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Sunraysia Bushwalkers

April 2012



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Affiliated with:



Membership Fees

New Members \$30

Existing Members \$25

Subs due July each year



Our meeting on Wednesday evening should be of great interest to learn just how Roger planned to carry that pack on the Octago Bike ride and the Routeburn Greenstone track!

Don't forget to
check out the
website:

www.sunbushwalk.net.au





0000NEW ZEALAND OTAGO RAIL TRAIL MARCH 2012

*Pedaled by Dick Johnstone, Russell Shallard, Michael Jobe,
Barbara & Roger Cornell*

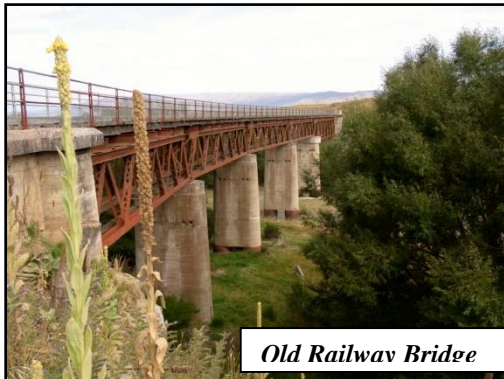


After months of planning we find ourselves in Queenstown about to board a bus to take us to Clyde for the commencement of cycling the Otago Rail Trail. It is still early morning when we get to Clyde, a beautifully preserved old town with old but low stone buildings. On the outskirts we disembark at the Rail Trail Base and have a final luggage reorganization on what we take with the bikes, what gets stored and what gets delivered daily to our overnight stops. Inside the big shed are racks with hundreds of bikes. We are each issued with a bike and helmet fully adjusted for our individual stature. It has been suggested that we take the leafy track along the Clutha River to Alexandra. Willow trees line the track along the banks of the light blue waters of the fast flowing stream all the way to the bridge at Alexandra where we cross over. Not surprisingly, it's morning tea time so we settle in to the Tin Goose Café.



Bridge over Clutha River at Alexandra

Through the town we cross the muddy waters of the Manuhierikia River and find our entry to the Rail Trail. This is undulating country surrounded with spectacular mountains with some patches of snow. With the steel lines and sleepers now gone, the riding surface is compact gravel. Soon we find one of the very many shelter sheds displaying information relating to the immediate surroundings that in this instance, is essentially pasture country. Riding on, we cross yet another bridge. Many of the railway bridges are big long complex structures that are now fitted with side safety rails. Some retain the old sleepers with the gaps filled with newer timber and some of the stone supporting pylons are testament to the skills of artisans who toiled here over one hundred years ago.



Old Railway Bridge

The Tavern at Chatto Creek has all the offerings for a pleasurable lunch. A large pot of amber fluid is known as a "handle" that helps satiate one's thirst. Beyond here is Tiger Hill with the steepest gradient of one in fifty winding its way up for quite some distance. A small porcupine crosses the track and is soon hidden in the grass. Soon we are in Omakau where we leave the Trail and ride the short distance to Black's Hotel in the old historic township of Ophir. Armed with a guide paper, we ride through the main street with its old buildings before returning to the Hotel. Even though the sun remains higher in the sky here in the late afternoon, the temperature drops rapidly. This area has the distinction of having recorded



Tea at Black's Hotel – Delicious Blue Cod



the coldest winter temperature in the whole of the country. The Pub offers wonderful country hospitality and we meet other riders before dining outside.

Next morning with continental breakfast provided and a farewell photo shot from our friendly host, we ride the longer route back to the Trail across an historic road bridge. A short distance along we discover the first remnant rail platform and nearby a cemetery. From here the track runs gently uphill and after some time we cross a curved bridge before arriving at Lauder at an appropriate time for morning coffee at yet another café. The morning tranquility is broken

by a Hercules Aircraft flying low through the valley.



The hills here are devoid of trees and the annual rainfall is little more than the very arid parts of Australia. A sign advises that this is the last place for twenty two kilometers for buying refreshments. Moving on, we cross even more amazing bridges before arriving at our first tunnel. There is only darkness inside; no light at its end that we could detect, so torches are essential as our eyes struggle with the blackness.

Eventually we see the proverbial light and emerge from the bricked exit. Further on we arrive at a second tunnel but this time a small window of light can be seen at the far end.



