

# Arapiles 50. A CELEBRATION

## *Arapiles: half as old as time*

***“Welcome to Australia’s premier sea-cliff! The tide’s been out for 20 million years... but it will come in again one day.”***

ROSS CAYLEY, GEOSCIENCE VICTORIA, 2008.

## 50 years of recorded climbing at Arapiles

**Wow! Fifty years. That’s an awful lot of kilometres that have been travelled vertically. From that first weekend in November 1963, that saw a number of routes climbed and recorded in writing, Arapiles has never failed to deliver.**

Even now with well over 2000 routes, new ones are always being discovered. But even if no more new routes were to come out of Arapiles, the freshness of surprise still gives the same feelings to those whom launch themselves upon her glorious orange flanks either for the first time or for the hundredth time.

50 years surely deserves a celebration. A celebration of all the climbing experiences we have ever had here. A celebration of Arapiles that surrounds us when we do. And a celebration of the future and more of it to come.

But while we are celebrating and thinking about all the things that we love and hold dear about Arapiles, take a little time to think about how we can ensure others that follow us in their climbing adventures, get

to experience many of the same amazing things. As park users we directly contribute to both the positive and negative aspects.

Mount Arapiles Tooan State Park is an amazing and unique park. From a climbing perspective it rates as world class. From a conservation perspective, as one of the few remaining areas of native bush in a sea of agriculture, it provides essential habitat for the flora and fauna of the Wimmera Bioregion. Many of the species, have no passage to elsewhere and rely directly the resources the Mount provides. With such high visitor numbers in a relatively small park it’s inevitable that climbers will have some impacts on nature and have the potential to diminish it. When it all comes down to it, at Arapiles, it isn’t just about the climbing.

And where do Parks Victoria as land managers figure in this? Given the responsibility of managing the parks natural resources, weighed up against the recreational values and the people that use it, this was never going to be an easy job. What we do have at Arapiles though, is a community of dedicated and passionate people who care about the Mount and what becomes of it - in the next 50 years, and beyond. Park users concerns of development, of a change in the lifestyle and culture of climbing at Arapiles and in the campground are bumped up against land managers concerns at managing the environmental issues the high visitor numbers cause as well as creating the visitor experience to suit a large and more diverse range of users.

**Best then, that maybe we listen to each other, talk and work something out together. All whilst celebrating everything that Arapiles is to us all.**



IMAGE  
COURTESY  
OF GLENN  
TEMPEST

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# Indigenous perspectives of Djurite

***“The Mount was ideal for working into stone tools... Aborigines took considerable risks to quarry this rock and... it is astonishing what dangerous positions they would have reached.”***

**ANDREW LONG, ARCHAEOLOGIST, 1994.**

Arapiles, known as Djurite to indigenous peoples, was the focus of the Djurite Balug clan for probably thousands of years until the 1840s. Rising spectacularly above the surrounding plains and ecologically biodiverse, the Mount was a base from which clan members hunted and gathered food, traded with neighbours, and engaged in a range of activities. Stone tool quarry sites, scar trees, and traces of rock art are surviving fragments that testify to a rich indigenous occupation.

During the 1840s, many Aboriginal people from the Arapiles district were massacred and poisoned during the brutal frontier wars. Many others perished from European diseases to which they had no resistance. Survivors were rounded up and sent to missions; some found work on properties. “All those horrors,” the late historian Rupert Lockwood observed, “because the dispossessed Aborigines learnt to fold the intruders’ sheep at Mt Arapiles for their own survival!”

