

FOOTPRINTS

February 2022

*Newsletter of the Border Bushwalking Club Inc A5665
Affiliated with Bushwalking Victoria*

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From the President's stump

Happy New Year to all our members!

I hope 2022 is a year when you can find the time to 'go bush' - whether it's just for a few hours, a whole day or over a few days. It might be somewhere close by, a bit further afield like the High Plains, or maybe on the other side of the state, or even interstate.

Either way, the following article I came across recently, reminds us all that a walk in nature can be good for your head, your happiness and your relationship!

"I've just returned, stiff and sniffing, from four days' walking in the cold and wet wildness of Tasmania. I have never felt better."Rebecca Huntley

"There are countless reflections on the benefits — physical, spiritual, intellectual — of walking, dating back centuries, evident in all kinds of cultures.

Philosopher Frederick Nietzsche wrote that "all truly great thoughts are conceived while walking". While that might certainly be true for shorter walks, the beauty of a long and sometimes physically arduous walk is that you stop thinking altogether. It takes at least half a day to reach this state of not thinking.

At the start, your mind is still whirring with things left behind, and you still have that Pavlovian impulse to reach for the mobile whenever you see something interesting — until it sinks in you have zero reception.

Once in that state of not thinking, a striding meditation, you never want to leave it.

The pursuit of nothing is a tonic when every waking hour of your day is supposed to be full of productive movement.

Curiously, while my husband comes with me on these walking trips, we almost never walk together.



I am always at the front of the line, within "glancing backwards" sight of the guide, but hoping to walk in as much silence as possible, increasing the chance of being the first to encounter an animal or bird on the path. Forest bathing, the Japanese call it.

My husband walks at the end of the group with his SLR camera. As a result, we have hundreds of photos of my Gortex-covered arse in the family photos albums.



While we remain mostly separate during the day, at the end of it we reunite.

We return to camp, dump the packs in the hut, remove the boots and socks and look over at each other. No children, emails, to-do lists or electronic noise, just wind in the treetops and bird song.

It's clear in those moments— when you're stripped of all worldly worries and most of your possessions — whether you have anything meaningful to say to your partner.

You know, not just whether you still love them, but whether you still like them, and would choose their company above all others.

My husband and I left Sydney for Hobart, sniping about laundry and garden maintenance.

We returned arm in arm, with even more dirty laundry to do and grass to be cut, but with that "bush connection" in our hearts, which I hope will sustain us until we pull on the boots the next time."

'Overheard in Australia' is a regular ABC Everyday column where social researcher and author Rebecca Huntley goes a little deeper on the things we're talking and thinking about.

Ian

New members; a warm welcome to

- Lisa Smith
- Michelle Heintze
- Peg Halbwidi
- Shrike O'Malley
- Donna Burgess

Next Club Night, Tuesday March 1, 2022

Your committee are planning for the first club night for 2022 to be Tuesday March 1. With the high numbers of positive cases, it was felt to be unwise to attempt a February meeting. More details to follow.

Trip reports

Mt Buffalo walk, camp & sing weekend

Amid this La Niña year, the clouds parted and allowed a whole weekend of warmth and sunshine for camping, singing, swimming, canoeing and conversing at Lake Catani.

Friday afternoon check-in had a few bewildered wanderers looking for our communal campfire site, but by 3pm we were ready for a gentle stroll around the lake to learn the weekend's theme song, Walk This Mountain, plus a wild woodchuck tongue twister for the faster walkers. Dinner was a BBQ for eight (and four stowaway camels) with drinks and a singalong before John and Rosemary (and three camels) headed home.

The homework was set for Saturday...to write either a camel song or something about wombats, evidence of which abounded. Bernadette was suitably inspired by a monument to the Wombat God near her campsite, being a very cube-shaped rock atop another rock.

Saturday we were joined by Jan and Charles to make eight walkers once again, and the group headed around the lake to The Monolith, then across to The Chalet for some 'real' coffee and lunch amid the rhododendrons and lupins, before ambling back via the Underground River.



Many stops along the way allowed for revision of Friday's songs, plus plenty of new ones shared by all walkers. Happy Hour was probably heard by the whole campground with boisterous renditions of musical favourites, then after dinner we got to find out who actually did their song-writing homework...there were more than a few hastily improvised verses, quite a few of which seemed to involve wombat by-products.

