

Old Scotch Bushwalking Club



June 2020

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Visit the bushwalking club's page on the OSCAnet website: <u>www.oscanet.com.au</u>. Click on 'Clubs' at the top of the home page, and then on 'Bushwalking Club'.

Along the Great Southern Rail Trail to Foster



Walkers pause near the end of the major walk during our memorable weekend at Foster (13-15 March). The main walk was a 13.5km hike along part of the Great Southern Rail Trail, from Fish Creek to the old Foster railway station, then into Foster township. Twelve walkers participated in this walk, led by Laurine Symington. For more, see pages 6-8.



AGM at Foster

At the club's 2020 annual general meeting, held at the Prom Country Lodge at Foster on the Saturday evening of our weekend away (14 March), members of the 2019 committee were returned unopposed, and formed the 2020 committee. Laurine Symington was elected the club's first female President, and David Ashton was appointed our first Honorary Life Member – see page 3



Ten questions – Laurine Symington

How long have you been a member of the bushwalking club?

At least 20 years. I wasn't a foundation member, but I registered shortly after.

How did you find out about the club?

Most probably from *Great Scot*, a regular magazine which appears in our home and always has something of interest.

What are your links with Scotch College?

I am the daughter of an Old Boy, Roy Spratt (Scotch 1934-38), the wife of an Old Boy, Brian Symington (Scotch 1961-66) and the mother of an Old Boy, Scott Symington (Scotch 1989-92). Our grandson, Ranulf Buchanan, is booked in for Scotch in 2028.

What is your dream walk within Australia?

The Great Ocean Walk. I know the club has done many of the sections of this walk, but I was unable to come on those walks, probably because I try to support my husband when he has pipe band competitions.

What is your dream walk overseas?

I was planning to get to Japan and discover walking along parts of the Nakasendo Way in combination with bike riding in the Shimanami Kaido, but that is on the backburner as I wait for the world to reopen.

What is your dream holiday in Australia or overseas?

Currently I am redoing the planning for across the Nullarbor (playing golf on the way) to Perth, then north to Port Hedland and home across the Great Central Road via Uluru, the Oodnadatta Track and Mildura, postponed from 2020!

What are your hobbies and interests, other than bushwalking?

My hobbies and interests are mostly outdoors. The farm is only 35 acres but there are sufficient problems to keep Hawthorn Farmers busy, especially with back-up



ers busy, especially with back-up from my neighbour, who is my brother.

Bike riding keeps me fit and takes up lots of time, depending where I go. I have had many hobbies, but in my old age I have realised you need to find places to put your completed articles, such as leadlight doors, a crochet ball gown, saddles – and a horse!

What was your occupation?

I qualified as an accountant in my late 20s and found getting that first job a challenge. I ended up as Acting Finance Manager for the Yallourn TAFE College, but the family was living in Melbourne



so I moved to a very mundane job before deciding to update my qualifications to education.

Retirement was from teaching at RMIT, where I landed after an interesting time at the Barrier Reef TAFE in Townsville and Sunshine Coast University.

What football team do you barrack for?

I grew up following Essendon because that is what my brother did. Dad had always followed Hawthorn, having lived in Hawthorn, but we never went to the football. My only VFL game was a preliminary final in the ladies' area in the members. What an eye-opener – ladies???

What is your favourite Melbourne restaurant?

I don't have one, as unfortunately my husband doesn't enjoy eating out, so we tend not to!





President's Tree-Stump

Thank you to all the members who voted for me to assume this very responsible position as the President of the Old Scotch Bushwalking Club. My association with the School is long, and as I look at the time Brian spends with the School pipe band, Scotch is an integral component of our lives. I am so glad we live nearby.

Who would have thought 2020 was going to be like this! There were some rumours around during the weekend at Foster on 14 and 15 March. But we were not put off, and had a fantastic weekend of good walks, good food, good company and great weather. Thank you, Di and Murray Hooper, for sorting out the walks, and thanks also to John and Margaret Moore for the liaison with the accommodation, and to Andrew Gibson for sorting out the money.

So where to from here? COVID-19 is ruling our lives, although as I write this it looks as if our lockdown conditions might be improving.

