



Ben Cruachan Walking Club

Issue 184 - BCWC NEWSLETTER SUPPLEMENT - DECEMBER 2015

McMILLAN'S TRACK REPORT



Maintaining BCWC's association with McMillan's Track was Joe van Beek, Michael Dowe, Anna Janca and Helmut Tracksdorf who took up the challenge of walking the 220km over 14 days to complete an End to End walk of this iconic trail. Very little evidence of McMillan's original track remains today so it is indeed rare to find remnants that have survived over the last 150 years. Here they are inspecting one of several blazes that was cut by Angus McMillan's original party back in 1864. Check out the full report of their adventure starting at page 3.

Newsletter Editor—Ramblings



SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT EDITION - McMillan's Track

December 2015

This month we are publishing a special supplement to the December 2015 Newsletter, primarily 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, 4 members of BCWC, Joe van Beek, Michael Dowe, Anna Janca and Helmut Tracksdorf and 2 members of VMTC, Clive Davies and Geoff Hindle took on the challenge. Unfortunately Clive and Geoff could only participate for the first 7 days as they had other commitments to attend to thereafter.*

Acting in a support role was BCWC member John Kellas who ferried all our equipment and food from campsite to campsite. John had led the 2003 expedition and was therefore able to offer his knowledge and experience to this years participants. It goes without saying that without his support , we may not have made it! On behalf of the group, Thanks John.

Ben Cruachan Walking Clubs association with McMillan's Track goes back a long way. In fact it probably goes back to the beginnings of the Club back in 1965 (TBC) because one of its foundation members, John Smith ("Smithy") has been an advocate of the track for a long time. 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. The combination of forest fires and re-growth plus a lack of funding and volunteers has all but made it impossible to maintain. Consequently sections of the track have become overgrown and fallen into disrepair.

Today it is possible to walk the track predominantly on well-maintained roads and 4WD tracks, with the occasional off road section. However for those who like a challenge it is possible to walk off road sections that adhere to McMillan's original track and are not for the faint hearted. Apart from steep pinches and declines, some sections are near impossible to find and towards the end near Woods Point the track has become overgrown with blackberries. Only those possessed with determination should proceed. Just ask Anna and she will set you straight. The saying: Veni Vidi Vici appears appropriate!

The club has consistently walked the track from end to end on various occasions, in 1996, 2003, 2009 and now 2015. (probably more). This walk has almost become a rite of passage for club members. However it is not necessary to walk end to end to feel special, sections alone will reward you with fantastic scenery, amazing wild flowers and special memories.

So what are you waiting for?

Helmut Tracksdorf

* Victorian Mountain Tramping Club

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 the goldfields and towns of Omeo, Dargo, Crooked River and Woods Point.

This network of tracks has now become known as McMillan's 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.

Since then, 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 in 1996, 2003, 2006 and now 2015. On each occasion it has proven a memorable experience and an adventure not to be forgotten. This latest challenge was no exception.



McMillan's Walking Track 2015

DATES: Friday 30th Oct - Friday 12th Nov

BCWC WALKERS: Joe van Beek, Michael Dowe, Anna Janca, Helmut Tracksdorf

VMTC WALKERS: Clive Davies & Geoff Hindle

SUPPORT CREW: John Kellas

REPORT: Joe van Beek and Helmut Tracksdorf

Four members of the Ben Cruachan Walking Club and two members of VMTC took on the challenge of walking McMillan's Walking Track to experience sections and or complete the 220 km journey in 14 days. The walk was in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the establishment of McMillan's Track and included reconnaissance of the tracks condition and involved a concerted effort to re-mark sections where necessary.

Day 1 – Friday 30th October

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

Climb: 240m Descent: 60m
 Distance: 8km Cumulative: 8km
 Campsite: Black Sallee (small lake)

On Friday 30 October Kath Smith, Forest Manager DELWP from Swifts Creek, farewelled the walkers and the support crew at Cobungra near Omeo. Robyn Shingles and Peter Maffei representing Bushwalking Victoria (BWV) were also present at the commencement of the walk to provide encouragement and present the walkers with BWVs recently released environmental code: Tread Softly. After photos, the 4 club members and 2 VMTC guests departed the starting point at 2:30pm and commenced walking along The Victoria River track.



