

Walk Into History

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The Walk into History follows historic timber tramways that wind their way through spectacular and diverse forest scenery, including forests of the world's tallest hardwoods (Mountain Ash) and sections of cool temperate rainforest in moist sheltered gullies.

The track

The walk is unique in Victoria, retracing the route of the original tramways and visiting the sites of former settlements and bush mills, now largely reclaimed by the forests.

From the early to mid-1900's, these tramways carried sawn timber from dozens of bush mills to Warburton and Powelltown.



The "Coffee Pot" steam engine on the Big Bridge, just east of Powelltown adjacent to the section of the walk that now follows Mackleys Road. (source: "Arsenic and Molasses, LRRSA)

Getting there

From Melbourne, take the Maroondah Highway to Lilydale. Just beyond Lilydale, turn right onto the Warburton Highway and follow this to the township of Warburton, where you can visit the Water Wheel Tourist Information Centre (weekdays 10am-5pm and weekends 10am-3pm) for more information.

You may choose to commence the walk from Warburton, however most walkers prefer to start from the Big Pats Creek Recreation Area, a further 6km from Warburton. To get there, continue through Warburton another 4km and turn right into Riverside Drive after crossing the Yarra River. After 600m turn left into Big Pats Creek Rd continue on through the small settlement of Big Pats Creek. After crossing a bridge, turn right into Smyths Creek Rd. After 1km, the recreation area and car park is reached.

Track overview and options

Many options exist to explore the natural and cultural delights of the Walk Into History, from hiking half day sections to more extended overnight and three day walks. Some possibilities are described here, but studying the route; where it intersects roads; and the times various sections take to hike, allow a range of other options to be considered.

Walk Into History



| | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 33 km (from Big Pats) | 2-3 days |
| Very steep & difficult | Rough track, many obstacles |
| Limited signage | Many steps |
| Experienced bushwalkers | |

If doing the entire walk, it is best done from Big Pats Creek to Powelltown over two or three days.

Please note the above description is the overall track grading, which takes into account the most difficult sections. To assist walkers in choosing the appropriate walk option, this forest note divides the track into sections that are graded separately, some of which are easier and contain only short steep sections and/or steps. The most challenging section for most walkers is the sustained steep grade of The High Lead Incline.

Big Pats Creek to Starlings Gap



| | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 9 km | 3.5 hours |
| Short steep hills | Rough track, many obstacles |
| Limited signage | Many steps |
| Experienced bushwalkers | |

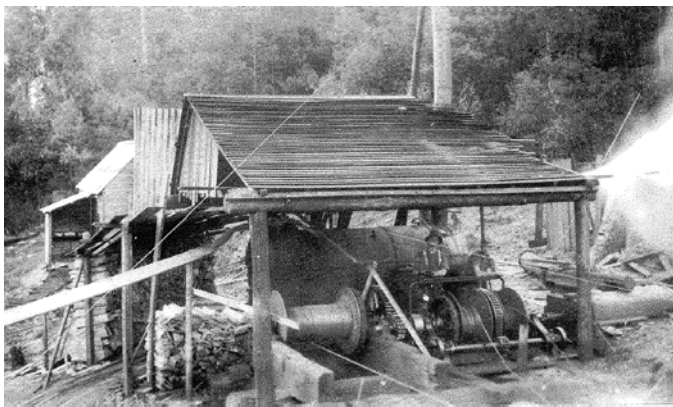
This section of the walk follows timber tramways constructed originally from 1908 to 1916 to service sawmills that extended as far as Starlings Gap.

The long white trunks of the Manna Gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*) welcome the explorer as the track gradually ascends the valley of Big Pats Creek and alongside the large gully of its tributary, Mortimer Creek. As the track subtly shifts more southerly in aspect, the forest becomes taller and wetter.

Careful observation along this section of the walk sometimes reveals sections of elevated tramway constructed with logs, where large granite rock prevented the normal "side cut" excavation. Two sawdust heaps are also visible. The first is Ezard's sawmill site (later Porta's), where a large heap falls sharply away from the track in a

partly obscured location. The second heap is reached just before Starlings Gap. This sawmill site operated under various ownership until 1939.

Starlings Gap provides a good place to rest, explore or even camp overnight before beginning the next section. When at Starlings Gap take a few minutes to visit the old winch and boiler located on a level track 100m past the toilet block.



