



THE VICTORIAN SEEKERS CLUB

MEMBERS' HANDBOOK



2015

The Club wishes to thank **Minelab Electronics** for their assistance in the cost of production for this Handbook.

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Preface to the Third Edition

The Members' Handbook is an important document that the Club has produced to assist members to enjoy prospecting and camping in an effective, legal and safe manner, and to promote friendship with other members.

This edition of our Members' Handbook includes the addition of our Emergency Procedures including a Sign-in/Sign-out Register at camps and a section on Social Media. It also incorporates revised detecting and camping information and several changes in the Club's rules.

The Committee recognises the continual need for a duty of care to members on all club activities and especially while camping in the bush. This is not just out of care for our members but it has now become a legal requirement. The Committee has introduced a set of procedural guidelines for any emergency, particularly the risk of a wild fire; and the need to adopt a camp Sign-in/Sign-out Register of members present as part of that process.

Please take the time to read this handbook and be familiar with the rules and hints, particularly the emergency procedures as they may save a life – maybe your life.

Lindsay Tricker, President, April 2015

The Members Handbook origins

The Members Handbook had its origins in 1986 by Life Member Shirley Don. In 2008 a revised edition was produced and credit is due to Peter Maffey and Lindsay Tricker who put in much valuable work. Acknowledgement for the formalizing of this 2015 version and the new emergency guidelines is due to the hardworking members of our present committee with Ian Semmens, Geoff Lee making significant contributions. Also thanks to Warren Ibbotson for his assistance in reviewing this edition.

THE VICTORIAN SEEKERS CLUB INC

MEMBERS' HANDBOOK

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The Story of the Victorian Seekers Club

In February 1980, the Victorian Seekers Club was formed by David and Pam Snelling. At this time large gold nuggets were being found in the golden triangle of Victoria. David noticed that many metal detectors were being offered for sale in the local newspaper. He spoke to several of the persons offering the detectors for sale and realised all of them had the same story - they were unsure how to use their machines, did not know where to go to find gold and knew no one of like interest to discuss detecting for gold.

David decided to use his experience in metal detecting to form a club in the Waverley area and advertised in the local paper that a meeting would be held at Waverley, inviting all interested persons to attend. To his surprise there was 'standing room only'. That night the Victorian Seekers Club (hereafter referred to as the Club) was formed with 37 inaugural members. Within the first 18 months membership grew to over 150 members.



During the 34 years that the Club has been operating, we have visited and detected in over 50 goldfields in Victoria, we have found thousands of nuggets, and though most of these are small, there have been a few in the 3-5 ounces weight range. There have also been extended detecting trips to Western Australia, NSW and Queensland. The Club has also found many coins and relics. We have had gold panning days, beach detecting outings and many social outings. As a Club we have also participated in detector token hunts

organized by local community groups in Ararat, Wedderburn and Tarnagulla. The Club has also had teams participate in the Victorian and the National Gold Panning Championships with some success.

We enjoy a good working relationship with State Government bodies that regulate our activities and we are involved in all relevant government inquiries into our hobby by putting forward submissions in the support of our continued access to the prospecting areas.

Due to the hard work and dedication of the various Committees and the participation and support of members, the Club has grown to be the largest and most active detecting club in Australia. There is a wide range of skills in the Club on various forms of prospecting so please feel free to ask some of the more experienced members if you need any assistance in this area.



The Club offers members an opportunity to go prospecting with other like-minded persons and to gain knowledge and experience of prospecting and camping. Another important aspect is that it gives members an opportunity to visit local and remote areas that they would not normally go to and also to enjoy the “Great Australian Bush”.

We wish you success in your prospecting but most important of all is to enjoy your time in the bush, the park or the beach or wherever you do it, to have fun with this great hobby and to enjoy the company of other fellow prospectors.

Overview of the Club

The Victorian Seekers Club is a family oriented organisation, the objectives of which are to promote friendship, co-operation and exchange of ideas among people interested in prospecting and metal detecting.

To realise these aims we have meetings, lectures, discussions and practical demonstrations to help members acquire the skills needed to make their chosen hobby an enjoyable and rewarding pastime. We arrange outings to the goldfields and other prospecting sites - to search for gold, and where permitted by law, coins and relics. In addition, we also hold functions to foster social contacts among members.

