

**MELBOURNE  
BUSHWALKERS INC.**

ABN 14 396 912 508

# THE NEWS

#830 May  
2020



**STAY HOME  
STAY SAFE  
STAY CONNECTED**

Background photo by Susanne Etti

**Would like your trip photos featured in the newsletter?**

Due date for contributions to June News: 21 May

email: [news@mbw.org.au](mailto:news@mbw.org.au)



**IN LINE WITH GOVERNMENT ADVICE, ALL NON-ESSENTIAL CLUB ACTIVITIES ARE CANCELLED UNTIL THE END OF JUNE DUE TO COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS. PLEASE REFER TO OUR WEBSITE FOR THE MOST UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION AND ONLINE SOCIAL EVENTS.**

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## **WE ARE A MEMBER OF**



**Bushwalking Victoria**

**There will be no Wednesday night meetings until further notice.**

General correspondence should be directed to:

The Secretary  
Melbourne Bushwalkers Inc  
PO Box 1751  
MELBOURNE VIC 3001  
[www.melbournebushwalkers.org.au](http://www.melbournebushwalkers.org.au)

## **NEW MEMBERS**

We welcome the following new members:

Reg Jebb, David Marantelli, Victor Savon,  
Robin Curwen-Walker

The News of the Melbourne Bushwalkers Inc (The News) is published monthly, and is the official newsletter of Melbourne Bushwalkers Inc.

Editor: Wen Qi

Walkpreviews, walkreviews, articles, poems, newsitems, photographs of Club events, reports of new gear, book/movie reviews, letters to the editor, advertisements, et cetera are always welcome. However, the Editor reserves the right to edit contributions where space, clarity or propriety dictate, and to maintain editorial consistency.

Note: photographs should be sent as separate high resolution files which are capable of being edited.

Please send your contributions as unformatted text files by email to [news@mbw.org.au](mailto:news@mbw.org.au)

Closing date for receipt of material for The News is the **21st of the month.**

Advertisements should relate to bushwalking (e.g. gear, maps, trips, tours, health and fitness etc.). These may be published subject to space availability and Editor's discretion.

For current advertising rates contact the Editor at [news@mbw.org.au](mailto:news@mbw.org.au).

Next committee meeting: Monday 4th May.

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## **CALL FOR THE NEWS CONTRIBUTIONS & SOCIAL EVENT ORGANISERS**

### *For the News:*

Have you been on a memorable bushwalking trip you would like to share? Do you have a special backcountry dinner recipe you think others would also enjoy? Is there a particular bushwalking equipment you would like to recommend? If there's a bushwalking related topic you would like to share, we would love to hear from you!! Please submit your article to [news@mbw.org.au](mailto:news@mbw.org.au) by 21st every month for it to be considered to be published in the next issue.

Any questions, please feel free to email the editor.

### *For the upcoming social events:*

Have you been on a bushwalking trip in Australia that you would like to share your experience at one of our virtual presentation nights?

Are you a quiz master and keen to host a virtual trivia night for the club?

Have you had experience organising book clubs and would like to host a virtual book club?

If that is you, please get in touch with us at [social@mbw.org.au](mailto:social@mbw.org.au)

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As weeks are turning into months in our new normal, I've found it helpful to spend time focusing on the progress being made in the fight against COVID-19 and on the signs that we are slowly approaching a potential recovery. While the entire world unites under a shared fear, we must also remember to unite under a shared hope and a shared planet. This past week on 22 April we celebrated the 50th anniversary of Earth Day. Despite the headway made on environment issues over the past few decades, the world is under greater strain than ever before. The enormous challenges — but also the vast opportunities — of acting on climate change have distinguished the issue as the most pressing topic for the 50th anniversary. Climate change represents the biggest challenge to the future of humanity and the life-support systems that make our world habitable.

The Himalayas are visible from northern India for the first time in 30 years. Pollution across the globe is reaching record lows. While it should not have taken mass self-isolation to see the benefits of climate action, we can use this as inspiration to reconsider and reimagine our relationship with Mother Earth.

*"You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make." -- Jane Goodall*

In honour of the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, I encourage you to take a break from the latest headlines to keep exercising and do some dreaming about your next travel destination where you can connect with nature. For my part the daily exercise includes walking the neighbourhood. With plenty of deciduous trees around me, I have been able to appreciate the intensity and pervasiveness of autumn colours. Dreaming of my next travel destination overseas I am adding up the kilometres of my daily walks imagining I am enjoying the Munich to Venice trek through the Dolomites.

In the meantime, the best thing we can do is continue to stay safe and support each other. With that in mind, I wanted to let you know that we are looking at having our talks virtually and looking at other activities to stay connected. I will be starting the new format with a talk on Val Gardena in South Tyrol – Italy's UNESCO-listed Dolomite region which is just a step away from the sky and is a real heaven on earth for hiking lovers. See for details in the separate section in this newsletter.

