



Ben Cruachan Walking Club

Issue 196 - BCWC NEWSLETTER SUPPLEMENT

Mc TRACK 2017 REPORT



No need for an Ambulance for these intrepid Hikers!

BCWC's association with McMillan's Track was on full display once again with these hikers and support members posing for a photo at the completion of their 220km trek over 14 days. Left to Right, Joe van Beek, Tomas Carew, Michael Dowe, Sue Hides, Oliver Raymond (support crew), Karl Sommer (Sunraysia Walking Club member) & Anna Janca look pleased as punch, to have completed their Journey. BCWC member, John Kellas and Parks Vic Ranger Conor Wilson (absent) were also instrumental in ensuring the team made it through to the very end - at Woods Point. McMillan's track is one of Victoria's best long distance treks and could be considered on par with the AAWT (albeit shorter). Significant track maintenance over recent years has brought the track back up to scratch, thanks to the efforts of BCWC, Parks Vic & DELWP. Dust off your boots and check McMillan's Track out!

McTk Ramblings



McMillan's Track End to End walk

November 2017

This month we are publishing a special supplement to the November 2017 Newsletter, (albeit late) to record and report on Ben Cruachan Walking Club's recent challenge to tackle the 220kms of McMillan's Track – from Cobungra near Omeo through to Woods Point.

Over a total of 14 days, 5 members of Ben Cruachan Walking Club, Joe van Beek, Michael Dowe, Anna Janca, Sue Hides, Thomas Carew and 1 member from Sunraysia Walking Club, Karl Sommer took on the challenge of walking McMillan's track from End to End. This years event was also run in conjunction with the official re-opening of the Crooked River section of McMillan's Track, whereby the end to end walkers were joined by Geoff Mattingly, Marian Matchan, Marjorie Kanagaratnam, Piero Baglioni, Rose de Leeuw, Jackie Whiting, Diana Christiansen, Helmut Tracksdorf, Hans Tracksdorf (Bendigo Bushwalkers) and Matt Zanini (DELWP). Making the whole event possible were the all important Support crew: John Kellas, Oliver Raymond, Michael Dowe and Parks Vic Ranger, Conor Wilson with Jeremy Reynolds and George Graham From DELWP.

In addition the group were well stocked and supported by Happy Camper Gourmet meals.

On behalf of all the walkers, Thanks to all those involved.

Ben Cruachan Walking Clubs association with McMillan's Track goes back to the 1960's when one of its early members, John Smith ("Smithy") championed the track. Smithy's efforts to reconnoitre and re-discover original sections of the track earned him an Order of Australia Medal and resulted in the re-opening of the track by the then Minister for Conservation Forests and Lands – The Honourable Joan Kirner MLC in 1988.

Since then BCWC has consistently worked towards maintaining the track, albeit a difficult task given the length and breadth of the area it traverses. Fortunately, a renewed push by BCWC's current President, Joe van Beek and club members has achieved remarkable results in clearing large sections of the track with assistance and support from DELWP and Parks Victoria.

Today it is possible to walk the track via a combination of well-maintained roads, 4WD tracks, and along newly cleared sections of bush. The Crooked River section is a case in point which during the 2015 expedition was considered un-navigable. Today it is a scenic and enjoyable section of the track.

BCWC has consistently walked the track from end to end on many occasions from the early 60's and in more recent times in 1996, 2003, 2009, 2015 and now 2017. The walk could be considered as one of Victoria's premier long distance walks. However it is not necessary do the whole walk to experience McMillan's Track, as there are numerous sections that can be enjoyed on a weekend basis.

You're invited to explore McMillan's track with its unique history and amazing landscapes.

McMillan's Track

McMillan's Track Historical perspective

It is worth noting that prior to 1850, Australia's non-indigenous population was less than 500,000. In effect Australia was a colonial backwater struggling to develop. In 1851, the discovery of the Victorian Goldfields (Primarily Bendigo & Ballarat) converted a remote dependency into a country of world wide fame; it attracted a population, extraordinary in number, with unprecedented rapidity; it enhanced the value of property to an enormous extent; it also made this one of the richest countries in the world; and, in less than five years, this remote colony made an impact felt in the most distant regions of the globe. It was an extraordinary moment in time. By 1855, Australia's non-indigenous population had ballooned to 1.5 million.