Our prospecting activities are governed by a code of conduct as laid out in the Club Rules including respecting owners of private property and respecting the natural environment, hence our motto: “*SEEK BUT DON'T DESTROY*”

Visitors, guests and prospective new members are welcome to attend two outings and two meetings for mutual appraisal, at which stage their application for membership will be considered by the Committee.

The Club has a general meeting at 8pm on the first Wednesday of each month, except January, held at the Mulgrave Senior Citizens and Community Centre, 355 Wellington Road, Mulgrave (Melway map reference 71 C12). Field trips are arranged each month to the goldfields and directions are published in the Club Newsletter.



A 90 gram nugget detected by a member on a club camp

Statement of Purpose

The purposes of the Club are to:

- Promote the skill of prospecting using metal detectors and other suitable equipment in the search for gold, other precious metals, minerals, gemstones, coins, artifacts and relics.
- Encourage and foster friendship and co-operation amongst people interested in the above pursuits.
- Collaborate with other similar clubs and organizations.
- Hold meetings, lectures, demonstrations, field outings and competitions for the furtherance of members' prospecting skills and experience.
- Engage in fund raising activities for the bona fide purposes of the Club.
- Encourage all members to act in an environmentally and socially responsible manner, and in accordance with the Law.

The Club Constitution

The Club is fully incorporated and as such is required by law to have a formal constitution. The Club Constitution sets out in detail the structure of our Club including such things as; Election and duties of office bearers, conduct of meetings, mediation and resolution of disputes, and the process of imposing sanctions upon members who have refused or failed or neglected to comply with the rules of the Club. For full details refer to a copy of the Club's Constitution.

Public Liability Insurance

The Club carries Public Liability Insurance. The cover is Australia wide in respect of official Club excursions. Members should note that the cover is **NOT** for Club members' personal injury or personal property - it is to cover the Club and its Officers in the event of being sued by third party for injury, damage or loss caused due to an act of negligence by a Club Member(s). The Club will not accept responsibility or any claim from a member or visitor for personal injury, damage or loss to property, while participating in any form of Club activity.

Club Rules

The following Club Rules apply equally to all members and their guests. Members are responsible for informing their guests of Club Rules and Emergency Procedures and ensuring they comply with same. The Rules have evolved to guide members participating in Club camps and outings to do so safely and lawfully, thus creating a congenial atmosphere in which members' enjoyment and satisfaction is maintained, and the natural environment preserved.

Members' Responsibility

The Club takes its duty of care for the safety and wellbeing of its members seriously and exercises all reasonable steps to ensure that this is achieved as safely as possible. A bush camp, and the surrounding bush, is a constantly changing environment and it can become hazardous as weather and the levels of natural threats change. The Club will do all that it reasonably can to keep the members informed of any hazardous situation. However, it must be emphasized that it remains the responsibility of each and every member to be informed and to be responsible for their own safety and wellbeing.

Miners Right

The Victorian Mining Law states that all adults who look for gold, gemstones or any other minerals in the State of Victoria must hold a current Miners Right. It is each individual member's responsibility to obtain and maintain a current Miners Right. Without a Miners Right you have no legal right to search for minerals, including gold, which remain the property of the Crown (Government). The back of the Miners Right contains some of the conditions imposed on the holder.

No Miners' Right is required to detect for modern coins or jewelry. However, the Heritage Act forbids the removal of artifacts and relics from historic sites, including the gold fields. Full protection is also accorded to Australian Aboriginal Artifacts and Sacred Sites.

Directions given by Club Committee Member

All members are required to comply with any direction given by a Committee Member pursuant to Club activities.

Directions given by Police, Park Rangers or any other Statutory Authority

All members must comply with any direction given by any Lawful Statutory Authority.

Detecting on Private Land

When detecting on private land members must obtain the permission of the owner. The Miners Right does not give you the right to detect on private land unless you have the express consent of the owner. It is preferable that consent be obtained on each visit to the locality. The landowner can withdraw consent at any time.

Sign-in/Sign-out Book

During a camp all adult Members, Guests and Visitors (collectively referred to as Members) must sign-in on arrival at the camp and sign-out at their departure from the camp (as in, not returning to camp). Those who arrive early, or late at night, should sign-in at earliest opportunity. Members are to record their name, date arrived, date left, mobile phone number and emergency contact numbers.