## What we have been up to during Covid-19

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Our lives have changed dramatically over the last few weeks as lockdown and social-distancing rules have been in place. Here's a snapshot of what some of our members' new daily routines look like.

Please feel free to send your new routine, favourite local adventures and creative ways to stay healthy to [news@mbw.org.au](mailto:news@mbw.org.au) and share with us!

And remember to reach out to your loved ones, whether it being a phone call, a text message or a FaceTime / Zoom chat.

## STAY SAFE & STAY CONNECTED



"We are lucky to be in the country at Barfold with 500 acres to manage and wander over. Lots of fencing and gardening to be done.

We still walk every morning with our neighbours socially distancing with the dogs.

Next weekend I plan to walk over the local hills with our neighbours and have a socially distanced picnic with our gas stove.

... We love the wetlands and bird hide in Royal Park down near Manningham road with a coffee shop. Stay safe and well everybody. "

Susan and John

"Fang and myself are both doing great, at the moment, just doing walks around the neighbourhood..."

Brett Daniel

"I have been doing the Maribyrnong River from Brimbank Park to Spotswood, a few km every day. I have got as far as Flemington racecourse and will probably finish tomorrow."

Judith Shaw

"I have taken this opportunity to retire and we have moved to John's house where he has been busy in the workshop and I have been cooking and sewing. Each day we do a circuit around Royal Park walking through the roughest areas, stepping over every fence, walking along every log and running backwards and forwards over piles of wood chips until exhausted. We have even sneaked in the odd illicit coffee!"

Carol and John



## What we have been up to during Covid-19

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"Vinnie and I are well and roam the streets of Port Melb/South Melb/Albert Park daily and social distancing is not a problem...Facetime has been great as we are able to keep in touch with family and friends especially with our daughters, grand children and my tech savvy elderly mum."

Poppy Sicari



"...Ian has been spending his usual 12-14 hours a day working on the new mobile phone friendly website so we haven't been venturing out too far. I am visiting Ian (my partner - totally acceptable) about 50% of the time and when he isn't glued to the computer we have been managing a few hours walking each day, mainly following the walking/bike trails near Ian's. There are quite a few. We too have been disappointed with the walks that we have had to cancel but hope that we will still be able to do them next year.

I have started to knit again, and hopefully will get into sewing again also. I did manage to sew a few face masks recently...just in case. I had 8 knitting projects that I had started but never completed, some only needing buttons to be added so slowly working through these. Also I have been trying to reorganise my home...I did manage to set up my treadmill in my spare room so if not walking along the bay I have been using the treadmill while watching videos or listening to the radio."

Halina and Ian

"I spent a fair amount of time sulking ...I am supposed to be in the Kimberley right now...we would have walked the Carr Boyd South, transferred by helicopter and now be on the Carr Boyd north.

Currently eating my way through all of the food I bought for that trip....I separated my walking food into use by date and started eating...not good for the waistline...high calorie, high protein.

My walk regime has been in the local area, a couple of times a week I have been exploring the neighbourhood and trying to make different routes through the streets and laneways...on the smaller streets I find it easier to walk on the road...not many cars and easier to social distance...also I don't have to do that dance thing when someone is coming my way...do I step to the right or left, who is going to walk on the grass etc.

I also walk to the supermarket and the market to get my food necessities...get a bit of weight bearing in that way. Today I plan to walk to Newport to check in on my brother...a nice 12km round trip.

I am longing to be out in the bush, I suppose it will still be there when this is over. in the meantime I am making do with jigsaw puzzles with bush themes."

Meredith Quick

## What we have been up to during Covid-19

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"[I] Am also working from home and biking a lot exploring the many trails around me esp the keysborough-Brighton-mordialloc loop and Dandenong Ck Trail which is lovely. Zumba instructors have gone live yay and learning hip hop dancing haha!

Growing lots of vege and herbs and cooking with my son. Simple pleasures of life. "

Rosalind Leong

"My husband Tony and I moved to Mt Eliza 3 years ago and we both retired in 2018. Luckily I am able to walk to the beach and have a swim (the council have advised we are allowed as long as we do not congregate.) The water is getting very frosty now so I dont think I have too many swims left. However, there are some pleasant local walks."

Cathy Merrick



Photo by Bettina Brill

"I've been somewhat enjoying 'just staying home', getting a few long-deferred tasks done, reading, exercising at home with a few walks round the local streets. None of those annoying bushwalks to go on... Most importantly, staying well.

John Terrell

"Walking whenever possible. Today we walked from our place in Northcote (close to Fairfield boathouse) via Ivanhoe and Boulevard to Yarra Flats and found a deserted area around Camberwell golf course. Delightful and peace at last. About 15 km in total."

Bettina Brill



photo of Susanne and Ragu by Ian Mair

# MELBOURNE BUSHWALKERS INC. CLUB HISTORY FOR FIRST 70 YEARS

Margaret Curry



Photo from our club's photo archive

We can't celebrate the Club's 80th Anniversary at present, but below is a summary of its history for the first 70 years – plus a few facts from the last 10 years.

