliff tops. We were careful to spread ourselves out in a line and not walk on any of the cracked sections.

We tried to explore the collapsed cliffs system but found the going too uncertain so we retreated and followed the fisherman's track to the western side of Childers Cove. Fantastic views!



We had morning tea at one of the Murnane Bay's picnic tables, applied sunblock as it was now getting quite sunny, then "followed" the track behind the toilet block and explored the area west towards Childers. Surprising views!

The track east of Murnanes Bay gave us many vantage points where we could stop, admire the views, and take lots of photos. The views east and overlooking the Sandy Bay area were particularly breathtaking.

We rock scrambled until we found the footpad that took us through the bushes and on to the steep sandy descent to the beach. At the bottom, a dog that was being exercised barked its displeasure at us being there.

We made our way east on soft sand until we reached the creek. It was flowing and the tide was quite high. Rather than taking our shoes and socks off and crossing, we each slipped a pair of garbage bags over our feet and individually waited for the wave to recede, the water level to decrease, and then simply but rapidly walking across the creek in our improvised gumboots. All caught on video of course! A steep but manageable ascent followed.

We followed the clifftops further east until we found the footpad and the obscured track to Dog Trap Bay. By obscured I mean that there was a great big bush concealing the entrance and what was once a track the width of a vehicle now involved lots of ducking and weaving and bush bashing. We arrived at the Bay all accounted for and none the worse for wear!

The steep sandy descent led us to the pebbly and stony beach. We watched the waves breaking in the distance and decided that the tide was too high for us to try and go through the arch. We didn't want to be caught in the dog trap!

We found a sandy spot out of the wind and had lunch. Afterwards we headed in the direction of the Stanhopes Bay Rd and took the long way back to the cars and hence avoided another swollen creek crossing.

We purchased some locally made goat cheeses for sale from the stall at a CC farm entrance, had coffee at the Freckled Duck bakery in Allansford, and then back to Warrnambool.

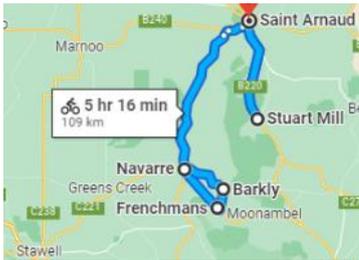
Thanks to all for a day of fun, action, and adventure!

*Lothar*



## Saints & Sinners: October 8–9

Friday saw 16 intrepid bike riders from Warrnambool and Koroit driving to St Arnaud for Saturday and Sunday's "Saints & Sinners Bike Ride". We were rather concerned about the rainfall, reports of flooding, and possible road closures, but it was all OK.



Saturday ride was from St Arnaud to Navarre, a distance of 40 km with an optional 23 km loop to Barkly. A sumptuous lunch was provided by the ladies of Navarre, followed by the return to St Arnaud, making the ride 80 km, and for a few, a 100 km. It was noticeable to me, as I was puffing up the hills back into St Arnaud that there were more electric bikes this year. Jim, Geoff, Trish, Marg and Liz all have electric bikes and were doing it easily, while Coralie, Julia, Brian, Mabel, Jack, Brian, Rob F, Lester, Michael E, and Elaine did it the hard way.

A shorter ride to Stuart Mill and return on Sunday morning was rewarded with another fine lunch provided by the Stuart Mill ladies group. Many thanks to Flo and Wayne Andison and their volunteers for hosting the Saints & Sinners bike ride again after a spell of two years due to Covid.

*Mike*



## Mt Richmond N.P.: Saturday 15 October

While most of Victoria was under water, we have been fortunate in the Southwest enabling us to continue with most of our planned walks.

Setting off from Warrnambool at 7.30 am with just a light drizzle, we made our way to Bridgewater Lake where we were joined by Gareth from the Grampians Bushwalkers and then drove on to the starting point of our walk where we met up with Scott & Katrina.

