

.GREAT VICTORIAN. RAIL TRAIL

Alan and Mary Capell's Great Victorian Trail Adventure

Sunday 19th to Monday 27th March 2017

Attendees: Mary & Alan Capell with Sue Carson - Caravan and Tent, Vicki & David Birks – Motor Home, Marilyn & David Partington – Motor Home, Alison & Geoffrey Cornish and Alison's Mother - Caravan and Tent, Eric Chaney & Steve Taylor - share Cabin with Lee & Steve Bruland, Tony Hill & Anne Nieuss - Share cabin with Jane Horton and Jo Martin, Helen Smith - solo cabin and tent. A special note to say I have great admiration for Tony Hill who came despite his fractured wrist and gave Anne the opportunity to ride – good onya Tony 😊

Transport: 9 vehicles carrying 17 riders. Jane and Helen travelling solo the entire 1700km. Jo Martin travelled with Steve and Eric to Mansfield – then departed on Friday by Bus for Melbourne. Lessons learnt: We need more communication on who is travelling and when to long distant destinations. Many vehicles can carry four persons and luggage but commonly are only equipped to carry two bicycles. At least two drivers are preferred for each vehicle over long distances, we broke our journey at Bendigo and Ballarat, three cars including the two solos did it in one hop over. Most of the Camping attendees were early arrivals. This destination could have been accessed by economical public transport (as demonstrated by Jo Martin on her departure) but carrying your bicycle could be problematic. Four persons in a medium sized vehicle is the most economical transport per person if you don't add in your fixed costs.

Accommodation was appropriate and at well researched locations – thank you Alan and Mary. The group was evenly divided between the “Caravan/Tent” dwellers and the cabin inhabitants. The availability of Cabins at each destination needs to be researched prior to selecting destinations, we did come unstuck at Yea but a cancellation fixed that with two days to go - phew.

The most economical accommodation is tents \$30 unpowered for 2, caravans \$35 powered for 2 and sharing accommodation \$35 pp for 2 bedroom units or for solo \$70. Mansfield was cheap, comfortable and spacious open grounds; Yea accommodation modern, more comfort but crowded and good tree cover. We tried a holiday house in Bendigo enroute great value and comfort for a group of five of us (with room for eight) down side is you wouldn't be all together as a full group.

Meals were DIY eat in or out, with a sausage sizzle together on Wednesday night (Sausages purchased at the nice piggery restaurant on the Lake Eildon loop ride). Group Meal at Yea Caledonian Hotel Thursday, good value meal. Saturday night Group meal at more up-market Peppercorn Restaurant for those still in Yea. The standout coffee stops were the [Bucks Boutique Country Bakehouse](#) off the Rail trail in Yarck (find the fibreglass full size stag out front), the well discovered by Mary and Alan [Howes Creek Farm](#) Howes Creek road just before Cummins Rd junction and Devonshire Tea with scones cream and fresh Jam [Schoolhouse Bed & Breakfast Trawool](#)



The adventure was well worth the 1700 Km journey

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Rides: Yes, that's what Recreational Cycling is all about are outlined below. A group of five of us drove over to Bendigo on Friday, and stayed overnight in a [Maggies](#) cottage Holiday home at \$40 each – it had four bedrooms and would sleep 8 in comfort.

Saturday. We rode the whole [O'Keefe 50km Rail Trail](#) and we did it all by three riders driving out to Heathcote and swapping keys at the halfway point of Axedale Tavern with the other two riders who started in Bendigo. The ride is a cruise on a good gravel surface with very gentle undulations. Lake Eppalock is a feature of the trail which passes through some spectacular natural bushland, passing recreation reserves, perfect for picnics, wildflower or bird spotting. Don't lose the trail at Axedale the Tavern/coffee is off the trail in the town – take the break.



Sunday was a bonus ride from Mt Buller down 12km on the Delatite river trail to Mirimbah, the [shuttle bus](#) that takes bikes to the Ski fields operates only Saturdays and Sundays from October to April hourly 8am to 5pm \$20 per run 03 5777 5529. Wow - what a 12km ride, the top two kilometres are grade 5 i.e. walking for mere mortals and the rest is a downhill thrill with 13 log bridges over the Delatite river. A mountain bike ride in native bush, albeit crazy Eric rode it on narrow tyred straight bar road bike, he didn't see the scenery too busy dodging rocks - didn't crash.



Sunday evening meeting Alan changed the published program - the Monday Rail Trail to Bonney Doon was replaced with a short 16km ride, led by Mary, out to the Merrijig School along the countryside sealed Mt Buller highway. Allan's challenge on his solid fork road tyred MTB with David & Vicki on real MTBs with big wheels and big tyres was riding from Mirimbah up to Box Corner then 9km down [Delatite trail](#) - nobody crashed and they succeeded with pleasure the climb and the trail.