The scene of cleared land and the water course on our left hand side is reminiscent of the magnificent landscapes painted by Arthur Streeton, the far mountains are peaked with white snow that endures year round. It takes some time to get to the Tavern at Otarehua where we stop for yet another fine luncheon. A short distance past the town, a side road leads to an old mining site that still holds a few relics from when gold was sought there.

Back on track, a long gentle climb ever upward finally reaches the highest point for the journey.



Highest Point 681m – It is all downhill from here!



Wonderful Wedderburn Cottages

From here we coast easily down and around the hillsides and arrive at Wedderburn Cottages, together with an alfresco masseur with table set ready to offer relief for those in need. They command a panoramic view of the forward landscape as it slopes far away into the distance. The nearby Wedderburn Tavern is a very old stone structure dating from 1885 but today offers fine hospitality for an evening dinner. As we walk there we find a number of large clean mushrooms but for the moment have no real means of preparing them for eating.

Next morning the riding is easy because of the long downhill track to Ranfurly. Having traveled thus so far, it is still hard to get a real comprehension of the monumental difficulties that the first construction gangs would have endured as they gouged cuttings through hills and built major embankments across depressions. Much of the work was done with very simple tools and equipment and we wonder what those workers would think of today's use of their undertaking. Our riding is easy on the gravel surface especially as our hired bikes are impeccably maintained. Some of the route today skirts great river floodplains that are now rich paddocks. They are a sharp contrast with the shallow soils of the higher country. Arriving at Ranfurly we find a morning coffee stop and later take a look at the well maintained former railway station building that now serves as an information base. We discover that the country's worst rail tragedy occurred on the former line in 1943 when a speeding train derailed, killing seventeen people.

Goodness what on earth happened to these fellows!



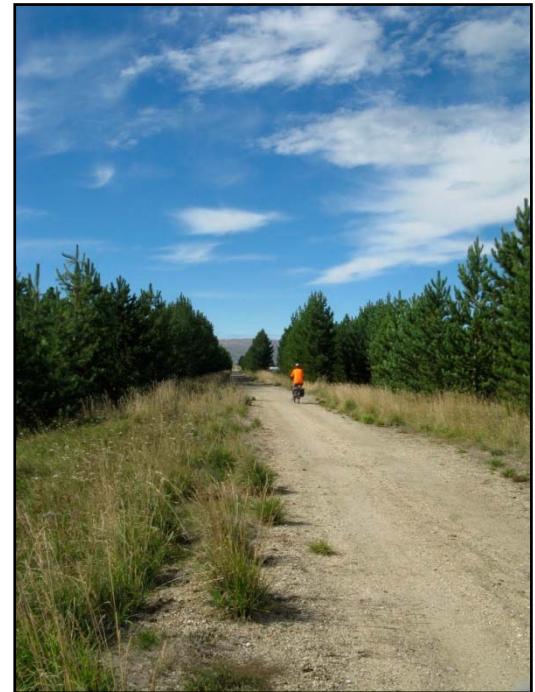


Farm house accommodation

We lunch at the Waipiata Country Hotel. The operation of the trail appears to support significant catering and accommodation enterprises in an otherwise sparsely populated region. The next section brings another major bridge as well as another tunnel. We have the deep Taieri Gorge to one side and now the evidence of rabbits is very clear. We ride ever forward and cross another large bridge just as we reach Hyde. After a quick drink at the early closing watering hole, we ride another kilometer to Pine Grove from where we are driven a short distance to a former farmhouse that is our night's accommodation. It is well appointed and at six thirty our hot

evening meal is delivered. During the evening it commences raining and by morning the rain is constant. Hoping the sky may clear, we delay our pick up for an hour but eventually have to don rain jackets and pedal in the wet. Riding is quite different this morning. The surrounding hills are shrouded in mist. With a slight head wind we now find that the wet surface presents some rolling resistance so the result is expending some energy to even ride downhill. We are grateful for our decision to ride from west to east as we believe that the opposite direction would have been tougher. After about an hour the rain fades but the higher elevations remain hidden. Arriving at Middlemarch we return our bikes, take a shower, visit the museum and lunch before being driven in the bus to Pukerangi where we board the Taieri Gorge Train for the final journey to the magnificent city of Dunedin.

The trains to Clyde ceased operation in 1990 after completion of the major dam project. In 2000 after the lines had gone, the trail offered a scenic passage for walkers, cyclists and horse riders. Today it offers a splendid recreational experience.