The sun shone on us as we meandered along the path to Mt Richmond picnic area, enjoying and stopping to photograph the abundance of wildflowers which were beginning their spring display.

A short stop at Mt Richmond to say hello to the 3 resident koalas before setting off on the track to Tarragal Campsite. This section of the walk is mostly on 4WD track fringed with grass trees and stringybark eucalypt. The easy walk enabled an earlier than anticipated arrival at Tarragal camp for lunch.

The final leg of our walk started with a gentle amble through a peaceful forest before undulating farmland. The climb over the 4 stiles and a steepish hill rewarded us with magnificent views of the Bridgewater Lakes and Discovery Bay beyond. A gentle descent eventually led us to the road and the extraordinary Tarragal caves. All in all, it was a very pleasant day's walk with Rosalie, Pauline, Scott & Katrina 📷 and our visitor Gareth for company. Wildlife sightings for the day 3 koalas, 1 large blue tongue lizard, and 2 leeches attracted to Scott's new red gaiters!

*Christine*



## The Newcomer's Walk at Tower Hill: Sunday 23 October

With the email invitations sent, the Facebook alerts posted and the cakes baked, the committee eagerly awaited Sunday's event. After some nervous dithering about whether the conditions would be suitable, seven committee members, one less often seen member, and five newcomers made their way to the club's banner set up at the Tower Hill's rotunda.

Christine's passionfruit and Rosalie's date and walnut offerings were well received, slices of Coralie's (gifted) fruit cake disappeared from the afternoon tea table, and Khyl (a guest) thoughtfully produced a packet of lovely biscuits to share. Mary's, Lothar's and Rosalie's thermos flasks kept everyone well supplied with hot beverages.

A short introduction to the club by the president followed by the vice president's acknowledgement of country was the cue to the rain to commence. Undeterred, the group donned raincoats and headed off on a walking tour designed by our Tower Hill track expert, Lothar.



There was easy chatter as the group ambled along. We learnt that Marie and Bev had planted trees in the park, Rhonda had previously attended a club night, Mary had been a past club member, and Trish had driven all the way from Codrington to join us. The group strolled around the Last Volcano, along the boardwalk to the island and, of course, no walk in Tower Hill with the club is complete without a visit to Lothar's Lookout. The distance was 5.5 km.

Wildlife featured; the most prominent being the noisy frogs but kangaroos, emus and a large galloping echidna were spotted. The bee hive was noted as were many birds both in the trees and on the water. A very large flotilla of swans, some with cygnets, graced the western watery expanse of the park.

Back at the rotunda, Christine thanked participants for contributing to a very successful afternoon and expressed a wish to see everyone on an activity soon.

*Coralie*



## Dunkeld Wetlands: Sunday 30 October



Participants: Gwenda, Katrina 📷, Lothar (leader, 📷), Rob 📷, Scott

A brilliant day weatherwise. A clear blue sky most of the day and not a drop of rain until we started driving home! But, expecting foul weather later in the day, we decided to go to Walker Swamp first. We climbed the lookout tower to admire the view.

The swamp was full to the brim, and much higher than last year, as the two photos of an overflow channel and its sandbag dam show—today's looking at the overflowing water from the swamp and last year's looking across the same dry "spillway".



The road beyond Walker Swamp was closed to traffic so we left the vehicle in the carpark and walked along the road to the track into the national park and so to Brady Swamp. [The sign is on a post by the road, not photo-shopped onto the picture—Ed.]



Flooding over the track forced us to walk on a narrow strip of high ground. Unfortunately, all the snakes had congregated there too. After seeing four snakes in the first 100 m we decided to abandon this leg.

*[For those who have been bored witless by the saga of the “dead” King Island snake, there was no such misapprehension today—Ed.]*



We then wandered a short distance along the road to where the water crossed it. As well as a lot of croaking from the swamps, some small frogs had made it to the road.