Sunday our group was due to be halved, so before leaving camp we harmonised with a beautiful Sufi chant, Asalaam Aleikum, meaning "Peace be with you", to set the mood for wandering along the

South Buffalo Track. This proved to be a day of serendipitous meetings, first with David and Kate who were hoping to walk The Back Wall (we tried to coax them into joining us, but the stricken look on David's face let us know we'd definitely still be a quartet), then with an all-singing, all-dancing family who not only knew but were happy to sing obscure Mamas & Papas songs with a very delighted Bernadette.

Monday morning after packing up camp, delirium had set in while walking towards Mahomet's Tomb. It was a morning for squawking musical games, the favourite of which was to call out songs containing someone's name starting with every letter of the alphabet. We were stumped by K, X and Z (thankfully Pauline emailed the next day after finding a website with all the answers).

Just when I'd declared that my first multi-day hike was complete and we agreed that it had been a good experience for all, someone discovered a walking pole had been left behind at Corral Peak...sigh! Eventually, seven of us made it to lunch at Happy Valley Hotel (some sooner than others), but we all went home laughing and looking forward to returning when the Wombat God of Lake Catani smiled on us once again.

Leanne



The huts walk – finding the shortcut

I've done 'the huts walk' at Mt Hotham several times now since Bernadette first put it on. It's a great walk taking in a lot of the key historical points of interest (mining aqueduct) and old huts. However I've always found the initial road walk a bit painful, particularly on a hot day.

Having not done it for a while I decided to put it on the program again. But then I had a look at the map and satellite imagery – is there another way? Turns out, there is!

Unfortunately, I was on my own for this one, but hopefully the below is helpful for anyone who puts this walk on in the future.



First things first though, Mt Loch carpark is currently closed off while the new Alpine Gateway visitor centre is built. It was meant to be finished by this winter, although that looks awfully optimistic given current progress. Instead, there is a little parking on both sides of the road a couple of hundred metres before it.



One you're at the snow making dam at the Mt Loch carpark, start heading down the slope on the right (grass not scrub, not too steep), and you'll see the Mother Johnson's access track which runs parallel to the main road, but a little downhill. This is a grassed old 4wd track. After a km or two, you'll get to some snowmaking equipment and huts intersecting with a gravel road. Go left, follow the curve left, right, and 'down' to snake gulley hut. Keep going straight and you'll intersect with the usual Davenport access track and then arrive at Silver Brumby hut.

The above is so easy I was wondering why the 'official' huts walk brochures go through the village. All I can think is that this directs people past the pub and cafes...

After Silver Brumby I followed the usual route up the Davenport access track a little before taking the aqueduct turn. This was nicely mowed for a little way, but then became quite grassy. It's always fascinating walking along the aqueduct, seeing the earthworks and thinking about the 120 workers it took to construct in what would have been difficult conditions.

Upon reaching the bottom of the valley, even though it was a relatively cool day the walk up the hill to Spargos hut was still a big as I remembered. It is also gradually accumulating more downed trees but nothing too difficult to climb over.

At Spargos I met a couple of other walkers who I suspect had effectively cleared the track along the aqueduct of any wiggle sticks, which I'm thankful for given the high grass. While I was having lunch a lady behind me caught up and shortly thereafter, I encountered a couple on their way down to Spargos – the track was much busier than I thought given the closed carpark!



From Spargos I headed up the slope and detoured over to Derrick's hut before returning to the main track. Shortly before arriving back at Mt Loch, I detoured to the left (there is a signpost) to Joyce Brockhoff hut which is 400m steeply downhill. It has a nice big deck with beautiful views and would be a good spot for an afternoon tea.

On the way home I stopped by Morrie's at Harriettville – I was thrilled to hear they've recently reopened having been closed for nearly two years.

David



Ryders Yards Beginner's Overnighter..... Ian

Eleven of us made the short trip to Ryders Yards early in December. We were accompanied by a small group of day walkers led by Eileen.

The morning began in cold but sparkling weather and it wasn't long before we were having nibbles and a break beside the aqueduct at Cope Saddle Hut.



When we arrived at the Yards we were pleased to note that there were no others there and that we had a choice of where to pitch out tents. Once pitched, some of us went on a wood collecting mission since the wood supply at the hut had been seriously run down. The rain from the previous day meant it was difficult to find any dry wood.



Eileen's party had their lunch and then bid us adieu and headed back.

