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Sunraysia Bushwalkers

June 2016



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Affiliated with:



Membership Fees
\$30 per Person
Subs due 1st July

Website:
www.sunbushwalk.net.au

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To view the complete calendar please follow the link:
<http://www.sunbushwalk.net.au/calendarofactivities.html>



MID YEAR DINNER

WHEN: Saturday 9th July (Friday night also available)

WHERE: Former Mallee Research Station Hostel, Walpeup

THEME: Dress for dinner as a “**Notable Australian**”

COST: \$20:00 pp / night

MEALS: Shared meal Saturday night.
Please bring either a main meal, dessert or
snacks/nibbles to share.
Bring own breakfast and lunch
Drinks

WHAT TO BRING: Linen is provided but suggest bringing own
pillow and sleeping bag/doona

ENQUIRIES: Verna M 0403885344 50 234102
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A SUNDAY STROLL AROUND CARDY LAKES

Noel Hayward

Whilst the more enthusiastic members of The Sunraysia Bushwalkers were doing a three day trek in the Pink Lakes/Mt Crozier area of the Sunset Country, Kym, Barb and Noel met at the Koorlong Store on Sunday afternoon (8th May) for a mystery walk. Whilst the showers may have deterred others from joining us, the rain stopped (as pre-arranged by Noel) as we began our walk.

But first to the history of Cardross Lakes, with acknowledgement to Mary Chandler's book, *Against the Odds - The Story of the Red Cliffs Settlement*

Origin of Lakes and Early History

The Lakes originated in the early 1930's when significant irrigation land in the Cardross area was exhibiting severe production losses due to salt damage caused by excess water. The Cardross settlers banded together and developed a drainage scheme incorporating eighty-seven blocks, which was completed in February 1935. The original design of the drainage scheme incorporated four Basins into which water was drained from the horticultural properties irrigated in the settlement. Basin C (see map) was known as Lake Cardross. The scheme was later increased to seven Basins.

Cardross citizens took full advantage of the lake and a committee of management was formed, a diving board and dressing room and shelters erected, and trees and lawn planted. The Cardross Lakes became a very popular spot for picnics, rowing and swimming



Swimming in Cardross Lake circa 1935

Photograph from Chandler (1979) showing diving tower in Basin C

During the 1970's the water level in Basin 1 was much higher than today (or on Sunday) and a further four basins to the south-west were also full. By the 1990's improved irrigation practises had already resulted in reduced water flows to the lakes leading to a reduction in the number of active basins and a reduction in water levels. As pipes replaced channels in the 1990's levels dropped further.

However, during the early 1990's the Lakes were still considered a valuable recreational fishing area and between 1992 and 1995 were stocked with 19,350 Murray Cod and 20,000 Golden Perch.

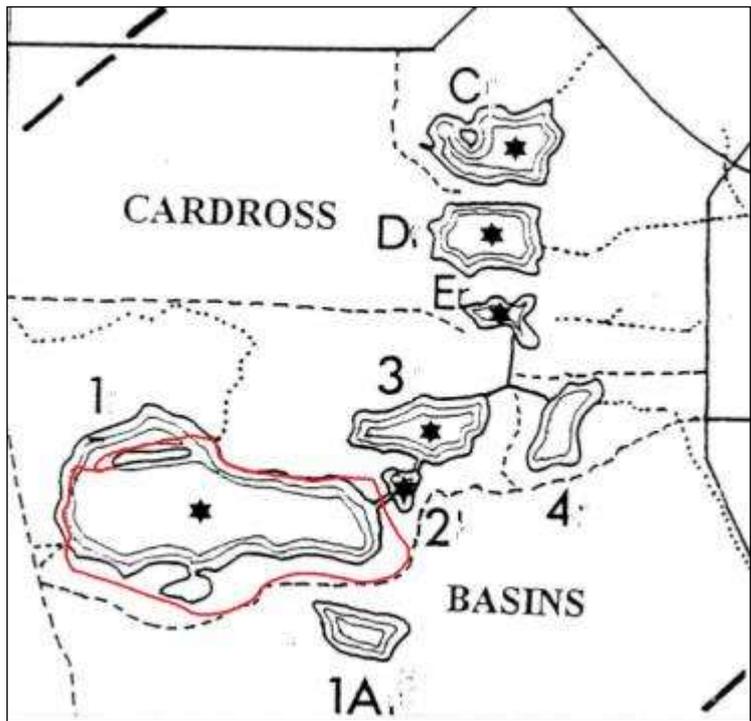
In 1995, a survey of the main Cardross lakes to assess recreational fish species found one of the most diverse freshwater fish assemblages in Victoria including the Southern Purple-spotted Gudgeon a species previously presumed to be extinct in Victoria and South Australia.