We returned to the car and drove to Bryan Swamp. Here the water level was so high and the ground so soggy that we were prevented from having a good look around or having much of a walk.



The drive back to Dunkeld proved to be the highlight. Patches of water covered the sealed road and we were directed to detour down a dirt road which went past ...

Two brolgas in a paddock!  
Two wedge tailed eagles in another!

We stayed in the car so as not to disturb them and watched for several minutes.



After lunch at the park in Dunkeld we still had plenty of time so we decided to head to the Piccaninny carpark for a climb. We enjoyed the views from the top and the many orchids along the way.

Many thanks to all for such a great fun filled day!

*Lothar*

*PS: Did I mention we saw brolgas?*



## The Twelve Apostles Trail: Saturday 5 November



*Riders: Coralie 📷, Rob 📷, Linda, Irene, Jim, Graeme, Mike and guests Elwyn & Barry*

The club had cycled the trail last Autumn but plans for a return ride had been thwarted twice due to poor weather forecasts. A very wet Spring had delayed the construction team's efforts to finish the trail, but most riders were keen to view progress since March.

The brightly attired group assembled in the car park beside the Timboon pool. There, we encountered Lothar, Chris and Pauline who were walking to the bridge on the Curdies River. The town was alive with market preparations and, in anticipation of, tribes of fit "[Dirty Warrny](#)" cyclists passing through the town later in the day en route from either Geelong or Forrest to the Warrnambool finish .

With no such gravel bike skill pretensions, the group set off through the Power Creek Reserve towards the first objective—coffee at the Schultz Organic Dairy on the Ford and Fells Road, six kilometres from the start. This gave riders a chance to reassess their suitability for the ride and Barry decided to abandon ship here, and with assistance from Irene and Linda, returned to Timboon for lunch.

The rest of the party continued towards Port Campbell. At various stages we needed to leave the trail as not all cattle overpasses had been installed. Eventually the group's progress was halted by a construction fence just off the Curdievale—Port Campbell Road, a few kilometres from the designated end.

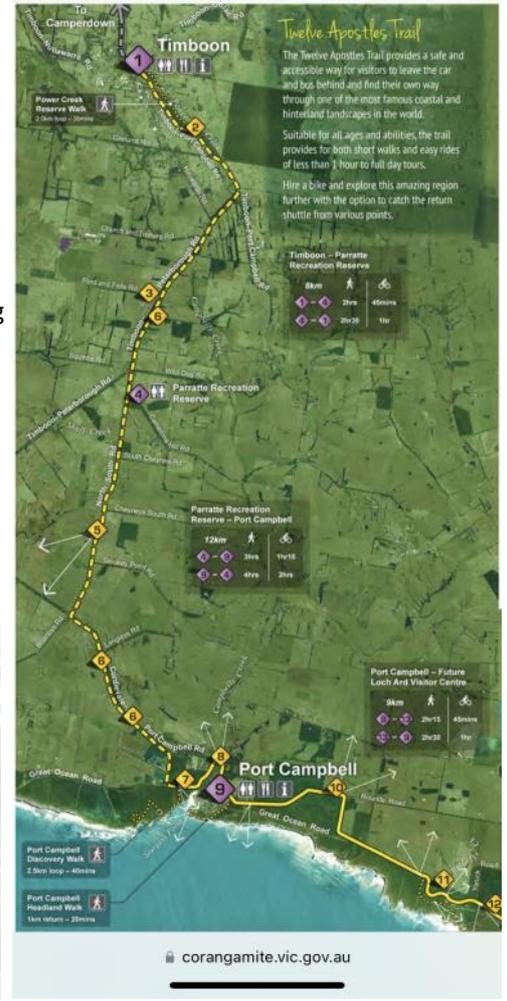




On the return journey, the spread-out party reformed and, after the long ascent approaching Paaratte from the south, enjoyed the ride back into Timboon. Large puddles made the going interesting and we arrived back at the cars with mud-spattered cycles and clothes.