The primary purpose of the sign in/sign out is for emergency use. For example, if there is a bushfire, or a member becomes lost, or has an accident or illness, or some other emergency the club then has a way of either contacting the member(s) or, if appropriate, contacting a family member or relative. It is the Members' responsibility to maintain a record of their attendance. Failure to do so in an emergency situation may jeopardise their own safety or the safety of others. Members who depart without signing-out should advise the Duty Officer or a Committee Member at the earliest opportunity. This could be by phone to the Duty Officer or a Committee Member remaining at the camp. It is highly recommended that members have at least several phone numbers of members

present at the camp stored on your mobile phone. These numbers can be obtained from the sign-in book.

Prospecting at Night

Prospecting and detecting is only permitted during daylight hours. The danger associated with mine shafts, injury or just getting lost is greatly increased at night. Also, other Club Members' safety may be put at risk in trying to assist you.

Places where detecting is banned

Detecting is banned at all times in cemeteries, lone graves, declared historic sites and on roads. Also members should not detect on historic puddlers. Detecting is banned in most National Parks and in some parts of State Parks & Reserves. There are parts of several National Parks where gold prospecting is allowed. Refer to the Research Officer for more information.

Back-filling of Detector Holes

All holes dug as a result of a detector signal must be fully refilled after the hole is finished with. The ground should be made to look as close as possible to what it did before you dug the target. In addition, holes dug for panning or sluicing should also be filled. The Miner's Right states "The holder of a miner's right must repair any damage to the land arising out of the search" and stipulates a monetary penalty.

Dogs at Camp

All dogs brought to a field trip are to be kept on a leash at all times. The permits issued to the Club by Parks Victoria and the Forest Service stipulate that dogs must be on a leash at all times. This also applies while out detecting. It is the responsibility of the dog owner to collect and properly dispose of their dog's droppings. There are some camps where dogs are not allowed. This is normally noted on the map for the camp in the newsletter. A dog may not be brought into a National Park - including being in your car.

Camp Rubbish & Toilet Waste

All domestic waste, rubbish and dog droppings are to be bagged and removed from the public lands. It is unlawful to bury same. Do not try to burn cans, bottles and any plastic in the fire. It is important that we leave the campsite in a clean condition. If there is any other rubbish in the camp, please clean it up and take it with you.

The use of chemical toilets is encouraged but the waste must not be emptied in the camp site or surrounds but taken home and tipped down the sewer or a designated dump point. If defecating in the bush, you must dig a hole and properly bury the waste. This needs to be done well away from water courses, dams and lakes which could become contaminated.

Firearms

Firearms should not be brought to Club outings however if a lawful and genuine reason exists for a firearm to be in the possession of a Club member, the firearm must be kept secure and on no account produced or discharged.

Camp Fires

The lighting of campfires, including personal cooking fires, is strictly controlled by regulations at all times of the year. On occasion, the Committee Members present may decide that weather conditions and the abundance of



dry undergrowth will make the lighting of a fire too risky and a 'NO FIRES' sign will be erected or it will be noted on the Club notice board. Members are requested not to light a fire when the sign is displayed or if directed by a Committee Member, Field Officer or Duty Officer.

Members gathered around the main camp fire at the end of the day.

In accordance with CFA regulations, when the lighting of a fire is permitted, it can only be done by following the directions. In brief they are:

- The area selected must be clear of everything combustible for 3 meters in all directions including directly above.
- The campfire must be built in a properly constructed fireplace or a trench 30 centimeters deep (one foot) and must be kept small - only sufficient for warmth and cooking.
- Fires must not be built against standing dry tree stumps - the roots can burn underground, sometimes for days.
- If the wind speed exceeds 10 kph, then the campfire has to be extinguished. It is strong winds that fan embers into life and spread sparks into surrounding dry grass and leaves.
- Fires must be attended at all times. Members finding an unattended fire shall immediately report the matter to a Committee Member who will arrange for the fire to be extinguished.
- On days of declared 'Total Fire Ban', no fires of any description are permitted to be lit in the open air nor allowed to remain alight. This includes candles, mosquito coils, solid fuel barbecues. Gas BBQs are permitted.