Bushwalking Victoria has advised its members not to walk until the end of June 2020. So we are ready to resume our walking in July, subject to the restrictions in place at the time.



Tom Morris is planning for a walk in the bush on Sunday 12 July, and the Stanleys are deciding on the most suitable walk for Wednesday 22 July.

The Mildura weekend away, scheduled for October 15 to 18, should be okay according to the current guidelines for intrastate travel. But we are not encouraging bookings yet.

I look forward to seeing you out on the track, with our walks recommencing in July.

Laurine Symington

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Our first President awarded our first Honorary Life Membership

GRAHAM STANLEY

Our Immediate Past President, David Ashton, has been awarded an Honorary Life Membership of Old Scotch Bushwalking Club to recognise the enormous amount of time and work he has devoted to the club.

His surprise award was bestowed on him at the club's Annual General Meeting at the Foster weekend away in March this year. It was the club's last outing before the coronavirus pandemic closed virtually all contact with everyone else.



As there was no provision for Honorary Life Membership in our current rules and regulations, the meeting had to resolve to introduce that new category. Prior to that motion, David was asked to vacate the meeting.

Once that new category was unanimously resolved by those at the AGM, a second motion nominating David for Honorary Life Membership was put to the meeting and passed unanimously.

There is no doubt in anyone's mind that David is truly a very worthy recipient of this inaugural award. He was our founding President from 1994 to 2000 and then again from 2016 to 2020. He has edited *Tracknotes* for more than 20 years.

He is the only President to have served two separate terms in that role. While he is now officially our

Immediate Past President, he is also our Vice President, because no one else was willing to stand for that position.

David's contribution to the Old Scotch Collegians' Association and to our Bushwalking Club was also acknowledged some years ago when he became the very first Old Scotch Collegian to be awarded an OSCA Merit Award.

David is one of those of whom it could be said that they never left Scotch. He left school as a student in 1965, after coming to Scotch as a six year old in 1953. David didn't, however, stay away altogether. He kept coming back through the school gate to serve in the role of Development Office – Communications (yes, that's his title!) and the Assistant Editor of *Great Scot*.

He also plays a role in many of the School's other publications including the School's official, annual journal, *The Scotch Collegian*.

David is also a Verger for weddings at the Littlejohn Memorial Chapel, a role he shares with Bushwalking Club Past President, Norrie McLeod.

And then there are the numerous family connections to the School. David's grandfather, father, brother, son, uncle, four cousins and a nephew together with many other relatives all attended the school. It is, therefore, not surprising that David is already a Life Member of the Old Scotch Collegians' Association.

There can be no better Old Scotch Bushwalking Club member to be honoured with Honorary Life Membership of the club than David Ashton.

Our midweek walks

Discovering Newport

LAURINE SYMINGTON and IAN HANSEN

Thursday 27 February was a delightful day for a walk in the Western Suburbs – ideal conditions to discover a place that we didn't know existed.

We travelled to Spotswood railway station on the 9.44am train from Southern Cross. Well, that was the plan, but some of us missed the connection and arrived LATE at the coffee shop near Spotswood station.

Setting off, the path followed the train line towards Newport, and we stopped on the way to imagine the 200 to 300 workers rushing from the station to the Newport Power Stations – A, B, C and D. At Newport station there is a concrete mural named *Nuts and Bolts* near the pedestrian underpass, which represents the former industrial activities of the Newport area.

Newport A was a coal-fired power station which opened in 1918, and was built and operated by Victorian Railways to supply power for the electrification of the suburban rail system. It was also used by the Melbourne City Council Electric Supply Department, the precursor to the State Electricity Commission of Victoria.

Newport B was opened in 1923 by the SECV, and Newport C opened in 1947, again by the SECV. The power station boilers were originally fuelled by black coal from New South Wales, until the 1950s when briquettes from the La Trobe Valley were used. Later power stations were built in the La Trobe Valley, nearer to the fuel supply.

The only remaining power station is Newport D, operating since 1981 and easily identified by its tall



Graham Stanley makes his careful way across the stepping stones in Newport Lake.

chimney. It uses natural gas to generate steam, and can produce up to 510 megawatts of electrical power. The gas-fired power station is used for standby and peak loads.