Group photo at the start of McMillan's Track



The walkers heading off along Victoria River Tk

Due to the late start, we only had to walk 8km today which was along a well defined 4WD track that slowly rose towards the top of the divide. After a relatively easy two hour stroll we arrived at our first campsite at Black Sallee which was a luxury camp alongside a small lake.



Arrival at Black Sallee & campsite below



Day 2 – Saturday 31st October

Long Plain - Mayford Track – Treasury Spur - Kings Spur

Climb: 840m

Descent: 540m

Distance: 17km

Cumulative: 25km

Camp: Kings Spur near Bright Hut, Dargo High Plains

The group rise and shine at 6:30am and are ready to depart by 8:30am. Day 2 presented the walkers with a very steep descent along a fire break down to Mayford Flats on the Dargo River and then a steep climb up Treasury Spur on to the Dargo High Plains.



Looking down onto the Dargo paddocks from Mayford



Clive, Michael, Geoff & Joe on the Dargo paddocks

Prior to reaching Mayford Track it began to drizzle but fortunately only lightly. The Dargo flats were shrouded in mist and by 11:00 am we were crossing the Dargo, the first of many rivers to come.

Some chose to walk straight through the water which was below knee height, whereas others removed their boots and socks to keep them dry. Soon we were heading up the other side of the mountains following markers along Treasury Spur. Three quarters of the way up at 12:30pm we stopped for lunch. By 2:00pm we were on top of the Dargo High Plains and began walking along King Spur on a well made road again. There was plenty of fog and mist but no rain.



Group at the edge of Devils Hollow



Walking along King Spur

At Devils Hollow we were able to look across the valley towards Mt Hotham which still had remnant snow on some of its slopes. Down in the valley we could see two eagles being shadowed by Currawongs who were determined to drive the raptors away. The track along King Spur was well defined so we made good progress reaching our campsite at 3:30pm, where John was waiting. Another shower of rain also greeted our arrival.

The number of 4WD vehicles which were at and about our chosen camp spot reminded us that this was Melbourne Cup weekend and the first weekend that many seasonally closed tracks had been reopened.

After setting up our tents, Anna & Helmut went to inspect the nearby Bright Hut which was surrounded by slush and mud as a result of a 4WD group that had taken up residence. Upon looking

inside and introducing themselves they realised they had stumbled onto the set of 'Deliverance 2' and promptly made a strategic withdrawal. Reputations intact!

Day 3 – Sunday 1st November

Kings Spur – Dargo High Plains Road – Jeff Davis Track

Climb: 170m Descent: 350m
 Distance: 27km Cumulative: 52km
 Campsite: Jeff Davis Spur track

We hit the track which was effectively Dargo Rd at 8:30am. Today could best be described as a stroll down the Dargo High Plains Road. Angus McMillan obviously agreed that this route presented easy going.

Continuing along the Dargo road we stopped briefly for lunch at noon and with dark clouds rolling in we hit the road expecting thunderstorms.



Walking towards ominous dark clouds



Strolling along the Dargo Rd

Further along we came across an old vehicle that had failed to negotiate a bend. After a quick inspection we continued on towards Jeff Davis Track and our next campsite. At 3:30pm we reached camp with the sound of thunder suggesting rain. Fortunately it was only light rain for a short time. After BBQ sausages for tea we hit the sack early at around 8:00pm



Group photo at McMillan's Track sign



Michael inspecting the vehicle

We didn't attempt the alternative route down the top end of the Crooked River as two recent walkers had abandoned it because the vegetation was hard to penetrate and the track could not be found; a job left for another occasion.

At 11:00am we stopped for morning tea at the historic site of Gows Hotel where our trusty support John, was waiting. There is nothing left of the original Hotel but several exotic trees clearly indicated its former presence.

Day 4 – Monday 2nd November

Jeff Spur Track - Crooked River - Talbotville

Climb: 110m Descent: 1,150m

Distance: 17.5km Cumulative: 69.5km

Campsite: Talbotville

Rise and shine at 7:00am to the sound of kookaburras. Depart camp at 8:30am and head along Jeff Davis track which was partly shrouded in mist until it abruptly and steeply declines down towards the Crooked river for about 2km.