After lunch we set off on the usual trek to visit the "secret waterfall". Any plans for a swim were put on hold due to the 'brass monkey' weather. At the Pole which cannot be named we left the

maintenance track and headed downhill for a couple of kms. The well-defined track wound its way down into the valley, across open meadows and through bushland before emerging above the fast-flowing Bundara River. Soon we were standing above the head of the waterfall.

With all the recent rain, the water was cascading over the falls in a roaring spray of water and tumbling into the waterhole below before flowing further downstream to repeat the spectacle. We clambered down a slippery track, navigating our way around the rocks to stand at the bottom of the falls and marvel at the sight. After the usual obligatory photos, we headed back to the Yards.





While we were gone, Ron had been busy making sure we returned to a warm welcome. With the assistance of all Ian's firelighters, and with a lot of mad fanning, he had managed to get a fire going which helped dry out our supply of wet wood so that by nightfall all was cosy and warm inside the hut.

It was pleasant to be able to once again sit outside in the evening and watch the resident robins flit from

tree to tree, to soak up the silence and to ponder the big questions of life. Once darkness descended, we adjourned to the hut, stoked up the fire and chatted until it was deemed late enough to go to bed.

Next day we took our time packing up, swept and cleaned the hut, jotted a few lines in the Visitor's Book, turned the light off, locked the door and set off. Another short break at Cope Saddle Hut an hour later, and then we headed back to the cars at the Cope Hut carpark.

Once we'd rid ourselves of our packs, we wandered down to check out historic Cope Hut before driving down to Mt Beauty where we enjoyed lunch. Thank you to all the participants, especially those new to overnight camping. I hope to see you all on the track again soon.

Ryders Yards Day walk.... Eileen

Four day walkers set out from Cope Hut car park to accompany Ian's overnight group. When we last did this walk in February, the wind was incredibly strong, but this time it was only very strong. It was, however, accompanied by low cloud, fog and that strange combination of rain and mist known as mizzle, which briefly turned to sleet at one point.

We set a cracking pace along the path, arriving at Cope Saddle hut in under an hour and managing to squeeze in long enough for a snack. Then it was round the aqueduct track to Ryders Yards, a collection of corrugated tin buildings set among gum trees and rumoured to have a view of Mt Cope (when not foggy).

The day walkers watched with interest as the overnights pitched their tents, offering advice where needed and admiring Ron's skill at whittling twigs when he realised he had forgotten his tent pegs. We even collected firewood for them but declined the offer of a walk to the hidden waterfall to join in the skinny dipping.

Then it was time for lunch and back to the cars, hidden in thick fog. This walk is only about 12 km, gently down on the outward trip and gently up on return and very suitable as an introduction to the High Plains. We didn't get many views because of the fog but close up the wildflowers were magnificent and quite the highlight of the trip.



Youngs Hut Overnighter

Nine of us ventured out across the High Plains to visit our favourite hut on a fine Saturday morning. After the usual grunt up the Fainter Fire Trail, we went off track and up and over the hill to the ancient snow gums where a brief break was taken before marching on to Pole 333 where we had a snack.

The heavy rains over the previous days meant the track past Mount Jim was pretty much water-logged which meant we skipped across the conveniently placed stepping stones. At the turn off to Dibbins Hut and the Cobungra River we stopped to chat to a grandmother, her daughter and grand-daughter on their way through to Cope Hut after experiencing some pretty torrid weather. While we chatted we watched the small mob of brumbies grazing nearby.



We arrived at the hut early in the afternoon and were pleased to see we had the place to ourselves. After lunch most of us trekked down the valley in search of a waterhole or waterfall in which to cool off. After a bit of a bush bash found what we were after and soon Sasho and Ian were enjoying a refreshing splash, each in his own private pool, before we headed back to the hut.

The evening was spent in the hut sitting around the fire and chatting while attempting to complete the cryptic crossword that Ian had brought along. (I'm afraid we were a dismal failure!)

There was a sprinkling of rain overnight, but the morning was clear and bright and after breakfast and a clean up we bid our hut a fond farewell until next time and headed off, arriving back at the cars at Pretty Valley Pondage after an uneventful walk.

Another successful overnighter filled with much fun and laughter. Thank you to all participants for making the job of leading such an enjoyable one!

Ian

Mt Nelse Full Moon

After Feathertop Full Moon walk had to be cancelled due to the weather, I decided to try an easier option one lunar month later: Edmonson's Hut and Mount Nelse.