**TODAY, WOTJOBALUK PEOPLE ARE PROUD OF THEIR HERITAGE AND THEIR ANCESTORS’ ACHIEVEMENTS. DJURITE IS A SITE OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE WOTJOBALUK.**



*Barengi Gadjin Land Council is the trustee of the Native Title rights and interests of the Wotjobaluk, Wergaia, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali and Jupagalk (collectively Wotjobaluk) people who were the first group in Victoria to be recognised as maintaining Native Title over their traditional lands.*

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## The Delicate Thread Biodiversity

**Arapiles is a local hotspot for biodiversity. Its physical attributes - varying elevations, deeply fissured topography and thermal mass – have enabled its ecological richness. Local author Keith Lockwood observed that Arapiles' exceptional biodiversity is also due to "its location at geographic and climatic crossroads... between green civilisation and the red outback... and at the western extremity of the Great Dividing Range."** (2007)

Deep moist chasms provide refuge for soft tree ferns (*Dicksonia antactica*), a remnant from Gondwanaland, when Australia was a warmer wetter place. On hot summer days, one often sees swamp wallabies searching for green pick along cooler south-facing cliff faces. Sunny gullies with well-drained soils support ancient native pines (*Callitris* sp). Even arid cliff faces are colonised by species of lichen, mosses, and flowering plants like round-leaf mint-bush (*Prostanthera rotundifolia*) and hop goodenia (*Goodenia ovata*).

Cliffs are a vital and unique habitat for dozens of animal species. Rock skinks, geckoes, insects and spiders exploit rocky ecological niches. Many bird species nest on craggy ledges or in rock holes at Arapiles. Peregrine falcons and the smaller Australian kestrel build and defend their nests in spring – climbers must avoid climbing routes with seasonal closures. Pardalotes and crimson rosellas have been observed raising young in holes and chimneys at Arapiles. Swallows and martins are responsible for the mud nests under the overhangs of Castle Crag and the Uncle Charlies. Observant climbers may also spot treecreepers and shrike-thrushes hopping up the rock face picking out insects from tiny crevices.

SOFT TREE  
FERNS.  
IMAGE  
COURTESY  
OF VERN  
HALLAM

## FLYING FREE

**Peregrine Falcons inhabit many of the cliffs we climb at in Victoria. As all of us who climb at these cliffs can attest to – it is a special privilege to be able to see these creatures up as close as we do. How amazing is it to watch them fly by, and check us out as much as we are checking them out.**

And Mt Arapiles would have to be one of the best places for seeing these birds. With a number of regular nesting sites it is important to note when the season begins and be alert for any reports. Season usually begins end of August until November. With birds generally returning to their regular sites each year, it makes it easy to plan climbing particular routes at a least sensitive time. When birds are nesting, your presence can impact hugely on their breeding and survival of chicks. It may be annoying that you can't do the climb you had planned but it will always be there for another day. If you do the climb, there's a good chance that the Peregrine won't be there for another day. It's not worth it.

### KNOWN REGULAR NESTING SITES AT MT ARAPILES:

- ▶ HARLEQUIN CRACKS/BEAU GESTE AREA
- ▶ EURYDICE
- ▶ SERPENT AREA, MITRE ROCK SOUTH SIDE

**Take note of any Falcon nesting warnings and please stay clear at least 50 metres.**

Falconwatch on the CliffCare website has updated nesting alerts. CliffCare has also begun the practice of installing small bird nesting signs near any reported nest sightings at Mt Arapiles. These are to alert those that may not be aware of the Peregrines. The signs are removed once the chicks have fledged.

Also, there are often notices put up on the noticeboard near the Pines campground, alerting climbers to the sightings.



PEREGRINE  
FALCON.  
IMAGE  
COURTESY  
OF IAN  
MORGAN

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# *In The Cooling Shade* **The Pines Campground**

**The history of Mount Arapiles Tooan State Park is an extensive one.**

Long before climbers discovered the Mount, the park was used and loved by the community that lived around it. And still does. Family visits and picnics, community celebrations, rifle clubs, band performances, walking clubs, birdwatchers – all enjoying the same special attachment that we as climbers feel about the Mount.

When the Mount Arapiles Centenary Park Committee was formed in the early 1930s, it was the first committee of its kind on forest land in Victoria. It started the development of Centenary Park, organised a pageant to celebrate the centenary of Major Mitchell's visit in 1836 and planted 500 pine trees to create what is now popularly known as The Pines. Natimuk State School children, including Keith Lockwood's mother and father, helped plant the trees.