The first official walk for the Club was April 1940 from Ferntree Gully Station up Mt Morton (now covered by houses). The party consisted of a group of German and Austrian refugees living in Melbourne who missed the outdoor recreation they had in Europe, walking in the mountains during weekends. These early walks started by Egon Donath, included Australians studying German at the Donath School of Languages. This had the dual purpose of walking in the bush and practising the German language.

In those days few members had cars and travel was by public transport, mainly train, to the walk locations. In later years the club used a furniture van for which many members still hold fond memories. Now group transport is provided by the Sunday bus in conjunction with private car pooling.

Weekly walks have been scheduled since the early days and at times included Historical rambles, Family Walks and Moonlight walks. Pack carries, base camps, cycle trips, lilo trips, caving, canoeing, kayaking and skiing activities have all been held. A major feature of the ski trips was the Club's Wilkinson Lodge near Falls Creek. Sadly this burnt down many years ago and approval was not given to rebuild.

Membership numbers were 100 in 1945 moving to 170 by the 1960's high 300's by the end of that decade and now over 500. The Club became incorporated in 1983.

The Club used to meet on a Friday night in various locations around the city - Russell Street, the Railway Institute at Flinders Street Station, in Flinders Lane and later met on a Wednesday night at Hosier Lane, Bushgear in Little Bourke Street, from 1988 the Horticultural Hall in Mackenzie Street, from June 2008 the Royal Historical Society of Victoria clubrooms cnr William and Franklin Streets and to the current location at the Seamen's Mission from the end of 2018.

## Melbourne Bushwalkers Club History

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For nearly 40 years, Melbourne Bushwalkers produced 'Walk', a magazine which contained track notes, anecdotes from walks, current conservation issues and natural history and reports of members from their touring. The Club first produced a monthly Newsletter in 1948 and along with our website is the main means of communication to members.



Photo from our club's photo archive

Melbourne Bushwalkers first participated in Search and Rescue in 1949 and is still involved in this along with other community activities such as Tree Planting, Bushfire Recovery and Track Maintenance. At one stage we were also involved in leading Senior Citizen walks as part of Seniors Week. During 2017 the Club organized a successful Federation Walks Weekend in the Warburton area on behalf of Bushwalking Victoria. Approximately 70 volunteers from the Club assisted with this event.

Social activities have played a big part in the lives of members. In the early days they used to meet and play the old 78 records. Other activities over time include bush dances, theatre nights, speakers, slide nights, and dinners.

In June 2009 Melbourne Bushwalkers received a Distinguished Service Award under Bushwalking Victoria's "Recognition Awards Scheme" in recognition of the contribution of the Club to the enhancement and development of recreational bushwalking in Victoria, furthering the objectives of Bushwalking Victoria and adding value to the wider Victorian community.

We celebrated our 50th Anniversary with various decade gatherings and dinners plus the launch of the Club's history in the book "50 Years Along the Track". The main event was a great get together at Gilwell Park, Gembrook which was also the venue for the Club's 60th Anniversary. Our 70th Anniversary was celebrated at Plenty Gorge Park where many people participated in the day walks which were held, others chatted while having a BBQ lunch, a splendid afternoon tea was enjoyed by all, many photos taken, and speeches held.

For our 80th Anniversary celebrations, a walk repeating as much as possible of the first official walk the Club conducted in 1940 was scheduled in our Activities Program for early April, and a number of other walks and official celebration was planned for early May this year. Unfortunately, these have had to be postponed. The Club has a wonderful history and it is hoped that as many members as possible will be able to celebrate this milestone when circumstances allow.

## A FEW ANECDOTES FROM THE CLUB'S HISTORY

In September 1967 a tenting rule in the By-Laws was reviewed, eg "On Club walks males and females shall occupy separate tents, except in the case of married couples. Should a shortage of tents prevent this, tent space may be allocated in the proportion of 2 females to 1 male, or vice versa, at the discretion of the leader".

In 1969 there was a rule "Alcohol was not to be carried on club trips unless such trips were deemed a social occasion".

There has also been mention of regulations at Darby River – the entrance point to Wilsons Promontory – "that visitors needed to be decently covered from neck to knee".



# THANK YOU FROM MBW'S NEWEST LIFE MEMBER

Halina Sarbinowski



Photo credit: Ian Mair

I would like to say "Thank you" firstly for my nomination for life membership and then for its acceptance. Anyone who knows me knows that all I do for and with the club is because it gives me so much joy. When I joined the club 20 years ago I did not expect it to lead me to walking 600 kms over the Bavarian Alps in Germany and Austria and the Dolomites in Italy, but it did. I would like to share my journey with you from being the ex-smoker (of 25 years) who thought she would die on her first walks, to the incredible walk I did with my partner, Ian, in 2019.

