

## **Short holiday exploring the Victorian high country from 7 - 15 April 2025**

We will be travelling in the caravan and will base ourselves in Porepunkah for seven days staying at the Discovery Holiday Park.

### **Monday 7 April 2025**

We headed off this morning around 10:00 for the 198 km drive from Canberra to Tarcutta. We are staying in Tarcutta for the evening, free camping in the local recreation grounds. Our route down the Hume Highway takes us past the town of JUGIONG, a town that we frequently stop at when we travel this way. JUGIONG has a great cafe 'The Long Track Pantry'. They not only serve great food and coffee but the pantry sells many interesting and tasty products from the surrounding area. JUGIONG is well worth a visit and there is free camping for travellers in the JUGIONG Showgrounds.

After our break we moved on to Tarcutta, 438 kms south of Sydney and 198 kms from Canberra.

Tarcutta is the halfway point between Sydney and Melbourne and serves a local farming community relying for its prosperity mainly on sheep and cattle, and the interstate truckies who use the town as a halfway change-over point in the trade between Sydney and Melbourne. The country singer, Slim Dusty endorsed the memorial with a plaque and a commemorative event is held annually in October

The local café, which has sustained generations of truckies, has also been the source of inspiration for some of Australia's recent modern poets, Les Murray and Bruce Dawe. Murray wrote "The Burning Truck" while visiting the café in 1961 and Dawe immortalised the eatery in a couple of lines in his poem "Under Way". The poem reads in part: 'there would be days / banging open and shut like the wire door of the cafe in Tarcutta / where the flies sang at the windows'. There had been extensive political arguing since 1999 between Federal and State Governments over funding and where to site a proposed Tarcutta truck changeover facility. It was finally decided to place it off the main street and the project which was completed in early 2007 was jointly funded at a cost of \$6.5m

Tarcutta is also the birthplace of former Grand Slam tennis player Tony Roche. A left-hander, Roche had a successful singles and double career and won 12 Grand Slam men's doubles tournaments.

Well, that is enough about this small town.

Tonight, we will head over to the local pub for dinner.

Well dinner was very disappointing. We both had chicken schnitzels as we thought you couldn't go wrong there. Well, that was a mistake. The chicken schnitzel was one of those small thin Woolworths ones. It was over deep fried too almost black. I ordered chips and vegetables. Maree just chips. The chips were hot but my veg was cold. The veg used was one of those Birds Eye frozen stir fry packs. I use those packs regularly at home and if you thaw them properly, they turn out well when stir fried or heated through. I knew it was these vegetables as she used the Asian mixed pack. The Asian lady who cooked our meal, only person running the pub, obviously just used the microwave to thaw the veg and did not cook them. They were very cold and inedible. The cost was \$24 for each schnitzel and \$6.50 each for a

glass of wine. Glasses could have been cleaner. Not worth eating at the pub and not recommended. It is unfortunate because we prefer to support local businesses, especially when utilizing free camping.

Our evening was quiet even with the trucks coming and going. The break and free camp is worth a stop here in Tarcutta.



Our setup for the stay in Breaden Sports Ground Tarcutta.



View from the van across to the Pub where we had dinner. Tarcutta

#### **Tuesday 8 April 2025**

We departed Tarcutta around 10:00 for the leisurely drive along the Hume highway to our first coffee stop, Yackandandah, about 160 kms from Tarcutta and 60 kms from Porepunkah.

#### **YACKANDANDAH**

Yackandandah is a town in northeast Victoria close to the regional towns of Beechworth and Albury Wodonga.

The indigenous people of the area prior to white colonisation were the Dhudhuroa people.

Yackandandah is said to have meant “one boulder on top of another at the junction of two creeks”, namely the Yackandandah and Commissioner creeks’ intersection. The area was first opened to white settlement when Irish-born James Osborne took up land at Osborne’s Flat in 1837. On the discovery of gold deposits on its territory in 1852, it became a gold mining centre known for its alluvial wet mining techniques.

The area is now predominantly a dairy farming and forestry region and has numerous bed and breakfast lodges which allow its many visitors to enjoy the peace and tranquility of the district's forest and mountains. The town is affectionately known as "Yack".

After a short walk around town and stopping for a coffee and cake, we pushed on to our destination of Porepunkah.

On arrival we went to set up the van in our allocated site at the Mount Buffalo Discovery Park. Unfortunately, there was no way I was going to be able to comfortably reverse the van between two trees and down a steep slope to the river's edge. The park managers ask for your van length and then do not appear to consider the ease or difficulty of getting the van in, let alone getting up the steepish slope on departure, made even more difficult if it rains while we are here. The site, 33, had a nice location, but not for our sized van.