In the early days of climbing, The Pines were dense, dark, fenced off and almost impenetrable - used as a toilet when other facilities were rudimentary and less than appealing. In 1985 Arapiles Shire Council sought to defend the Arapiles pines when 30 pines were axed at Doon Swamp. The Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands assured councillors that the Arapiles pines were safe - it had no intention to remove the existing pine plantation, but individual trees would be removed if they were deemed unsafe.

**BY 1997 THE  
NUMBER OF PINES  
HAD FALLEN FROM 500  
TO 197, WITH ANOTHER  
37 IN DECLINE.  
THE LONG DROUGHT SPILT THE  
END FOR MANY MORE.**

Subsequent campaigns to save the pines have focussed on their heritage value both for the national and international climbing community, and for the heritage of Centenary Park. By 1997 the number of pines had fallen from 500 to 197, with another 37 in decline. The long drought spelt the end for many more.

**In 2008 Jim Newlands - who did the first ascent of Bard - propagated hundreds of native oyster bay pines, which were planted by Natimuk Primary School children the following year. Many are thriving in their tree guards.**

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## *Animals in the Park*

# The Non Native Variety

### WHY ARE NO DOGS OR CATS ALLOWED AT MT ARAPILES?

The issue of dogs in our parks does seem to upset people on both sides of the fence. The fact is – that in the majority of parks and this includes Mt Arapiles, dogs are banned. In the case of Mt Arapiles, dogs are allowed in the Picnic Shelter area. On many occasions when people have been confronted in the park with their dogs, justifications such as: The dog is on a leash. It's very well behaved. It's only a small dog etc are often offered as their reason for bringing a dog in. There are many reasons as to why it is not appropriate to bring dogs in. Cats also fall into the same category although visitors are not so willing to bring cats along for the journey. But the feral cat population is growing at Arapiles and its surrounds and they also impact on the wildlife in the park

One of the main reasons dogs are not allowed at Mt Arapiles is to ensure that the park is managed in accordance with its objectives, to preserve and protect the natural environment and to conserve flora and fauna. Dogs can compete with or harass, chase, trample or prey upon native fauna, especially ground-dwelling species. Dogs can also disturb wildlife by their scent, sounds, scratching and digging. Dogs may also transmit diseases and parasites to native fauna, and their urine and excrement may attract wild dogs and foxes. Even if a dog is on a lead and is very obedient it would be impossible to have a rule which allowed some dogs (the quiet or small ones) into parks and similar reserves but not others (the big and the boisterous).



JOB ON ROPE.  
IMAGE  
COURTESY  
OF DAN  
MILLER



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# Staying Inside the Box Camping

Currently there are three campground areas at Mount Arapiles Toosan State Park. The Pines, The Gums and the Lower Gums. There are also a lot of areas around these campgrounds that look like they would be really nice spots to camp at – consequently people will often pitch their tent or park their campervan etc. there. Camping in the Day Visitor area in front of the Pines campground seems to be especially popular, as does in the park areas further down near Pharos Gully and Watchtower Face.

Camping outside of the campgrounds has an impact that is very noticeable over time. Pitching a tent as well as the concentrated foot traffic eventually kills all vegetation and hardens the ground. Acceptable to a degree in a campground, but a bad look in the day visitor area. Perhaps you have seen them – bald patches of ground amongst vegetated areas.

In particular, the Day Visitor area has been created for all of those users who come to visit the park for the day. Somewhere to sit, socialize, have lunch and for some of the groups, a meeting place to discuss plans for the day or even a lesson or two. If this area continuously gets used for camping, it denies these users the opportunity to have their space. It becomes a very different kind of space.

From an environmental point of view, it will degrade the soil and therefore the vegetation. One of the first steps towards impacting on the biodiversity of the area.

Whilst in no way wanting to promote the idea of living inside a box - perhaps this is one time though, that staying inside the lines is the best choice for the park and in the end, the long term enjoyment of future climbers and campers. Be aware of the campground boundaries. They are usually visible with posts and barriers. There are also multiple small signs in some of the front areas of the park noting that camping is not allowed there. These tend to be the areas that people will set up tent in. However, please don't assume that because there isn't a sign there saying no camping that it's ok to do so. A proliferation of signs is not the path that we should be going down.

