



Rat Tales

June 2008

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Ballarat Bushwalking and Outdoor Club

BURCHELL TRAIL

APRIL 25-27 2008

After depositing cars at Steiglitz, our drivers Vicki, Gretta and Craig returned to Boar Gully where the rest of us (Phil, Alex, Ian, Kerry, Yoshi, Brian and myself) were sipping tea and devouring the Boston Bun kindly provided by our fearless leader (Vicki).

The Burchell Trail climbs gently through the dry open woodland that typifies the Brisbane Ranges, eventually meeting the slightly optimistically named McLeans Highway. We left the McLeans Highway after only a short distance and followed a broad spur, which then turns south along a prominent ridgeline, from which the recent bushfire damage could be seen. We re-grouped for lunch in a lovely gully by a dry creek bed. John and Gloria found us here whilst out walking, which later proved to be a lucky break for Phil who was having a fight with an un-cooperative pack. After lunch I set out up the steep climb back up to the McLeans Highway after Craig and Ian, and did my best to conceal my gasping for breath and light-headedness as I met them at the top. On arrival at Little River we made camp and Ian set about making a fire with some help from Alex. Others scoured the creek bed for wood in readiness for an evening of good conversation and mindless flame staring.

Just when I thought that it couldn't get much better John and Gloria arrived with a wonderful platter of nibbles, a couple of bottles of wine and Phil sporting a different pack. Needless to say, there were some pretty contented campers that night.

The second day started with an amble along the dry bed of Little River before again gaining elevation sharply to Griffen Hill, where mobile reception was regained and several calls were made to home. At the back of the group we noticed the change in soil type and admired the "Grugs" (Grass Trees) before dropping down through another gully and climbing yet again to the McLeans. Wadawurrung Track led us down to Stony Creek where some of the group explored the old reser-

voir wall before dipping into the scroggin and treating blisters at the picnic ground. We skylarked on the rocks at 'The Outlook' while a stiff breeze blew our hats off, before returning to our packs and the shelter of the forest. Expecting the weather to turn, lunch was a brief affair on the track before we high-tailed it to Old Mill Camp and to get the tents up before it rained.

Ian got the fire on while our little tent village materialized for a second time. The rain came before we'd eaten and people shot into tents like rabbits into their burrows. Fortunately it wasn't serious enough to dampen our spirits and a little port and chocolate went down well around the fire despite the occasional light shower.

Day 3 began with a hike up to the Durdidwarrah Road where we stowed water containers for collection later by Gretta and Alex, who were b-lining it to Steiglitz. The trail headed roughly west before turning south as we fell into a now familiar pattern. We followed the Burchill Trail (except for a slight unintentional diversion) through to Graham's Creek Gully where we stopped for more scroggin. The forest here is pretty, but unfortunately has suffered from the introduction of Cinnamon Fungus. Then we blazed on past The Crossing picnic area and up a steep climb to Steiglitz Road and dropped over the other side into a picturesque gully. A great lunch spot was found in the dry bed of Sutherland Creek where we soaked up the sunshine. We were lucky not to get the forecast hail! After lunch we rock-hopped up the creek before finding ourselves at the Steiglitz courthouse where Alex and Gretta were waiting to greet us after having collected the empty water containers.

Thanks must go to Vicki for a well-organized walk and to the whole group for making my first club walk so enjoyable. Thanks also to John and Gloria for drinks and nibbles.

Darren Bowman