We reach the river at 11:30 and stop for an early lunch. With time up our sleeve we explored upstream following a track cut into the side of the valley above the river. There were signs of mining activity along this track and we all agreed this represented a more interesting approach to the river.



Exploring along the Crooked River

We suspect this track connects with the alternative top end track that was deemed unnavigable but time constraints meant this alternative route



Michael inspecting old mining equipment

will need to be explored another day.

Upon our return to the Crooked River it was time to don sandals or runners as there were many more crossings of this river before we would reach our destination for the day - Talbotville.



Clive and group crossing the Crooked River

In the 1860's, the Crooked River became the sight of a minor gold rush with thousands of people took up residence along its banks in places like Bulltown, Hogtown and Talbotville. There is clear evidence of mining (shafts) and the remnants of historic buildings along the track. All in all an interesting and possibly dangerous area to explore.

The water at our first crossing was crystal clear but with the numerous 4WD's negotiating the track it soon became muddy downstream. After finally crossing the river 20 times we reached Talbotville at 4:30pm.

Talbotville is located on a large grassy plain next to the river. This was a popular camping spot where a thriving 4WD and camping community had set up for the Melbourne Cup weekend. Once again John had chosen an ideal spot for us to set up camp beside the river. We hit the sack at 9:00pm after a round of 500. (cards)



Our campsite at Talbotville

Day 5 – Tuesday 3rd November

Talbotville – Station Track – Cynthia Range – Eaglevale – Pulpit Rock

Climb: 785m

Descent: 765m

Distance: 21km

Cumulative: 90.5km

Camp: Wonnongatta River (1km past pulpit rock)

Woke to the sound of running water at 6:30am. At 8:30am we departed camp crossing the Crooked River one last time before heading up hill. The track diverts off the main 4WD road and drops down to the Wongungarra River and the extension of Station Track which climbs up the Cynthia Range then drops down to the suspension bridge over the Wonnangatta River. This section presented us with our first real bush bashing experience as parts of these tracks were quite overgrown, but worse was still to come.



Where McMillan's Track drops down to Wongungarra

Initially the walk proved a stroll along a 4WD track but once we plunged off the side (following the officially marked track) it became more challenging. It appeared no one had walked this section for some time as it was completely overgrown with little evidence of a path. Fortunately we were able to negotiate our way down to the Wongungarra River doing a little track clearing on the way down.



Checking our position during track clearing

After a short break we headed off up Station track which soon separated the men from the boys and girls. It was up, up and more up with steep sections along the way. By 11:30 we finally reached Cynthia Range Track where we diverted once again off road down towards the Wonnongatta valley below.

By 1:00pm we were down alongside the lush pastures of the Wonnangatta valley. This looked like perfect cattle farming country but then again I'm no cattle farmer! We crossed the Wonnangatta River via an old suspension bridge at Eaglevale and promptly settled down for lunch beside the river. A perfect location.



Crossing the Wonnangatta river

By 1:45pm we were back on a 4WD track referred to as Moroka junction track which followed the Wonnangatta valley upstream for approximately 12km until we finally arrived at our campsite just past pulpit rock alongside the river at 5:30pm. This gave us the opportunity to freshen up and wash away the dirt and grime (plus the smell) of the last 5 days.



Anna, Joe and Geoff above the Wonnangatta River

This time we only had to share our campsite with a couple of deer hunters who proved an interesting couple. (See 'Wildshot' on Page 19)

Day 6 – Wednesday 4th November

Pulpit Rock – Moroka River - lower end of Moroka River Track

Climb: 170m Descent: 80m

Distance: 10.5km Cumulative: 101km

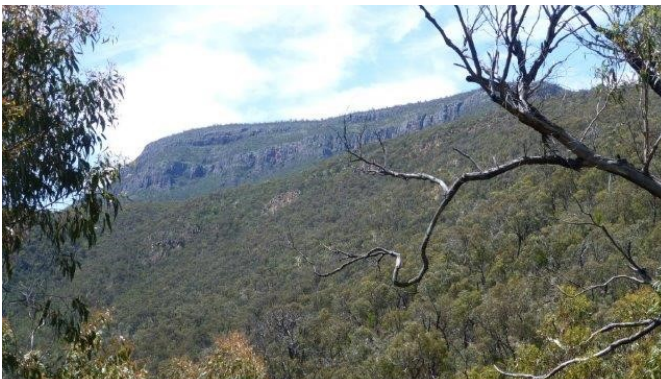
Campsite: Moroka River (base of Moroka River Tk)

