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News Letter Editor

Barb Cornell 50257325

Sunraysia Bushwalkers

December 2012

PO Box 1827
MILDURA 3502
Ph: 03 50257325

Website:
www.sunbushwalk.net.au



Affiliated with:



Membership Fees

\$25 Per Person

Subs due July each year



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- ❖ Report of the Viking Track walk
- ❖ Report of the Goulburn High Country Rail Trail
 - ❖ President's Report
 - ❖ Calendar of upcoming events



At the meeting:-

A presentation by Bernie on his trip through Turkey

PLUS

A presentation by Peter on his walk along the Cascade Track to the source of the Murray.



THE VIKING CIRCUIT, 27 Oct – 3 Nov 2012



WOW, What a rugged hike! Deep into the Viking Wilderness Zone of Victoria's Alpine National Park, we have had a walk of some mention, cutting through Wet Forests of the Eastern Highlands as well as Snowgum Woodland, Heathland and Alpine Grassland of the Snowfields. Situated 50km ESE of Mansfield, our Viking Circuit hike took in some iconic locations of Victoria's high country and pushed us to physical limits.

Beginning at Refrigerator Gap due to seasonal road closures, we set out more-or-less eastward as excited and expectant as any group. It would be a day and a half hike just to reach the beginning point on the Viking Circuit. The immediate ascent of day one was a fair jolt to the system as well as a foretaste of what we had come for – eight days of tough rugged walking. The Bluff was our first conquest and set the altitudinal scene at 1726m.



We eased into the rest of the day completing an acceptable first-day distance of 5km to camp outside Bluff Hut. Bluff Hut is a very large, completely restored mountain hut clad with iron. Its site for a campfire as well as the numerous friendly weekend campers was welcoming.

Day two's 16km took us further eastward over Mt Lovick, past Lovick's Hut (a virtual clone of Bluff Hut) and on to a short stretch of the Australian Alpine Walking Track. This leg took us over Mt Magdala, past a number of rock formations that could all reasonably be named Hells Window and on to the peak of Mt Howitt, which provided one of a number of notable wildlife experiences. Here we observed about a dozen black and brown butterflies all hill-topping together, spiralling and flying so fast as to take on the appearance of fighter planes. Occasionally some would peel off to rest for a few moments only to rejoin the fun (is that a fair adjective for butterflies?). Over night saw us camped at the southern end of the iconic Crosscut Saw, and defending our food bags from a very bold and marauding Australasian Raven. More on him later. Awaiting us the next day was the Viking Circuit



proper.

The 7km of the Crosscut Saw is aptly named as the sharp teeth of the eponymous tool comes to mind as one



hikes the sharp rock-strewn “teeth” which at times measured only a few metres across. It was fascinating to realise that any rain falling on the east slope would collect in The Terrible Hollow and flow via the Wonnangatta River into the Gippsland Lakes, whilst that falling on the west slope only a step away would flow to the Murray-Darling Basin. Mt Buggery, Horrible Gap and Mt Speculation stood in our way and from the high peaks, 11 rows of ranges from us, the eastern horizon was something to behold. Catherine Saddle was a welcome shady location for camp and equally liked by Sambar deer. Footprints, a stamping ground and a concentration of evidence around a spring were fascinating enough, but the overnight stampede was something else. We were all startlingly woken (expletives deleted!) by a trumpeting warning call by a Sambar that no doubt was as surprised as we were. Our camp was then besieged by a stampede of Sambar all trumpeting their explosive bark only metres away.



Day four started with an up and at 'em climb on the westward slope of Mt Despair where very rough, rocky, slippery terrain and thick, tall regrowth combined to make navigation difficult. But we didn't know what navigational difficulties were to come! A half rest day was an unscheduled welcome amongst the Billybuttons and *Ranunculus* flowers of the grassland of Viking Saddle.