For more details on fire regulations please download the CFA PDF at:

http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/fm_files/attachments/warnings_and_restrictions/cfa_can_I_cant_I_brochure.pdf

Generators

The use of generators is not encouraged. The noise and exhaust fumes of a generator can be the source of annoyance to other campers. The use of other sources of power such as batteries charged by solar panels is strongly encouraged. If used, the generator should be sited away from other campers where possible, and steps should be taken to minimize the sound by having it sited in a pit or hole, or have a sound barrier erected around it. A generator can only be used between the hours of 8:00am to 9:00pm and should be operated for as short as time as possible.

Vehicles

Members must drive their vehicles with due care at all times while in camp and in its vicinity. In dry conditions, drive at a walking speed while in camp to keep dust to a minimum. Remember that the camp is not an area for the Club's exclusive use; it remains open to the public at all times.

In regard to mobile homes and camping buses the practice of running the engine for extended periods to warm the vehicle while near other campers is not permitted. It also pollutes the camp area with engine fumes.

When looking for detecting spots, stay on defined tracks and when parking pull off the roadway in natural clearings to avoid damaging the vegetation. So called bush-bashing or driving off-road is banned. It is advisable to always lock your vehicle and take a GPS reading before setting out detecting.

Joining Fee and Annual Subscription

The annual subscription shall become due on the first day of July each year. Members whose current subscription is in arrears on the first day of September shall automatically cease to be members and can only be re-admitted upon payment of both the annual subscription and a joining fee.

Social Media

With the increasing use of the internet and related technologies by members the Club has implemented policies regarding the use of Social Media sites. The primary purpose of the Club's Facebook page is to facilitate private social communications amongst members. Only financial members will be 'Friended' and family membership entitles all family members to be friended. Due respect to other members must be given and the Administrator can remove inappropriate comments or images. More details of this are at:

<http://seekers.metapath.org/Downloads/FacebookandSocialMediaPolicies.pdf>

Emergency Procedures

While we all hope that a camping and detecting outing will be emergency, accident or illness free, unfortunately not everything can be prevented. We can however, have a course of action to set in train appropriate procedures to deal with an emergency situation.

Each map published in the Club Newsletter contains emergency numbers to contact essential services, the camp map co-ordinates and the fire region that the camp is located in. Members are encouraged to bring the map page with them to the camp.

Be aware that mobile telephone reception is very poor in the mountainous country of the goldfields, even so the network mobile coverage has much improved over the last few years. It is highly advisable to have your mobile phone with you and turned on while detecting, in case you need to be contacted in an emergency situation. CB radio units are very useful to communicate on the field over short distances and relatively flat ground and the Club preferred UHF channel is 12, however their reception is limited to line of sight which could be as little as 500 meters.

A handheld GPS unit, a compass and topographic map, or a smart phone with a GPS and map application such as Google maps or OziExplorer will assist you greatly in finding your way, but only if you are proficient in their use. Ask about members willing to teach you the basics. Carry spare batteries with you for your GPS or phone.

It is not a good idea to detect alone. If you do, stay in sight of your car. It is much easier to find a car in the bush than a person who becomes lost or injured.

Should a First Aid Kit be required, check with the Duty Officer regarding its location. It is normally kept at the camp. It is important Members should carry their own First Aid Kit in their car at all times (along with a woollen blanket and water) and it is highly advisable to have a small basic First Aid Kit with you while detecting, especially a pressure bandage to use in the event of a snake bite.

Bushfire Emergency

Camp Cancellation

The Club may cancel an outing before or during prescribed dates; nominally determined by weather forecasts, CFA Alerts and Code Red conditions, or any major incident. Notification of a Camp Cancellation will be posted via available Internet resources (e.g. Club Website, Facebook and Email). Members without Internet access should contact other Club Members.

NOTE: In the event that a Code Red Alert is declared, the Camp Duty Officer must initiate a Camp Cancellation. DSE/DEPI will close most Forests and Parks during Code Red days and Penalties may apply for those that enter a Park or forest that is closed.