CAMPING OUTSIDE  
OF THE CAMPGROUNDS  
HAS AN IMPACT THAT IS  
VERY NOTICEABLE  
OVER TIME.

## THE CAMPSIDE CLASSROOM QUESTION

Over the last two decades, Arapiles has become increasingly popular with school groups, universities and colleges.

Despite a 5 hour bus drive, and several other cliffs being closer to Melbourne, the Mount has become the choice destination for schools offering their students a specialised rock climbing program. This is because Arapiles has good camping, easy access, solid rock, dozens of top quality cliff venues, and plenty of beginner routes. Schools, unis and colleges from Victoria, SA, ACT and NSW utilise Arapiles. Peak periods such as the last week of term 1 and 4, are especially busy, with sometimes up to 200 students simultaneously converging on Arapiles for the week.

Over the last two decades, school group size appears to have increased, as schools operate more like businesses in order to optimise efficiency. Large group sizes in the campground profoundly affects the experience of those in the group and others camping near the group.

At the cliff, Parks Victoria limits commercial group sizes to 15 at any one site at any one time. Most groups self-regulate. Occasionally much larger groups monopolise cliff sites and adversely affect other users.

On the plus side, the campground is a vibrant place with a rich social environment with a casual friendly tolerant ambience. The campground has many excellent ancillary educational opportunities for secondary and tertiary students as they observe or casually interact with other campground users, namely recreational climbers and in particular full-time climbers. For students to witness a simple alternative lifestyle embedded in the natural world, rich in social and physical experience but largely non-materialistic is an antidote to urban lives filled with high-tech gadgetry, conspicuous consumption and a managed environment.

## CAMPFIRES AND BIODIVERSITY. THE BURNING QUESTION.

**Every Australian loves a campfire. However, they have an ecological cost.**

This is unsustainable when visitor numbers are large and the natural area is small. Arapiles is barely 4000 acres in size. It has up to 80,000 visitor-days per year. Open fires are banned for six months of the year, during peak fire danger period (November to April), but allowed for the cooler months (May to October).

Firewood collection in a small heavily-used park like Arapiles is not compatible with biodiversity.

A suite of micro- and macro-organisms utilise wood, including termites. Echidnas' main source of food is termites; leaving wood on the ground is integral to echidnas' habitat.

Despite firewood collection for campfires being banned in the park for over the last 15 years, collection still continues. The request for visitors to bring their own wood is followed by the minority.

There are a number of official fireplaces in the campgrounds. These are metal rings. Please refrain from building a new fireplace. Over the years many more stone ring fireplaces have been built by campers. Not only is this unsightly but it creates vegetation loss as well as camping space loss.

**Our impact on Arapiles can have cascading effects on biodiversity.**

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VICTORIA  
Healthy Parks  
Healthy People!

**CliffCare**

**FRIENDS OF ARAPILES**

**VCC**  
VICTORIAN  
CLIMBING CLUB INC.

IMAGE  
COURTESY  
OF PHILIPP  
HAMMES

# Keeping on Track

**It seems a simple concept to take on board and follow doesn't it? And while many do, there is the chance that the track they are keeping on, isn't actually the right track. So, what is the right track you ask?**

Basically, in most situations, it is the track that has been formally created by land managers to travel along or access a particular destination. Or in the case of Mt Arapiles, by climbers themselves accessing the cliffs. Generally, these tracks have been found to be the easiest to access large sections of the cliff and for the most part travel along the more sustainable sections of the landscape in order to do so. Are they always going to be the quickest way to the cliffbase? Often not. But if we employed that premise, we would end up with an even worse situation of excess tracks than there already are.

Shortcutting - in a park like Mt Arapiles, which sees an inflated amount of visitors focussing on specific areas at any one time - is a sure fire way of not only creating unsightly multiples of tracks arriving at the same destination but more importantly, the destruction of larger sections of land from multiple tracks eventually eroding toward each other. All vegetation caught in between will suffer from this impact and often the end result is bare hardened sections of land that can't support any vegetation. The best place to see the impact of multiple tracks is when you are up high on the cliffs. Look down, and besides the more obvious ones which we would see to be the main access tracks, there will also be a multitude of smaller ones. They can often be seen at the corners of intersecting paths, but also often within metres of another and both going to the same place.