Prior to the Gold rush, around 1840, Angus McMillan had established himself as an explorer of the high country in Gippsland but by 1855 he had effectively retired to become a pastoralist on the Avon River in East Gippsland.

In 1864, in need of money, McMillan acceded to a request from the Victorian Government to lead a team of men into Gippsland's alpine region with the aim of mapping and clearing tracks to support local mining operations. Within six months McMillan and his men had constructed more than 220 miles (350 km) of track through rugged terrain near Omeo and Dargo. It was to be McMillan's last expedition; in May 1865 he was clearing a track near Dargo when a pack-horse slipped and fell, crushing him beneath it. McMillan was carried to a public house in Iguana Creek, suffering serious internal injuries. He died on 18 May 1865, and was buried in the public cemetery at Sale.

His work from March to May in 1864, greatly expanded the existing track network and linked many goldfields including Omeo, Dargo, Crooked River and Woods Point.

Part of this network of tracks has now become known as McMillan's Walking Track and forms one of the most challenging walks across the Great Dividing Range of Victoria.

McMillan's Track BCWC's Perspective

Over time, McMillan's original track was superseded with the formation of alternative roads and as the gold fields became depleted and abandoned, its usefulness dwindled.

During the 1980's BCWC member John Smith ("Smithy") became the driving force behind re-discovering the track. BCWC in conjunction with predecessors of Parks Victoria (PV) and the Department of the Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) rediscovered, cleared and marked the track. The track was officially opened as McMillan's Walking Track by Joan Kirner then Minister of Conservation, Forests and Land on 19 March 1988 as recorded on the plaque to mark the occasion at Breakfast Creek on the Wellington River north of Licola.



The Plaque near Breakfast Creek commemorating the official re-opening of McMillan's Track as a walking track in March 1988

Smithy was duly awarded an Order of Australia medal for his submissions and commitment to the re-opening of McMillan's track. This was a truly proud achievement for John Smith and the Ben Cruachan Walking Club. However, it will require ongoing maintenance to keep the track open and available for others to enjoy.

Numerous working bees have been carried out along sections of the track with assistance from the various land management groups. In addition, club members have walked the track from End to End on many occasions and now 2017. On each occasion it has proven a memorable experience and an adventure not to be forgotten. This latest expedition was no exception.

McMillan's Walking Track 2017

Sat 18th Nov - Friday 1st Dec

End to End Walkers: BCWC Joe van Beek, Michael Dowe, Anna Janca, Sue Hides, Thomas Carrew. **Sunraysia Walking Club:** Karl Sommer

Part Time Walkers: Helmut Tracksdorf, Di Christensen (both BCWC) and Hans Tracksdorf (Ballarat Bushwalkers) walked Days 4 to 9. Clive Davis and Jurgen Weller from VMTC walked with us on Days 10 and 11. Andrew Burrows (BCWC) joined part way through on day 11 and walked to the end.

VIP Walkers: Geoff Mattingly (Leader), Marian Matchan, Marjorie Kanagaratnam, Piero Baglioni, Rose de Leeuw, Jackie Whiting, and Matt Zanini (DELWP). Support Crew: Jeremy Reynolds and George Graham (DELWP); Conor Wilson (Parks Vic)

Support Crew: John Kellas, Oliver Raymond, Michael Dowe and Parks Vic Ranger, Conor Wilson.

Sponsor. Happy Camper Gourmet.

Report: Joe van Beek & Helmut Tracksdorf

Ben Cruachan Walking Club's last end-to-end walk of McMillan's Walking Track was McTk2015 which took place in December 2015. Refer BCWC Special Newsletter Issue 184. Since then a lot of maintenance work has been done on the track including opening up the Crooked River section of the track. So this year the end-to-end walk included a VIP Walk on Tuesday 21 November to mark the reopening of this 15km section of the track.

McTk2017 was a 14 day, 220km fully supported and catered walk along the track originally cut by Angus McMillan through the Gippsland high country. The walk started at Cobungra near Omeo and finished at Woods Point. Objectives of the walk other than to enjoy the experience included:

1. Conducting a track condition survey,
2. Taking an accurate GPS trail,
3. Noting where signage needs attention,
4. Replacing & adding new markers.

Five members of the Ben Cruachan Walking Club and one member of Sunraysia Walking Club took up this years challenge of walking McMillan's Track from end to end.

This is the report of their adventure.