Bushfire Awareness

During Camps and especially during the bushfire season, it is the Members' responsibility to keep themselves informed of potentially hazardous or severe weather. This could be through the radio, Victorian Bushfire Information Line, the CFA website or the CFA smart phone application "FireReady", the VicEmergency website, or the Club's Bushfire Status board. VicEmergency is Victoria's primary website for incident information and warnings on fire and flood, and lists other types of emergencies and incidents.

During adverse or threatening weather conditions, Members should make a special effort to maintain UHF and/or Mobile Phone communications. As Mobile Phone and UHF reception is not always available, Members should periodically check for Voice Mail and SMSs. Members, who use a channel other than UHF Channel 12 should maintain a scan on Channel 12.

In the event that a Member detects smoke or fire, they should (not necessarily in this order):

- Refer to any notification from the Club's Bushfire Status, displayed on the club notice board.
- Check if it is a local burn-off. Log into VicEmergency <http://www.emergency.vic.gov.au/map#now> or the CFA website <http://cfa.vic.gov.au>, CFA FireReady app or Victorian Bushfire

Information Line on 1800 240 667).

- Inform the Duty Officer or a Committee Member (be it a burn-off or bushfire),
- Advise 000, if warranted.

Bushfire Evacuation

If a bushfire or other threat is determined, the Club may initiate a Bushfire Evacuation. During such an event, the Club will attempt to advise Members of the urgency (e.g. pack or leave caravan), evacuation routes and a safe meeting place, if possible.

Also, if possible, the Club will broadcast a General Alarm by sounding car horns (3 beeps, pause; then repeat as necessary); and UHF Channel 12 will also be used to broadcast the alarm. *During an Emergency, UHF Channel 12 should be kept clear for emergency use. Any 'discussions' should be switched to alternative channels.* Members should monitor UHF Channel 12 for alarms and updates.

On hearing an alarm, Members should take appropriate action as well as advise others. Members should only return to Camp if safe to do so.

The Club will endeavor to contact all unaccounted-for, Signed-in Members via Mobile Phone. This may be a time-consuming process and is a *Secondary Priority*. Members ***should not*** depend on this notification or its timeliness.

During or following an Evacuation, all attending Members must Sign-out and record their evacuation intentions, if possible. Otherwise advise the Duty Officer or a Committee Member of their well-being and evacuation intentions (in order that their status is recorded and efforts may be directed towards other Members who remain unaccounted-for).

*N.B. During an emergency, Committee Members will also have themselves to consider; and resources to implement procedures will likely be limited. Whilst the Club will endeavor to ensure the safety of all Members and their property, **responsibility remains with individual Members for their own safety and property.** Members should not rely on hearing an Emergency Alarm but use common sense at all times.*

In the event that Media or other Public Officials are involved, except for

personal accounts, Members should refer all enquiries to the Emergency Coordinator or Club President.

Notes

- When parking in the bush, always reverse in such that you are ready to drive out.
- During an emergency *always* travel with your lights on.
- It is a good idea to carry a woollen blanket and water in your car. If you get caught in a fire, park in a clear area with windows up then lie on the floor, covered with the woollen blanket.
- If you get caught in a bushfire on foot, then protect yourself from radiant heat: get in a miner's hole, behind a rock face, a ditch or dam, etc.
- For every 10 degrees of incline, a fire will double in speed (and vice versa). Be aware of this if evacuating or seeking high ground (for Mobile Phone reception, etc.).
- Even in moderate heat, treat the bush with respect.
- If you have a Smartphone then download the CFA FireReady application and configure it to send you Alerts within a radius covering, at least, the forest surrounding the camp and your prospecting areas; probably at least 20 kilometers.
- Members should ensure their caravans and other property are insured. If evacuating without their caravan and if time permits, caravans can be better protected from bushfire by turning off the gas and winding away any pop-top and awning.

Lost in the Bush

When you realise you are completely lost, panic and fear will set in and a desire to hurry or run will take over you. The first thing you must do is STOP. Look round for a place to rest and think. If it is hot, get into some shade and take time to calmly consider the situation. If it is raining, look for shelter. Look around you. Do you recognise any features at all?

