

# FOOTPRINTS

## December 2021

*Newsletter of the Border Bushwalking Club Inc  
Affiliated with Bushwalking Victoria*

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Sandy, David B., Alwyn & Wendy

### End of Year BBC Christmas Event; Tuesday December 7

Yes, it's still on however it is a BYO EVERYTHING picnic at Browns Lagoon Garden, South Albury on Tuesday, December 7 from 5:30 pm onwards. We have taken the conservative option with our region still having significant positive testing numbers to operate under the "no sharing of food guidelines." Unfortunately, we will not be able to indulge in the usual amazing array of salads and desserts members have shared in the past.

We will set up near Harrys Hut as usual so that those who prefer a barbecue will be able to access the barbecues and those who want refrigeration for your drinks, Harrys Hut will be open for our use. There are fixed tables at the barbecue, but you may prefer to bring your own as it is a public area and there could be other people using it also.



One other Covid restriction that will not be lifted in time; you will need to be double vaccinated to participate.

Browns Lagoon Gardens is accessed by the Olive Street entrance at the end of Nurigong Street, South Albury.

Finally, your opportunity to also share your thoughts on where you plan to walk now things are opening again.

### One new member; a warm welcome to

Antonia Gosbell

## From the President's stump

On behalf of the committee, I would like to wish everybody a Happy Christmas and all the best for a New Year that is looking far better than what we were facing at this time last year.

Little did we know just how tough 2021 was really going to get. For those of us who enjoy the outdoors it was particularly challenging. At least we can now return to the outdoors and allow nature to restore us both mentally and physically. Pity the snow, winds and heavy rain have forced some cancellations and made it tough going for others. That's our world.

Let's make the most of it in 2022.

See you all at the Christmas Event on Tuesday December 7.

Ian



## Advance notice – changes to risk acknowledgement processes

The committee has endorsed the following change to the risk acknowledgement process. We will provide further information, including step-by-step instructions, in due course. **Please Continue with the current process until then.**

From the 2022/23 membership year (not calendar year) we will be moving to annual risk acknowledgements.

To renew your membership for the 2022/23 year, you will be required to log into the website and tick a box stating you have read and acknowledge the accompanying risk acknowledgement statement.

Activity leaders will then only be required to obtain signed acknowledgements from visitors (an updated template will be provided to leaders).

Bushwalking Australia (the provider of the club's insurance) has a pro-forma annual risk acknowledgement for use by clubs for annual risk acknowledgements in association with membership renewals, upon which the annual acknowledgment will be based. Notably, rather than attempting to list all potential risks bushwalkers *could* encounter, the template simply provides acknowledgement that 'activities may expose me to hazards and risks that could lead to injury, illness, or death or to loss of or damage to my property'.

In addition, a box/field will be added to each activity description on our club's website where activity leaders will be asked to disclose any activity-specific risks or considerations that participants should be aware of when considering whether to book in and while undertaking the activity.

It is important to note here that the annual acknowledgement will become the acknowledgement of the risks involved in member's participation with the club, irrespective of the level of detail activity leaders do/don't provide in this additional box/field for specific activities.

Again, further information will be provided soon regarding the level of detail that will be requested, but this will be to highlight key activity-specific considerations – such as water crossings, scrambling, height exposure, prolonged sections of exposure (this amplifies the impact of temperature/weather), etc. Activity leaders will still be welcome to note any 'bushwalking-as-usual' risks if they choose e.g. the risk of ordinary trips and falls, slipping on mud or bark/debris, being stung by a bee etc.



The benefit of these changes is that it does away with the current process of *'don't forget to take a sign-on sheet for everyone to sign and also don't forget to list every possible risk on it'*, and each leader accumulating a pile of sign-on sheets in a drawer.

Instead, it should result in more of an upfront disclosure around what the real key risks are and if/how you'll mitigate them (e.g. carrying a plb or sat phone, cancelling if thunderstorms forecast for particularly exposed locations, whether there are any 'exit points' etc.).

Again, more will be communicated in due course regarding all of the above. I'm happy to receive any feedback or be contacted if you have any concerns or would like to discuss further.

David – Activities coordinator. [Activities@borderbushwalkingclub.com.au](mailto:Activities@borderbushwalkingclub.com.au)

## Trip reports

### The Fainters Weekend

The weather is often a topic of conversation on bushwalks, and the BOM website was closely watched the days leading up to our Fainters weekend. With improvement noted we took the plunge, and left our cars at Pretty Valley, with the sleet stinging our faces, and the wind trying to push us backwards. But it was only a 5 km walk at most, and once at the Tawonga hut we kept warm by the fire until the weather settled, then tents were erected.