Rose 6:00am with the aim of departing by 8:00am. Today Anna left us for two days due to a commitment in Melbourne. So the rest of the party made its way up the beautiful Moroka River.



Geoff, Clive, Helmut, Joe & Michael at start of Moroka River

We followed the track markers along the river until they petered out. This section of the track along the Moroka river was certainly scenic with plenty of spots to stop and take in the views.



View of Snowy Buff from Moroka River

However, as the track markers became fewer we weren't sure whether to go up or down. At this stage the group split into two parties with Joe, Clive and Geoff staying with the river whereas Michael and Helmut took the high ground which led them up over a saddle which then promptly dropped back down to the river. According to previous attempts McMillan's track diverts away



Michael & Joe discussing the options: up or down?

from the river and crosses the saddle that Helmut & Michael explored. They found a track marker but couldn't understand why McMillan would have chosen the high ground rather than the easier river option.

Upon returning to the Moroka, Helmut & Michael seemed to find every brown snake that lives along the river!



One of the close encounters!

We re-joined the others for lunch alongside the river at 12:30pm. After a short break we continued along the beautiful Moroka River until we reached our campsite at the bottom end of Moroka River track at 3:15pm. There was a large waterhole in the river at this location which afforded us the ideal opportunity for a swim.

As a Wilderness area there is no access for private vehicles to this camp site. We were therefore grateful to Sheri and Paul from DELWP who on behalf of PV ferried our camping equipment and food from Doolan's Plain down to the river. We dined in style, as we did every evening, and gathered some local knowledge.

Day 7 – Thursday 5th November
Moroka River crossing – Playboy Creek –
D4 Track – Volkswagen

Climb: 1,010m Descent: 40m
 Distance: 13km Cumulative: 114km
 Campsite: Volkswagen

Next morning Sheri and Paul took the rubbish we had collected along the track and ferried our camping gear, left over food and John back to his vehicle (our support vehicle). We continued on along the track recording markers, replacing missing and burnt out markers which was part of our daily routine as required. At 9:30am we reached Playboy Creek where we left the Moroka River and headed up over Beth Saddle and onto the D4 Track which links up with Moroka Road.



Saying thanks & goodbye to Sheri & Paul of DELWP

After leaving the Moroka River we walk parallel to Playboy Creek looking for markers as we go. By 10:30 we leave Playboy creek and head uphill towards Beth Saddle still following and looking for markers. By 12:30 we arrive on top and stop for lunch. Soon after we hit the D4 track which connects with Moroka Rd. However we are effectively above the cloud line so we are walking in the mist with occasional light showers. The wet conditions bring out the leeches and soon we are removing these bloodsuckers from our legs.



Makeshift 4WD bridge on D4 track

At 2:30pm we reach our campsite called Volkswagen, named after a VW was left abandoned at this site (many years ago & since removed). Unfortunately the campsite which is located near the junction with the Moroka Road was not ideal as a deer had had an unfortunate accident nearby and was starting to decompose. So every now and again the waft of 'Eau De Venison' would drift across our campsite.



Volkswagen campsite on D4 track

Geoff and Clive who are members of the Victorian Mountain Tramping Club (VMTC) finished their walk with us here whereas Anna re-joined the team. Now there were only 4 walkers left to complete the task.

Day 8 – Friday 6th November

Moroka Road – Arbuckle Junction – Kellys Lane - Sambain Chalet

Climb: 260m Descent: 400m
 Distance: 18.5km Cumulative: 132.5km
 Campsite: Sambain Chalet

We wake up to the sound of ravens and blowflies, thanks to the deer carcass nearby. Also the sound of John cutting wood indicates it's time to get up! By 8:30am we are on the track and hit Moroka road within 5 mins. Turning right we stroll towards Arbuckle Junction spotting a pure black rabbit along the way. Is this a sign of good luck or bad?