## MY BACKGROUND BEFORE MBW

I had always enjoyed walking and walked with my girlfriends every school weekday the 3.5kms each way to and from Secondary School, however, we did not do this because we wanted to be fit. We walked so that we could use our bus money to buy cigarettes. So at the age of 15, I commenced smoking and I smoked (heavily, up to 40 a day) for 25 years. I was never sporty and although I occasionally played squash (very rarely), my most active sport was Kelly Pool. I wasn't very good so I did have to walk around the table quite a bit. When I was 17, one of my teachers, an exchange teacher from Canada, arranged two bushwalks - one in Lerderderg State Forest and the other at Werribee Gorge. I attended both and remember them being the best days and wanted to repeat the experiences. It wasn't until in my early 40s, after finding myself single, an ex-smoker and no longer with the big house and yard needing my attention on weekends, I was able to follow my dream to bushwalk again.

## MY JOURNEY WITH MELBOURNE BUSHWALKERS

One of my girlfriends had previously walked with MBW and highly recommended it. Being pre-website days, I duly sent off my stamped self-addressed envelop and received a copy of the program. With two girlfriends, I attended my first walk in February 2000. The leader kept on insisting that the walk was "relatively" flat as we headed always upwards from Sheoaks Picnic Ground to Blanket Leaf Car Park, crossing the Cora Lynn creek about 25 times. Although I struggled, I had a fantastic day and I was "smitten". By April I was a member of MBW. For at least the first two years I did not do any walks with "Mount" or "Waterfall" in their title as I knew that these would be steep and even on a relatively minor ascent my heart would pound and, often, I thought that I would die. I always appreciated the encouragement of the "whips" and often whip on walks as I want to support others as I was supported in the early days of walking with MBW. After one particularly challenging walk in the Cathedral Ranges, I abandoned the walk to sit on the bus reading a book. The day was hot and I wasn't well, however, it scared me and for a few months I didn't walk. Eventually I had to make a pact with myself to walk at least once a month with MBW. Anything over was a bonus, however, I had to walk at least once a month. I encourage new members to make these pacts with themselves (not necessarily once a month) as it keeps the motivation going.

## Noticeboard

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I commenced leading with the club by offering to lead a walk in the Mornington Peninsula area as I had lived in this area for almost four years and knew it well. In 2002, I led my first walk with the club and I loved the experience. All MBW leaders are volunteers and their efforts are always appreciated. I gained my confidence with map reading while being whip as I was always supplied a map and would follow it during the walk. Knowing my interest, leaders would often stop and ask me where we were on the map. Initially I didn't have a clue, but eventually I gained the skill and would be excited when I was able to pinpoint where we were on the map accurately. This led me to lead more walks and now, with the support of a GPS, I rarely have location challenges (something that did happen a few times in my early days as a leader!).

Due to my enthusiasm as a leader, I was asked to become Sunday Walks Secretary and in 2007 I took up this position with the club. I was very lucky since a member, David Arnold, had set up a Leaders' Database, and scanned walk reports from 1999 into this database. I was able to plan the Sunday program from the comfort of my home (often with a glass of red for support!). This database is now an invaluable resource available to all leaders. David also set up a Sunday walks booking system. This meant that the leaders no longer needed to record a list of walkers, collect bus monies and then reconcile takings. No longer were leaders short on takings because they forgot to collect the booking fee while talking to walkers. Importantly, walkers no longer had to drop in to the clubrooms to make a booking. This was great progress, and now most members transfer funds to the club's bank account and email "busbookings" to book onto Sunday walks. A major change from the previous long queues on a Wednesday night. Although no longer Sunday Walks Secretary I still, when in Melbourne, attend the clubrooms to take monies and add walkers to the bookings list. Although applauded for this, I do this for purely selfish reasons. Ian always shouts me to a lovely meal on a Wednesday night prior to going to the clubrooms!

When I first joined MBW I tried a couple of pack carry walks and I found them difficult (especially when you carry a 7kg tent as I did on my first pack carry!) and was not enthusiastic about continuing. Ian encouraged me to try again and with his support and with better knowledge of what to take, and what not to, I started to do pack carry walks and now love the peacefulness and isolation of them. During a pack carry, I feel as though I am escaping all the stresses of the world. Not only did Ian introduce me to pack carrying but also to long distance walking and together we have done some amazing walks, including the Great South West Walk, Larapinta Trail, Coast to Coast in England, Mont Blanc Circuit in Europe, Manaslu Circuit in Nepal, Haute Route in Switzerland and last year the Dream Way from Munich to Venice.

MBW has taken me from being an unfit person to someone who has experienced some amazing adventures. Thank you for honouring me with Life Membership for my contributions to the club, however, whatever I have done is only minor to what I have gained from the club, especially the lovely and beautiful people who I have met through the club, many of whom have become special friends.