So, Maree went to the park reception, explained our issue, and was given a choice of three vacant sites on the river front we could select. The options were a lot better but didn't quite have the river frontage I was expecting, but we were happy to set up on site 43 for the next seven days.

## **POREPUNKAH**

The meaning of Porepunkah has been variously given as Hindu for 'gentle breeze' and of Aboriginal origin as 'meeting of the waters'.

Porepunkah is located on the Great Alpine Road at the foot of Mount Buffalo, 320 kms northeast of Melbourne and about 6 kms from the town of Bright. It is also located on the Ovens River, and it is this river that our van site is located next to.

European settlement began in the 1830s, but it wasn't until the discovery of gold in the 1850s that the development of the town took place. Porepunkah is the nearest modern township to the site of the Buckland Riot, an anti-Chinese race riot that occurred on 4 July 1857. The notorious bushranger Harry Power defied police in the Ovens district for a decade. Power held up the mail coach at Porepunkah on 7 May 1869 after escaping from Pentridge Prison.

This evening, we dined at the Punka Pub. The food was excellent. I settled for the chicken parmigiana, and Maree had the salt and pepper squid. I tasted one of Maree's pieces of squid and it was so light and tender. The chef did a great job with both our meals.



Punka Pub salt and pepper squid. There was a lot more squid but we had started eating before I

remembered to take a photo.



Chicken Parma at the Punka Pub. I had eaten my salad and half the parmigiana before taking a photo.

**Wednesday 9 April 2025**

This morning, we made the short drive into Bright (6kms). We wandered around the shops for about an hour, stopped for coffee and cake, then headed back to the car for the short drive back to Porepunkah.

This afternoon we went for a walk along the Ovens River into the small township (consists of one street). Walking along the riverbank we spied two large rainbow trout swimming casually downstream to the weir. Shame my fly rod was back at the van.



View of the Ovens River in Porepunkah.



View of the Ovens River in Porepunkah where we saw two rainbow trout swimming downstream.

We are cooking dinner at the van tonight in the Weber. We will have beef eye fillet with roasted pumpkin and potatoes.

### **Thursday 10 April 2025**

Today we made the loop from Porepunkah to Mount Beauty, returning via Running Creek and Ovens. The photos are views of the valleys as we drove the route.

#### **MOUNT BEAUTY**

**Mount Beauty** is a town in north-eastern Victoria, about 34kms from Porepunkah. The town lies alongside the Kiewa River at the junction of the Kiera Valley highway and the Bogong High Plains Road.

The climate of Mount Beauty is seasonal, with chilling winters, cool wet springs, warm summers with blue skies and colourful autumns. Each season has its own attractions, including skiing, bushwalking, horse riding, gliding, bike riding (mountain and road) as well as fishing (river and lake). Mount Beauty has its own annual music festival, mountain bike competition and regular weekend markets on the first Saturday of each month. There are also many four-wheel drive tracks in the local area.

The town is a launching point for trips to the Falls Creek ski resort, and to the Bogong high plains. This town also has great views to the mountains, such as Mount Bogong, and the peaks that are of interest to many of the tourists coming through the town.