We picked up a few snippets of local history from the substation audio tour, before heading inland to the Newport Lakes Reserve. One was an interesting tale of the thief who broke into the chemist shop in the local shopping centre. It was before most people had cars, so the thief went from the chemist shop to the train station for his getaway, but the signalman saw all this unfolding and ensured that the train was delayed long enough for the police, whom he had called, to detain the thief before the train was permitted to leave the station. We also heard of the local butcher who was an SP bookmaker in his spare time.



The walkers pause beside Newport Lake.

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Our midweek walks

The Newport Lakes Reserve was created from a former bluestone quarry and rubbish tip, and the 33ha site has been extensively planted with native vegetation. We strolled around the lake and walked across the large stepping stones. This area of the park is a sanctuary for waterbirds and wildlife. There is a large off-leash area for the local dogs, and I made an observation: this is one of the few parks which has room for a sports oval but is not a designated sports oval, just a lovely flat area where children play and dogs walk.

It was a beautiful day but we noted the lack of children and walkers in the park. Of course, this was before the COVID-19 lockdown, and probably there are now lots of locals getting their exercise by strolling around the paths like on our crowded shared paths

We returned to Newport station for the trip home. Thank you lan, for organising a delightful walk in what was a new area for us.



Idyllic scene at Newport Lake

Honorary member Gil Albury dies



Gil Albury as a young man

The club was sad to learn of the death of Old Scotch Collegian and our club's honorary member, Gil Albury. We awarded honorary membership to Gil after he made two generous donations to our club funds in recent years.

Gil attended Scotch from 1951 to 1956 in the Junior School, after which he attended Haileybury from 1957-60. Leaving school, he trained in horticulture and worked for Melbourne City Council and for private nurseries.

After that, Gil's career became varied and was interspersed with lengthy periods of overseas travel. He worked for G J Coles, Ensign Dry Cleaners, drove for Brighton Towing, worked for BHP, and as a cowboy and a gardener again in Queensland, before settling at Broken Hill. Gil died in the Broken Hill Hospital on 26 February and was buried in the Broken Hill Cemetery on 10 March.



Nuts and Bolts, the concrete mural at Newport station

Our weekend walks

Our enjoyable pre-isolation weekend at Foster

JOHN MOORE, with contributions by LAURINE SYMINGTON, GRAHAM STANLEY, DI and MURRAY HOOPER and DAVID ASHTON

Twenty-nine club members enjoyed a great weekend at Foster (13-15 March) – in fact, one of our best ever weekends away! As events unfolded, we realised that we were fortunate that the weekend could take place at all, as it was just before everyone went into self-isolating lockdown.

We booked in at the Prom Country Lodge at Foster, a really nice small town of just 1164 people, 174km southeast of Melbourne, which is a gateway town to Wilsons Promontory. A quirky fact is that Foster library was the first in Victoria to be open for access 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It also provides access to computers and the internet for the 30 per cent of the town's population who do not have internet access. There you are – beat that if you can, Fish Creek!

Back in the 19th century, Foster, originally known as Stockyard Creek, was a quiet, sedate stopping-off point for people travelling from Port Albert to Westernport. But all that changed in an instant with the discovery of gold in 1870, when there was a small-scale gold rush – small, that is, in comparison to what had happened 20 years earlier with the gold discoveries in Victoria and NSW.



Participants in the rail trail walk led by John Moore

Another quirky fact emerges in relation to the discovery of gold hereabouts. In the mid-1800s, illegal logging was common in the Foster vicinity, and when evidence of unlicensed logging floated downriver, an inspector was dispatched to investigate. While he was sleeping overnight at a local farm, the loggers got wind of his presence nearby, and next day posed as innocent prospectors panning for gold in Stockyard Creek. Eureka! By chance they actually discovered gold, and that led to a moderate gold rush in the area in 1870.