Most people when they shortcut, ask themselves, what difference will it really make if they just cut across there? If it was just that one person? A miniscule difference. But at a park like Arapiles, you will never be just the one person. When it comes to using the park both as campers, climbers and walkers, there is scarcely a unique thought amongst us. If you have thought of it, someone else or two or three or more will have also thought it a good idea to just nip across that way. And therein lies the problem.

**STICK TO THE TRACK. SHAVING 20 SECONDS OR EVEN A MINUTE OFF YOUR WALK TIME IS NOT WORTH THE DAMAGE IT WILL CAUSE IN THE LONGER RUN. IF THERE IS SIGNAGE, PLEASE FOLLOW IT.**



FIELD OF  
GOLDEN  
EVERLASTINGS.  
IMAGE  
COURTESY OF  
NERN HALLAM



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## Paving the Way

# The Pharos Gully Repair Project

**The Pharos Gully Track serves as a major access route. It is not only a popular walkers track from base to summit at one of the steepest areas at Arapiles, it also serves as the access to a number of climbing areas at the Mount as well as the descent track from the Pinnacle Faces.**

Due to its steepness and the continued impact of human traffic it has suffered severely from erosion. Over the years a small section was stoneworked by a few volunteers, along with Walter Braun, a fellow climber and stonemason, who gave up his time to dry stonework it. Unfortunately the ability to repair the track and keep up with the ongoing damage in their spare time, made for a very long timeframe. In 2009 a joint project with Parks Victoria, Friends of Arapiles and CliffCare made the task of dry stoneworking the entire track, a very real possibility. Grant funding provided by Parks Victoria, allowed us to employ Walter Braun as the project stonemason. Further funding by Friends of Arapiles via donations received from park users to its donation box, as well as CliffCare funding organizational and project development costs, has meant that after 5 years, the project is nearing its completion. With an expected finish date of Spring next year, there will be many a volunteer breathing a sigh of relief that the job of rock transportation will be quiet for a while. 6 years of moving rocks is quite enough thankyou.

So how does it all happen? Rocks are purchased from the Mitre area. This ensures that the rock is local and that the stonework steps and retaining walls will blend into the environment. And how do the rocks, large and small get transported up and down the track? Human power! Over the last 5 years numerous working bees have provided hundreds of volunteers, predominantly climbers, to help move the rocks along the steep track so that Walter can create the stonework by fitting them

into place – much like a jigsaw.

Along with the working bees, Louise Shepherd from Friends of Arapiles would often finish her guiding and instructional duties each day with her school groups, by getting her students to spend a little time in the afternoons also moving the rocks. Once the rocks are in an accessible place, Walter our stonemason, begins to work his magic. Handpicking the right rock for just the right spot, dry stonework really is an art. Making something look natural and ensuring that it stays put for years and years to come whilst undergoing constant pounding from visitors up and down carrying heavy packs is no small feat. And all without the addition of any concrete or binding materials! Vegetation can continue to grow in and around the stonework, helping to strengthen the track and preventing further erosion on the track sides.

NEXT TIME YOU ARE UP THAT WAY, HAVE A GOOD LOOK. YOU MIGHT RECOGNIZE A ROCK YOU CARRIED. AND IF YOU HAVEN'T CARRIED A ROCK, DON'T DESPAIR. WITH A NUMBER OF WORKING BEES SCHEDULED FOR NEXT YEAR, THERE IS A VACANT SPOT WITH YOUR NAME ON IT.



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**CliffCare**

**Friends of Arapiles**

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# Mount Arapiles Tooan State Park and it's Volunteer Groups



**Look around the park – there is evidence of much of the work of the two main volunteer groups that keep a watchful eye on Mt Arapiles and its park environment.**

These two groups often work hand in hand with each other and with Parks Victoria, to organize and administer many of the projects that take place. With such a heavy visitor load, many of the areas need stabilization to help control erosion and in the bigger picture, help to ensure that the flora and fauna of the area continues to thrive. Both of the groups are not for profits and rely directly on donated funds they receive from the climbing community. Alongside this Parks Victoria help out with grants for specific projects.