Monday, A group of half the riders, instead of the changed short country amble, decided to ride Bonnie Doon to Yarck as it was a missing part of the Trail that we had driven 850km to enjoy. It was a great recreational ride with many features and the best Country Bakery in the whole District



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Tuesday, we all joined in the deferred Monday program and rode the rail Trail Mansfield to Bonney Doon and return with a shower of rain to cause a rush for shelter at the dubious Café in Bonnie Doon. A good recreational ride with a great bridge over lake Eildon just prior to Bonnie Doon.



Wednesday, we rode as a group out to the Howes Creek Farm 15km for a great Morning Tea then on to the Delatite Bridge for Lunch returning via the undulating Monkey Gully Road, passing rural properties including a large goat herd (40km for the whole really pleasant circuit or 34km for those who returned prior to lunch). A well-researched recreational ride – thanks to Alan & Mary.



Thursday, was reserved to move camp to Yea on the program. Three of us chose to Ride Yarck to Alexandra and back to Yea on the 52km Rail Trail. Two of us rode Yea to Yarck both great relaxing rides and both included the Cheviot Tunnel. The Alexandra branch line was probably the most picturesque of all the rail Trail especially the summit lookout 4km out of Alexandra.



Friday a swap of program days to ensure we didn't miss out on Devonshire Tea with fresh Scones, Teapot tea, Farm Cream, and Homemade jam at Trawool – a treat for Royalty and Cyclists. The ride was an out and back but some arranged transport to do the full journey to Tallarook to complete the entire Great Victorian Rail Trail. While nowhere near the Devonshire Tea, the Café at Tallarook was a great respite. Jane gets special mention – she rode Yea to Tallarook and return.

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Saturday – I can't say first hand but the program was to ride the rail trail from Yea to Yarck and return. I do know that Jane did the ride Yea to Yarck to Cathkin to Alexandra to Cathkin to Yea, all 81 km to become one of only three of us to complete the entire Great Victorian Rail Trail on this visit. Lee & Steve B and Eric and Steve T drove to Ballarat on Saturday

Sunday – for the 13 staying with the program this was to be a day to move to Bendigo. For Lee & Steve B, Eric and Steve T it was a bonus day riding the full length of the 53km Ballarat to Skipton Rail Trail which is a light gravel surface undulating with an overall fall of 160M to Skipton. A Feature of the trail is the high wooden trestle Nimmons Bridge after which the trail travels through bush for 22km. Lee and Steve X2 found Cafés at Smythesdale and Linton. Eric drove to Skipton and rode back meeting halfway with car keys; then proceeded to prove something (that he still has testosterone maybe) by taking 2½ hours to do the whole ride. A great trail offering a little more challenging ride than a Sunday dawdle but with rewarding scenery. We stayed at [Big4 Ballarat Windmill Holiday Park](#) a great park only 500M from the Rail trail – out of town towards Adelaide (Indoor Swimming Pool and Wireless Internet Included).



Nimmons Bridge

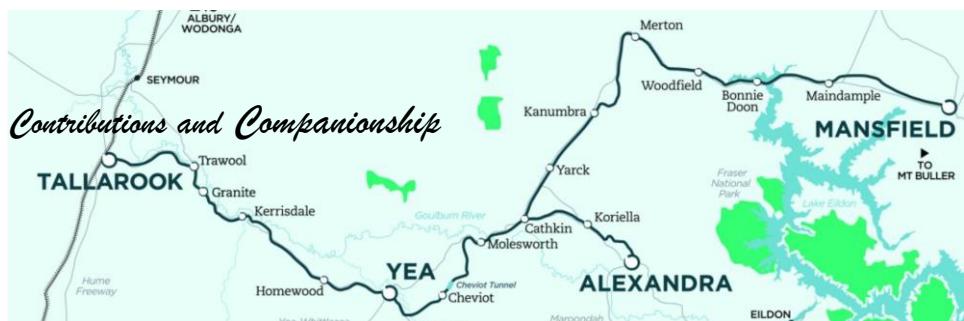


Bush Trail from Nimmons Bridge for 22km

Monday Lee & Steve B, Eric and Steve T drove Home. Hopefully the remaining riders enjoyed riding the O'keefe Trail either out and back halfway to Axedale or with abundant transport maybe the whole trail. Subsequently, I have been advised that the group rode Bendigo to Axdale and return; with Super Jane doing the whole O'Keefe Trail ride (Onya Jane). Then, on return to Bendigo, everybody with commonsense – well, almost everybody – decided that discretion is the better part of valour and took shelter in Bendigo from a storm front that passed through mid afternoon.

Tuesday all Home

*Thank you all for your Contributions and Companionship
Cheers Eric*



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