8 people signed up for a midweek walk and 8 came! In my experience, in these days of COVID, that's unusual.

The forecast was examined from every angle and we were no clearer on what the outcome would be.

After setting up camp, comparing notes on gear and eating our dinners the mist began to roll in. Will we? Won't we? Is there any chance of a sunset? But we are bushwalkers, optimists and opportunists so off we set for Nelse.

The view from the top was non-existent. Call it mist, call it cloud; it was set in. We walked back to the trail and decided it was worth a short sit and wait. And then it happened. The sky was alight with amazing colours and patterns. The ooohs and aaahs could be heard from Mt Bogong I'm sure.



After the show we headed back via twilight and then torchlight. The moon was no doubt doing her best but was certainly hiding behind those clouds.

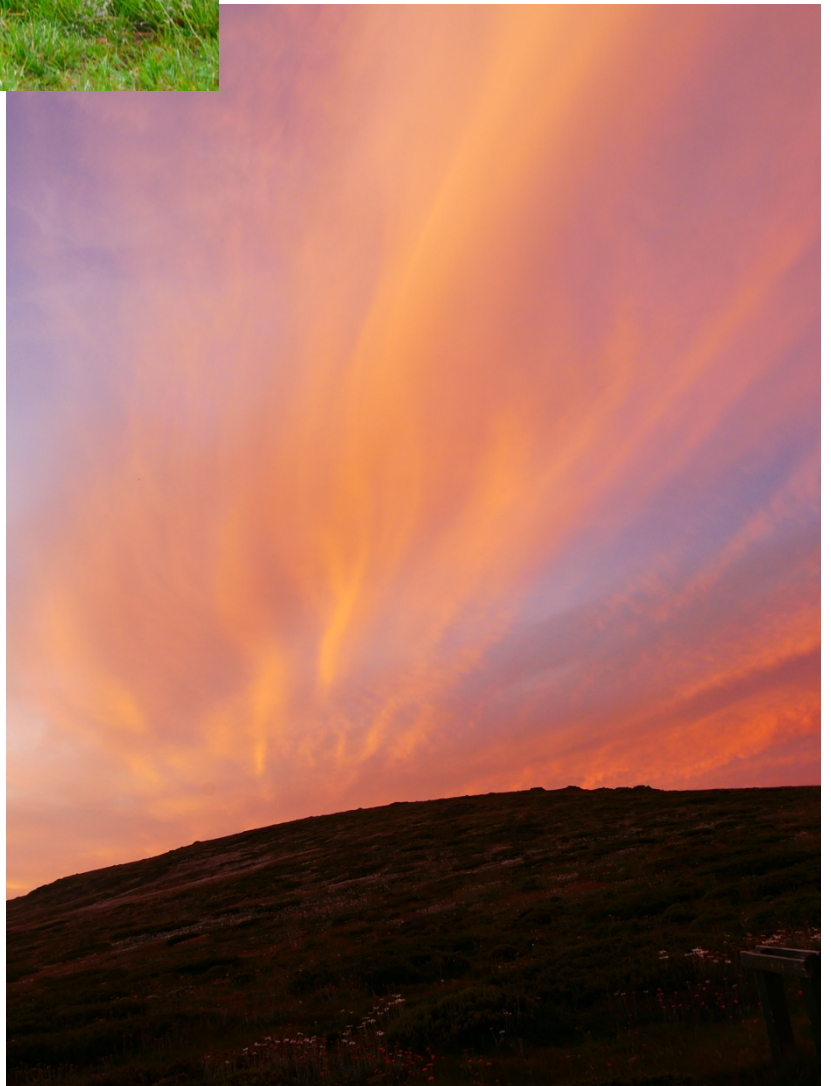
When we got to the turn off down the footpad back to the hut a luci light and some reflectors that had been set up earlier made our path very clear and it was time to crawl into tents and dream of sunset.



I think I need to rename these walks as sunset walks but this was one of the best.

Thanks to my 7 companions who were excellent company.

Bernadette



Get together at JB Plain

With 2000 cyclist descending on Bright and riding various routes around the alpine area including Mt Hotham we arrived at JB Plain holding our breath on camp site availability. Fortunately, it was an almost deserted and beautiful camping area just a short walk of the road. Bernadette had planned a camping, walking and relaxing long weekend for all ages and abilities.