Day 1 – Saturday 18th November

Cobungra (Victoria River Track) to Black Sallee on Long Plain

Ascent: 240m

Descent: 60m

Distance: 8km

Cumulative: 8km

Campsite: Black Sallee (small lake)

Support crew vehicles departed Traralgon at 8:30am; Oliver went via Maffra to collect Michael, Anna and Tom while Oliver with Joe and Karl on board went via Sale to pick up Sue. By the time of final pickups our two support vehicles were loaded to capacity with supplies, equipment and walkers. The two vehicles met up at Swifts Creek for a coffee break. The much anticipated coffee at the Bakery wasn't to be as the Bakery was closed so coffees were had at the pub. After a further break at Omeo for a snack and the mandatory photos at the beginning of the walk the 6-dedicated end- to-end walkers commenced their adventure in the rain along the Victoria River track, near Cobungra. The rain soon ceased.

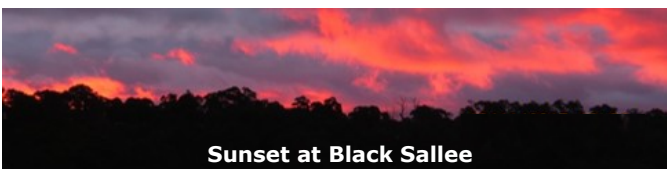


Mandatory group photo at the start of walk

The walk on this first day was an easy 8km stroll to Black Sallee, a nice campsite beside a small lake. When the walkers arrived just before 4pm Oliver had the tarpaulin stretched over the camp table to keep us dry in case of further rain. Sue had a swim and others worked out how their camping gear went together. We enjoyed a meal of barbecued lamp chops with mint sauce and boiled potatoes and vegetables. The sun set was picturesque - red sun at night, walkers delight.



Black Sallee campsite



Sunset at Black Sallee

Day 2 – Sunday 19th November

Black Sallee - Mayford Track – Treasury Spur - Kings Spur

Ascent: 840m Descent: 540m
Distance: 17km Cumulative: 25km
Camp: Near Bright Hut, Dargo High Plains

The mist was rising over the lake as we breakfasted and got ready for our first serious day of walking. On making sure we had everything required for the day, lunch, water, rain coat, warm sweater, first aid kit, sun tan lotion, insect repellent, map and GPS it was discovered that Tom had packed much more "just in case". Even after the contents were much reduced his pack was still the heaviest. Oh, to be so young and so fit. We were on our way shortly after 8am. Anna was recording waypoints for strategic locations. We were soon carefully picking our way down the steep Mayford Track.



The steep Mayford Track

Sue determined the pace downhill. Our first unbridged River crossing was the Dargo River which was straight forward with water up to mid calf. The delightful setting of the Mayford Paddocks was spoilt at one spot by rubbish and partial deer carcasses left strewn on the ground. Tom did a sterling service picking up rubbish, mainly drink cans and bottles. Lunch was had half way up Treasure Spur. Oliver and John meet us at the top of Treasure Spur where we attempted to remove markers from fallen trees



Tom drying his feet after crossing the Dargo

and put them up so they were useful. Once on the Dargo High plains we wandered on to camp near Bright Shire Hut taking in the views into and over the Devils Hollow. Water in the creek below the hut was refreshing and the BBQ sausage meal was nourishing.

Day 3 – Monday 20th November

Kings Spur – Dargo High Plains Road – White Timber Spur track

Ascent: 100m Descent: 630m
Distance: 16.5km Cumulative: 36.5km
Campsite: Ritchies rd & White Timber Spur Tk

At 1,550 metre elevation and a clear sky it was not surprising to wake up to a frost which soon disappeared once the sun hit the ground. Oliver had the billy boiling before most of us were awake. The route today differed from McTk2015. In 2015 the track down the Crooked River was over grown and difficult to find so the walk went down the Dargo High Plains Road; 26km of road walk! McTk2017 would tackle the track head on, knowing full well the Crooked River section of track was cleared. The section from the Dargo High Plains Rd round to the northern end of White Timber Spur track had not been walked previously by any of the party but we soon found some markers and followed the fence lines to meet up with White Timber Spur Track.