## THANK YOU!



Photo credit: Ian Mair

# NEWS FROM OUR LONG SUFFERING ENVIRONMENT

John Terrell ([environment@mbw.org.au](mailto:environment@mbw.org.au))



Burnt forest on Mt Kuark, East Gippsland (photo: Rob Blakers, [www.geco.org.au](http://www.geco.org.au))

**As** you will recall, 2020 started off disastrously for bushland environments with devastating bushfires in East Gippsland, North-Eastern Victoria including the Alpine area, as well as the whole East coast of Australia, Kangaroo Island and more. Once the fires were out, communities hoped for a revival, both of their tourist economies and of the environment itself. And we looked forward to visiting our favourite bush places. The advent of COVID-19 stopped much of this in its tracks.

## Environment

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Parks Victoria and DELWP have closed access to most parks and forests and suspended all volunteer activities, such as track maintenance, wildlife surveys, weed suppression and planting. We normally participate in these with other Bushwalking Victoria members through their Bushwalking Tracks and Conservation section (BTAC). I'm waiting to hear from the Regional Honeyeater Project whose planting weekends would normally be starting soon, but I expect they will be deferred too. Please contact me at [environment@mbw.org.au](mailto:environment@mbw.org.au) if you wish to be advised when any of these activities resume.

Each year Melbourne Bushwalkers donates the interest from its special account to an organisation whose aims support those of the Club. In view of the immense destruction wrought by the fires on bushland environments and wildlife, the committee decided in April to donate about \$300 to the Goongerah Environment Centre, a small East Gippsland community group with a long record of campaigning for protection of forests and biodiversity in their region. Their website ([www.geco.org.au](http://www.geco.org.au)) documents with many photos the destruction wrought by the fires and states: "Due to the fires in East Gippsland we'll be directing funds and efforts to scouting and assessing fire damage in reserve areas (once it is safe to do so), surveying for animals affected by these fires and ensuring the remaining unburnt forest in East Gippsland is protected as important refuges for wildlife."

Although you can't go walking in the bush, or engage in its restoration or maintenance, logging continues unabated including in areas that have suddenly become even more important habitat for the remaining threatened animal species. Salvage logging will take much of Eastern Victoria's remaining wildlife habitat and likely interfere with the natural process of ecosystem recovery. Victoria's Regional Forest Agreements which have allowed for much of this destruction under the guise of 'balance' has been extended for another 10 years in a situation where effective scrutiny has been impossible.

Meanwhile, deer, horses and other feral animals will be undisturbed in chewing up any regrowth they find.

### What can I do?

We need to ensure that the recovery from COVID-19 is done in an environmentally sustainable way. Green New Deal anyone?

There is already much political pressure to use the COVID-19 crisis as an excuse to entrench unsustainable activities, e.g. rehabilitating coal fired power stations, expanding logging and woodchipping, and more oil and gas exploration. They will argue that "we can't afford NOT to [insert name of development or other destructive activity] and "we need to cut green tape" (i.e. to lower environmental safeguards).

Organisations that work to support the environment and to campaign against destructive activities will be more important than ever.

- Talk about these issues with your (physically distant) colleagues, friends and family;
- Participate in activities of groups supporting environmental recovery and a sustainable future (even joining their mailing lists and clicking on petitions is a good start!);
- Donate (if you are in a position to do so) to a group whose aims and activities you support.

Remember that regardless of COVID-19, the long term issues of climate change which contributed so devastatingly to last summer's bushfires will continue to be just as important as ever.

Finally, my thought for the month: Have the economic and social devastation wrought by the coronavirus given us forewarning of a possible future if the world becomes more uninhabitable due to climate change?

# GETLOST FREE DIGITAL MAPS OF VICTORIA NOW AT VERSION 11

Ian Mair

With each version release the free GetLost Maps become more refined and easier to read. Prepared by a bushwalker for bushwalkers these maps are a gift to all walkers. The new Version 11 makes some significant changes:

They come in three scales:

- 1:75,000 (which cover the state in 70 sheets), complete with new relief shading as well as 100m contours.
- 1:25,000 which cover the state on 431 sheets.
- A new 1:250,000 series that covers the whole of Australia, and comes in great big mapsheets; Victoria is on just 2 sheets.

New in V11:

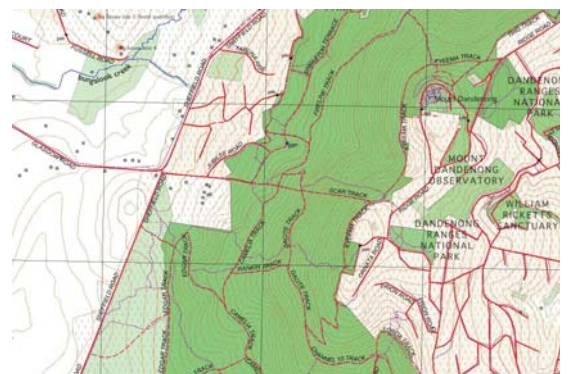
- Relief shading added to smaller scales making things a bit easier to visualise
- EVEN MORE huts, campsites and ruins marked
- Huts and Ruins have dates where known – huts have construction dates, ruins have construction and destruction dates and names of what was there, where we have the data
- Seasonal Road Closures have the dates on them, both open and close, because they vary a surprising amount (up to 6 weeks difference between tracks in some areas)
- Ferry routes added
- Various clarity and overlay improvements making things clearer