**IN ORDER TO SURVIVE THOUGH, WE NEED YOUR HELP WITH DONATIONS AS WELL AS VOLUNTEERING FOR THE WORK DAYS. WE REALLY CAN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOUR HELP.**

**Friends of Arapiles** is a non-profit community organisation based in Natimuk and made up of volunteers from all over Australia. It includes local residents, rock climbers, school students, university and TAFE students and climbing club members.

The group was formed to enable frequent visitors at Arapiles to assist Parks Victoria with park management. We all have an impact on the natural environment. Constant foot traffic tramples vegetation which leads to soil loss, gully erosion, track proliferation, the spreading of weeds and a conduit for feral animals.

A secure donation box is located next to the notice board outside the flushing toilets.

Your money will pay for materials that are needed for special projects like the stone trail in the Pharos Gully, indigenous seedlings, and chemicals and secateurs for weed control.

**Thank you for your generous donation!**



**CliffCare** is a not for profit environmental organization administered by the Victorian Climbing Club and is the peak body for recreational climbing in Victoria. Land managers, both Parks Victoria and private landowners recognise CliffCare and the Victorian Climbing Club as such, and negotiate directly with us when issues arise.

The Victorian CliffCare Trust in simple terms, is the environmental arm of the club. It's about taking responsibility and looking after the places we love to climb at and maintaining their access.

Since 1998, we have employed Australia's first professional Access and Environment Officer who works in three ways:

## 1. EDUCATION

*Promoting 'low impact' climbing*

## 2. ADVOCACY

*Negotiating with land managers to maintain access and re-open popular cliffs*

## 3. PROTECTION

*Organizing work parties and raising money to preserve the cliff environment*

A CliffCare Fund has been established which allows us to raise money to continue the valuable work we do preserving the cliff environment where you love to climb. Think of us as the nuts and bolts of the climbing community.

We do need your support though. Work with us to follow best practice guidelines, volunteer some time and make a donation. Our funding is dependant on donations from the climbing community.

## CLIFFCARE AND MT ARAPILES

CliffCare has been involved with the care of Mt Arapiles and the park for many years. It has organized multiple on ground projects and recruited hundreds of volunteers from the climbing community. Some of the projects it has organized include:

- ▶ PHAROS GULLY MT ARAPILES REPAIR PROJECT – REVEGETATION & REPAIR.
- ▶ BUSHRANGERS BLUFF MT ARAPILES REPAIR PROJECT – DRY STONework AROUND BASE.
- ▶ MT ARAPILES CLEAN UP DAY.
- ▶ ORGAN PIPES STONework AND EROSION CONTROL.
- ▶ MT ARAPILES THEMEDA GRASS (KANGAROO GRASS) REPLANTING.

### HOW TO CONTACT CLIFFCARE:

[cliffcare@vicclimb.org.au](mailto:cliffcare@vicclimb.org.au)

Ph: 0490 360 277

[www.cliffcare.org.au](http://www.cliffcare.org.au)

Photo site: <http://vicclimbingclub-cliffcare.smugmug.com/>



Visit CliffCare and Victorian Climbing Club

**VISIT HERE  
TO DONATE**

<http://www.givenow.com.au/cliffcare>

[http://www.cafaustalia.org.au/caf\\_home.php](http://www.cafaustalia.org.au/caf_home.php)

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# Thoughts for the Future?

Arapiles is part of a very special global family of amazing places to go climbing and spend time camping and hanging out in a laid back, relaxed and beautiful natural environment. Comparable to Yosemite and Camp 4, Paynes Ford in New Zealand, the Verdon Gorge in France, the 'Gunks' in New York to name but a few.

