

# HFNC excursion to Pomonal Tunnel and Bridle Trail on 24 April 2016

Rod Bird, Diane Luhrs, Reto Zollinger & Peter Hocking

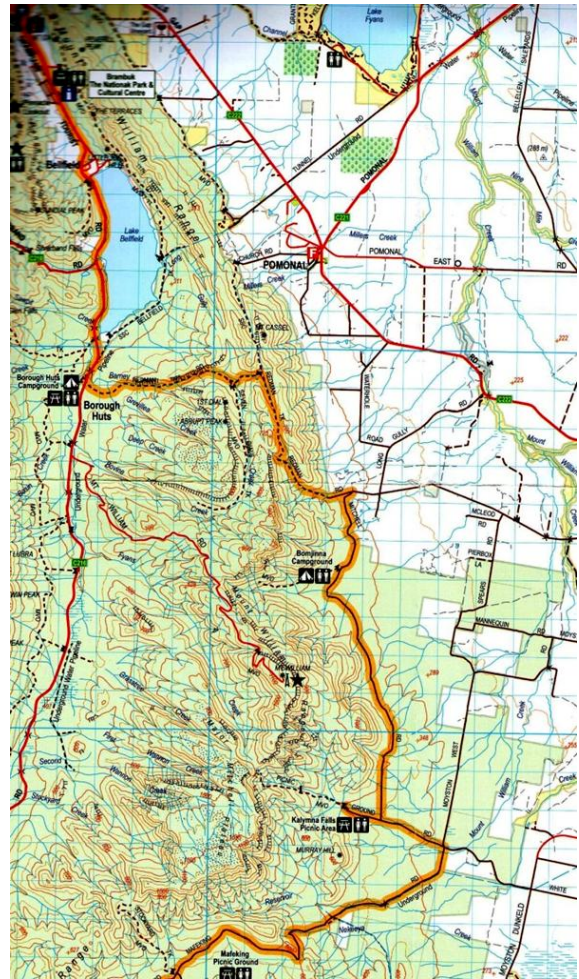
We started the day at 9 am from Hamilton with Rod & Diane, John & Glenys, Ken & Janeen, Peter (with a friend John from Melbourne), Darryl, Reto, Hillary and Karen in the party. At Dunkeld we met Tim & Valetta and children (Fingal, Amelia & Olive).

We drove along the east side of the Grampians on the Dunkeld-Moyston Rd, stopping at the **Kalymna Falls picnic ground** for morning tea. It was a lovely sunny day, also enjoyed by many others on this Anzac Day weekend, so we had some difficulty finding parking spots at the Falls and at Pomonal. The unsealed tracks were dusty as a result of the dry weather.

We did not take the steep walk to Kalymna Falls, since our main objective was the Bridle Trail hike over the Mt William Range at the Pomonal Tunnel site. There was no water in the Kalymna Creek near the picnic area and therefore unlikely to be at the Falls.



Mt William Range from Kalymna Falls car park



We turned west off Dunkeld-Moyston Rd onto Picnic Ground Rd, taking us to Kalymna Falls area. After morning tea there and a brief look around that site we travelled back along the road and onto the northbound Mitchell Rd.

At Redman Rd we turned right and then left onto Long Gully Rd. That runs into the Ararat-Halls Gap Rd – we turned left and drove through **Pomonal**, turning left at Tunnel Rd. After a short drive through bush on a narrow track we arrived at the **Pomonal Tunnel** car park and eastern end of the tunnel.

After lunch and inspection of the eastern end of the Pomonal Tunnel, where one could peer into the drive through a grate, we started on the 4.8 km return walk along the Bridle Trail to the western end of the tunnel. Some information on the tunnel was given in the notice board and is summarised here.

Gold was first found near Stawell in 1853 and lack of water was always a problem. In 1875 work was begun to tunnel perhaps 800 m through the Mt William Range at Pomonal to take water from Fyans Creek and others and pipe it past Lake Fyans to Stawell. The digging was hard and work had to begin at both sides of the range – incredibly, both teams managed to meet ‘with almost professional accuracy’.

The contract for the tunnel required the passage to be at least 6 ft high and 6 ft wide. The centre had to be dead straight and the fall not more than 1 inch per 100 ft. Piping had to be fitted to ventilate the drive. There were to be three 8-hr shifts on each of the 6 working days of the week and not less than 3 men at the face at any one time. Drills were used, presumably to enable gelignite to be set to blast away the rock face. Sleepers and iron rails were to be installed, presumably to allow rubble to be removed from the tunnel on small trolleys.



Wooden flumes were built over high trestles to pipe transport water from several creeks to the 'distribution tank' at the eastern end. The pipeline to Stawell was laid and in 1881 water flowed through the system (final cost was £115,000). The flume and trestles were replaced later by pipes. In 1988 a rock fall on the final 15 m at the western end required the rubble to be removed and a 45 cm x 20 m pipe to be laid there. Otherwise, as reported in 1979 "the tunnel has weathered 100 years extremely well".