Is there high ground easily accessible close by? If so, make your way up as from a higher vantage point you will see further and hear sounds better. Can you hear the sound of vehicles on a distant road? Can you see the glint of sunlight reflecting off a car windscreen? Is there a road nearby? Unless you can actually see signs of habitation, do not cut through the bush but stay on the road or track. Searchers will initially look for you by car. The cars will only

travel on the tracks. If you have ample daylight left, walk along the road in the direction of the traffic sounds you heard. If night is fast approaching it is far better to look for shelter close to the track. Spend your time collecting firewood, sufficient to keep a small bright fire going all night; that is quite a lot of wood. Start your fire using a lighter or matches (*see items that should be carried when detecting in the bush on page 20*) as soon as possible. A fire is very comforting and will keep you warm and its light will lead searchers to you.

Do not be tempted to stagger through the bush at night. Your chance of getting back to your camp is very remote while your chance of being injured is very high. If the spot you plan to spend the night at is out of sight of the road or track, draw arrows on the road surface pointing to where you are or which way you have gone. If your car breaks down and it is too far to walk to camp, stay with your car.

Medical Emergency

It is not possible to plan a course of action for every medical emergency and incorporate it in this booklet. Knowledge of basic first aid and CPR is recommended for each member. The most common problems expected at Club camps will be falls, cuts and burns and insect bites followed by existing medical conditions such as asthma attack, diabetic collapse, heart attack and stroke. Minor medical problems can be dealt with by stabilising the injury and conveying the patient by private vehicle directly to the nearest medical facility. More serious matters will require first aid procedures to be applied while an ambulance is sent for. It may be necessary for someone to drive to the nearest main highway and lead the ambulance into the camp.

All medical incidents must be reported to a Committee Member. Many members have some medical first aid experience and those who are qualified are recorded in the Sign in/Sign out Book. The Club's First Aid Kit is present at the outings and most members carry first aid kits. Members are recommended to have their own First Aid kits

If you are bitten by a snake, do not try to move until the limb bitten is firmly wrapped with a pressure bandage and immobilized. This is to stop the venom from travelling. Keep any movement to an absolute minimum. Help has to be brought to you.

Duties of Field Officers & Ordinary Members

Duties of Field Officers

The position of 'Field Officer' should not be accepted lightly for it carries responsibilities which help ensure the safety and success of Club field trips. Field Officers are experienced Club members who are expected to:

- a) Make themselves available to assist, advise and guide new members at camp and on the gold fields.
- b) Collect firewood for the communal campfire.
- c) Determine the best central position for that campfire, dig the requisite hole, then build the fire in readiness for lighting. They must first check with the Research Officer or member of committee if unsure of any restrictions on fire-lighting or firewood gathering.
- d) Carry and erect Club signs to guide members into the camp site.
- e) Note suitable available camping sites within the camp site and be prepared to guide late arrivals to those spots by torch light if necessary.
- f) Assist committee members at camp in ensuring Club Rules are complied with.
- g) Assist on special occasions in erecting and pulling down the Club marquee, carrying trestle tables, generators etc.
- h) Ensure that at the end of a camp all fires are completely extinguished and the camp is left in a clean condition.

Duties of Ordinary Members

Ordinary members are expected to:

- a) Offer their assistance in whatever capacity they are physically able, be it food preparation, table setting or decorating the venue.
- b) All able-bodied members should be prepared to assist in erecting the Club marquee, collecting firewood and preparation of the main campfire.
- c) Winners of Club Treasure Hunts should be ready to collect the tokens and demarcation ribbons ready to set up the treasure hunt at the next camp.

Camping & Detecting Etiquette

Camping

When space permits, do not set up camp too close to another member unless invited. Do not enter another members caravan or tent unless invited or in their absence.

Unwanted noise can travel a long way in the bush so be considerate of your fellow campers and reduce the sound output to a reasonable level. If you operate your TV, radio or other device loudly or have a dog that barks then take appropriate step to reduce the noise level.

Detecting

- Be aware that modern detectors, especially those designed to find gold, transmit a radio signal that will interfere with other nearby detectors. This usually occurs at about 25 meters. It is normal practice to stay out of range of one another but if interference is heard, each operator alters his path to increase the separation.
- If you see another operator obviously detecting or digging a signal, the onus is upon you to walk away, this operator is not expected to walk away from a target.
- If you wish to speak to another detectorist in the field, turn off your machine and remove your headphones before approaching.
- When a Club member locates a nugget or patch, it is expected that you will not crowd the area or approach so close that your machine causes interference. Do not invade this spot. Allow the search to be completed and do not occupy the area until invited to join or told the search is finished.