After setting up camp on Friday afternoon, our first walk was to Carmichael Falls from Dinner Plains, a good leg stretcher and certainly worth the walk. And of critical importance we needed to order our Saturday night Pizzas at the Dinner Plains hotel.



Car camping afforded us the luxury of extending our imagination on food and beverage choices, leading to much tall story telling around a campfire.



The next morning, early light over JB Plain filled with wildflowers, particularly billy buttons was one of the many highlights of our relaxing weekend. However, we could not delay our serious walking so those who chose, made the short drive to the start of our Cobungra Ditch walk. Some preferred to explore the wildflowers on the Plain or just read a book.

Thanks to the early gold seekers who built an 11 km race or ditch in the 1880's for us to walk along and enjoy magnificent views over our alpine region. Wildflowers were abundant and talk flowed easily.

On returning to camp, those with enough energy to explore another short walk headed off to a Room with a View, an even more expansive view over the alps. Perhaps they were trying to justify the choice of Pizzas around the campfire that was planned for the evening.



The next day was packing up tents and now an even smaller number choosing to walk to Mt Loch on the way home

Thanks, Bernadette, for a fabulous weekend that was flexible enough to see some of the long-term members camping and walking where stiff joints often restrict their options.

Ralph





Vallejo Gantner Hut overnight hike

Leaving Benalla late Friday afternoon, we arrived at our campsite and beginning of our 2 day hike, at the foot of the King Billy's in time for tea. Even though we got an early start on Saturday morning we could feel it was going to be a warm day.

At first we followed the road around The King Billy's. The AAWT leaves the road fairly soon and becomes a well defined, but rough in places foot pad as it passes Mt Magdala, Hells Window, Big Hill and our final climb for the day was up to Mt Howitt.

The views all day from the ridgetop walking were pretty speccky. As we expected it was a pretty warm day and this slowed us down a bit. We were all happy to get to Mac Springs and the hut after swatting march flies all day. Some of us saw sunset while others went to bed early.

After breakfast and packing up early on Sunday morning, we were heading back by 7:30am because it was going to be another warm day

Mick



News from Bushwalking Victoria

The Grampians Peaks Trail has Opened

After being in the pipeline for well over 20 years, the spectacular 13-day Grampians Peaks Trail has officially opened. The trail passes through a variety of terrain in the Grampians National Park (Gariwerd) and is rated a challenging Grade 4/Grade 5. Covering 160km from Mt Zero in the north to Dunkeld in the south, it caters for self-guided walkers, groups and fully-facilitated hikes with a licensed tour operator.

Bushwalking Victoria's Bushwalking Tracks and Conservation standing committee has been involved with this project from its early inception and advocated for the rights of all walkers. During the trail's development, legitimate concerns were raised about the encroachment of accommodation and other recreational infrastructure into pristine areas. Matt Ruchel, the executive director of the Victorian National Parks Association, said that the original plans for several huts and more high-end accommodation along the trail had been revised, with most now focused in existing town centres. The trail itself features small huts at two of the 11 bookable campsites, which minimises its intrusion into unique areas.

Some walkers suggest that site fees of \$47.70 per night will rule out financially disadvantaged hikers, but Parks Victoria chair, John Pandazopoulos, says it's an appropriate rate, considering the cost of maintaining the track and servicing the campsites. Over 1400 reservations have already been made. Many walkers may prefer to tackle shorter sections of the trail; some sections can be done as free day walks.

The trail extends over the ancestral lands of the Djab Wurrung and Jadawadjali people. Parks Victoria worked with traditional owners to guide the trail alignment and shape visitor information and stories.

More trail information from Parks Victoria can be found [here](#).

Bushwalking Victoria have produced an excellent Bushwalking Manual that can be accessed at the following address. <https://bushwalkingmanual.org.au/>

It can also be accessed from the Home Page of our BBC web site

Its contents include sections on Trip planning, Clothing and Equipment, Food and Water, Weather, Leadership, Environment, Emergencies etc.

A request from Leanne (of walk, camp and sing weekend fame)

I'm needing a few keen folk who might be interested in helping with my Cert IV Fitness Personal Training assessments, and thought to see if any of the BBC members might be interested, especially newcomers or day walkers who'd like to transition to overnight hiking or longer walks.

It would involve about 3-4 sessions with a consultation, health measurements, fitness testing and then working through a personalised program that helps each person work towards a manageable goal.

Contact Leanne on 0448 566 777 if you are interested

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 February 23 2022.