Tawonga Gap Lookout on the way to Mount Beauty



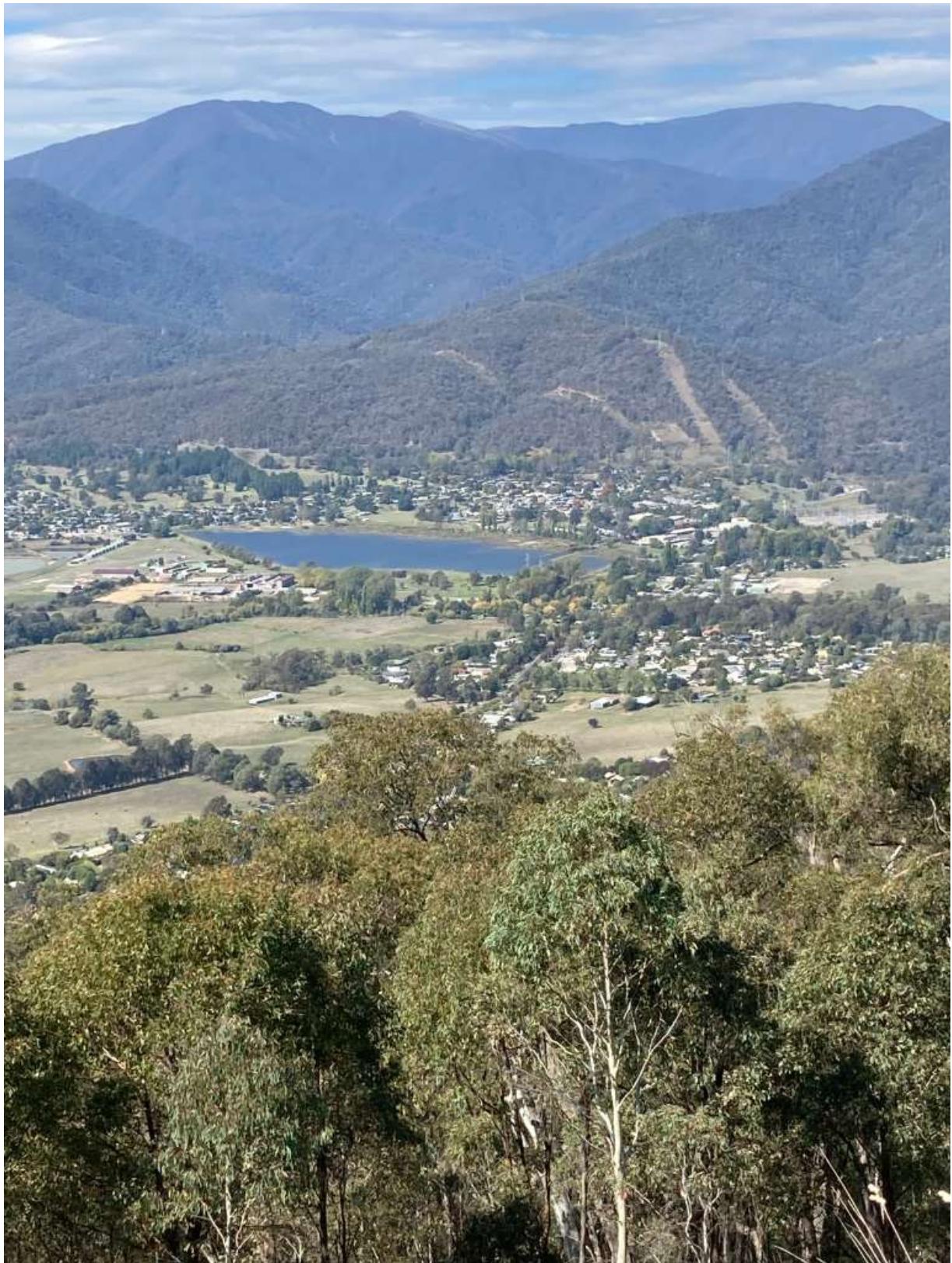
View from Sullivans Lookout



View from Sullivans Lookout



View from Sullivans Lookout



View from Sullivans Lookout Of Mount Beatty and township



Maree enjoying her coffee in Mount Beauty

**Friday 11 April 2025**

Today is a lazy day. We drove in to Myrtleford for brunch and wandered around a few shops.



Town of Myrtleford



Town of Myrtleford



Town of Myrtleford



Town of Myrtleford. The bakery where we stopped for brunch. Excellent coffee and food.

Then we drove back to Porepunkah where we will just be taking it easy. I had a snooze, and Maree is reading a book. The only chore today is me cooking dinner. An easy dinner tonight, red Thai curry of beef and vegetables.

#### **Saturday 12 April 2025**

Today we wandered around the town of Bright. The Victorian fire service is doing burn offs in the surrounding area and the smoke all around Porepunkah, Bright and surrounding areas was quite thick. Most retailers in Bright were open but had their doors closed to keep the smoke out. There is not a breath of wind so that is the reason the smoke is just settling down around the town.

So we had brunch at a nice cafe called the Riverdeck Kitchen. We each had coffee, and Maree ordered the Canadian version of French Toast with fresh berries. The Canadian version was served with bacon in maple syrup. I tried some and the flavours were good. I ordered the Smoked Salmon Tartine. Both meals were very enjoyable and large.



Steve's Smoked Salmon Tartine. Very enjoyable.



Maree's Canadian French Toast and Berries.



Maree pondering over how she was going to get through this large serve

While Porepunkah Mount Buffalo Caravan Park is ok to stay, management does not seem to consider the spaces they allocate to caravans, even when they have been given the total towing length of the van. The guy next to us came in late last night and had great difficulty trying to fit his van onto the site. The site is the same length as ours and we have the draw bar just off the road. The other van is 9 plus metres. Ours is 7.5 metres.

We were talking to management today saying it is difficult to park our vehicle without it protruding onto the road, causing potential issues with arriving vans. Their attitude was 'if you cannot fit your car on the site, then park it outside in the visitors' car park (not doing that). We paid for a site that includes space, supposedly, to park your car on the site. We won't stay here again as there are other problems, such as no drain of wastewater, we have ours running to the dirt road and there are no drains. The alternative is to let it run out on the back into the Ovens River, and none of us want to do that.

We have always stayed in Beechworth but wanted to be closer to the walking trails and river fishing. Next time we will stay at Mount Beauty as their sites are better and there is quite a bit to see and do.