Michael resting along White Timber Spur Track

We did cross some boggy ground and wondered what it would be like in a wet year. The planned destination for today was the southern end of White Timber Spur Track but we knew we had an issue. Access on to WTST south of Richie Road was difficult if not impossible for our support vehicles. DELWP's plan to do some work on the track with a bulldozer had been delayed. John and Oliver checked out the track and decided it was unwise to proceed down the track so camp was established in a clearing just south of Richie Road 6 km short of our planned destination.

As it happened there had been a wild fire on White Timber Spur just a few days after we had passed through and a bulldozer was used to improve access onto the track for fire fighting.

The walkers arrived at the camp just after 1pm, had lunch and whiled away the afternoon trying to keep out of the sun. Some work was done on the track to allow passage by the DELWP and PV vehicles the next day. That evening we had a scrumptious beef stew and retired early in preparation for an early start the next day.



Camp near junction of WTST and Richie Rd

Day 4 – Tuesday 21st November

White Timber Spur Track - Crooked River - Talbotville

Ascent: 380m Descent: 1,170m
 Distance: 17.5km Cumulative: 69.5km
 Campsite: Stonewall

Today was to be a big day. First by completing the 6kms not walked the day before, and secondly, being joined by the VIP walkers for the reopening ceremony and walk down the Crooked River to Stonewall and then on through the 24 river crossings to Talbotville.

The tents were bone dry in the morning making for easy packing. We were on our way down White Timber Spur Track shortly after 7:30am. As we approached the end of WTST the two DELWP and one Parks Victoria vehicles caught up

with us. They had departed Dargo 2 hours earlier bringing the three additional walkers and the VIP walkers who would join us for the day. Oliver and John had also hitched a ride. The vehicles parked at the small helipad at the end of the track. It was here that a make shift "ceremonial" ribbon was erected. A bit before 10:00am, Joe and Matt got the proceedings underway. After a few words of thanks and praise for the efforts of many, the ribbon was cut and the Crooked River Track was officially declared re-open.



Joe & Matt get ready to cut the tape

With our ranks now swelled to 16 walkers we headed off steeply down from the end of White Timber Spur Track to the junction of 25 and 35 Mile creeks. One of the magic spots on McMillan's Walking Track. Most took off their boots to cross the 25 Mile Creek. Once across the creek we hit the track proper which immediately and slowly begins to rise above the creek bed. There were still quite a few obstacles such as fallen trees and scrub to negotiate at this northern end.. Those who thought the going was tough should have seen it before it was cleared! Lunch was had well above the river with extensive views of our surrounds. But it would have been nice to dip our toes in the river as it was already quite warm. Stone-walling along the track is clear evidence of early track construction during the gold mining era.



Example of Stonewalling along the track

The afternoon got quite warm and had an effect on the pace of the party. Where the Crooked River (actually a creek) flows into the valley floor to join with 35-mile Creek to officially become the Crooked River the group refilled their water bottles. The track was now definitely easier to negotiate plus we were next to the river on several occasions. The views along this section of the Crooked River and the signs of early gold mining activities such as water races and remnants of old machinery are certainly worth the effort. By the time we reached Stonewall, almost 5.30 for the last to arrive, we were all worn out and certainly happy to see our support staff with a billy on the boil and damper to boot. Those who were hot simply jumped in the river to cool off. The VIP walkers then departed via convoy back to Dargo and home no doubt wondering if they would ever return to this VIP - **Very Isolated Place!** Michael took a ride out to attend to a family commitment.



Tom, Anna & Karl at one of the 23 river crossings

certainly pleasant and upon arrival at Talbotville we met up with our support crew for another break. Then the real walk began with a short rise before dropping down to the Wongungarra River where we had to fight our way through some blackberries. Lunch was taken in the shade on the banks of the Wongungarra River.



Marian, Hans & Diana Inspecting old mining equipment

For the rest of us, now ten in number, we quickly decided that we would camp at Bulltown just one river crossing away rather than go onto Talbotville and that we would leave the other 23 river crossings for the morning and make up the 8kms some other day.