Pausing during the Mount Hoddle-Fish Creek walk

Now here's something about the name of the town. Foster was first named 'Stockyard Creek' after the watercourse flowing through it, but it was renamed 'Foster' in 1884 when (according to the all-knowing Wikipedia) the Sale police magistrate (Mr William H Foster) complained pretentiously, 'I can't hold court in a creek!' – so the town suddenly became 'Foster'. It is now a dairying and grazing town, located in a prosperous farming area.

On the Friday evening of our weekend away, we headed off to the Exchange Hotel in the Foster CBD for some country-style dining. As we tackled our very full plates, a couple of chaps from the Foster Football Club came by selling chook raffle tickets – and although the prizes turned out not to be chooks, a few of our diners did pick up prizes, including a huge fruit and vegetable tray, won by Margaret Moore.



Lunch during the long walk on Saturday. (David Ashton is sitting on his fold-out chair, which makes him appear small in the photo.)

Our weekend walks



Sweeping views of verdant countryside during the Mount Hoddle-Fish Creek walk

Saturday morning dawned fine and cool, and we had three walks to choose from, organised by Murray and Di Hooper.

The major walk was a 12.5km hike from Fish Creek to the old Foster railway station, along part of the Great Southern Rail Trail, in which 12 walkers participated. This very pleasant walk, led by Laurine Symington, actually ended up as approximately 13.5km, because there was an additional final section of walking from the old railway station back to the centre of town.

Rail trails are by definition not prone to sharp inclines or declines, so the walkers enjoyed the gentle rise over the first 5.5km, followed by a gradual decline over the rest of the walk into Foster. Along the way there were long, straight sections and evidence of considerable work done on cuttings and embankments, which must have been arduous to construct in the days of horsepower, picks and shovels. The day was pleasantly warm, and walkers were treated to picturesque glimpses of green, rolling hills along the way. Lunch was in a park-like area with picnic tables, adjacent to the rail trail. At walk's end, coffee and cakes back in Foster were most welcome.

Led by Murray Hooper, the second walk was from the Mount Hoddle car park to Fish Creek. This was quite a demanding walk of about 9km, but the weather was clear and the views were spectacular. Walking in the rolling hills of Gippsland ensured several long up and down hills were encountered. We lunched, chatting to a group of walkers training for the Three Capes Walk in Tasmania, before traversing down to follow the Old Quarry Road to Fish Creek, where we relaxed over a cup of coffee.

The third walk was led by John Moore. Seven walkers commenced this rail trail walk at Lowrys Road, near Fish Creek. A short distance into this section we came to the Hoddle Lookout, with fine views across the farmlands to Wilsons Promontory and Corner Inlet. The group then walked the 7km into Foster and, arriving at the site of the old railway station, proceeded to Pearl Park on the banks of Stockyard Creek, where they enjoyed a late lunch and coffee in the park.

Back at the motel walkers rested and recuperated ahead of the club's annual general meeting, which was held in the motel's atrium. During the AGM, Laurine Symington was elected the club's sixth President – and our first female President. Outgoing President, David Ashton was appointed as the club's first Honorary Life Member.



David Ashton hands the Presidential walking stick over to incoming President Laurine Symington at the AGM

Everyone enjoyed the fellowship of post-AGM/pre-dinner drinks outside two of our motel rooms, after which the group descended on Max's Restaurant at the motel for a sumptuous meal. Alas, in the absence of the Gibson family there were no post-dinner games, but most were ready for an early night after the exertions of the day.

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Our weekend walks

Foster continued

Sunday was another fine cool day, although a light drizzle was falling as we arrived at Walkerville North after a 25minute drive from Foster. There we were met by Di and Murray Hooper, and walkers set off for Walkerville. Some took the 'high road' (led by Murray) and some took the 'low road' (led by Di). The high road was the well-formed cliff path, from which there was a sidetrack to the tiny old cemetery with its 30-odd crumbling headstones. The low road was along the wide beach, with its extensive reaches of sand at low tide.

The two walking groups merged at what is now the ghost town of Walkerville. But back in the early 20th century it was very different. Commercial quantities of lime, processed from raw material obtained from surrounding sandstone cliffs and burned in kilns, were bagged and exported at this former settlement for transport by ship to Melbourne. Walkerville lime is said to have been used in building Flinders Street Station. Evidence of the kilns persists near the beach.