Approaching Arbuckle Junction

We arrive at the junction by 9:45am and then head bush following markers up towards Mt Arbuckle. This section of the track requires maintenance as it has become noticeably overgrown. Skirting the summit of Mt Arbuckle we cross over towards Shaws Creek with Kelly Hut beyond. The views over the button grass plains dotted with purple hoveas are simply spectacular.

Reach Kelly hut by 11:30am taking time out to inspect the hut and take a photo. We now turn South following Kelly lane a 4WD track that takes us towards the Bennison Plains. Stop for lunch at McMichaels Hut which is located next to Shaws Creek, a pleasant spot.



Joe reading the Kelly Hut logbook

Departing at 12:45 we continue along Kelly lane. However it soon becomes apparent that we have missed a marker indicating a turnoff point.

After some discussion the group splits into two with Anna and Helmut sticking to Kelly Lane and Joe and Michael heading back to explore where we missed the turnoff. Kelly Lane connects with Tamboritha Road which leads Anna & Helmut directly to Sambain Chalet, whereas Joe and Michael bushwalk around the perimeter of Higgins Hut to arrive at Sambain a short time later.



Anna happy at reaching Sambain

Sambain Hut is the location for this years annual gathering of the Eastern Clans otherwise known as the Combined Gippsland Bushwalking Clubs Weekend. (CGWC) For the McMillan's track walkers it is an opportunity for hot showers and the added luxury of eating and sleeping indoors.

An added bonus was the fantastic roast dinner prepared by Trish Marston and her team of helpers, that provided enough sustenance for what lay ahead.

Check out the December Newsletter for a full report on the CGWC weekend activities.

Day 9 – Saturday 7th November

Sambain Chalet - Dingo Hill Track – Mt. Tamboritha – Breakfast Creek

Climb: 510m

Descent: 1450m

Distance: 19.5km

Cumulative: 152km

Campsite: Sambain Chalet

As part of the CGWC celebrations seven other walkers joined us today for the walk along McMillan's track over the Mt Tamboritha section. At 8:30am the group are ready to depart walking along the perimeter fence of Higgins property towards Dingo Hill track and Long Hill track. Surprisingly we meet a lone walker at Shaws creek also walking McMillan's Track from end to end, carrying a full pack and unsupported! Hats off and full credit to this hardy individual. I for one had not thought it possible.



CGWC walkers ready to hit McMillan's Track

Soon we were heading up towards Mt Tamboritha and beyond. The views along this section of the McMillan's track were indeed spectacular as were the wildflowers at this time of year. It would appear that November is the best time to walk this section of the track. As a group we certainly enjoyed the views and scenery that was abundant in spades.



Group atop Mt Tamboritha admiring the views



Heading down Tamboritha saddle with the Crinoline in background



Group photo with Gable End (in background)

As we approach Breakfast Creek the track became more difficult due to the steep decline and regrowth that occasionally obscured the track. Nevertheless it proves relatively easy to negotiate our way down with the help of the occasional marker and arrived at Breakfast Creek at 5:00pm. With the assistance of a car shuffle we were ferried back to Sambain Chalet for an evening of camaraderie and celebrating 150 years since the establishment of McMillan's Track. Darren McCubbin, Mayor of Wellington Shire led the singing and cut the commemorative cake.

**Day 10 – Sunday 8th November
Breakfast Creek – Macalister River -
Glencairn Rd (9km) - Barkly River**

Climb: 990m Descent: 890m
Distance: 17km Cumulative: 169km
Campsite: Skene Ck - Barkly River

Today, after a car shuffle we recommence walking at Breakfast Creek with six other walkers in tow. Before starting we took group photos at the official plaque commemorating the re-opening of McMillan's track back in 1988.



Official group photo at commemorative plaque

The combined group then began their climb up towards the Crinoline, diverting at Smith Street and then down a recently burnt out spur that leads to the Macalister River. We left Helmut behind at Breakfast Creek as he was suffering from a mild case of the trots, which made walking somewhat tricky to say the least. Enough said!