Well dinner is over, and we are relaxing for the evening. Tomorrow we will head off to Wandiligong to do some bush walks.

## **Sunday 14 April 2025**

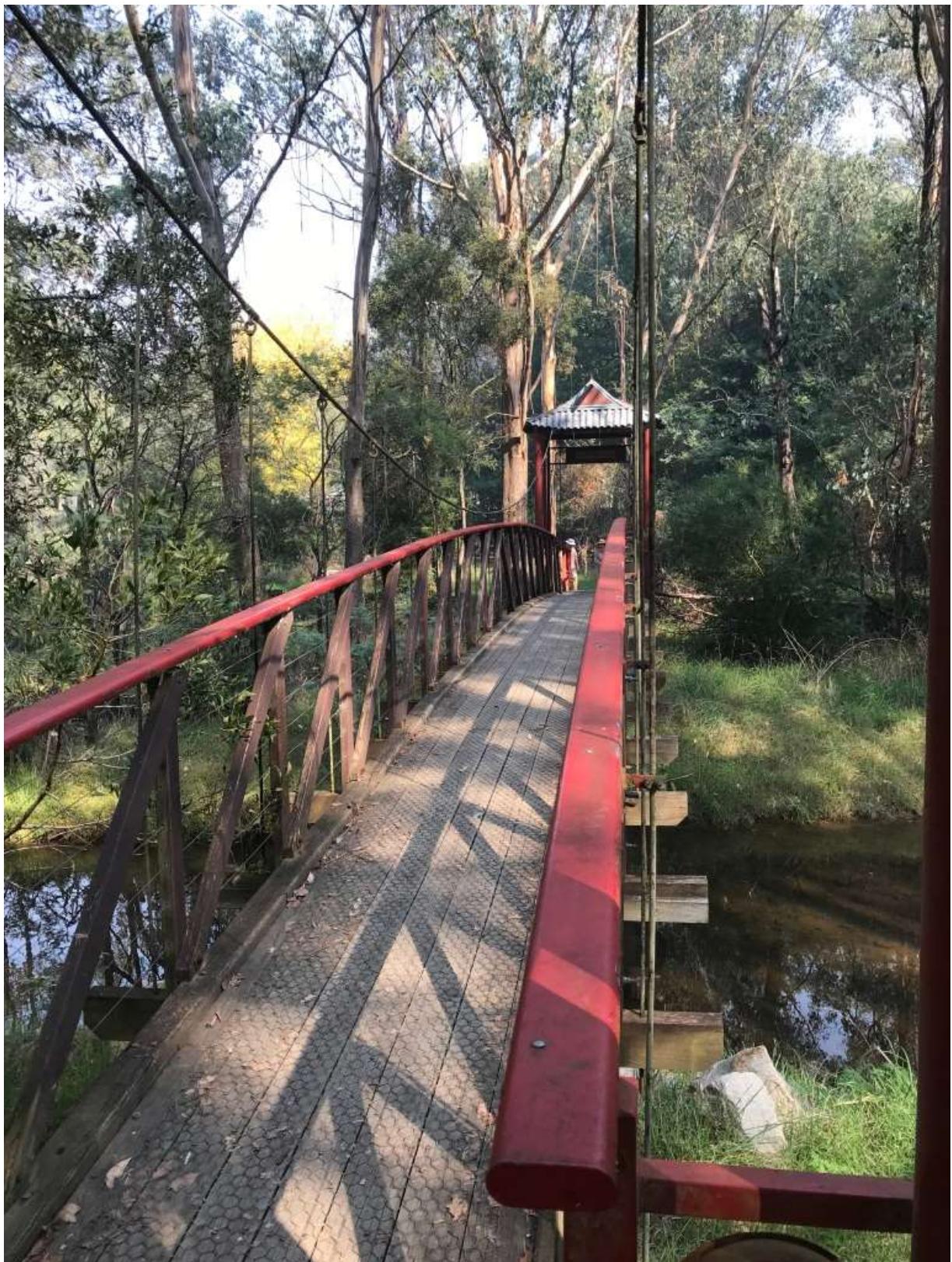
Today we went on several walks. The first was through the Wandiligong.

Wandiligong is a small historic village which lies 6 kilometres south of Bright.

Wandiligong was the site of a small gold rush during the mid-1850s which saw the town's population climb to over 2,000. The whole town is now registered with the National Trust as a classified landscape and features historical buildings such as the Manchester Unity public hall (built in 1874), the general store, several churches and several quaint cottages.