A clamber over rocks including up through a 3m hole passing our packs saw the start of day five, followed by a southeast descent of the Wonnangatta spur to the Wonnangatta River which was always going to be navigationally intense. Without signs, tracks, cairns or a GPS and with thick regrowth over our heads we had to find the SE spur, not the SSE spur nor the ESE spur. Some hours later, the shallow, rocky Wonnangatta River provided a welcome and surprisingly not too cold bath as well as a backdrop to camp that night. The next morning a barely perceptible track took us to the Zeka Spur 4WD track where our first cold temperatures combined with wet weather to make hiking challenging in a whole new way. A fire in the Vallejo Gantner Hut at Macallister Springs was equally welcome and necessary in order to warm up and dry out some clothes. And who should be there to meet and greet us – none other than our friendly raven from the Crosscut Saw camp 4 days earlier. Yes, having travelled westward, we were now only about 1km from completing the clockwise Circuit, and about 1km from the start of the Crosscut Saw again, but still contemplating the day and a half hike to get back out.

Sub-zero temperatures and some precipitation overnight left a pretty dusting of snow over the trees and campground features the next morning. Our westward trek away from the Viking Circuit took us again over Mt Howitt, but now down the Howitt Spur to follow the gorgeous Howqua River to overnight at Pikes Flat with the 4WDers (the track gates had now been opened) and ultimately back to our vehicle, a total of about 80km.



A few additional observations of the Snowfield country included many red-chested Flame Robins, whilst in the taller forested slopes were heaps of the beautiful red-headed squeaking Gang-gang Cockatoos, a handful of lyrebird sightings, some large brown native snails and numerous examples of the native insectivorous plant Tall Sundew, *Drosera peltata*. But we'll never forget the echoing call of the Currawongs from the treed slopes below when heard from the herbfields above the tree line.

Geoffrey G Allen 8 November 2012

“WHERE THE FARCK IS YARCK!!!

A RIDE ALONG THE GOULBURN RIVER HIGH COUNTRY RAIL TRAIL

When	Friday 23 rd to Sunday 25 th November
Who	Bernie (Driver) Michael, Paula, Verna, Dick, Russell & Roger
Where	Tallarook to Mansfield via Trawool, Granite, Kerrisdale, Homewood, Cheviot, Cheviot Tunnel, Molesworth, Cathkin, (Koriella, Alexandra – as a side trip) Yarck [where the farck is Yarck], Kanumbra, Merton, Woodfield, Bonnie Doon, Maindample & finally Mansfield.
How	Bus hire with trailer for bikes covering 1300 klms (including ride).



Paula, Michael, Roger, Verna, Dick & Russell (photographer Bernie)

An early start on Friday morning made it possible for a relaxed drive to the start of our ride that afternoon from Tallarook. The moderate distance to Yea, our first overnight stop, was easily ridden and allowed us to enjoy the remarkable scenery along the way. It was surprising the number of bridges that we crossed and the way the line followed closely the river for a considerable distance. All the crossings have been replaced with concrete and steel and account for a large proportion of the \$14.2m spent on the trail. Another substantial cost would have been the Loos dotted along the trail at regular intervals, so for those who are regular, very convenient.



After 3.5 klms from Yea the trail crosses the Yea River before commencing the climb to the Cheviot Tunnel, the one of the highest points (283m) on the ride, with gradients as steep as 1:40 for 5 kilometres with short respite at Cheviot Station (1:60) and the tunnel itself (1:200) but then the reward of all that hard climb with an 8 kilometre descent to Molesworth Station. After the station a short ride brought us to the Goulburn River crossing. The Cheviot Tunnel is 201 metres long, is brick lined and was opened on 12th November 1889 (123 years prior to our ride) and formed part of the Tallarook to

“WHERE THE FARCK IS YARCK!!! A RIDE ALONG THE GOULBURN RIVER HIGH COUNTRY RAIL TRAIL



The photo to the right has us girding our loins for the ride into Alexandra and contemplating the climb out of Alexandra after lunch. It all seems so far off!

Mansfield Rail Line which operated between 16 November 1883 & 18 November 1979 so it was most appropriate that we ride the rail trail in November 2012.