Hints on Camping and Detecting

Camping Hints

Trees

When selecting a camp site, it is wise not to camp under large old trees.

It is rare for an entire tree to fall down; it is not rare for a large limb to drop off the tree, usually without warning, especially in hot humid weather when a storm is brewing and the barometer is falling. This is often the case with the large River Red Gums. It is safer to park near a stand of young box trees which will act as a wind break and if they are to the west of your spot, give shade in the late afternoon when the day is at its hottest. In winter the same rule applies although you may wish to be further out in the sun to gain maximum warmth and sunlight to operate your solar panel.

Positioning the Caravan

Most caravans have an awning and a side entrance door. Position the van with the door facing the east so that the morning sun will shine under the awning. As the day progresses and warms up, the awning will give shade for the rest of the day. The trees behind you will put late shade on the van helping to cool it.

Another reason why it is not always a good idea to park directly under overhanging trees is when rain is forecast. Even light rain collecting in the leaves become large drops which make a loud noise landing on the roof at night, and continue to drum down even when the rain is finished.

Level Ground versus Sloping Ground

When selecting your camp site, look for evidence of previous water flow which has rushed downhill leaving a series of tell-tale levees consisting of leaves and twigs at right-angles to the water course. You do not want to find a river flowing under your van, or worse if set up on level ground, finding your van sitting in the middle of a muddy lake, slowly sinking in the mire.

Strong Winds

When strong winds are forecast, position the caravan so that the prevailing wind strikes either the front or rear of the van rather than the sides. You definitely do not want the wind coming straight in under the awning.

Be prepared to roll the awning up if the wind gets too strong. If possible put on additional guy-ropes before the wind starts as it is very difficult once the blow arrives.

Leveling the Van

Not only it is more comfortable living in a caravan that is nice and level, but most caravan fridges function far more efficiently when the caravan is level. This is to do with how the refrigerant flows under the effect of gravity down the rear of the freezer box in the fridge.

Leveling is best achieved by checking with a spirit level to ascertain which side caravan wheel is the higher. Dig a shallow sloping hole about four inches deep in front of the wheel on the high side then move the van forward until the caravan wheel goes into the hole, then check the level. If it is still high, rather than digging the hole deeper, back the van out of the hole then place a piece of wood, carried for the purpose, in front of the caravan wheel on the low side. Now when you drive the van forward, the high side wheel will lower down into the hole while the low side wheel will rise as it climbs onto the plank of wood, hopefully leveling the van across its width. The remaining front to rear leveling is achieved once the jockey-wheel is attached.

Detecting Hints

Prospecting is an enjoyable activity however there are some inherent dangers on the goldfields. Chief among these is the danger of falling down an open or concealed mineshaft. Take particular care around these. Also be watchful of animals such as snakes, wild dogs and kangaroos. While they will often run away, if confronted and maybe provoked, they can attack.

Stinging insects such as ants, scorpions and spiders are common on the goldfields so make sure that you have some anti-sting ointment in your first aid kit.

If going out detecting, it is **highly recommended** that at a minimum you should always carry a mobile phone and water. It is also **highly advisable** to carry the usual emergency items such as a GPS or compass, basic first aid kit, torch, whistle, matches or a lighter, UHF radio and a snack bar. You should have members' mobile phone numbers stored on your phone so you can contact them in an emergency. Store close family and relative's phone numbers in your phone under the name of ICE (*In Case of Emergency*) to allow others to contact them if you are somehow incapacitated. It is not advisable to prospect alone. Team up with a mate.

Note: Members are responsible for their own safety!

If you are new to detecting, do not hesitate to seek help from one of the more experienced Club members. No matter what detector you have purchased, someone in the Club will be familiar with its operation. Remember, it is most important to understand how to operate your detector well. The second most important thing is to develop a good detecting technique. The old adage of 'low & slow' is equally true with the oldest model machine as it is with the latest technology.

The following hints are intended to help the beginner prospector to look for gold.