As an added bonus, the downloads page has a link to the map producer's database of huts and ruins so you can upload them into your GPS unit. There simply isn't anything else available like this for Victorian huts. Huts that were confirmed as being there using satellite imagery are listed with names, those with locations / status which can't be confirmed are listed as "approx". "Never rely on a hut being where you think it is – they fall down, they burn down, they might not be there – always take a tent – huts are for emergency shelter only."

The maps are available as:

- OZF4 for use in OziExplorer on PC, Android or WinCE.
- JPG for image viewers and printing, or OziExplorer PC.
- GeoTIFF or "TIFF" for Avenza Maps (Android or IOS) and other apps.; or
- Download inside your Avenza Maps app.

You can download your own set of free maps from <http://www.getlost.com.au/downloads/the-map-table/>, however, consider donating to the project to keep the maps current either as a single payment or by purchasing the convenient Avenza series bundles through your Avenza app.



Above: GetLost Map website logo; Right: GetLost 1 to 25k - Mt Dandenong

# PACK CARRY :

## STANLEY NAME SPUR - SPECULATION - MUESLI SPUR

6 - 9 March 2020

Trip report by Bert Reeh, photos by Bert Reech & Ian Mair



It feels strange to write about this walk now, bookended as it is by the enforced preclusion of such pursuits first by our bushfire dominated summer and now by the COVID-19 lockdown. It makes one really appreciate the freedoms normally taken for granted.

Having only resumed packcarry walks late last year I never expected the New Year would see the Alpine National Park closed for the remainder of the summer. So it was really good to see autumn start so positively after good rain. Agajan's long weekend trip to some of the best Alpine country Victoria has to offer felt like a long awaited chance to be let off the leash.

As we headed out of Melbourne in mid-afternoon on the Friday it seemed like everyone else had the same idea, but once out of the city the road opened up and we arrived in Mansfield just in time to find a coffee. Our campsite options, as suggested by Agajan, ranged from Mirimbah to Howqua Gap to King River Hut, up to 1½ hrs drive apart. We opted for the former and soon spread ourselves out in plenty of space opposite the Mt Buller resort gates and enjoyed a leisurely BYO dinner. Not surprisingly in hindsight, people continued to stream in and compete for remaining patches of grass. Fortunately things quietened down in time to afford us a restful night.

## Along The Track

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The morning dawned crisp, clear and dry. To the screech of yellow tailed black cockatoos we headed up Mt Stirling road and onto the Circuit road with almost no other traffic and no sign of the expected horde of 4WD campers at Howqua Gap. We arrived at our rendezvous point of Mt Thorn track junction with time to spare to take in the stillness and the fresh bush-scented air following recent rain. The rest of our group soon arrived and after introductions and a briefing from Agajan we set off, with the strengthening sun dispelling the morning chill.

With no sign of the foot track meant to follow the ridge we sidled around on the open, grassy 4WD track until it crested and crossed the ridge, where the now well defined foot track diverged to head steadily and at times steeply up to the elongated and treed top of Mt Thorn. After a short descent the ridge narrowed and the track followed the rocky edge of cliffs, affording great views across and along the Howqua River, from Mt Magdala and the unmistakable notch of Hell's Window to the cliff lines of Picture Point, Square Head Jinny and the Bluff, surely among the finest vistas in Victoria's Alpine country. Approaching the aptly named Red Rock Saddle we walked on fine deep-red gravel, quite unlike the dark weathered look of the rocks from whence it came.

We crossed the disused Queen's Spur road, the easternmost route down to the Howqua from the north. Skirting around a cliff on the other side we climbed the last section of the ridge before our destination for the night. Our expectations of an early arrival were dashed when we found ourselves off track, pushing through tangled scrub, fallen timber and thick undergrowth until the track miraculously reappeared, well off the ridge line it was supposed to be following and under the feet of Ian and John who had managed to keep to it.

With relief we quickly covered the home stretch to our excellent camp site at the foot of the Crosscut Saw, with easy access to water at the infant King River South Branch which was flowing strongly. As we settled down and the sun bade farewell, low cloud crept over the Crosscut Saw and Mt Howitt, bringing back the chill.

In the morning the cloud had descended even more and soon enveloped us as we climbed. At the top we passed close to two tents barely discernible in the mist. Dropping packs we started our intended side trip to Mt Howitt but soon accepted the futility of persevering, so we resumed our path northwards along the rocky ups and downs of the Crosscut Saw and down into the saddle of Mt Buggery. On the way up light rain added to the steady drips off the snow gums. Lunch on the top was a hurried affair as a damp breeze made us feel unwelcome. We moved on and down into a deeper saddle for the long ascent of Mt Speculation, starting with its three rock steps which required a bit of scrambling and pack hauling.



