

Rushworth Wildflower Rambles

contributed by Colbinabbin resident Leonie Lewington

On a recent sunny morning, the Sunday somnolence of Rushworth was interrupted by the sounds of some 160 adventurers setting off on the annual Rushworth Wildflower Hunt.

Walkers gathered at the Rushworth War Memorial and on donating a gold coin were provided with a well-marked map showing points of interest, alternative routes, and a sheet of wildflower photos indicating likely finds.

A guided walk, led by Paul Foreman, of Blue Devil Consultancy, took an interested group from the War Memorial to Growlers Hill Wildflower Sanctuary and environs. Walkers took the opportunity to learn about the topography of the area, and its wildflower productivity.

Growlers Hill was a popular spot, with wildflowers in abundance. I was pleased to discover a Downy Grevillea: that's one to be added to my garden ideas, for sure!

For this newbie to Victoria, and specifically to the local area, the walk was a delight, despite the chill wind and occasional shower. It's quite some time since I last "wildflower walked" with my Canberra friends and ACT naturalist Ian Fraser, so I enjoyed testing my memory and challenging my legs and walking poles with an increase in pace for some of the route. I had thought I would do the shorter walk of 5.5km but my Runtastic app shows 7km and 12,000 steps! I may not be moving too well at the time of writing, but



I'm pleased with my effort.

At the halfway point of the route, this walker and others were delighted to find hot drinks and biscuits at a station "manned" by three (frozen) women, supporters of the Wildflower Hunt.

Those coming after me were offered "pre-dunked" biscuits. No prizes for guessing who spilled her coffee over the tray of biscuits! I hastened away from the stop, tail between my legs, to finish the remaining two km to Rushworth!

No doubt Rushworth's economy was boosted somewhat by those anxious to spend their money at any eateries open on a Sunday. The bakery was a popular spot, I noticed, crowded by hungry and cold walkers.

Paul Foreman gave his scheduled 2pm talk on the Ironbark Forest. Some 50 people gathered in the Shire Hall to hear Paul speak on the ecology of the forest and Goldfields area of Victoria. I was interested to learn about spring soaks, formed by the leakage of water from metamorphic rocks, long after heavy rains. These springs may remain for months or years, then go to dust in dry times. Their presence, albeit intermittent, provides significant habitat for many species of native fauna.

A sumptuous afternoon tea was enjoyed by the audience, and thanks are due to those who provided the delicious cakes and slices. A raffle for plants was held, and several smiling winners went home to do some gardening.

As I reflect on my introduction to the environs of Rushworth, I consider that the day was most enjoyable, worth every one of those 12,000 steps, and that the Rushworth Wildflower Hunt has an assured future.