**We'll travel from afar to visit these special places, often from the other side of the world, but we'll likely end up bumping into people from home or friends we know from other places. We make new friendships too. Through intense climbing experiences we form strong connections with the Mount. This special place needs and deserves looking after by us.**

- ▶ **WHAT IS SPECIAL ABOUT MOUNT ARAPILES AND THE EXPERIENCES PEOPLE HAVE HERE THAT WE SHOULD PROTECT AND LOOK AFTER FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS?**
- ▶ **HOW HAVE THINGS CHANGED OVER TIME — BOTH IN TERMS OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AT MOUNT ARAPILES AND THE KINDS OF EXPERIENCES PEOPLE ARE COMING TO ENJOY HERE?**
- ▶ **WHAT CHANGES COULD BE MADE TO MOUNT ARAPILES AND ITS MANAGEMENT TO IMPROVE BOTH THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE ENJOYMENT OF VISITORS INTO THE FUTURE?**
- ▶ **WHAT REALITY CHECKS ARE THERE IN TERMS OF LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY REQUIREMENTS AND RESOURCING CONSTRAINTS AND HOW CAN CREATIVE SOLUTIONS OVERCOME THESE?**

**Thinking about the quintessential Arapiles experiences what are some of the options we have for retaining these in the future?**

**Keeping a relaxed and informal camping experience.** Yes, it can get pretty cosy, cheek by jowl, on a busy weekend, but overall do we prefer this rather than having to camp within designated boxes and sites? Many Parks Victoria sites have designated sites and some park managers see merit in this for keeping things organised and not overcrowded. Alongside this, an online booking system has also been implemented in a number of parks. Mt Arapiles and other parks in the vicinity are also being considered for this. Would a dedicated area for larger school groups be a possible solution to providing other campers a school group free experience? Your thoughts?

**The pines, planted all those years ago.** No they are certainly not native but they do give denser shade and they are part of the layers of stories written into the landscape of the Mount. Should we replant the pines with a new generation of pines to continue the story and the shade or should they be removed and the native gums restored?

**How many facilities are enough?** Yes, we do get pretty dirty out at the Mount but it's a dry climate here and water is a scarce resource, particularly in summer. The old flushing toilets currently run off a bore but the level has been dropping over the years. With the new Wimmera Mallee pipeline in place could a connection for the park help? What is the most environmentally friendly solution for sustaining these vital resources?

**Keeping on track.** There have been track rationalisation programs at Arapiles in the past which have had some success but the focus has dropped away in recent times. Other places like Paynes Ford in New Zealand have made efforts rationalise tracks. Is it time for another go at track rationalisation at Mount Arapiles?

**Alternative Campsite management models?** What role can climbers play in the management of the campground? Should we be considering the American Alpine Club approach?

"The American Alpine Club is dedicated to providing affordable lodging for climbers at world-renowned climbing destinations in need of such facilities."

The American Alpine Club currently manages three major lodging facilities for climbers: the Grand Teton Climbers' Ranch in Wyoming, the Hueco Rock Ranch in Texas, and the New River Gorge Campground in West Virginia. They have also just started a project to establish a new campground at the Gunks.

"The Samuel F. Pryor Shawangunk Gateway Campground will provide a high quality, minimalist, camping experience to the thousands of annual Shawangunk Mountains visitors, and be an important resource for the local community," said Mohonk Preserve Director of Land Stewardship/Chief Ranger Hank Alicandri.



## ARAPILES NEEDS YOU!

### How to get involved...

There is a strong tradition of community and visitor interest in Arapiles and its management. You can help by joining and/or donating to The Friends of Arapiles, the VCC CliffCare group. There is also the longstanding formal Community Advisory Group for Mount Arapiles Toaan State Park. Provisions for having a Community Advisory Group are made under the National Park Act for those parks where there is a particularly strong community interest in the park. Mount Arapiles Toaan State Park is one of less than half a dozen parks in Victoria that has an Advisory Group. Expressions of interest for people to be part of the Advisory Group are called for every three years with renewals due soon.

Parks Victoria generously provided financial assistance for the Arapiles 50. A Celebration project. Content has been community generated and does not necessarily reflect the opinions of Parks Victoria.