At the summit we took in the non-existent views and heard about the dramatic helicopter evacuation of Agajan and his group on New Year's Eve, in the face of imminent bushfire threat. We descended to our campsite along the flat west shoulder of Mt Speculation, above Camp Creek, with plenty of time for the 20 minute each way trip to collect water from same. Signs announced that east from here the Alpine Walking Track was still closed in the aftermath of bushfires. Once again the mist and clammy breeze discouraged socialising around a non-existent campfire, but not before we enjoyed some delicious treats generously supplied by some, whose thoughtfulness was greatly appreciated.

## Along The Track

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Monday morning started much like a continuation of Sunday but by the time we had packed up and retraced our steps to the summit the sun was dispersing the fog to reveal blue sky and views all around, although a retreating white blanket covered peaks beyond the Razor and Mt Howitt. We savoured this visual feast but eventually moved on, following a good foot pad almost all the way to Mt Koonika. However we soon found ourselves in another stretch of scrub, making us work hard for more great views from the top, this time dominated by Mt Cobbler and the whole King River valley spread out below. Our descent route down Muesli Spur was also clearly visible but still dauntingly distant.

With Agajan unerringly navigating down the broadening northern slope we eventually gained more open forest with soft snow grass underfoot. Picking up the Mt Speculation road we passed Mustering Flat and continued to the signposted junction with Muesli Spur track. Climbing initially the track soon gains the narrow spur and, after another rise, drops steeply some 600m to meet the Speculation road again near the King River.

I had dropped behind on the descent, shepherded by Ian, who charged ahead once we gained the road while I was treated to a very welcome taxi service for the last mile, thanks to Meredith. She then ferried us drivers back to our cars while our passengers had to cool their heels picking plentiful blackberries.

Reuniting at the Delatite Hotel in Mansfield over a sumptuous (so it seemed) dinner we reflected with satisfaction on a demanding but highly rewarding walk, with Sunday's bleakness totally eclipsed.

Thanks to Agajan for ably organising and leading this walk whose memory is made even more precious by our current deprivation, and to Bettina, Deb, Ian, John, Meredith and Rachel for their good company.







# PATAGONIA

## PART 1

Dec 2019 - Jan 2020

Trip report & photos by Meredith Quick

Early last year I called out for EOI for a Willis Walkabout trip to Patagonia. I got quite a few responses, but as time went on and the lack of information gave me very few answers to multiple questions, the interested group shrunk until at the deadline for the full payment to Russell Willis was due. I contacted the remaining 4 interested people and it was decided we would commit to the trip and make the most of the opportunities it offered. At that stage we had no departure date, no return date, no estimate of cost, all we knew was that we were going to Chile to and would be walking the lesser known areas in Patagonia.

I need to explain a bit about our group. There was of course me, then there was Kate experienced traveller and meticulous planner, whom I had been on various adventures with, Annemarie fortunately for us, a fluent Spanish speaker and experienced traveller, Therese a very experience traveller and Sylvia the novice traveller, her first time away from Australia or New Zealand for many years.

As the weeks went by, we sent Russell questions, but they largely remained unanswered, it was his busy time of year and he was away from the office and out of phone range.

By mid-August we finally had a start date and an end date so we could book our flights...but still the walking program remained vague at best. We were to fly to Santiago Chile and then catch a connecting flight down south to Balmaceda. My friend the travel agent loves me because I fly to places she has never booked before. Balmaceda described by Wiki, is a Chilean village located south east of Coyhaique in Aysén Region. Balmaceda has around 500 inhabitants, and has Aysén Region's largest airport and meteorological station. Coyhaique was our destination and our home for a few days. Russell had advised us that it was the biggest town in Chilean Patagonia and had the best stocked supermarkets.

The flights were booked, we were all fully committed now!

Russell returned from his Walkabouts and gradually the bare details of the walking program were transmitted to us. We were given names like Los Nardis, Peurto Bertrand, Cochrane, Villa O'Higgins, Cerro Castillo, West Winds and everybody's favourite Jeinimeni. Maps were supplied without grid references and legends. A spreadsheet with gaps was forwarded as a rough itinerary and we were reminded by Russell, that we needed to allow for the unexpected and bad weather days...it was Patagonia and it was going to be tough.

(Part 2 To be continued in June News.)

## REMINDER : MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL 2020 - 2021

Membership subscriptions are due **1st April 2020**. You are not required to sign an Acknowledgement of Risk form on renewal, however you are advised that payment of fees implies acceptance of the risks involved in any activity you may undertake as a member of Melbourne Bushwalkers. Members are asked to read the following wording regarding your insurance cover through Bushwalking Australia.