The group then spread out to lunch at different Timboon businesses, ensuring all were well fed before the journey home.

*Coralie*



## Beyond the tourist Byaduk Caves: Sunday 13 November

Walkers: Rosalie, Coralie, Pauline, Christine, Lothar 📷 and Katrina 📷

After leaving Kepler St carpark at 7.30, we arrived at Byaduk Caves and were ready to walk before 9 am. Despite the forecast of wet weather, it was cool and dry – excellent for walking. Eager to set off, I forgot to make an Acknowledgement to Country for this fascinating and mysterious landscape.

We made a brisk walk along the path to the Bridge Cave and then set off cross-country close to the stone fence. Lothar and Coralie had previously done this walk with Rob so we relied on them for route finding along with maps and notes provided by Rob on Rosalie's phone.



Once we found the first big hole of the collapsed lava tube (Church Cave), it was easier to locate the second large hole and following features including 'The Basin', the 'Flowerpot' and 'Bathtub sinkhole'. These holes featured luxuriant growth but no straightforward access. But on reaching the 'Tunnel sinkhole' with arches at either end, there were cries of glee from Coralie and Katrina as they found a way to descend to the floor of the lava tube and clamber through the lush ferns and other vegetation from one arch to the other. After their re-emergence we located



the small Staircase cave and then turned back to find the very pretty Fern cave containing several large tree ferns. We re-traced an approximate route through long grass, low scrub and (lava) stony ground to arrive back at the cars about 12.30.

Wildlife – a few kangaroos, a bushy-tailed possum scurried along the wall of one cave, no wildflowers and few birds, but finally the bloody evidence of two leeches on Katrina. She must have picked them up in the ferns at the bottom of the lava tube.

The adventure done, we headed through Hamilton to the tourist spectaculars. With the Wannon River in full spate due to continuing heavy rains, Wannon Falls (top) and Nigretta Falls (bottom) were magnificent with turbulent brown water shooting over the long drops. A great finale to the day.

*Rosalie*



## Signal Peak: Sunday 20 November

*Walkers: Rob was a guest of Fiona (leader), Lee and Helen of the Camperdown Bushwalkers on this "joint" club walk*

The usual chores at Dunkeld were followed by leaving a car at Cassidy Gap and starting walking from the Mt Abrupt car park. A duck orchid was found beside the track soon after and was dutifully photographed many times by each of us. This was repeated many times for different flowers, with a few more minutes being added to our ETA at Cassidy Gap each time.

At the Mt Abrupt/Signal Peak junction we diverted to go to the knob above the junction—a good view spot plus a large cockroach and a flowering *Xanthorrhoea*. More off track for a short distance to a view point on the cliff edge had bird orchids as an extra benefit. While ti-tree and calytrix provided a sea of white flowers, masses of purple Fairy Aprons in moss clinging to moist rocks in several small spots had to be the best display.

The plains to the east (top photo) and west (bottom) had many large expanses of water, possibly even more than on Lothar's swamp walk three weeks before. One could roughly plot the course of the flooded Wannon River from Brady Swamp.

Considering the forecast, the weather was surprisingly pleasant, sometimes sunshine, sometime rain—donned parkas were soon discarded—and sometimes windy. The blotting out of parts of the Victoria Range gave us ample warning of approaching squalls.

Fittingly, our final orchid was another duck orchid near Cassidy Gap. We finished at 2:30, a half hour before the calculated ETA. Obviously Fiona had factored in many photo stops in her estimate. It was a most pleasant day—a thank you to Fiona for the inviting our club and for her excellent navigation. In return she hopes for an invitation to a swamp walk—when the waters have receded.

*Rob*



## Beach exploring WEST of Port Fairy: Saturday November 26

*Class: Janice (tutor), Rosalie, Christine, Katrina, and Rob*

What better way to spend the morning of election day than a relaxed ramble along the lesser known coast west from Port Fairy?