Routeburn Greenstone Walk Which Followed on from the Otago Bike Ride.....



Our pick up for the Routeburn Greenstone walk is from the Leviathan Hotel in Dunedin. The whole adventure has been organized by the Milton Rotary Club Tramping Club as a fund raiser and the promotion has been extensively spread both in New Zealand and overseas. We are members of the twenty three person group who, with the addition of four leaders will trek through parts of both Mt Aspiring and Fjordland National Parks for the next five days. The bus travels south through Milton passing through rich farm lands and nearby

forests before turning westwards towards Queenstown. Along the way we traverse barren bare hills and see the Clutha River that we first encountered at Clyde. We discover a significant fruit growing area in one of the major valleys and as we follow the road at the base of the hills close to Cromwell, we learn that vast engineering works have been undertaken to stabilize them since the construction of the Clyde Dam.

The drop-off spot – note the mountains & valleys beyond!



From Queenstown the bus follows the edge of Lake Wakatipu for some forty five kilometers to Glenorchy where we spend the first night together. There is still plenty of remaining afternoon light to appreciate the dominating presence of the mountains each side of us as well as the stark icy white slopes of a more distant peak further up the valley. There is no mistaking the reality that we are in a very different land. Lesson number one is that we will be spending the nights at close quarters with other walkers as many sleepers are housed under limited roofing in these parts. It is also the last night of a la carte dining and wining for some time, at the welcoming hotel.



*Barb, Roger, Russell & Dick at the start.
Mike having already begun the walk.*

along a gently rising well-formed pathway through Beech forest. It is a fine clear morning and the rays of morning sun illuminate the masses of small green leaves that characterize so many of the plants here. Before long, we are moving along the side of the Routeburn Gorge and get views of the clear water as it flows and tumbles through the rocky bottom. The group divides its leaders with one at the very front and at least one behind the last walker. Not surprisingly, we saw more of the tail end leaders. From a fork in the track it is only five minutes to the Routeburn Flats Hut and our first experience of lunch being soup and a sandwich. We are independent walkers as distinct from the alternative comfortable catered experience.



From the hut, the track steadily rises through forest for a considerable time and then suddenly the group of buildings at Routeburn Falls Hut appears. The hut verandah overlooks a vast valley that becomes filled with light misty rain just at our time of arrival. As it is still early afternoon, our leaders Steve and Ross offer to escort any volunteers to a lookout far above the huts. With raincoats donned, this trip commences with the outward track past the nearby tumbling Routeburn waterfalls before a fork and a steep climb to a knob within the greater ranges that then delivers a vista over the hut ever so far below and then much further beyond, down the massive valley.



The 3 days food for 26 hungry walkers

By the time we return we are slightly wet on the outside but it is not cold. The common room has a warm heater with some drying space above. In no time at all dinner is served.

It rains heavily for much of the night as the sound drums on the roof. Some reports were that 150mm had fallen but the thundering torrent of swollen waters at the nearby falls is the best indicator of the volume of rainfall. Early in the morning, lower level cloud blots out the valley but there are some windows of visibility that reveal newly cascading water powering down the steep mountain sides. We think the rain is lifting, but, right at departure time the signs to put on raincoats are clear. The rain is gentle and steady but much of the walking track has become a fast flowing stream. Falls from last night are still running down the slopes where periodically they cross and charge down the walkway. Much of the surrounding landscape is shrouded

Forever upwards



with cloud yet from time to time the masses of waterfalls appear with their white lines down the ridges providing a grand spectacle. Some high peaks give a glimpse of permanent snow. The track goes upwards into the open sub-alpine lands where we seek shelter and lunch by crowding inside the small hut at Harris Saddle.



Forever downwards – Lake Mackenzie

Dry boots are but a memory as we continue through the high rocky track for quite some distance until amazingly a clear view of Lake Mackenzie can now be seen at the bottom of the deep valley ever so far below. Walkers ahead show that the track zigzags way down to the lower level where the hut can be seen. Towards the lower part of the valley the trees re-emerge; firstly with fine white lichen reaching out from the twigs and branches and only a little further on where they are closer, we see whole trees covered with dense green mosses made brilliant by the afternoon sun that has miraculously appeared.