The town itself is set in a picturesque valley surrounded by forests and mountain ranges. Morses Creek runs through Wandiligong and features a walking track which follows the course of the river, extending all the way to the town of Bright. Wandiligong gold history can be explored at "The Diggings" which is where we walked. "The Diggings" was the site of extensive mining and has established walking tracks and several footbridges across both Morses Creek and Growlers Creek. A highlight of the area is the Chinese Swing Bridge which is a tribute to the large number of Chinese who lived in the Wandiligong area during its gold rush days. You can see images of the bridge below.

A popular scenic drive is south along Morses Creek Road, past the iconic Wandi Pub, across Morses Creek and through a valley lined with fruit orchards and farms. A drive along School Road passes in front of the Wandiligong Primary School (established in 1860) and along a scenic ridge which provides good views west across the town with forested mountains providing a stunning backdrop.



Chinese Bridge, Wandiligong



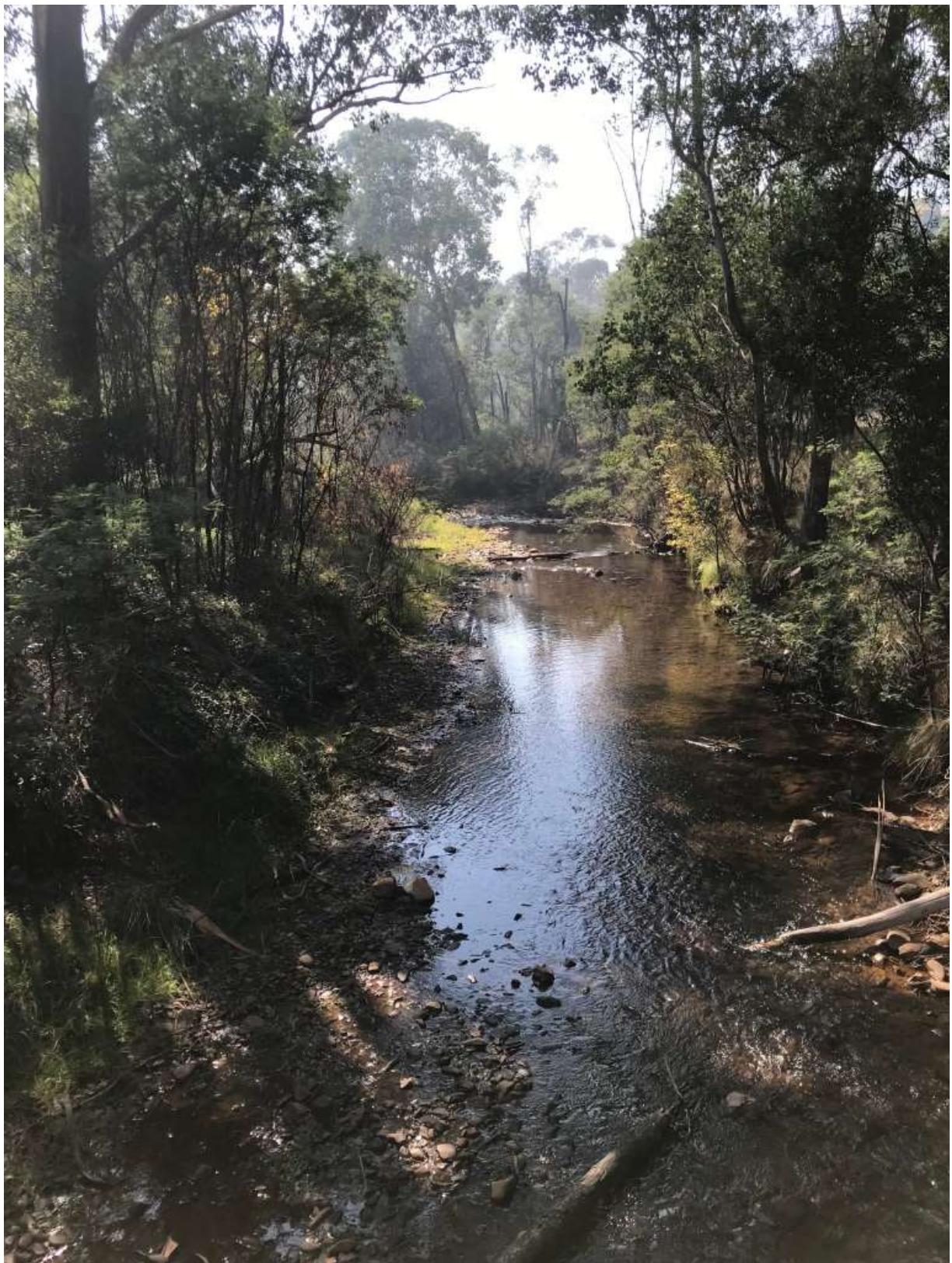
Chinese Bridge, Wandiligong







Walk through 'The Diggings", Wandiligong



Walk through 'The Diggings", Wandiligong



Walk through 'The Diggings", Wandiligong

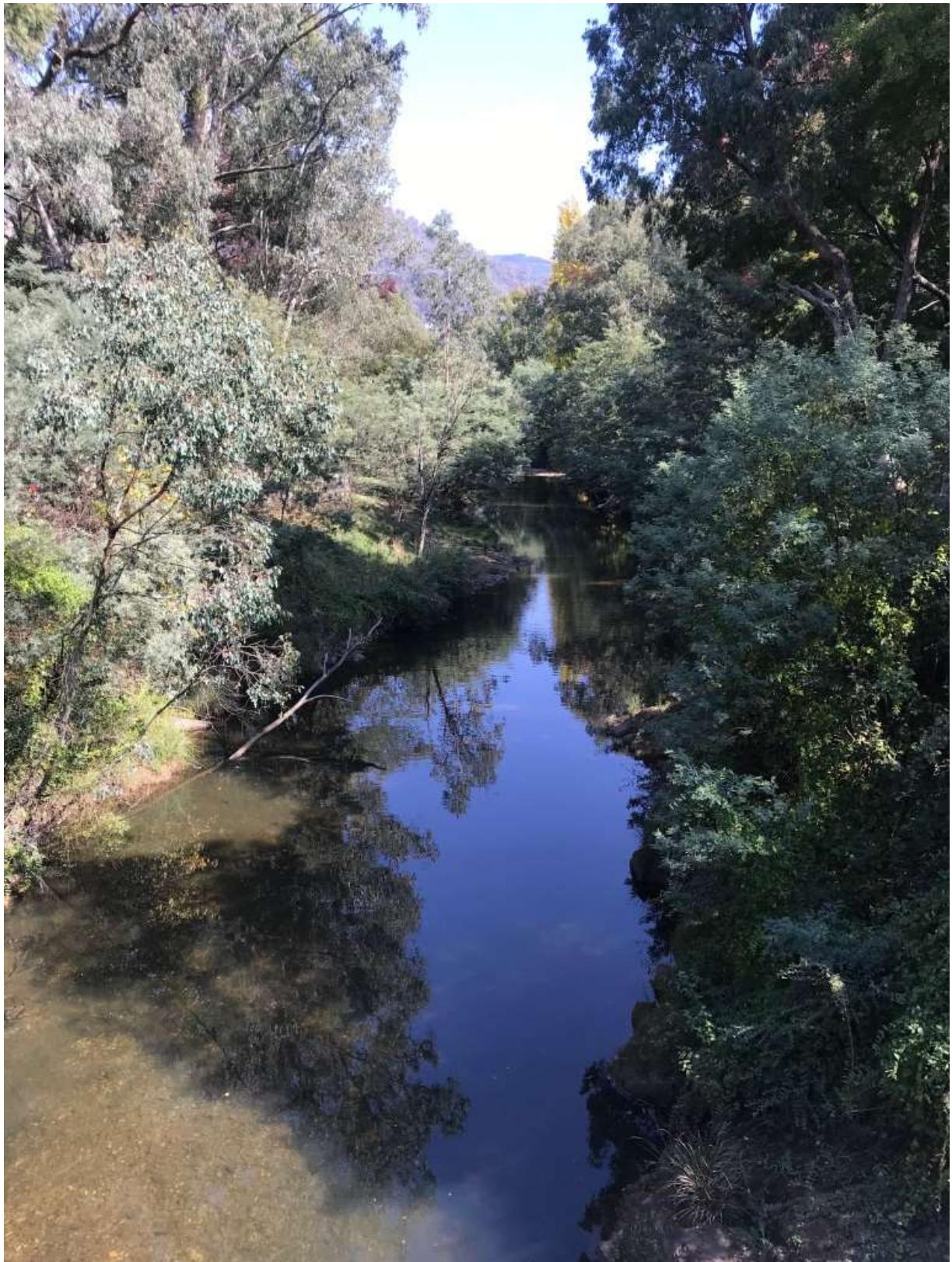
After our walk at Wandiligong we headed off to Howitt Park which is the start of the 4 km Canyon Walk.

This walk is mostly flat, and no bushwalking experience is required as it is on a formed track but there are a few obstacles, short steep hills and occasional steps, however, the track on the northern bank of the Ovens River has steep steps and may be difficult for some. The track on the southern bank from Howitt Park to Canyon Lane is sealed.

Interpretive signs highlight the local gold mining history of this area. This walk takes you past a small canyon carved by the Ovens River and water races dug by early miners.

The following images were taken along our Canyon Walk.