"In voluntarily participating in activities of Melbourne Bushwalkers Inc., which are described to me by the activity leaders, I am aware that my participation in the 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. I also acknowledge that I may encounter weather conditions that could lead to heat stroke, hypothermia or being in locations where evacuation for medical treatment may take hours or days. In particular when participating in abseiling or above the snowline activities I am aware that these activities could expose me to additional hazards and risks.

To minimize risks I will endeavour to ensure that:

- Each activity is within my capabilities;
- I will carry food, water and equipment appropriate for the activity;
- I will advise the activity leader if I am taking medication or have any physical or other limitation that might affect my participation in the activity;
- I will make every effort to remain with the rest of the party during the activity;
- I will advise the leader of any concerns I am having; and
- I will comply with all reasonable instructions of club officers and the activity leader.

I have read and understood these requirements. I will consider the risks before joining any activity of the Club. I acknowledge that I will take responsibility for my own actions, that the Club strongly recommends that all participants have comprehensive personal ambulance cover, and that payment of my subscriptions will be deemed as full acceptance and understanding of the above conditions."

**RENEWAL SLIP CAN BE FOUND IN APRIL NEWS (ISSUE 829) OR FROM OUR WEBSITE**

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### EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

## PACK CARRY - WALKING IN THE KIMBERLEY

2 - 26 April, 2021

Approximate Cost: \$1,500 per week or \$4,200 for the 3 weeks. Per person excluding Airfares and Accommodation whilst not on the trek.

Destination: Carr Boyd North & South and Purnululu (Bungle Bungles)

Operator: No Traces Bushwalking

You can opt to do one, two or the 3 weeks of walking. Walking approximately 10 km per day with plenty of opportunity to stop and take a dip on one of the many pools along the way.

If you are interested please contact Meredith Quick.

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## EXTENDED GILLESPIE PASS CIRCUIT & MOTATAPU TRACK, NZ

4 - 22 March, 2021

Refer website or contact Wen Qi for more details.

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**IN LINE WITH GOVERNMENT ADVICE, ALL NON-ESSENTIAL CLUB ACTIVITIES ARE CANCELLED UNTIL THE END OF JUNE DUE TO COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS. PLEASE REFER TO OUR WEBSITE FOR THE MOST UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION AND ONLINE SOCIAL EVENTS.**

## **VIRTUAL PRESENTATION NIGHTS**

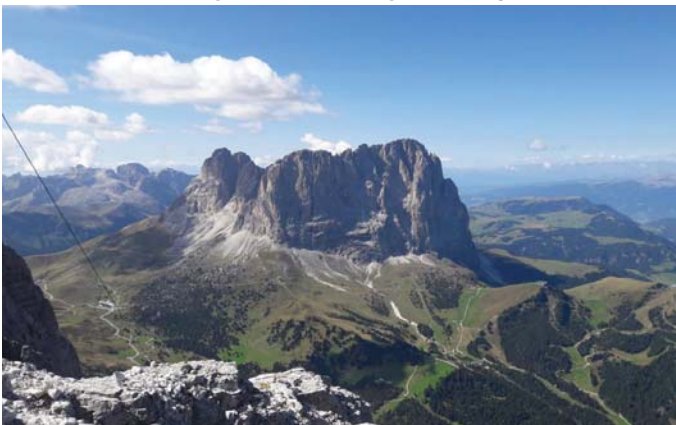
We reformatted our Wine & Cheese night presentations to be delivered digitally, starting next month, so we get to listen to inspiring bushwalking trip stories from the comfort of our couch!

While we are trying our best to make sure everything works on the night, please be patient with us if things didn't go as smoothly as intended. We are new at this social event format, but we live in this unprecedented time and all we can do is to give it a try!

A virtual meeting link will be sent in a separate email to all members as well as being added to our website and social media pages. Please check website regularly for updates and more details.

## **WALK IN THE DOLOMITES BY SUSANNE ETTI**

Wednesday 6th May, 7-8pm



Val Gardena is just a step away from the sky and is a real heaven on earth for hiking lovers and skiers.

Enjoy a talk that ventures forth on ascents that lead to incomparable panoramas. The Dolomites have a very special magic any time of the year. The talk has something for everyone i.e. for those that love skiing or hikers that can enjoy a multitude of mountain flowers bloom on the mountain meadows. Find out more about Dolomites Val Gardena which is located in the heart of Dolomites, a UNESCO World Heritage Site because of their uniqueness, their beauty and their incredible importance for humanity.

## **THE NOT SO GREAT WALKS OF NZ BY WEN QI**

Wednesday 20th May, 7-8pm

From a Facebook hiking group post, to a 7-day suffer fest in waist deep mud, join me on this virtual Social Night to discover what NZ has to offer other than the well-known Milford and Routeburn Great Walks through stories on the three amazing non-great walks in the South Island: Dusky Track, Rees-Dart Track and Travers-Sabine circuit.