From 1996 until December 2000, a good aquatic habitat was maintained, but during the latter part of 2000 and 2001 the millennium drought set in and the water level fell rapidly and by March 2001, the Gudgeon could not be found.

As Cardross Lakes supported one of only four Murray Hardyhead populations remaining in Victoria in 2007 a levee bank was constructed to split the basins into eastern and western pools. Delivery of environmental water has been ongoing to protect the nationally-threatened Murray Hardyhead.

It had been my intention to walk around the shoreline of Basin 1 as I expected it to be low due the recent dry spell and the levee bank between the eastern and western basins. During the millennium drought I had observed numerous relics (corrugated iron canoes, fishing gear, old bottles etc) of the good old days as the water level receded.

However, unbeknown to me the water in eastern basins C, D, E & 3 had become too fresh, allowing competition from other species to reduce the Hardyheads chances of survival. So environmental water was again going into Basin 1 (and I assume Hardyhead) and the water was lapping up against the cumbungi.



Cardross Lakes Basins - With our clockwise route shown in red

So as the rain abated we parked by the remains of the old pump station which once pumped water across Benetook Avenue to a further four basins. With the water higher than anticipated we had no choice but to try a route through the spiny rush behind the cumbungi. We soon learnt that as well as being spiny it was also wet and had proliferated across the old lake bed now water levels were permanently lower. Forcing our way through the spines we eventually reached an area of the old lakebed which had not yet been colonised by the spiny rush. However the combination of fine silt and rain made for slippery walking. As we headed towards a thinner area of the spiny rush we happened upon an old iron boat. Surely this could not be where Sturt abandoned his whale boat on his search for the inland sea? It appears not, as a friend has advised me that it is a great example of a homemade "John Boat", which were very popular with duck shooters in 50's through the late seventies.



Kim and Barb inspecting the old boat.

Lewis and I had actually first seen the boat as the lake dried up during the Millennium drought. Nearby we had also found a heap of fishing gear and tackle on the dry lake bed. With the tackle there was also half a dozen unopened stubbies of West End. We took them home and opened a couple and they smelt OK, but then again as West End was probably not much different to swamp water who knows. We didn't taste them.

Leaving the boat we finally emerged from the spiny rush and made our way across the now breached levee bank which was rather slippery and exciting as we crossed the narrow channel.

Exiting the lakes shore we walked into some splendid largely untouched mallee with a diverse range of mid and understorey plants. With the good rains this month the area should be rich with wild flowers in spring. We then wandered back along a little used track in the mallee by the lake to the cars, before retiring to the Koorlong store for a coffee and bikkies.

It is looking good for the walk in the Koorlong Forest in spring.



ARSE-GRASS - Now have I got your attention? **Mount Crozier circuit – 3 day walk, 6-8 May 2016**

One of the interesting things about walking with our group is that occasionally someone will pick-up on a phrase or term and run with it. On this particular walk it was Karl who picked up on my use of a PNG pigeon English term to describe the traditional dress of the locals around Mt Hagen and their clothing(?). The term actually relates to a form of dress used by many highland natives which consists of a wide bark belt into which they insert pandanus leaves that then hang down at the back. The leaves are commonly referred to as Arse-grass. Karl was so taken with the term that it cropped up many times over the weekend.