### **Monday 14 April 2025**

Today is our last day in Porepunkah. Tomorrow, we have decided to stay the night in Jugiong on the way home. So, all we have done today is do some shopping, so I don't have to cook dinner tomorrow night in Jugiong. I was thinking we could have dinner at the Sir George pub in Jugiong but our previous experiences at this pub were not great, food wise. I also noted that the recent reviews regarding the food have not improved. So, dinner tomorrow night will be store bought quiche with salad washed down with a nice bottle of Pinot Grigio.

Before doing our shopping, we went back to the Riverdeck Cafe for breakfast. Once again, the food was very good. I had mushroom medley and Maree had the sourdough fruit and nut bread with sweet honey ricotta.





As we drove back to Porepunkah we took some photos of the trees with deep red foliage.



Tonight, we are having dinner at the Porepunkah Pub. The same place we ate at last Tuesday when we arrived.

### **Tuesday 15 April 2025**

This morning, we started our journey home to Canberra. We have arrived at Jugiong where we are spending the night before finishing our journey tomorrow morning. We have decided to cook in the van tonight as the food served at the Sir George Hotel in Jugiong still gets poor reviews. We have tried eating there on two previous occasions and both times the food was not up to that stated by the hotel.

So quiche is on the menu tonight with a Moroccan salad and of course a glass or two of lovely, cooled Pinot Grigio.

### **JUGIONG**

While staying at the Jugiong showgrounds, on this trip I went for a walk around the small park and came across a statue of a horse and police officer. I had not realised these were here, so I did some research about the statue.

The statue of the police officer and his horse commemorates Sergeant Edmund Parry who was shot by the bushranger Johnny Gilbert near Jugiong in 1864. The memorial is erected at the entrance to the Jugiong Showgrounds.



The following information was provided by the South Australian Advertiser regarding the death of this Police Officer while protecting the mail coach:

***Edmund Parry (1832–1864)***  
***from South Australian Advertiser***

*On Tuesday afternoon the mail from Gundagai reached the hill at Deep Creek, about four or five miles on the Yass side of Jugiong, between 4 and 5 o'clock. Mr. Sheahan, of Jugiong, the mail contractor, and Mr. Bradbury, of Queanbeyan, were passengers by the coach, and had alighted to walk up the hill. They were some distance in advance of the coach. Mr. Sheahan was in the act of pointing out the spot where the mail was stuck-up a few weeks before, when three horsemen appeared on the top of the hill, and spreading out—one on each aide, the third in the centre of the road—they galloped towards the coach. On coming near it was noticed that each had a revolver in his hand, and the order was given by Ben Hall to "Bail up." Hall pointed and told them to "walk up there; we have got a little township there." After going up the hill for some distance, they were ordered to turn off to the left and approached a spot where twelve teams were stock up, as well as several horsemen. The mail was then stopped. Mr. Sheahan was asked if he had any money; he replied that he had not, and they might search for him if they liked. Hall declined to search, remarking that Mr. Sheahan was not a "bad sort of fellow." Bradbury was then searched; although he handed them a cheque for one pound, stating that that was all he had, they examined his pockets, and asked him if he did not have a watch. They got nothing from him but the cheque, and subsequently, on his telling them it was all he had to carry him on the road, the cheque was returned. Hall and his companions then took out the mail bags, six in number, and cut them all open. Before proceeding to examine the letters, they asked Mr. Sheahan and Mr. Bradbury if they would have some wine. They answered "Yes," when Hall called to one of the teamsters to "fetch over port wine." The wine was brought, in a quart pot, and a portion of it drunk by those present. The examination of the mailbags meanwhile proceeded, the three bushrangers sitting down on the ground with the bags before them. The letters were speedily ransacked of any banknotes they contained, Mr. Bradbury remarking to them that they sorted the letters much quicker than was generally done in Sydney. Mr. Sheahan asked if he would be allowed to sit down, and Hall told him he could do so. Mr. Sheahan availed himself of an empty mailbag close beside him, and noticing many whole and half cheques, remarked that they were of no use to them, and asked permission to gather them up. The bushrangers consented, and Mr. Sheahan was enabled to bring on to the Yass Post Office his coat pocket as full of cheques as it would hold, as well as three bank drafts. The coach and passengers were kept an hour before they were permitted to depart, Mr. Sheahan and Mr. Bradbury gathering up the remains of the letters and placing them in a mail bag. On the bushrangers completing their work, the driver of the coach pushed on as fast as possible to Yass and reached here only half an hour behind time. The matter was instantly reported to Sub-Inspector Brennan, who, with a couple of mounted men, took the road within half an hour.*