The night temperature dropped to minus 5 according to a BOM screenshot kindly sent by a club member who was unable to attend due to a last minute covid test. (Negative).



We woke on Saturday with a fine sprinkle of snow on the ground, but a clear blue sky. With the sun on our faces and an icy crunch underfoot, we navigated over several wide creek crossings around the edge of Mount Jaithmathong, with views of Mt McKay to our right. After traversing a small plateau and stopping for morning tea, Mount Fainter came into view, with the cairn on the south peak clearly in view.

I had always assumed that of the two peaks, Fainter North was the higher. After investigating this a little more diligently I discovered Fainter South was the highest at 1881 metres, with the North being 1817 metres. (Interestingly different sites give different altitudes, but the outcome is always the south being the highest).

So we left the main track to follow a very faint trail to the top of both peaks, and while eating lunch enjoyed spectacular views of Feathertop, Bogong, Buffalo, and the Ovens and Kiewa Valleys.



The clouds had begun to cover the sky, and we headed back, but no rain or snow fell. We had a lovely surprise at the camp, finding the cheerful smile of Ron H who had walked out to join us for the evening's merriment. From a magazine, crossword clues on Australian places to visit were read out, and Ron was soon banned from answering as he'd clearly been everywhere!

The next day we wiped the frost from our tents and drove to Mount Beauty for lunch, in a café. (Covid times makes you appreciate these little things).



Thank you for a marvellous weekend, David, Leanne, Ian and Rex, and commiserations to those other five who had to cancel out just before leaving due to injury or covid tests, remember there is always next year!

Pauline



## Hotham to Falls Crossover

The forecast for our annual crossover wasn't looking promising with rain predicted, but we decided to bite the bullet and head up the mountains anyway – four of us driving to the Mt Loch carpark near Mount Hotham and another group of four, led by Bernadette driving past Falls Creek Resort to Pretty Valley Pondage.

As it turned out the day was perfect for hiking – overcast skies, just the gentlest of breezes and temperatures that meant we were able to hike in comfort.



Of course, comfort levels changed dramatically once the hard slog up the steep climbs reduced us to mere plodders gasping for breath!



The morning passed pleasantly for the group I was leading as we clattered down Swindler's Spur towards Dibben Hut where a school group was setting up camp. We walked on across the Cobungra River and settled down beside the fast-flowing waters to have lunch.

We'd barely taken the first bite of our sandwiches when the other group came stumbling out of the bush after their descent from the Basalt Temple.

Over lunch we swapped car keys before we bid each other adieu and headed on our separate ways.

The climb up past Basalt Temple proved to be a bit of a gut buster and we were relieved to finally come out of the tree line and hit some flatter ground. A small mob of brumbies watched on as we walked past Mount Jim towards Pole 333 where we took a brief break and watched the fog rolling across Mount Mackay in the distance.

We made the usual off-track detour across the low heath, dodging hidden water courses and rocks with the couple of lone ancient snowgums as our marker. Before long we'd descended to the Fainters Fire Trail and marched on towards Pretty Valley Pondage and our waiting car.



Contact via a mobile message to the other group indicated they had arrived at Mount Loch a short time after us, so it was high fives all around. We'd won the race! After all, it's all about the destination, not the journey ... isn't it?

Ian



## Down memory lane trip reports

### Two nights around Spion Kopje

The original plan had been to hike out to Edmondson's Hut, spend the night there and then do a day walk to Spion Kopje before heading back to our cars. When we heard the road between Watchbed Creek and Falls Creek Village would be closed for a bike race on our planned day of return, we decided an extra day in the mountains wouldn't go astray and we'd be able to do a bit more exploring in this fabulous High Country region.

There are number of options to reach Spion Kopje's summit. If you're after a gut-busting toil, take the Spion Kopje Fire Track that climbs steeply out of Howmans Gap. Another option is the much longer circuitous route along the Black Possum Spur Track from the Bogong Power Station. We were looking forward to a leisurely weekend's walking, so we chose the less arduous route by starting from Watchbed Creek and following the Big River Fire Track.



Four of us set out from Watchbed Creek, about 10 minutes by car from the Falls Creek Village, late on a Friday afternoon on a 'bluebird day' – perfectly clear skies and not a breath of wind. Our route involved a steady climb that wended its way through shimmering snow gums before emerging above the tree line at 'The Park', an expansive snow plain and a favourite playground of mine during the snow season. After passing the turn off leading to Fitzgerald and Kelly Hut we made a left turn and walked down the narrow bracken-infested track to Edmondson Hut and set up camp.