The walk that Karl & Meryl had chosen for us was most of the Mt Crozier circuit and we started at the water tank on the edge of Red Dam adjacent to Lake Becking and proceeded north crossing Honeymoon Track and meandering up to the summit of Mount Crozier (111 metres). This was our first day's walk (14klms) and camping was at the through walkers camp area near the Mt Crozier car park. The only facility provided is a 500lt water tank that was virtually full at the time. A short walk back to the Mt Crozier car park gives the option of a pit toilet which is well maintained. Very little evidence of recent walkers on the track probably due to it being early in the walking season which is mainly winter time.

After over-nighting at Mt Crozier the walk proceeds east crossing the Mopoke Track and swinging south to then cross Honeymoon Hut Track and onto the final overnight campsite which is about 150 metres short of the Mount Jess Track. There is a great variety of vegetation, typical of 'The Mallee', along this section and a number of sandune crossings which give opportunity to view the distant horizon and various high points including Mount Jess and, looking back, Mount Crozier. Anyone reading this, who is not familiar with the Mallee, needs to be aware that the use of the word "Mount" in relation to high points in the country only refers to prominences that attain heights up to 121metres AHD (Australian Height Datum) but should also be read with the knowledge that the top north west of Victoria has the lowest AHD away from the sea [the actual height at the South Australian border is just 28 metres]. The fall of the Murray River from Albury (base of the Australian Alps) to Lindsay Point (near the junction of Victoria and South Australia on the Murray River) is 129 metres (422 feet) and considering that this is about



2/3 of the border length it is not a very significant drop and accounts for the slow flow of the Murray River.

We were pleased to see 4 Mallee Fowl nests including one that was in the middle of the track. This nest displayed evidence that it had recently had a cursory digging occur even though it is well outside their normal breeding season. We wondered if it had been opened up to allow penetration of rain that was forecast.

At our campsite near the Mount Jess Track we were pleased to have Russell & Dick walk in on our second day. They were unable to get away on the Friday and decided to drive down to our starting point on the Saturday and walk in the reverse direction to meet up with us and then return to their car the next day with us. As we set up our tents the rain started to fall in light showers and we were able to make our evening meal but soon retreated to our tents as it became heavier.

The walk back to the vehicles saw us stopping in a forest of sheoaks for lunch which is always a pleasure with the whispering sound of the breeze passing through the needle like leaves. A relatively short distance on we joined up with our outbound track and a few kilometres on returned to the water tank we left on Friday. Thanks Karl & Meryl for organising the walk, it was good to have Christiane join us and Bill and Peter for their company (Bill keep practicing your “planking” technique) and Dick and Russell for their visit.

Postscript: Neil & Alison were in the Pink Lakes area and probably drove past our last campsite before we got there. Sorry to have missed you both.

Report by Roger



Dawn on Saturday. Why would you want to be anywhere else?

*It is not worthwhile to go around the world to count the cats in Zanibar.
Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) in Walden, 1854*



CALENDAR

2016

June 1st	Meeting	
14th - 19th	Hinchinbrook Island, Qld 4 Day Pack walk	Contact Bill 0408231984
19th	Lake Cullulleraine Depart Centro 8.00am	Contact Peter 50221898
July 6th	Meeting	
9th - 10th	Mid-winter Dinner at Walpeup Research Station	Contact Verna 50223480 Peter 50221898
August 3rd	Meeting	
6th	Riverland Walk, SA	Contact Verna 50223480
21st	Rocket Lake	Contact Peter 50221898
Sept 7th	Meeting	
10th	Koorlong State Forest	Contact Noel 0428456335
21st	Coomealla - Wild flower walk	Contact Noel 0428456335
	Bibbulman Track WA 10 Day pack walk	Contact Karl 50227676 Noel 0428456335

**PLEASE NOTE
NEW LOCATION FOR
OUR MEETINGS**

**Next Meeting
Wednesday 1st June at 8.00 pm
at Apex Park,
Life Saver's Club Rooms,
Mildura**