Everyone took the Bridle Trail up the range but most were happy to stop at the top. Reto, Tim & Darryl reached the west end of the tunnel while Peter and John continued on to Lake Bellfield. The tunnel at the west end had been collapsed, so there was little to see there.

The bush had been burned perhaps 10 years ago and there were many small trees. While good views were had out to the east, including Lake Fyans, one had to get well down the western slope before obtaining views of the Serra Range and Lake Bellfield.

The bush was extremely dry, no fungi were seen and the only plants seen with flowers were:

1. Common Correa (*Correa reflexa*) – 1 plant
2. Cranberry Heath (*Astroloma humifusum*) – many plants with buds
3. Brown Stringybark (*Eucalyptus baxteri*) – a few trees with flowers
4. Silver Banksia (*Banksia marginata*) – many with some flowers (especially Kalymna Falls area)
5. Ixodia (*Ixodia achillaeoides*) – this species had the most flowers.

Birds were also hard to find, those seen were:

- |                               |                            |                          |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Wedge-tailed eagle         | 5. White-naped Honey-eater | 9. Buff-rumped Thornbill |
| 2. White-throated Treecreeper | 6. White-eared Honey-eater | 10. Brown Thornbill      |
| 3. Grey Shrike-thrush         | 7. Superb Fairy-wren       | 11. Eastern Yellow Robin |
| 4. New Holland Honey-eater    | 8. White-browed Scrubwren  | 12. Striated Pardalote   |



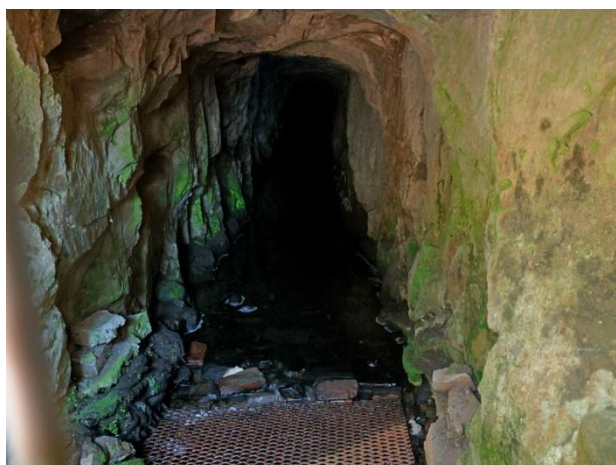
East end of Pomonal Tunnel



Valetta & children at Tunnel exit



Bridle Trail – view to Lake Fyans

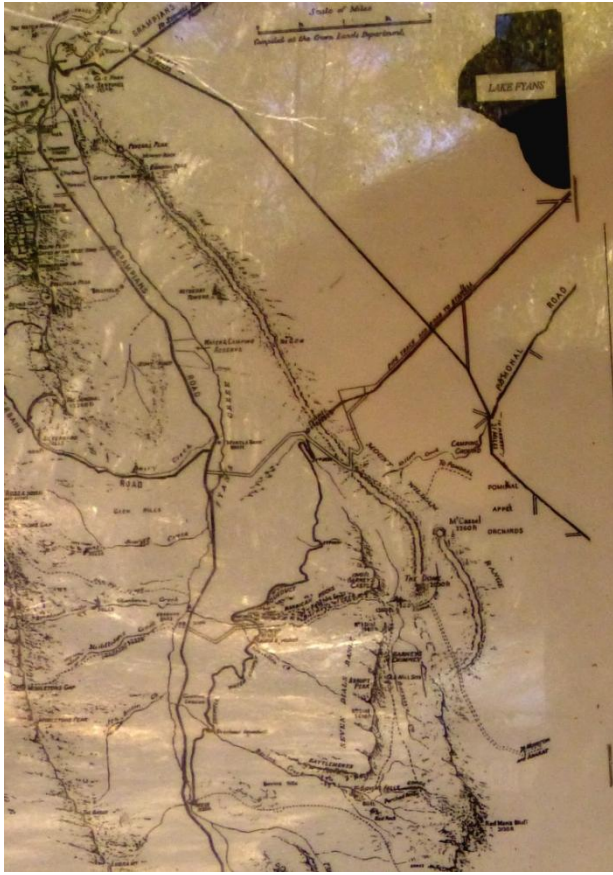


East end of Pomonal Tunnel



Bridle Trail east side





The Pomonal Tunnel & aqueduct line to creeks



View to Serra Ra from top of Bridle Trail



A view of Serra Ra from west side of Bridle Trail



West side – Pomonal Tunnel entry



West side Bridle Trail – view to Lake Bellfield



Looking north along Lake Bellfield



Various routes were taken back to Hamilton; the Jacksons and some others going via Halls Gap for coffee or ice creams, the remainder going back through Moyston or through Redmans Gap to the Tourist Rd. Three of us then took the Mirranatwa Gap Rd, checking the scene where a Common Wombat had been seen in February on the

roadside at the top of the pass, and then across to Victoria Point and Hamilton.