Day 5 – Wednesday 22nd November

Bulltown – Station Track – Cynthia Range – Eaglevale

Ascent: 785m Descent: 765m
 Distance: 21km Cumulative: 90.5km
 Camp: Eaglevale on Wonnongatta River

There were now 8 walkers on the track, comprising 5 end to end walkers and an additional 3 part time walkers. It was time to decide what footwear to wear because ahead lay 23 crossings of the Crooked River. This section of the walk was

The next leg would take us up the very steep 4WD Station Track up onto Cynthia range in what we estimated to be 33 degrees. Then on the walking track down to the Wonnangatta River. We crossed the river on the swing bridge at Eaglevale and met up with John and Oliver just before 4pm. Were we going to continue onto Pulpit Rock, our planned destination, or somewhere in between? No. This was too good a spot to move on from. We set up camp, swam/bathed, explored and enjoyed a meal of Happy Camper Meatballs on pasta. We were entertained by Hans's tales, some of which were no doubt true. We also discovered that Hans did not retire until all the fire wood was burnt with Tom keeping him company in the mean time.



Crossing the Wonnongatta at Eaglevale

Day 6 – Thursday 23rd November

Eaglevale – Moroka River - lower end of Moroka River Track

Ascent: 170m Descent: 80m

Distance: 10.5km Cumulative: 101km

Campsite: Moroka River (base of Moroka River Tk)

As it was going to be another hot day and we had distance to make up we had an early departure. To save time and some climb and descent we cut through Happy Valley, a private property located within the Wonnongatta. This certainly saved us some distance and was easier walking in the heat than climbing in and out of gullies along the road. We had committed ourselves before we got to the 'no trespassing' signs, Oops! Pulpit rock located on a bend of the river was a highlight and soon thereafter found our way down to the river to refresh and refill our water bottles. We then continued on towards the junction of the Moroka and Wonnangatta Rivers.



Group above the Moroka River



Group in the Moroka River



Group on the track near Pulpit Rock

Turning left we headed up into the Moroka Valley and the Mount Darling - Snowy Bluff Wilderness Zone. In line with policy for wilderness zones Parks Victoria have discouraged track maintenance and erecting markers within the zone. Some markers can still be found but it is up to the parties to navigate their way through the zone the best they can. For the first few kilometres we found easy going along the river flats kept open by deer grazing. For the remainder since the river was low we were able to walk in the river bed much of the way. This is another great location but walking up the rocky river was not without its challenges and going by the sky and high humidity there had to be thunderstorms somewhere. Eventually at around 5pm we reached our campsite below Snowy Bluff at the bottom end of Moroka River Track. It was then we could all relax by taking a dip and cooling off.

Conor Wilson from Parks Vic had transported all our gear and brought Michael and John into this management vehicles only wilderness zone. He joined us for the night and we introduced him to Happy Camper meals. Oliver took the opportunity to have a night in his own bed and fetch new supplies.



Conor being introduced to Happy Camper meals by Sue (with smoke in her eyes!)

Day 7 – Friday 24th November

Moroka River crossing – Playboy Creek –

D4 Track – Volkswagen

Ascent: 1,010m

Descent: 40m

Distance: 13km

Cumulative: 114km

Campsite: Volkswagen

A challenging day lay ahead, and Anna knew it, over a thousand metres of climb in hot conditions on uneven terrain. Everything, other than the day packs, was loaded onto Connor's vehicle. He departed for Doolans Plain to transfer gear back to John's vehicle with John and Anna aboard.



Ready to depart from Moroka River Track

Michael lead the way and found easy walking along the flats to Playboy Creek and then followed this upstream. We hunted for the markers indicating where to cross side gullies, we found some. We slowly rose above the landscape, stumbled on to a thunder egg site and reached Beth Saddle by 11:30. After a break we headed for the D4 Track. Slow and steady was the pace due to the heat. With storm clouds building we trudged on till lunch at 12:30 taken on the track. During lunch the heavens opened. Back on track we experienced a heavy hail shower. Hail stones crunched under foot till 2pm when we reached our campsite at Volkswagen which was a wonderful sight. John, Anna and Oliver had a fire going and the tarpaulin set up for shelter. They had collected buckets of hail off the tarpaulin.

Rain continued and off till about 3:30pm. It was dry enough then to erect tents and get sorted for the evening. Oliver had arrived back with fresh supplies. That evening we dined on a delicious chicken casserole prepared by Carolyn, his wife. Most retired early to their tents but chatter from Hans and Tom could be heard well into the night.



Campsite at Volkswagen



Karl, Anna, Joe and Michael relaxing at camp

Day 8 – Saturday 25th November

Moroka Road – Arbuckle Junction – Dingo Hill Track

Ascent: 260m

Descent: 400m

Distance: 18.5km

Cumulative: 132.5km

Campsite: Shaws Ck on Dingo Hill Track

A fine morning but tents were wet from further over night showers. The tarpaulin was left up till after breakfast and lunches were made and bags packed. Today's walk would take us along the Moroka Rd to Arbuckle Junction where there was mobile phone reception if you stood in the right place and held your phone just so.