Ada Company's winch at Starlings Gap (source: "Mountains of Ash", LRRSA)



Warburton Timber and Tramway Company's, No 6 Mill at Starlings Gap (source: "Mountains of Ash", LRRSA)

Starlings Gap to Crossroads & Ada No 2 Mill



| | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 7.5 km / 8 km | 3 hours |
| Short steep hills | Rough track, many obstacles |
| Limited signage | Many steps |
| Experienced bushwalkers | |

This section of tramway walk traverses tall wet forest and cool temperate rainforest as it follows the Ada River Valley, downstream from Starlings Gap. The expansive riparian zone of the Ada River, devoid of Eucalypts but dominated by Tea Trees and Melaleuca's, is regularly viewed below the tramway.

Another significant tramway existed on the south side of the Ada River, where timber from other sawmills as far west as Starlings Gap was transported back to Powelltown. As with hundreds of kilometres of other tramways in the area, this is completely overgrown.

After 7.5km the track reaches the junction with the Powelltown tramway at a point known as the crossroads.



The crossing of the Powelltown Tramway and the Federal Tramway from Warburton, January 1941, two years after the devastation of Black Friday, 1939. (source: "Arsenic and Molasses, LRRSA)

Alternatives walks from the "Crossroads"

At this point, the walk route to Powelltown turns to the south, however two very worthwhile options exist for further exploration.

2km to the north the New Ada Mill can be reached. New Ada Mill closed in 1942, the workers then being transferred to the Powelltown mill. A walking track continues beyond the mill site before linking up with VHC track, a vehicular track accessible from Big Creek Rd.

Alternatively, New Federal Mill can be reached by walking east for 2.2km from the tramway crossroads, passing an impressive partly collapsed tramway bridge on-route.

New Federal Mill dominated the sawmilling industry in the Warburton area for almost 15 years. Its closure in 1949 signaled the end of the timber tramway era. Walkers are welcome to camp at this site of historical significance, although no facilities exist.



View of New Federal Mill (source: M.McCarthy)

A walking track links New Federal Mill with The Ada Tree (1.4km) and the Ada Tree picnic area and car park (a further 1.4km). This provides an option for an end point and car pick up. Back on to the main walk route, the Ada No.2 Mill campsite is reached after heading south a few hundred metres from the "Crossroads".

Ada No.2 Mill to Highlead Carpark



5.5 km | 2.5 hours
Very steep & difficult | Rough track, many obstacles
Limited signage | Many steps
Experienced bushwalkers

The Ada No 2 Mill was destroyed in the 1939 bushfires, however the relics of structures and machinery around the campsite provide the visitor with a sense of a very different time. The site has camping platforms, fireplaces and sturdy food boxes to protect your food stocks from the resident possums.



Ada No 2 Mill, 1937 (source: "Arsenic and Molasses, LRRSA)

Heading south, the track crosses swampy riparian vegetation on a boardwalk adjacent to a long tramway bridge, the remnants of which are still visible. Ascending Dowey Spur and crossing Dowey Spur Rd, the track descends 415 metres in 1600 metres down a section known as "The High Lead Incline". The name of the incline relates to the high lead cable logging systems formerly employed in this locality; an efficient technology for logging in steep terrain imported from North America, involving the aerial movement of logs.



Walkers making use of the High Lead Incline (source: "Arsenic and Molasses, LRRSA)

Burnt in the Black Friday fires of 1939, the hallmarks of the 1983 Ash Wednesday fires are also evident in the younger regrowth forest in this section. Soon after crossing Big Creek Basin Rd, the track flattens

out in the lower reaches of Big Creek near its confluence with the Latrobe River.

Some exotic plants indicate the site of Knotts Mill and soon after the Latrobe River is traversed on an old log before reaching the Yarra Junction - Noojee Rd at the High Lead Car Park.

Highlead Carpark to Powelltown Picnic Area



10.5 km | 3 hours
Very steep & difficult | Rough track, many obstacles
Limited signage | Many steps
Experienced bushwalkers

The track turns westward opposite the High Lead Car Park and runs parallel to the main road. Two log bridges span the Latrobe River before the track crosses the main road and passes the site of the Nayook West township.