Saturday's warm weather was ideal for exploring the geography of this area with its numerous small sandy beaches which nestle inside offshore basalt reefs that formed due to volcanic action around 300,000 year ago at Mount Rouse, 60 km to the north.

Some of the sights along the coast included clear views to Deen Maar, (considered to be a "Sportsman's resort" in the past with its hunting and fishing), a swan taking four cygnets for a saltwater swim, a mysterious multitude of maggots working their way towards the waves, and several varieties of shorebirds skittering along the waters' edge. The light breeze dispersed the occasional unpleasant smell of decay wafting up from lines of what had been washed up onto the beach in high seas, most likely the remains of velella aka by-the-wind-sailors, a relation of bluebottles. Previous storm damage to the dunes was clear in places.

This side of town reveals aspects of the history of the settlement of Port Fairy with the sealing and whaling industries on Griffiths Island, the drainage of numerous wetlands, and its growth out along Ocean Drive. As the weather was warm we did not explore the Sandhills Cemetery which has the reputation of being snake central. Morning tea was taken on the rocks at Beach 516 where Katrina took the opportunity for a paddle in the shallow warmish water—who knew it would have been a good day to throw in the bathers?



The walk finished with a final push to Pea Soup Beach through a few more sandy stretches where the invasive effects of Sicilian Sea-lavender are clear. The lookout at the east end of Pea Soup Beach provides a vantage point over South Beach to the Passage and was an excellent position to discuss the changes made to improve navigability of the port, which back in the early days was considered to be the second busiest in the colony after Sydney.

I would like to thank my attentive (if captive) audience for their indulgence as I reprised my inner Geography Teacher—some habits are hard to break. It was a pleasant and relaxing amble of 5.5 km, with plenty of time for coffee and cake afterwards if desired.

Janice

### Now for a history lesson: the Old and New Cemeteries of Port Fairy ...

As mentioned above, the walk passed the site of the long disused “Sandhills Cemetery”. At some point of time, it was the local landowner who hindered visitors from crossing his land—now in the warm weather snakes serve the same purpose. Janice took the pictures on a cooler visit and provides this information:

The “Sandhills Cemetery” is currently accessible only from the beach and was established in an attempt to replace the OLDER first burial ground in town at the current site on the highway. The oldest headstone in the original graveyard is dated 23 August 1847.

The towns founders had set aside land for burials at Greens Paddock but La Trobe, the Superintendent of the Port Phillip District, felt that it was “objectionable to continue to practice interment in a portion of land situated in close proximity to the town” † and called upon Surveyor Hotham to find a NEW site further away in a more hygienic location.



† see “Port Fairy. The First Fifty Years” by J. W. Powling.

Land was chosen in the sand dunes to the west of the town with burials starting in the 1850s. About 2 ha in size, it may have held up to 200 graves and after burials stopped around the 1860s it was still visited by mourners up to 1887. Michael Connolly, one of the first whalers and a founder of the town, was buried here in 1855, and his well preserved headstone is easy to locate. Unfortunately, despite the advantage of being out of town, it was a little too much out of the way as there was no public all-weather road. It finally fell out of favour when the neighbouring land owner limited access with a gate. The more convenient and suitable spot in town was reinstated. The “Sandhills Cemetery” became the OLD cemetery and the older graveyard was re-established as the NEW cemetery—confused?

There was concern that the site of the Sandhills Cemetery could be lost over time and work has been undertaken to preserve the area with ‘appropriate sand dune measures’ to stabilise the cemetery and re-siting fallen monuments. Some headstones and remains can be seen and there is an informative sign, but the location, in long grass and close to swampy ground, makes it a haven for snakes, and visiting is not for the faint hearted!

Janice

### ... and a biology lesson: blue bottles and by-the-wind-sailors

A couple of Fridays after the walk, Janice (and beach walkers as far east as Gormans Lane) found the beach strewn with trillions of washed up bluebottle-like creatures—see Janice’s pictures. It seems most likely that a previous beaching of such creatures was the cause of the smell noticed on the walk.