Lake Mackenzie Hut overlooks a lake of the same name. A short walk leads to a very attractive site for campers but for the moment the prospect of tenting has absolutely no appeal. Following dinner, the resident Ranger delivered the mandatory fire contingency instructions, before speaking on the impact of stoats on the native bird population followed by an appeal for donations of traps.

Next morning we awake early where in the very first light the moon remains prominent in the clear sky. After breakfast we again take to the track and walk upwards through mossy forest similar to yesterday's stands. The shadow of the mountain range blocks the rays of the morning sun shining into the walkway thus limiting the display of vivid colours that were so apparent the previous afternoon. It is a steady climb along the high side of the Hollyford Valley where the forest thins out to a lesser number of white lichen clad trees. The sky has changing cloud at several levels but most of the time the highest peaks are shrouded.



What comfort & luxury

large green lichens. Compared with Australia, the trees are all relatively young, having established themselves after a destructive fire some two hundred and seventy years ago. The track to Mckellar Hut passes beside the lake before once again cutting through forest. Tonight we have the luxury of a privately owned hut that offers lights, hot showers a full kitchen and very comfortable facilities.

A descent takes us to Lake Howden Hut for a lunchtime stop. It is at the junction of the side track to Key Summit, a high vantage point that affords panoramic views in several directions including way down the Hollyford Valley. The trees here are host to prolific red mosses and





Dick crossing large landslide

We had been encouraged to sleep in this morning because it is a relatively short walk to the next hut. The initial track is through forest but soon opens into the riverine plain of the Greenstone River. All the time the towering mountains each side of the valley ensure we stay traveling in the right direction. There has been a frost overnight and on the shaded grassy parts the ice endures well into the morning. Most of the forest track is again in the shadow of the sheer range above. Later in the morning we reach a massive old rock slide. It is a vast slope of black boulders that has obliterated all the trees in its path but we find that our track requires us to carefully make our way across

the half kilometer challenge. Some distance ahead a long, high one person swing bridge spans a creek where just beyond we arrive at the Greenstone Hut. Being still early afternoon, a number of adventurous souls take an icy dip in the nearby swimming hole, notwithstanding the provision of hot showers in the hut.

The last day's walk begins early because twenty kilometers must be covered before 2pm. The track goes all the way along the scenic Greenstone Valley. One enterprise controlled by Maori people grazes cattle here in the warmer months. Towards the last section of the river we see hardy swimmers on inflatable rafts riding the fast flowing river. As we emerge from the protection of the trees, we find a very brisk wind whipping up fair sized waves on the lake. Our water taxi takes little time to take us to the other side to our waiting bus complete with cold refreshments.



Taxi for weary walkers

Our leaders for the journey have tramped many of the well-known tracks in the region consistently maintain that the Routeburn Greenstone circuit is their favourite. We have the very good fortune of being here for a wonderful variety of its ever changing moods and views. Every day is so rewarding.



Our Leaders: Steve McLay & Ross Flett

Both reports by Dick Johnstone

*Why of course I recycle.
I've been using the
Same age for years now.*

Magazine Review – ‘Wilderness’ March 2012



A little browsing in the airport at Queenstown awaiting our flight home produced the magazine under review. Similar to Australia's Wild magazine the New Zealand magazine contained some insights into NZ tramping (not bushwalking) as well as an article on the Cape to Cape walk described as "135km of Australia's coastal paradise".

The article 'Cooking up a fuss' gained my interest sufficiently to purchase the magazine and covers one walker's experience with airlines when transporting a camping stove. The method of rendering a stove SAFE for airline transport by flushing it with vegetable cooking oil or equivalent product I found to be a novel approach but no mention of burning off all fuel and using an air compressor to get out any remaining vapours was not included. What did appear to be the most important considerations were the olfactory gland of the inspector at the check-in and a copy of the most recent stove packing recommendations of the airline being used. Any fuel smell prohibits transport aboard an airline. Part of the concluding sentence reads 'I am seriously considering leaving my stove at home in the future'.

I was alerted to the fact that on our walk of the Routeburn Track we had missed the Spooky Split Rock pictured in the Hot Shot section of the magazine.

Other articles were titled:-

- Preconceived Ideas – ignore others concepts of a walk and do it yourself.
- Wild Buyer's Guide – Sleeping mats and Sleeping Mats (2 articles).
- Body & Sole – Exercises for taking to the hills.
- Wild Medicine – Water intoxication (hyponatremia).
- Gear Review – Alpine Packs.
- Gear Review – Footwear for the fast & light.
- 5 Articles on walks etc.