We made an early start the next morning to walk the 8kms to Spion Kopje. Despite the chill in the air, we soon warmed up as we hiked up and around the western slope of Mt Nelse (1,882 metres) with a spring in our steps now that we were only carrying small day packs. With Mount Nelse North (1,884 metres) a short stroll to the east, we discarded our packs and made our way to its summit to take in the views towards Mount Wills and Omeo. We then strolled across undulating ridgelines from Warby Corner towards Spion Kopje.

Soon we were standing atop Spion Kopje with views all the way to the fire tower at Mount Hotham. To the north-west lay Bogong Village and Lake Guy, while Mount Bogong brooded to the north. The vistas were all the more remarkable because of the ridgelines and spurs marching away to the horizon, thickly spiked with dead trees from past bushfires, looking a lot like the stubble on a grizzled cattleman's chin.

At 1,841 metres elevation, Spion Kopje (pronounced spee-on kop-yeh, or kee-op depending on who you talk to) isn't the highest mountain in the Bogong High Plains. It doesn't loom large and ominously over the landscape like Victoria's big fella, Mount Bogong, and it lacks the stateliness and spectacularism of Mount Feathertop to the

southwest. Despite being “less significant” and less well-known, it’s well worth the walk to stand at the trig point and gaze across the panorama of the Great Dividing Range.

We had morning tea in the lee of a jumble of rocks below the trig marker, my gaze being repeatedly drawn back to the rugged peaks fanning out from Australia’s most famous ridge – the Great Dividing Range. After a leisurely stroll back across the ridgeline we stopped to soak up the sunshine at Warby Corner and had lunch. As I sat back on the grass supported by a convenient rock, I watched the white-throated needletails cutting through the air high overhead.

After the birds had flown on and we’d soaked up a bit more sunshine we headed back to the hut, ready for a refreshing, if somewhat cold dip in the nearby creek.

With an extra day up our sleeves we decided on a hike across Heathy Spur to Roper Lookout, a return distance of around 16kms. This is an area I am well acquainted with, but the many times I’ve spent on Heathy Spur I’ve usually been wearing skis instead of hike boots.

After leaving the hut we tramped up the narrow track and onto the Big River Fire Track, a wide 4WD maintenance

track. Up here there are no trees, just sweeping plains of open grassland with large swathes of alpine daisies that can be quite stunning during the summer months. A short walk along this track brought us to the Heathy Spur Track.



As we ambled along the track, I was constantly visualising the snow-covered slopes where in winter we practise our telemark turns. Even though Falls Creek Village was a mere 15 minutes away, to be out here was to feel totally disconnected from civilisation, the air filled with a beautiful silence, occasionally interrupted by the trill of a Richard’s Pipit or the cry of a Pied Currawong.

Along our way we encountered a number of trail runners and day walkers, out early to make the most of the day. The track took us over some low ridges and down through snow gums so that soon we were looking over Rocky Valley Dam. We chose a spot just off the track and out of the steady wind that had sprung up and took a brief snack break before continuing. It wasn’t long before we reached the information board and “Roper Lookout” sign at the eastern end of the Rocky Valley Dam wall.

We followed the track for about 1.5 km beside the open channel of the aqueduct before climbing the short, somewhat steeper section, which ended at the small basalt knoll of Roper Lookout. While we ate lunch we were able to enjoy views down the Kiewa Valley, of Falls Creek Village, and Mt McKay and the distant peak of Mount Feathertop.

Next day began with an early breakfast before we packed up tents, stuffed our gear into our packs, said farewell to our new-found friends and made the short walk back to the car. We mightn’t have completed a gut-busting, multi-day hike in the wilderness, but as Christopher Ives says, “... *Emerging back at the trailhead, we feel satisfied, maybe even cleansed. We may feel vividly alive in our sore bodies. An hour later we may find ourselves bombarded by the fluorescent lights in a supermarket as we forage for munchies, and at that point we may realise for the first time how calm and quiet we became on the trail.*

Ian

## Murray River Adventure Trail



A new long-distance walking, cycling and water-based adventure trail along the Murray River is one step closer with tenders having opened on Monday for planning and designing the [Murray River Adventure Trail](#).

Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Lily D'Ambrosio, announced the opening of the tender process for the trail – funded under the *Flagship Tourism Projects* program in the Visitor Economy Recovery and Reform Plan. An investment of \$10.3 million to design and construct new and upgraded trails and a range of other visitor facilities from Picnic Point in Barmah National Park to Koondrook, as part of Stage One of the trail. The trail will be easy to access and will cater to both day and multi-day trail visitors.

When complete, the Murray River Adventure Trail will connect a series of walking, cycling and watercraft trails and create a new long-distance nature-based experience all the way from Lake Hume in the east near Wodonga to Mildura in the west.