- a) Gold is most likely to be found in areas where it has been found previously.
- b) Your machines ability to locate gold at depth is limited. Do not waste time detecting virgin ground where the bedrock or base is too deep. Maximum effective depth on a large metal target (drink can size) is about 600- 900 mm.
- c) Small coils (coils with a diameter of less than 11") are more sensitive to tiny gold nuggets but do not penetrate as deep as a larger coil. Larger coils (greater than 11") penetrate deeper but are far less sensitive to smaller nuggets.
- d) For gold detecting with a modern pulse induction detector most operators will use a mono coil. As a general rule in highly mineralized ground, a Double D coil operates more quietly than a mono-loop coil but is less sensitive to tiny nuggets, whereas the Mono coil is noisier however it is

- more sensitive to tiny nuggets and has different field pattern that can give more depth. Be aware that new technologies from the major detector companies may give different results from this general rule.
- e) When searching mullock heaps, look, at how deep the old miners dug to get down to the thin layer of 'pay dirt' or 'wash layer', often located from two to five meters deep in a typical shallow gully. The only gold you are likely to detect at the surface of a gully is what the miners dug up out of the hole and have thrown out on the heap. You are unlikely to locate gold in deep virgin ground adjacent to the diggings.
 - f) Not all holes on diggings produced gold. These holes were called 'duffers'. Look for holes close together as they did not work in one another's pockets unless they were onto payable gold.
 - g) Look for ground on gently sloping hill sides that look like a 'moonscape'. This is 'surfaced' ground in which the old timers removed all the top soil down to the bedrock, usually from 100mm to 600mm in depth, and carted it away to be washed in puddlers for its gold. Tiny nuggets can often be detected on the surfaced area and also in the higher ground just above the surfacing and the area just below it.
 - h) When detecting mullock heaps and deeper ground, listen for the faint but repeatable signals. Do not be disappointed if you only detect bullets, shotgun pellets or even rusty nails. Gold sounds just like lead and should have already been dug. You are doing everything right and you will soon find your first gold nugget.
 - i) When detecting mullock heaps, you will be more successful if you concentrate your efforts in checking areas where a detector coil has not been: under prickly bushes and under rotting logs which have lain undisturbed for the last 25 years across the heaps. That portion of the heap has not had a modern detector over it! Remember there are no prizes for the person who detects the greatest number of heaps. Success lies with the operator who does a thorough job of detecting a heap. "Low & Slow" will get the results. And please, refill your holes straight away.
 - j) Respect the historic importance of the old puddlers and do not detect on the actual puddler. The adjacent heaps will be more rewarding in any case.
 - k) Never walk backwards while detecting - deep mine shafts are plentiful on some gold fields. They can be in the gullies or on the hillside. Do not be tempted to look down to see how deep it is. If you fall in and are lucky enough to survive, the chances of anyone finding you are pretty remote.
 - l) When participating in Club 'treasure hunts', many machines are in very close proximity so only VLF or coin/relic detectors are permitted to be used as they are less prone to interfere with one another.

Clothing & Equipment

Wearing suitable clothing and carrying a few extra items of equipment can make all the difference to how comfortable and safe you are when out detecting. To protect your body from sunburn, insect bites, cold and cuts and scratches, it is essential that you wear appropriate clothing and footwear. Ideally footwear should consist of quality leather elastic sided boots with no metal whatsoever in them. Steel cap toes will cause the coil to signal every step you take. However even non steel capped boots can give you a signal because most boot manufacturers use metal staples to attach the upper to the sole. Check with experienced members on the brands that are suitable for detecting. Long pants are better than shorts. Dust gaiters over the boots and trouser cuffs will not only keep grass seeds and dirt out of your boots, it will help prevent the most painful and common of bites from insects - the bull-ant!

A loose fitting long sleeved shirt and a cap or broad brimmed hat completes the outfit. In warm weather water should be carried and sipped often. By the time thirst sets in, dehydration is well underway. People have been found dead in inland Australia from dehydration and were still carrying water.

We wish you an enjoyable, safe and successful time with the club.



The Prospectors and Miners Association of Victoria (PMAV) has been working to protect prospector's rights and opportunities since 1980.

The Victorian Seekers Club is a proud and active member of the PMAV. We strongly encourage all Club members to become individual members of the PMAV.

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