Approaching Arbuckle junction

Several phone calls were made and SMSs sent. Then up onto Mt Arbuckle itself and down to cross Shaw Creek. We were thankful for the track clearing that had been done on this track. The purple wildflowers (hovea) along this section were marvellous.



Purple wildflowers along the track

We inspected Kellys Hut and had lunch at McMichaels Hut. A little further down Kelly Lane we turned off to follow the marked track along old logging roads/tracks north of the private property eventually came out onto Dingo Hill Track, where we once again met up with our support crew and camp.



Joe and Tom at Kellys Hut



Sue at McMichaels Hut

The GPS, as usual, suggested we had walked more than the distance measured from the map 19.7km compared to 18.5km and that we had climbed and descended more than the heights determined from the map, 330m v 260 and 462m v 400 respectively.

We enjoyed the bolognese sauce that Judy van Beek had prepared on the usual spaghetti. There was thunder around but we only had a few light showers. Hans and Tom burnt a mountain of wood well into the night. The light from the roaring fire was that bright at times that some of us woke and thought it was morning. Di spent a good deal of the night diverting a leak in her tent so as not to get her sleeping bag wet.



Serving up Judy's delicious Bolognese sauce

Day 9 – Sunday 26th November

Dingo Hill Track – Mt. Tamboritha – Red Box Camp

Ascent: 510m

Descent: 1450m

Distance: 19.5km

Cumulative: 152km

Campsite: Red Box Camp

No doubt one of the highlights of this walk is the track up and over Mt Tamboritha with its spectacular views and amazing array of wildflowers. However today the gods were not on our side. Rain coats had been on and off several times and Hans's umbrella had done some duty. Then in the afternoon there was a cloud burst initially driving strongly from the west and then straight down which drenched us in seconds. Sue and Anna didn't bother putting on rain coats they looked like drowned rats. Hans's Umbrella didn't pass the test. Fortunately, we still managed to capture the views and soak up the atmosphere. The track takes a significant turn to follow a spur



Group at the start of Tamboritha Spur



Group photo along Tamboritha

line all the way down to Breakfast Creek. This section required further maintenance and we marked it with tape as we went. With the rain now coming down relentlessly it wasn't much fun, however we got the job done.



Spot the odd one out!

As we staggered into Breakfast Creek in dribs and drabs we were certainly glad to put that last section of track behind us. Our support crew were just around the corner at Red Box Camp, an excellent choice. This is where the Part Time walkers packed up their gear and called it quits! Mainly because Heather Tracksdorf had come to take them back to civilisation. As Helmut, Hans and Di departed Clive and Jurgen arrived. Tom had an early night to catch up on sleep.

Day 10 - Monday 27th November
Breakfast Creek – Macalister River -
Glencairn Rd (9km) - Barkly River
 Ascent: 990m Descent: 890m
 Distance: 17km Cumulative: 169km
 Campsite: Skene Ck - Barkly River

Anna set off before the others to get a head start on the climb towards the Crinoline. The tree falls had been cleared from this track by Parks Victoria back in July. Although this made for easier walking the relentless climb in increasing warm conditions still made it an effort. We caught up with Anna at Smith Street on the saddle between the Crinoline and Sugarloaf. Joe was curious about the track from here down to the Macalister River. It had been subject to a fuel reduction burn in early 2015 which burnt out most of the markers and evidence of the track. We may not have been on the 'track' but the route is down a well defined ridge which is readily negotiable. We crossed the Macalister River at the Gauging Station which is upstream from where the crossing is marked on most maps but seems the obvious place to cross and provides stiles to get over the fences.



On the ridge heading down to Macalister river

This was a convenient place for lunch. The next 3 km were on private land with a climb to a saddle then down to the Glencairn Road. The walk up Glencairn Road and then down Middle Ridge Road to the Barkley River seemed longer than it should have been, maybe we were tired. But it was a relief to arrive at the spaces Rumpff Flat where John and Oliver had established camp and we could bath in the stream. While Clive and Jurgen had their meal the rest of us concocted a stew/sauce with pasta sauce, salami and vegetables which was served on spiral pasta. Arguably our most tasty meal.