Bernie ‘Stop the train!’
We rode on with the day getting hotter and took the branch line into Alexandra for our lunch

After lunch we climbed back out of Alexandra heading for Yarck (see title to this article). We arrived in good time to enjoy the pub and a beer or two before sorting out the accommodation which consisted of two rooms in the pub and tent sites at the rear of the pub. One shower and toilet to share not only with our group but also with some camping down the road at the local oval.



On the way into town a cherry packing establishment was observed and Dick & Bernie were dispatched to see what could be purchased as it was the commencement of the season. They returned with a 5kg box of seconds costing \$25.00 and they were as good or better than any seen at home. Thus commenced the Cheery Pig Out.

Bernie – driver and cherry deliver extraordinary

A great meal was had at the Yarck Pub that night and as the forecast was for hot weather we were up and on the rail trail early the next morning (actual starting time has been withheld due to the possible precedent that it could have established if publicised).

The climb out from Yarck to the highest part of the rail trail (393m) was a continuous pedal but not a slog as the gradient was fine. As on most rail trails, when there is a climb there is usually a section of down and we had our just rewards in time.

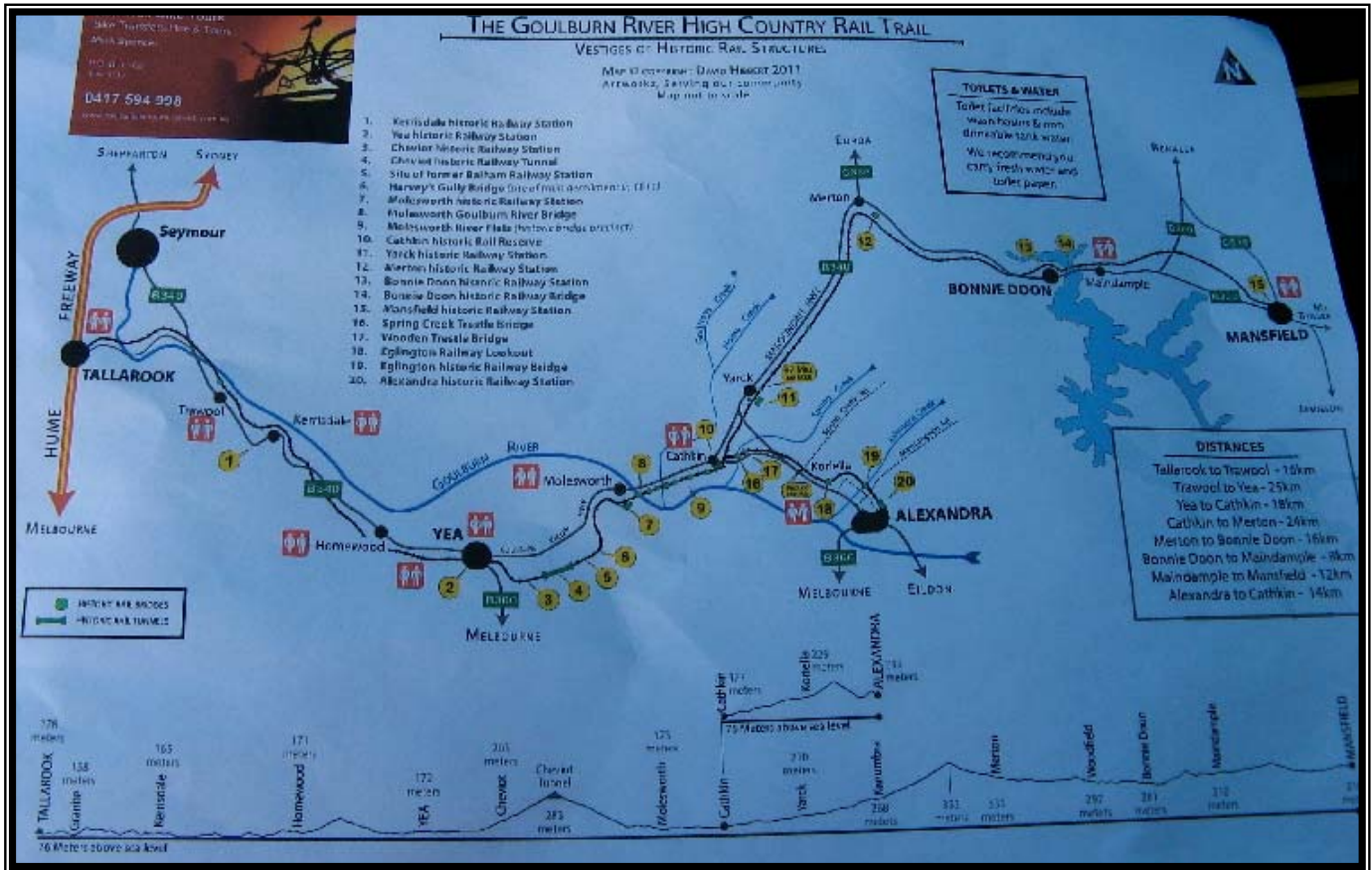


We made our way to Bonnie Doon next to an arm of the Eildon and enjoyed morning tea at a small Motel café. The crossing of Eildon was on a concrete section of the rail bridge and certainly the longest bridge of the ride. A bit more up and then a pleasant descent into Mansfield brought us to the Information Centre that I had spent an hour at only a few weeks before when attempting the Viking Walk.



A big thank you to Michael for yet another excellent ride and to Bernie for his exceptional driving ability. A most enjoyable excursion. Roger 2nd Dec 2012

“WHERE THE FARCK IS YARCK!!! A RIDE ALONG THE GOULBURN RIVER HIGH COUNTRY RAIL TRAIL



FROM THE PRESIDENT.