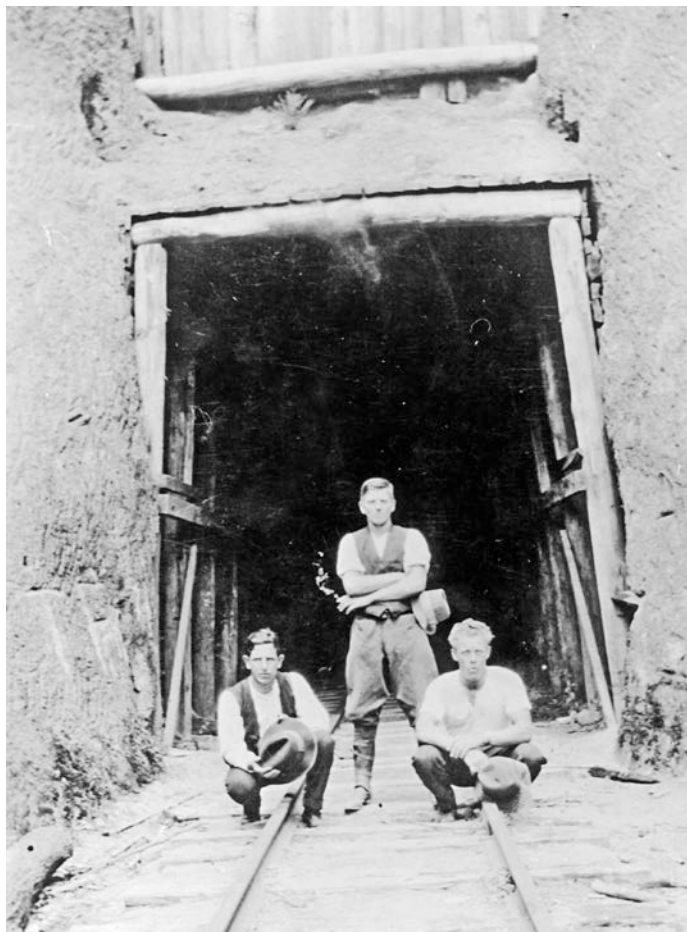
The "Coffee Pot" steam engine at Nayook West township, approx.1920. (source: "Arsenic and Molasses, LRRSA)

Crossing the Latrobe again the track climbs up and crosses the main road at the site known as The Bump, the divide between the Latrobe and Yarra catchments.

The Bump is also known for 'The Bump Tunnel', a historic tramway tunnel constructed in 1925. Spanning 313 metres in length, the tunnel was constructed to avoid winching up the existing steep inclines. Both entrances to the tunnel were blown in many decades ago, although the excavations that led to the entrances are still evident.

Over The Bump, the track winds its way down the Little Yarra catchment, crossing the Little Yarra three times over log bridges, before joining Mackleys Rd.

Into the Powelltown Township, the track passes the historic Union Church and the sawmill before reaching the Powelltown Picnic Area, opposite the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning Powelltown work centre.



Western portal of The Bump Tunnel, just after completion in 1925. (source: "Arsenic and Molasses, LRRSA)

- the ground and airspace within 3m of the appliance is clear of flammable material
- when in use and alight, the appliance is in a stable position and attended by an adult who has the capacity and means (minimum of 10 litres of water on hand) to extinguish the fire.
- **It is your responsibility to know if a Total Fire Ban is declared. If in doubt, do not light a campfire.**
- Be responsible for your own safety. Be aware of extreme weather events, carry your own first aid kit and let someone know before you go.
- Forest roads are public roads and normal road rules apply. Drive as if you were expecting a vehicle to come around the next bend.

For more information

The Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning (DELWP) is responsible for managing Victoria's State Forest. For further information contact DELWP's Customer Service Centre ☎ 136 186 (TTY: 1800 555 667) or visit DELWP's website at <http://www.delwp.vic.gov.au>



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Forest use guidelines

- Pit toilets are common at State forest sites but hand washing facilities and toilet paper may not be supplied. Come prepared.
- Be careful camping under trees – they can drop their limbs (particularly during high winds).
- There is no rubbish collection service so please take your rubbish home.
- Dogs are allowed in State forest but must be under direct control at all times and are expected to be on a leash in picnic and camping areas or when near other visitors.
- Motor vehicles including motorcycles must not be driven off formed roads or on walking tracks. All vehicles must be registered and drivers licensed.

Safety information

- On Code Red Fire Danger Rating days, parks and State Forest are closed to the public. Do not enter parks or forests on Code Red Days. If you are already there when a Code Red day is announced, you should leave the night before or early in the morning. For more information contact DELWP (see below).
- **Campfire safety** – Use fireplaces where provided. The fire must be attended at all times by a person with the capacity and means to extinguish it. For solid fuel fires, the ground and airspace within 3m of the outer perimeter of the fire must be clear of flammable material. Ensure the fire is extinguished with water before leaving. **If it's cool to touch it is safe to leave.**
- **Campfires are prohibited on days of Total Fire Ban.** This ban does not apply to a person preparing meals on a gas or electric appliance that has been designed and commercially manufactured exclusively for cooking provided:

Walk Into History Trail

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Meters
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Forest Notes Map
FS-124