After a knee-high crossing of the Macalister River the group had lunch. Then it was only a relatively short trek up the other side and then on to Glencairn, an old established farm located within the Macalister river catchment. Arriving at 2:30pm. Here John and CGWC support staff were waiting. After a group photo, the six guest walkers left to return to Sambain or home whereas the three remaining end to end walkers continued on towards their next campsite.



Group at Glencairn

It then took almost 2 hours for the remaining 3 walkers to reach camp alongside Skene creek a tributary of the Barkly River. After crossing the Barkly, the walkers appeared happy to see John and Helmut (who had recovered from his stomach bug) waiting at camp. Someone had built a roman style spa bath in the creek, so some of us took advantage of the opportunity to freshen up. That night we hit the sack around 8:30pm having discussed and resolved all the current global issues, around the campfire.

Day 11 – Monday 9th November

Skene Creek – Connors Plain – Licola-Jamieson Road

Climb: 990m Descent: 890m
 Distance: 20km Cumulative: 189km
 Campsite: Skene Ck - Barkly River

Woke to the sounds of birdsong and Skene Creek around 6:30am. We hit the track at 8:30am This morning Anna took a break and rode with John. A wise move as within minutes we turned up McMillan Spur / Morris road, which although not quiet vertical was certainly steep by most standards. After approximately 2hrs of steady climbing we arrive on top to be greeted by a D10 dozer and crew who are doing road maintenance. Anna re-joins us as John has parked near the intersection of Morris track and the main Jamieson - Licola Rd.



Another one bites the dust on the Licola - Jamieson Rd

After a short break we turn right along the Jamieson Licola Road to a junction with Lazarini Spur Track. The 4 km of off-road from N18 up to Mt Shillinglaw which joins with the AAWT and back to the Jamieson Licola Road, had some difficult bits. This track was over grown in places and markers burnt out. Unfortunately Joe inadvertently misplaced one of his walking poles whilst busy cutting and remarking this section of the track. If future expeditions should find it,

please return it to Joe as he had formed a sentimental attachment to it. Fortunately the line of the track was easy to follow by noting the gap between the tall trees.

Prior to reconnecting with the main road Anna decided to take a tumble. This resulted in the sole of her shoe removing itself from her boot. Prior to this we had already initiated some repairs back at Sambain Chalet. But fundamentally her boots had reached the end of their life. We initiated some additional repairs tying and taping the sole back on. There was not much more she could do except soldier on.



Anna's boots showing signs of wear & tear

We reconnected with the main Jamieson - Licola Rd at 3:00pm and by 4:10 reached the head of Lazarini Spur, where we set up camp for the night.



After dinner it seemed appropriate to relax with a drink and some apricot slice.

Day 12 – Tuesday 10th November
Lazarini Spur – Black River – CS5 Track
 Climb: 600m Descent: 710m
 Distance: 12km Cumulative: 201km
 Campsite: Champion Spur/ CS5 Track Junction

As per usual we rise and shine early at 6:30am to a variety of birdsongs. Depart camp at 8:15am following Lazarini Spur Track. Within the hour we depart Lazarini's and follow McMillan's track markers all the way down towards the Black River. There was a bit of scrub bashing and some awkward fallen trees that needed to be negotiated.

On the way down, we passed trees that were originally blazed by McMillan's party 150 years ago and observed some stone walling also attributed to the original construction of McMillan's Track.



Helmut, Joe, Anna & Michael on Lazarini Tk



Blaze originally cut by McMillan's party



Anna, negotiating fallen trees on the track

There is a beauty and tranquillity about this isolated part of the world which makes the journey worthwhile. From the Black River we climbed steeply up Champion Spur Track where John had established camp. We arrived round 2:30pm.

We were indeed very fortunate to have John Kel-las as our support crew. John has walked the track twice and had been on many track maintenance work parties. His knowledge of the track was of immense benefit to us.



