

# HFNC Excursion to Harmans Valley, West of Byaduk – 19 August 2018

Dave Munro

**Participants:** Glenys Cayley, Janeen Samuel, Ross Simpson, Peter Hocking, Kate Kennedy, Lyn & Dave Munro, and Damian & Sophie Magner (our guides for the day).

This excursion was proposed by Damian whom some of us met at the Independent Panel Hearings for the Shire's proposed amendments to their Planning Scheme pertaining to the Harmans Valley Significant Landscape Overlay. He and his wife Sophie own a farm which includes part of the Harmans Valley lava flow west of Byaduk.

The forecast was for cool weather with occasional showers and so it turned out to be. We were only exposed to a couple of short sharp, blustery showers interspersed with pleasant sunny breaks.



Harmans Valley lava flow from Mt. Napier

Damian and Sophie met us at the Harmans Valley Lookout on Port Fairy Rd where there is a grand view of the lava flow down the ancient river valley from Tappoc (Mt. Napier). The recent rains had stimulated new grass growth on the areas of the lava flow in which the lava stone had been crushed by the landowners for an agricultural purpose. We agreed that it would have been better if this had not happened.

We travelled in convoy, following Damian and Sophie, along Old Crusher Road and Kinghorns Road (not sign-posted) to their property.

Leaving our vehicles at the gate we walked north along the unused road reserve on the property boundary to the first of several large tumuli. Damian, with Rod & Diane, had made a preliminary survey of a practicable route on 7 July.



Map of the site and the route taken over the lava flow

A fine section of stone wall abutted this feature on the south side. From the top of this significant tumuli a good view was had over the wide and flat valley floor.

Our guides provided a commentary on their land and the family's strong commitment to conserving the natural features of the lava flow. Our walk then took us along the flow, past other tumuli and across to the southern edge. Walking over the broken lava surface was somewhat of a challenge to some of the less nimble of our group but we all managed.

We were to examine other fine examples of the many tumuli in the valley, as well as a complex of ridges and hollows, the interpretation of which await a more competent geologist's explanation.



Stone wall on S<sup>th</sup> side of first tumuli



View of first tumuli from N<sup>th</sup> side



HFNC members inspecting one tumuli



A tumuli in the centre of the lava field



A third large tumuli, with associated Black Wattles



The lava flow viewed from a rise on the S<sup>th</sup> side



Pressure ridges on the lava flow to the west and a deep lava channel between the ridges



Further down the flow four of the party (three of them Scots) decided to return to the cars while the younger (?), keener members ventured further on to explore a series of pressure ridges, the largest of which had a fissure several metres across and deep. This feature adds to the view that this whole landscape is of significant geological interest.

Damian pointed out the position of their house on the west side of the valley and a large swamp below it created when the lava blocked Lyne Creek. The map above shows these features.

Another large wetland on that side of the valley was just visible from our standpoint. This wetland is associated with a series of stone Aboriginal eel trap structures. The family have also located the foundations of what could have been Aboriginal dwellings on the property. We were told that the very common shrub in the area, Tree Violet (*Melicytus dentatus*), often marks the site of an Aboriginal hut.

Ross spotted an Acacia in full blossom; unfortunately it was an Early Black Wattle (*Acacia decurrens*) and out of place there. Damian intends to make it a 'late' Early Black Wattle. Black Wattle (*A. mearnsii*) was common along the lava flow and Blackwood (*A. melanoxylon*) was also present in smaller numbers. The thorny shrub, Tree Violet, is the most significant and interesting plant on this landscape.



The mid-section of the lava flow viewed from a rise on the S<sup>th</sup> side, with Mount Napier to the east

We spotted a few Eastern Grey Kangaroos (*Macropus giganteus*) but were told that the valley holds a large population of these macropods. A single Red-necked Wallaby (*Macropus rufogriseus*) has also been seen previously by Damian. We recorded this species recently in the Mt Napier State Park, and in the Budj Bim (Mt Eccles) National Park, but it is uncommon in these areas, not having been reported prior to 2010. The Black Wallaby (*Wallabia bicolor*) is also a fairly recent arrival, in the 1980s, but is more common.

The only birds recorded were Grey Fantails and Grey Shrike-thrush.

After a rather cool, windy and slightly damp lunch we drove further west to the Tumuli site along Old Crusher Road. After agreeing that this should be a public reserve we took our leave of Damian and Sophie and thanked them for sharing their time, knowledge and enthusiasm with us.

A small patch of Waxgill fungi (*Hygrocybe sp.*) were located on the grassy edge of the valley. They are most likely to be an undescribed species.