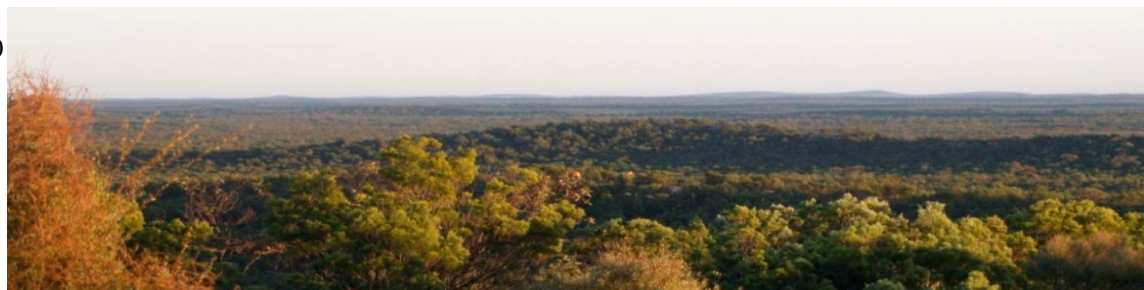
The magazine is available as a digital publication for iphone, ipad and PC through Apple's App store or at www.zinio.com at \$A31.07 for 12 issues – keyword search 'Wilderness'

WEBSITE UPDATE

The site now includes dated update information on the Home page usually with links. Sunraysia Bushwalkers Facebook site is now viewable by persons not on Facebook. President's page – moved to 'About Us' section of website and available to public. A link to Governance Issues for Not for Profit Organisations – Clubs

Some statistics to 31st March 2012:

- Home page strikes 1721
- Program and Walks 342
- About Us 302
- Join Us 259.



PROGRAM SUMMER/AUTUMN 2012

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

Day & Date	Activity	Grade	Trip Leader	Phone No	Comments
APRIL					
Wed 5 th	BUSINESS MEETING				
Sun 15 th	Bike Ride Merbein	SM	Michael Jobe	5023 8257	Ride through Merbein Common
MAY					
Wed 2 nd	GENERAL MEETING – Slide Show of 1970's Kayak Trips down Tasmania's Franklin River				
Sat/Sun 5-6 th	Mungo Loop MTB Ride	EL	Noel Hayward	5025 7455	Supported overnight ride, camp at Belah Camp
JUNE					
Wed 6 th	ANNUAL MEETING				
Sat 23 rd	Explore Pooncarie	SE	Dick Johnstone	5022 0030	Explore the river, cemetery & historic Pooncarie Pub
JULY					
Wed 5 th	GENERAL MEETING – non Business Meeting				
Sun 22 nd	Bike Ride Red Cliffs	SE	Michael Jobe	5023 8257	Explore south of Red Cliffs Boat Ramp.
AUGUST					
Wed 1 st	BUSINESS MEETING				
Sat/Sun 18 th /19 th	Belated Winter Solstice at Pine Plains Lodge	SE	Noel Hayward	5025 7455	Join us around a big campfire, for a camp oven banquet.
Sun 26 th	Ride or walk, Abbotsford Bridge	SE	Michael Jobe	5023 8257	Explore west of Abbotsford Bridge
SEPTEMBER					
Wed 5 th	GENERAL MEETING – non Business Meeting				
Sat 22 nd	Mt Henschke day walk	SM	Noel Hayward	5025 7455	Optional vehicle camp O/N or pack camp beyond Mt Henschke
OCTOBER					
Wed 3 rd	BUSINESS MEETING				
Sat/Sun 20 th /21 st	Grampians Overnight walk	MH	Roger Cornell	5025 7325	Alternate day walks from Halls Gap
NOVEMBER					
Wed 3 rd	GENERAL MEETING				
17 th /18 th	Murrumbidgee Canoeing	ME	Barb Cornell	5025 7325	Yanga Woolshed to Murray

ADVANCE WARNING 2013 -14 WALKS.

April 2013	Waldheim Huts Cradle Mountain. Day or overnight walks around the Cradle to admire the autumn foliage of the <i>Nothofagus Cunninghamham</i>	Noel	5025 7455
April 2014	Himalayan Walk. Everest Base Camp and/or Goyko Lakes	Noel	5023 8257