The tide was still well out, and the two groups, now merged, strolled back along the beach and then set off for the Hoopers' shearing shed at Tarwin Lower for morning tea. This was no ordinary morning tea – there were delicious cakes, slices and biscuits to enjoy, and coffee and tea. Everyone sang happy birthday to Sonia Gilderdale, whose birthday it was on that Sunday. Then it was time to set off for home.



Ian McMichael with Murray and Di Hooper in the Hoopers' woolshed

Many thanks to Margaret and John Moore and Di and Murray Hooper for all they did to make the Foster weekend so memorable and enjoyable. Our next weekend away is scheduled for Mildura/Wentworth in October.



Sonia Gilderdale's birthday was celebrated in the Hoopers' woolshed



Lime kilns on Walkerville beach – reminders of a very different era at Walkerville



Survey results are in

IAN HANSEN

Late last year the club's committee developed a survey form and circulated it to members in order to gain a better understanding of the activities in which club members wished to participate.

The results are in and we have found that ... we are doing a pretty good job. A significant majority of respondents:

- Prefer weekend walks to weekdays
- Favour rural/suburban walks over CBD walks, or walks involving museums/art galleries
- Enjoy walks that are rated as easy to moderate, cover around 11km, and occupy no more than four to five hours of walking.

Nearly all of the respondents want to retain two 'weekends away' each year, with March representing a clear preference over November.

The only disappointing note was that we attracted virtually no interest from respondents in leading future walks, other than from 'old hands'. As we continue to age gracefully, it becomes even more important to share the load of planning and leading our walk activities.

Finally, thank you to all those club members who contributed so meaningfully to the survey.

Our past walks



This is the first of a series of articles recalling interesting walks from the club's past. The article below (which has been edited) was written by our current President, Laurine Symington, after a group of club members travelled to Sydney for the weekend of 27-29 August 2004. Laurine takes up the story ...

A great fun weekend in Sydney

The fun began on Friday evening when seven of us took part in the OSCA Sydney branch's annual dinner, where we shared our table with the [then] school Principal, Dr Gordon Donaldson, and his wife, Joyce.

Saturday morning dawned bright, sunny and clear – perfect conditions for a 10km walk/stroll along the harbour shore from Manly to the Spit Bridge. We set off along the path, and soon encountered hundreds of walkers participating in an Oxfam 24 hour walk.

Entering Sydney Harbour National Park, we passed Reef Beech and the Arabanoo lookout before heading off through native bushland, before we stopped to enjoy lunch at Castle Rock Beach. After lunch we resumed our walk, past Clontarf Beach and Duke of Edinburgh Reserve, reaching our finishing point at the Spit Bridge.



Stepping very carefully during the bridge descent

Sunday was a somewhat less beautiful day – it was cloudy, and wind and rain were forecast. Undaunted we set off for the Harbour Bridge, where we were breathalysed and issued with fashion statement boiler suits, raincoats, hats, lanyards for glasses, handkerchiefs on elastic, harnesses to attach ourselves to railings on the bridge, and radios. We passed a 'test' for climbing and descending ladders, after which we headed to the final assembly point. At last we were on our way.

We walked a little nervously along a catwalk high above the traffic, as our guide recited some of the history of the bridge. Climbing ladders as we had practised, we arrived at the top of the bridge and ascended towards the centre, stopping at set photo points along the way where our guide snapped us with her camera. We admired the magnificent harbour and city views as we climbed.



The group poses on the Harbour Bridge

Crossing to the other side of the bridge for the downward trip, we pressed on, arriving at the ladders to start the climb down. Still attached to our lifelines, we made it back to the starting point and were finally invited to unlatch ourselves from the wire.

We said our farewells to others in the group and went our separate ways. It had been a fabulous weekend.



During the Manly to Spit Bridge walk

In productive isolation on a WA farm

WENDY LE GET

At the time of writing, April 2020, I am in the middle of a 7000ha farm, 'Koobabbie' at Coorow, in the Mid-West region of Western Australia, 264km north of Perth. My family has recently inherited this property and I am now running it. We are preparing to sell it, and this is not an easy task for me as it has been both in the family for 114 years, and was my childhood home. But my children are not farmers. I had planned a visit to Western Australia for several made it just months and before 'lockdown'.