Day 11 – Tuesday 28th November

Rumpff Flat – Connors Plain –

Licola-Jamieson Road

Ascent: 1060m Descent: 270m

Distance: 20km Cumulative: 189km

Campsite: Jamieson Rd Lazarini Spur Jn

As we had an 800 metre climb up McMillans Spur (Morris Road) to the Jamieson - Licola Road first off Sue and Anna set off before the remainder of the party. Everyone did the climb at their own pace and we regrouped over a cup of hot tea brewed by John and Oliver at the top of Morris Road. An easy stroll along the Jamieson - Licola Rd before we turned down N18 and onto the old logging road leading to Mt Shillinglaw. It had been two years since we walked this track, but the track was almost beyond recognition with the amount of growth. We had not taken Joe's machete this day. Tom used a stout stick to bash a way through. The going got a bit easier as we



Section of overgrown track towards Shillinglaw

gained altitude and approached Mt Shillinglaw. Just off the summit of Mt Shillinglaw we joined the Australian Alps Walking Track, this had been cleared relatively recently but the cuttings had been left on the track making for tricky walking and trip hazards. It was a relief to be back on the Jamieson - Licola Road. We strolled along the road and arrived at our camp at the junction of J - L Rd and Lazarini Spur Track, not the most salubrious camp but adequate, at about 3:30.



Relaxing at camp after dinner

Clive and Jurgen, who had remained on the J - L Rd rather than walk the ridge to Mt Shillinglaw as they were expecting their fellow club member, Geoff, to meet them at any time from noon on, were waiting at the junction for their ride. Time went by and yet Geoff did not arrive. Clive got concerned that something may have happened to Geoff. It was decided that John should take Clive and Jurgen to Licola, so they could raise the alarm. Six kilometres down the road at the junction with N21 they meet Geoff who had been patiently waiting for Clive and Jurgen to appear for some time. Obviously, a miss understanding of the pickup point. Anyway, all's well that ends well.

Day 12 – Wednesday 29th November

Lazarini Spur – Black River – CS5 Track

Ascent: 600m Descent: 710m

Distance: 12km Cumulative: 201km

Campsite: Champion Spur/ CS5 Track Junction

Frogs croaked for most of the night, a vehicle went by and deer were heard during John's last night with us. He had commitments back in South Australia. It had been arranged that Michael would take over the support role. After packing up, carefully briefing Oliver where our next camp was to be and farewelling John we all set off: John and Michael to Maffra to transfer gear and supplies to Michael's vehicle who would then go to the camp site at the junction of Champion Spur Track and CS5, Oliver to find some water and establish camp at CS5 and the remaining walkers, now 5, headed down Lazarini Spur Track. An easy stroll for 4 km before we headed off down towards the Black River. The first 2 kms on a permanently closed road (PMC) but it was clear that a vehicle had been down it relatively recently and pushed over the scrub. Then on to a foot pad which was benched, and stone walled in places and quite overgrown. This time we had taken Joe's machete and Tom made good use of it. We paused at a spot where a number of trees bore blazes believed to have been made by McMillans track cutting gang back in 1864.



Blaze originally cut by McMillan's party

We got out our compasses to see if there was some sense to the positioning of the blazes as we had heard that McMillan had used them to calibrate a compass. To our amazement we found that our compasses did not read true. There must be some magnetic interference in the area. We got to the Black River, another of McMillans Walking Track's magic places, at 12:45pm for lunch and a cooling swim.



Anna, Joe & Karl taking a dip in the Black River

The short climb up to CS5 is challenging and once on CS5 it is a steady grind to the camp site at the junction with Champion Spur Track. Oliver had the camp established by the time the walkers arrived at 3:45 but he did confess that originally, he had established camp at the junction of Mt Selma Road and Champion Spur Track but then realised the error. Michael arrived at 4pm. Tents were erected and set up for the night. That evening Anna orchestrated a meal of leftovers consisting of eggs, potatoes, onions, cheese, asparagus, tomatoes, carrots and some with peaches and chocolate for desert. It went down a treat. Afterwards Sue did her usual routine of boiling water, collecting dishes and washing them.