Our Club has offered a diverse variety of walking and social opportunities for members during the 2012 year. Some of these require only simple planning whilst the distant excursions can be best accomplished with firm forward commitment. The coming summer renders extended local walking of less appeal than in the cooler months but it is a good time to start thinking about the club program for 2013.

Planning the scheduled visit to Waldheim in Tasmania next April is progressing well. We have had some expression of interest in walking from the Walls of Jerusalem through to the southern end of the Overland Track at the latter end of the year. Mention has also been made of the South-West Victorian Coast Walk. The coming months may yield some clues on renewal of Grampians walking tracks and there remain attractive paths in the Victorian high country that we have not trodden.

December's Meeting will be focussed on learning of the amazing travel experiences of Bernie in Turkey and Peter in the Upper Murray. Time for routine business will be minimal next Wednesday, yet I encourage members early in the new year to make their wishes known on what they would like included in the forward program.

May you all have a happy and rewarding Festive Season.

Dick Johnstone. President.

Make a jotting : Wish list of walks for 2013



SUNRAYSIA BUSHWALKERS



PLANNED WALKS FOR 2012 & 2013

If you intend going on any of these trips please contact the Trip Leader by 8 pm the Thursdays beforehand so that arrangements may be finalized. Unless a minimum of 4 walkers (including the Trip Leader) have registered by Thursday evening walks may have to be cancelled.

2012	Activity	Grade	Contact
December 5th	Meeting		
December 9th	Christmas Break-up Picnic	Yummy	Dick Johnstone 50220030
2013			
Feb – To be advised	Progressive Meal	Delicious	Dick Johnstone 50220030
Feb Either side of the Wooden Boat Show (8 – 11 th)	Western Arthurs – Tasmania 10 days	LH	Roger Cornell 50257325
April 18 - 24	Cradle Mountain - Waldheim Huts Day Walks 6 nights		Roger Cornell 50257325

** For our grading system of activities refer to on our website at <http://www.sunbushwalk.net.au/activities.html>

Next Meeting
Wednesday 5th December at 8.00 pm
at Drysdale's
2164 Fifteenth Street,
Irymple