Keeping fit is easy when you are looking after sheep. Sorting, drafting and most of all, chasing, will see to that. For the last month the stockman, Billy, has been on holidays. So my round of exercise has also included checking and cleaning troughs, and making sure the lupin lick feeders are working. They must have an adequate supply of lupins in them and the calcium

lick must be topped up. As there is virtually no dry feed left for the sheep they are being fed hay, lupins for protein and a calcium lick, as the ewes are pregnant.

I have two part-time workers, so one does bales of hay when needed and the other one fixes the windmills. I don't need that much fitness!

We have been busy selling down our livestock in preparation to sell the property. Most of this stock went to the eastern states, as feed is scarce in WA. As sheep numbers are rapidly declining I can only warn you that prices are only going to go up – but as a producer I am happy.



Wendy enjoyed an 18km lake walk, but received a lecture!



'Koobabbie' homestead at Coorow, WA

We now just have the lambing ewes, and lambing has just started, but thankfully, Billy has returned from holidays. I will be kept busy checking lambing ewes, and hoping madly that no one needs my limited midwifery skills – though from experience I know they will. Billy has already clearly told me no pet lambs are allowed or they go back to Melbourne with me.

The best part of being here definitely isn't the heat and the flies, it's the bush. The property is known for its conservation efforts, and has 40 per cent of the farm fenced off as bush. We were very lucky that our grandparents and parents had the foresight to leave wide timber belts that grow mainly salmon gums, gimlets and york gums.

Then in 1987 my sister and her husband purchased 2000 hectares of very over-grazed salt lake country, which they just closed up and protected. This land has regenerated and is now magnificent in spring with an abundance of orchids and everlastings. I might add the whole district is known for its wildflowers, and the farm has seven rare plant species listed.

This gives me the opportunity to go on very long walks, either through timber belts, or through the lake country. We all know the rule that you should always walk in pairs, so I text my children where I will be disappearing to and then when I arrive back home. They acknowledge this by not sending anything in return!

One day I went off course on the lakes because it was so nice out, and managed to increase my walk to 18km, so I got a stern lecture. I have to admit it would be hard to find someone out there.

I actually have not left the farm since I arrived, so I'm really staying isolated. You may have heard that WA is divided into regions and that you cannot leave your region without good cause. We are allowed into the next region, Moora, to access the nearest doctor and chemist, and to purchase machinery parts, but as it is 95km it is a trip only made when necessary – and usually for such things as a new tractor tyre. Even the little local store in Coorow is closed and only does deliveries, to protect their staff.

There is a mail run twice a week, so my stores come out on that. Choice is very limited, and what you receive may bear little relation to what you ordered, but I will not die of starvation. But I do miss the supply of fresh fruit and vegies I enjoy in Melbourne.

Seeding is starting here. My son, Rohan, had carefully arranged a month of long service leave to do it, but as he is a Victorian that can no longer happen. Luckily for us a former employee has volunteered his services. This meant he had to fill in numerous forms, and I had to supply documentation I was employing him so that he could leave the Perth region, pass through the next region, and enter our region. Fortunately, this year we have only planned to plant a thousand hectares of crop.

The other thing that keeps me busy, if not fit, is sorting 110 years of family belongings. My family members were very good hoarders, and a large house and lots of sheds enables you to do that. I have 90 years of cheque butts and tax returns if anyone needs some reading matter!



Wendy with one of her young lambs – but it isn't a pet!

Hell's bells! It's enough to scare a bison



According to *Great Walks* magazine, officials at Yellowstone National Park in the US state of Montana have used the music of Australian band AC/DC to scare bison off the area's highway. Bison blocking traffic is a common occurrence in the park, sometimes stranding tourists for up to half an hour.

The local sheriff's deputies first try scaring off the massive beasts with lights, sirens and horns, but if that doesn't work, apparently AC/DC's track *Hell's Bells*, played over loudspeakers, is far more frightening and soon has the huge animals – which can weigh up to a tonne – scurrying for refuge.



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Tracknotes

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The club's 2020 program