*It was fully expected in town that the mail on Wednesday would also be robbed, and the spot where it was expected to take place was mentioned to the police before they left Yass. The anticipation was realised, and even the locality surmised as the scene of the outrage proved to be the spot selected. The mail is due in Yass at eleven a.m., and as it is generally very punctual to the time, and not having arrived at a quarter to twelve, it began to be thought very likely that it had been stopped. A few minutes before*

twelve it was heard approaching, and much anxiety was felt to learn what had occurred to cause its detention. It was then ascertained that on the mail leaving Gundagai, Constable Roche, of the Yass police, who had gone as guard of the mail the previous day to Gundagai, and Mr. Rose, police magistrate of Gundagai, were its occupants. It was escorted by Sub-Inspector O'Neill, and Sergeant Edmund Parry, of the Gundagai police. On reaching within about four miles of Jugiong, at a place known as the Black Springs, Hall and his companions appeared from behind some rocks. The moment they were noticed a signal was made from the coach to the Sub-Inspector and Sergeant to ride up, which they at once did; and one of the bushrangers remarking that "the bobbies" were with the coach, Gilbert said "There are only two of them; come on, let us rush them." They then darted towards the coach, and on getting near the police called out "Come on you —— wretches; we will fight you like men." A deadly encounter followed, in which poor Parry, who acted very bravely throughout, was shot through the shoulder and dropped dead. Before, however, narrating what transpired in the encounter with the police, we may state that Hall, Gilbert, and Dunn took up their position on the road early in the day, and stuck up a large number of teams and two carts, the latter followed by 20 or 30 Chinamen. Amongst those detained were a son of Mr. Owen Ryan, of Derrengullen Creek; Mr. Hayes, wife, and young man, who were in a buggy; and others, to the number of 40 or 50. Some considerable time before the coach came up Constable McLaughlin, of the Gundagai police, approached, leading a pack horse. Gilbert rode up to him and ordered him to surrender, but he replied by a shot from his revolver, which was returned by Gilbert, who then turned his horse and rode off a short distance. Hall then took up his position and fired at the constable, who again discharged his revolver. Hall's horse stumbled, and Dunn rode up and fired at McLaughlin. The constable discharged the six barrels of his revolver in the encounter, and then surrendered, some nine or a dozen shots having previously been fired at him by the bushrangers. Dunn remarked that one of the constable's shots was a very good one, and they would "have it in for him" on that account. The constable was added to the mob of captives. The coach subsequently came in sight, and the affray commenced as stated above. Constable Roche, who was on the coach armed with two large pistols, a six-barrel revolver, and a carbine, is stated to have slipped off the coach when the fight began, and to have darted into the bush, carrying his firearms along with him. He did not subsequently appear on the scene. Gilbert fought with Sergeant Parry, who refused to surrender, and discharged every barrel of his revolver before he fell; Hall and Dunn attacked Sub-Inspector O'Neill, who first discharged his carbine, and then several shots from a revolver. On Parry falling dead, the Sub-Inspector surrendered. The bushrangers disarmed him and took from him a ring and his watch chain, but we believe he was permitted to keep his watch on his informing them it had belonged to his father. The horse Mr. O'Neill rode was, however, taken, one of the bushrangers remarking it would make "a good packhorse." It seems singular that the driver of the coach did not take advantage of the proceedings going on to put his horses to their mettle and save the mail. This, however, he did not do, for Hall and his mates on the termination of the fight ordered Mr. Rose to throw out the bags, which the bushrangers cut open in the usual manner, and appropriated all they desired. The mail was a very heavy one, and it is supposed they secured a large amount of money. From Constable McLaughlin they took £7105, from Mr. Rose a watch and chain. We have not heard what was taken from Mr. Hayes, but he was searched; the lady who accompanied him did not molest. Gilbert is said to have turned over poor Parry's body, and to have remarked, "He's got it in the cobra (head); I am sorry for him, as he was a game fellow."

*We may state that the bushrangers informed the police that they intended to rob the mail next day (Thursday) and told them to send as many police men as they liked, and they would fight them. On the mail reaching Yass on Wednesday night Sergeant Scully, who was in charge of the force in the absence of Sub-Inspector Brennan, at once dispatched five mounted men, four of whom are connected with the Goulburn force, and had reached Yass the previous day, after eight days' unsuccessful search for the whereabouts of the bushrangers.*

*The coroner's jury returned the following verdict:—"That on the 16th day of November, in the year of our Lord, 1864, at a spot about four miles to the south of Jugiong, in the colony of New South Wales, the deceased Edmund Parry did die from the effects of a gunshot wound, at that time and in that place wickedly, maliciously, and feloniously inflicted upon him by one John Gilbert; and two other certain persons, named Benjamin Hall and John Dunn, were then and there unlawfully aiding and abetting the said John Gilbert in so feloniously destroying the life of the said Edmund Parry."*

Tomorrow we will drive the last 115 km home. We had an enjoyable journey exploring the area around Bright in the Victorian Highlands.