While the creatures look like a smaller version of the well know bluebottle *Physalia physalis* they are actually a related species *Verella vellella* commonly known as “by-the-wind-sailors” or “admirals hats”. Each one is a colony of three types of polyps, one for catching prey, one for digesting the prey, and one for reproduction. These are all attached to a single float which has a sail to catch the wind—some sails point to the left and some to the right in order to prevent the entire collection from being beached.

[australian.museum/learn/animals/jellyfish/bluebottle/](http://australian.museum/learn/animals/jellyfish/bluebottle/)  
[www.jellipedia.com.au/about-sea-jellies/species/by-the-wind-sailor](http://www.jellipedia.com.au/about-sea-jellies/species/by-the-wind-sailor)  
[www.jellipedia.com.au/about-sea-jellies/species/bluebottle](http://www.jellipedia.com.au/about-sea-jellies/species/bluebottle)  
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Verella](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Verella)





### **The GPT from Mt Zero to Halls Gap: 29 November–2 December**

My aim to do the GPT as day walks was easily achieved south of Halls Gap. About half were on the club's 2022 walks program. But north of Halls Gap the logistics for day walks are difficult. So, alas, the easiest option was a 4-day pack carry. Hike and bike was a cheap solution to a single walker's car shuffling needs: drive to start, leave pack, drive to end, leave car, pedal to start, leave bike, do walk, drive to start, collect bike. Although gravel, Mt Zero Rd was an OK ride, helped by being split into two days using the Gar Trailhead as a mid-walk staging post. The hike was well worth doing too.

*Rob*

*View south from Mt Gar, morning mist from Lake Wartook Lookout, typical camping platform, Gar Falls #2*



## Wartook Christmas breakup: 2–4 December

Revellers: Coralie 📷, Gwenda, Lothar 📷, Pauline, Rob 📷, Rosalie

We travelled up to Wartook on the Friday. On the way we met up in Halls Gap for a day walk. We had a few walking options and finally settled on doing the Chatauqua Peak loop walk. 10 minutes into this walk who should we see coming towards us but Rob! This was his 4th and final day of a solo trek from Mt Zero to Halls Gap and he was focused on his end goal—a pie, a vanilla slice, and two ice creams. He recommended we take a detour to Clematis Falls as water was actually spilling over. It was an excellent detour!

Near the Peak we were advised by an unknown concerned walker that the last 100 m or so was tricky and he'd been forced to turn back. We thanked him for his advice and pressed on to the top. Stunning views. We had lunch at Bullaces Glen ("a ferned gully under blackwoods") on the way back to Halls Gap.

The *Happy Wanderer Resort* provided our accommodation for the next 2 nights. Rob tented, and the rest shared 2 cabins. We had a BBQ dinner that night sitting out on the veranda. Also, because of the expected heat (32° Saturday, 35° Sunday), we were forced to change the walks around a bit and even cancel one.

We started Saturday with muesli, bread, muffins, etc then headed to the Mt Zero picnic area. The walk to the summit is listed as grade 3 but it felt like a grade 4. Some stiff climbing and rock scrambling in parts. We thought we were heading for the trig point that we could see on the way up but the summit was actually on a slightly different peak. Great views all round.

Next the Hollow Mountain Trailhead where we split into 2 groups. One did the grade 4, 2.2 km Hollow Mountain walk and included a scramble through a cavern from one side of the ridge to the other.



The other group went to and explored the Gulgurn Manja Aboriginal Rock Art Site and, on the way back, detoured to what looked like a cross between an old quarry and a corral area.