Remnant stone walling



John relaxing at camp

Within half an hour of setting up camp it began to rain so while some of us snoozed in our tents, others huddled under the awning of John's vehicle. After an early dinner consisting of Happy Camper Meatballs, we finished with apricot slice and port. Due to the consistent light rain we hit the sack early around 7:00pm

Day 13 – Wednesday 11th November

CS5 Track – Abbot Link Track - Johnson Hill - Johnson Link Track

Climb: 680m Descent: 720m
Distance: 11km Cumulative: 212km
Campsite: Johnson Link Track

This morning within 20 minutes of our departure we arrive at a point where McMillan's track leaves Champion Spur track. We spend the first 15 minutes marking and clearing the track which appears heavily overgrown. By 9:30 we have lost all signs of McMillan's track and can only scrub bash our way down the spur looking for 'any sign' of its existence. We do manage to find a log cut but that's all. At 11:00am we take a break and establish via GPS that we have only progressed 820 metres, 'as the crow flies'. In real terms we have walked approximately 2km, zig zagging for evidence of the track.



Evidence of a track?

Michael, our main navigator (via GPS) was heard saying: "We are on the track, but just can't see it"

In Joe's words: "Today presented us with one of the greatest challenges as far as the track was concerned. As we dropped off Champion Spur we searched and searched for evidence of the track to no avail. This section was burnt in 2009. The

fire burnt/melted the markers and the regrowth was thick. After two hours we were only 600 meters from our starting point".

Finally at 11:30am we located an old burnt out marker. We're back on track! After a while the undergrowth thinned out and it was relatively easy walking along the ridge. When we got off the ridge we found and lost the benched track a number of times. However, we did put up markers when we were sure we were on the track.

Eventually we hit Stander Creek which was strewn with mining relics from the past. However to view these relics you must turn right when you hit the creek. Those who went left missed seeing them.



Mining relics in Stander Ck

The exit from Stander Creek to Johnson Hill was a grind up the Abbot Link Track. If you thought Morris Rd was steep, this bordered on 'vertical' The track was closed to 4WD vehicles, no doubt because too many had come to grief attempting this section. To prove the point, Anna's boot repairs also failed along this track, and another temporary patch job was done.



Anna undergoing boot repairs

We finally reach our campsite near the intersection of Johnson Link Track and Johnson Hill Track at 4:45pm. There is a lot of mist around with dew dropping off the trees. After setting up our tents we celebrate our last camp with a drop of champers. By the time we hit the sack at 8:30pm the mist is like pea soup.



Campsite in the mist



Celebrating our last camp with champers

Day 14 – Thursday 12th November
Johnson Hill – Bald Hill - Gooley Creek
- Woods Point

Climb: 110m Descent: 520m
 Distance: 8km Cumulative: 220km
 Campsite: n/a

For our last day we met up with Catherine, Roger, Geoff and David from the Mansfield DELWP depot to identify and mark the track from Bald Hill down to the Goulburn River. They were equipped with slashers, secateurs, GPS and tape. What we thought might take a couple of hours ended up taking close on five. The lower we got the thicker the undergrowth, which included blackberries, and the more difficult it got

to find the track. After we crossed Gooley Creek, only the brave took the lead, as the blackberries were causing many scratches. We were grateful to have the slashers. We worked as a team with the DELWP people but they did most of the heavy lifting.



Our friend the Blackberry

We were pleased to finally hit the Johnson Hill track just above Comet Flats and the Goulburn river and walk the last few kilometres into Woods Point on a made road. Arriving at 1:20pm