This initial section of the trail will connect almost 180km of existing land-based trail, deliver vital improvements to over 100km of trail, and create 22km of new trail.

# Falls to Hotham Alpine Crossing Project Update



David sat in on a Zoom meeting with all the stakeholders and passed on a summary to your committee. If you are interested to know more, the following is provided by BWV

The Falls to Hotham Alpine Crossing (FHAC) is the third of Victoria's Icon walks to be developed. The FHAC was first proposed around 2005 and became government policy in 2014. BWV's main concerns with the development of the FHAC are outlined in submissions made to Parks Victoria in 2015 and 2017. These continue to be the BWV position and are available on the BWV website at <https://bushwalkingvictoria.org.au/advocacy#>

The project has very strong support from state and local governments, tourism bodies and local businesses. Funding of \$15m for the project was included in the 2021/22 state budget.

BWV has two representatives on the Strategic Partnerships Committee (SPC) established by Parks Victoria to provide project management and consultation input to the project. Our representatives are Chris Towers, a former BWV president and board member, Eileen Clark from Border Bushwalking Club and BTAC Field Officer for the alpine area. Other members of the committee include a representative from the Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA), with the remainder being from government agencies such as Regional Development Victoria, and Falls Creek and Hotham resort management, Alpine Shire, and Tourism North East.

The three main aspects that concern BWV the most include:

1. Maintaining access to existing campsites,
2. Maintaining open access to the trail for independent walkers,
3. The siting and scale of huts, especially in the vicinity of High Knob.

Parks Victoria has already given commitments on the first two and plans for the accommodation are not yet detailed enough to enable an informed decision.

A comprehensive Environmental Values Assessment of the trail has recently been completed which entailed an on-ground assessment of the entire 57km route, including a 20m corridor on either side of the trail. This work gives an unprecedented insight into the flora and fauna that exist beside the existing trail and will inform further updates to the Master Plan. Typically Parks Victoria would release just a summary but have committed to publicly release the full report. This is expected in the next few weeks. One early decision resulting from this assessment is that the only new section of trail that had been contemplated, from Tawonga Huts to the saddle below Mt Jaimathong and on to pole 333, will now not proceed.

A Landscape Visual Impact Assessment will soon be undertaken by a separate consultancy that will look at minimising the visual impact of the trail and the planned accommodation. This assessment will be critical to informing the siting of the accommodation and will be closely scrutinised by BWV. Parks has recently stated that the trail will not be constructed as a 'walkers highway' with major work limited to protecting the environment from the impact of walkers e.g. track braiding on the Diamantina Spur.

BWV remains concerned about aspects of the project but is somewhat encouraged by recent decisions by Parks Victoria, and through its involvement on the SPC will continue to advocate strongly for the interests of as wide a range of bushwalkers as possible.

For more information on the project, including a Spring 2021 Community update that answers some common questions and concerns, visit <https://www.parks.vic.gov.au/projects/falls-to-hotham-alpine-crossing-project-planning>

**For more information contact Chris Towers on [chris@bushwalkingvictoria.org.au](mailto:chris@bushwalkingvictoria.org.au)**

## **Weekend with the Warby Ranges Bushwalkers**

Chris from the Warby Range Bushwalkers has invited any interested Border Bushwalking Club members to join them on the following activity. Please call Chris to book in.

The plan is a walk along the Razorback to Mount Feathertop, with a descent back to Harrietville via the Bungalow Spur. This is a hard walk of approx. 22k along The Razorback to Federation Hut, and Mt Feathertop, then a descent down the Bungalow Spur track back to Harrietville.

There will be an additional easy walk on Sunday.

Camping at Harrietville caravan park (book your own accommodation).

To book in, call Chris on 0418 503 802.

<https://warbybushwalkers.org.au/>

## Services included in your BBC membership include.

A range of gear is available from the club to hire at a very minimal rate

- Sleeping bags
- Back-packs
- Hiking poles
- Waterproof jackets
- We even have a dehydrator if you want to prepare your own meals

Safety equipment is available free of charge for leaders of club activities

- First aid kits
- GPS
- PBLs

All of the above is stored and managed by [Adventure Gear, 479 Dean Street, Albury.](#)

Call in and have a chat to Gino, Wendy and Peter for all your equipment needs whether it be hiring or buying at the special BBC club discounted rate.

**Disclaimer** *All statements and opinions expressed in articles published in 'Footprints' are those of the respective authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Editor, the Committee or members of the Border Bushwalking Club*

***Cut off date for input to the next issue of Footprints January 23 2022.***