Day 13 – Thursday 30th November

Champion Spur – CS5 Track - Comet Flats

Ascent: 680m Descent: 720m

Distance: 17km Cumulative: 201km

Campsite: Comet Flats

This day the walk was to be relatively short but with a challenging 700 metre climb, however due to the reports we were getting about pending storms and lots of heavy rain starting some time Friday it was decided we would push on to Comet Flats camping area on the Coulburn River just a few kms out of Woods Point adding 6kms, mainly downhill, to our journey for the day.

Our normal morning routine of having breakfast, making lunch, clearing up, packing up tents and gear, cleaning teeth, and stowing bags into the support vehicles etc was interrupted by Oliver wanting to take a group photo before we broke

camp. We commenced the days walk by heading up Champion Spur Track for two kms to a high point where the track heads off down towards Stander Creek. This track had been cleared since the 2015 walk. Within 15 minutes we were at a log which took us 2 hours to reach in 2015. We headed down a ridge and passed several shafts dug by miners. We then sidled on a benched track, which was still a work in progress maintenance wise, till we reached Stander Creek. There we inspected the ruins of the Leichardt Gold Stamping Battery and refreshed in the Creek. Lunch was had at the junction of Abbot Creek Track and Abbot Link Track where Joe erected some additional markers to make the way finding clear as had been done at several locations elsewhere along the track.



Joe erecting McMillan's Track markers

People walked up the relentless Abbot Link Track at their own pace. We regrouped near the communications tower on Johnsons Hill from where we had a view (partial) of Woods Point. We passed our previously planned camp site. When we got to the Walhalla Road Sue and Anna opted to walk the road rather than climb towards Bald Hill and come back to the Road. As Tom, Karl and Joe were looking for the point where the track leaves the Bald Hill Track we came across a bloke lying in the grass whom we didn't recognise at first. Andrew Burrows had come to meet us and walk the last section into Woods Point with us. We caught up with Anna and Sue who were also surprised to see Andrew. As we made our way down the bridge trail to Woods Point we were delighted to come across DELWP workers doing maintenance on the track, creating a diversion round a difficult bit and brush cutting blackberries and other vegetation. We were pleased to provide them with a few McMillans Walking Track markers for their use.

We caught up with Michael and Oliver at Comet Flats at 5pm and preceded to erect our tents for

the last time. The river had a good bath sized hole adjacent to a log where several of us took turns to clean up and refresh. We dined on an assortment of delicacies, many provided by Andrew, and leftovers. We also had some wine to finish up and Andrew found some more.

Day 14 – Friday 1st December

Comet Flats - Gooley Creek

- Woods Point

Ascent: 50m

Descent: 50m

Distance: 2km

Cumulative: 220km

Campsite: n/a



Historic hut beside the Goulburn River with Andrew (RHS) having joined the group

The day dawned threatening rain, but it held off long enough for us to pack up, complete the last two kilometres of the walk into Woods Point (we were there by just after 8am), take some end of walk photos, bid each other farewell and set off for home. Andrew and Anna may have got wet as they had a kilometre walk back to Andrew's Car. Oliver drove Joe and Karl back to Traralgon and Michael headed to Maffra with Sue and Tom.



End to End walkers: Anna, Tom, Sue, Karl & Joe on their last river crossing



The group at CS5 camp

And so ends another adventure along McMillan's track. This walk is certainly worth the effort and undoubtedly remains one of the highlights of the year for those who took part. Well Done!



Tom eating dinner



Yes, there's still room on top for more sauce!

CAST & CREW



Walkers at start of Track



Campsite at Volkswagen



John getting ready for dinner



Anna & Joe on Arbuckle Plain



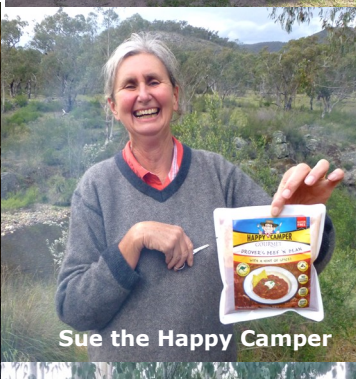
Conor at Moroka river Tk



Karl on Arbuckle Plain



Sue, Di & Michael at Kellys hut



Sue the Happy Camper



Good Tucker here, Mate!



Oliver replenishing the water supplies



Group at start of D4 Track



Hans, not your typical Hiker



Tom, establishing his whereabouts



Helmut with his catch of the day



Karl, Sue & Di on Mt Tamboritha

McTK FLORA