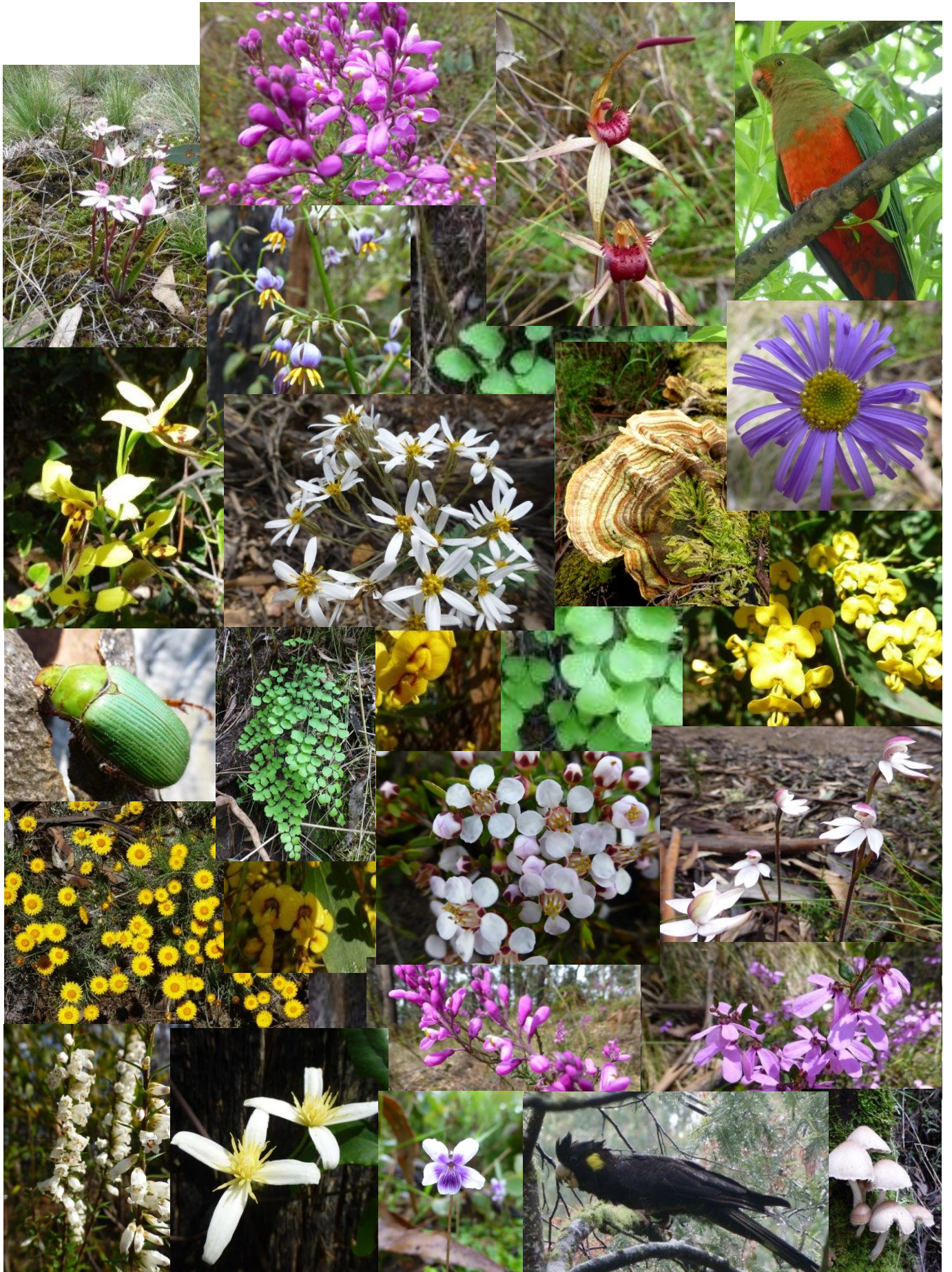
We were delighted to be met by Judy and Jack, our pick up crew, but also by the surprise welcome provided by Charlie Ablitt and Dave Rimmer from BWV who had come from Melbourne. I'm not sure who arranged the short heavy shower of rain just as we entered Woods Point, the heaviest we had since we left Volkswagen. In the main, the weather during our walk of McMillan's was benign. Luck as it turned out was on our side.



Helmut, Michael, Joe & Anna at the end of their walk

It was good to finish, but at the same time it was sad. Our adventure had come to an end. We joined with colleagues and friends for a cuppa and treats. The Woods Point Hotel was closed, which meant we couldn't shout the bar. That was their loss. Shortly after leaving Woods Point the heavens opened and we drove through a massive hailstorm. I couldn't help but think, Wow! How lucky are we!

MCMILLAN'S TRACK — FLORA & FAUNA



MCMILLAN'S TRACK

WILD SHOT



It was a dark and gloomy night when all of a sudden some hunters appeared!

"What are you hunting for?" asked Joe

"BUSHWALKERS" they replied.