After a lunch of prawns, potato salad and fizz at the cabin, we headed to Zumsteins Picnic Area. It was hot but the uphill walk beside the Mackenzie River provided us with some shelter. The young social media crowd were concentrated at Fish Falls, a wonderland of waterfalls, swimming holes, and dangerous fast flowing currents. We paused regularly for gulps of water and to enjoy the sights, and eventually made it to the base of Mackenzie Falls. Near there we sat in the shade beside the river and had a break before sprinting back to the vehicles. It had taken us 3 hours to do 7 km. Then back to the resort for showers and a change of clothes before driving the short distance to the Wander Inn for our 6 pm dinner. I slept like a log that night.

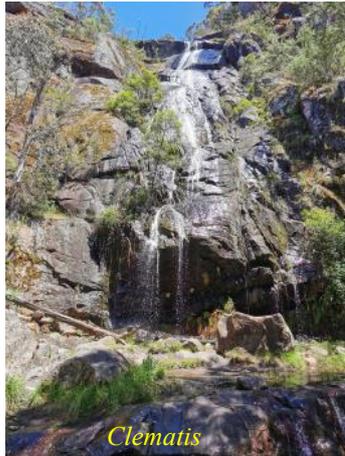
After a breakfast of pancakes and sundry from the morning before, we packed up. The planned 5 hr Stapleton Loop walk was going to be too long and too hot so we opted for the much shorter Beehive Falls walk instead. They were excellent of course and we were back at the cars by 9 am! Then home via favourite watering holes at Moyston/Cavendish/other.

An excellent weekend of fun and laughs and walking!

*Lothar*



*The five of us must add our copious thanks to Lothar for all his work organising this most enjoyable weekend! C, G, P, R & R*



*Clematis*



*Fish*



*Mackenzie*



*Beehive*

## Rail trail working bee: Saturday 10 December

Gardeners: Linda, Ross, Dina and Rob 📷

The working bee was brought forward a day because of the forecast of rain on Sunday—something not conducive to the planned use of Roundup. For a couple of hours Dina mowed, Ross trimmed low hanging branches and spayed weeds at the base of the trees, Rob carted Ross's trimmings to the fire, and Linda was elsewhere, having done more than her fair share of the mowing the Wednesday before. At the end of the day, everything looked pristine and the burn pile was a heap of grey ash. Thank you all for your help.

In recent times concrete "things" have appeared along the rail trail. Our section has recently been blessed with two. Some might consider them art, some might not, and a few might consider them just one more bleeping thing to mow and spray around, like tree stumps.

Rob



## Gauls Cave: Friday 23 December

*Watchers of the waves: Katrina 📷, Rosalie 📷, Rob 📷, Lothar, Dina, Gwenda, Angie, Pauline*

Two days before Christmas. This date was chosen after a request from Katrina to visit Gaul's Cave before she leaves Warrnambool. Very low tide at about 5.30 pm, an escape from the madding crowds at this time, and hopes for easy access around the rock buttresses shortly before the cave.

We started from the Blue Hole at 4.30 pm and walked along the river shore on to Logans Beach where we briefly admired the sculptural 'whale' created from the driftwood and logs brought down by the recently flooded Hopkins River. Then it was the long slog along the beach with soft sand and occasionally running away to escape a big wave.

It took almost an hour to reach the rock platforms which initially presented no problems but as the platform narrowed and the rocky cliffs loomed, the sea also lost its tameness, with waves jumping up and drenching legs up to the knees with little escape next to the rock wall.





The 'throat' of deeper water just around the corner was not a good look, so most of the group retreated while three clambered up the rocks above the 'throat' and reached the small sandy beach beyond – and then the cave! Reward!

The happy trio returned and two decided paddling was more pleasant and easier than trying to avoid every wave. The group had dispersed. Two had streaked ahead to meet other commitments, two more walked all the way back along the sand, and the other four decided the whale platform was an easier way to complete the walk as the sand certainly seemed so much softer on the way back. Reached the Blue Hole shortly before 7.30 pm—a great way to introduce the festive season!

*Rosalie*

