

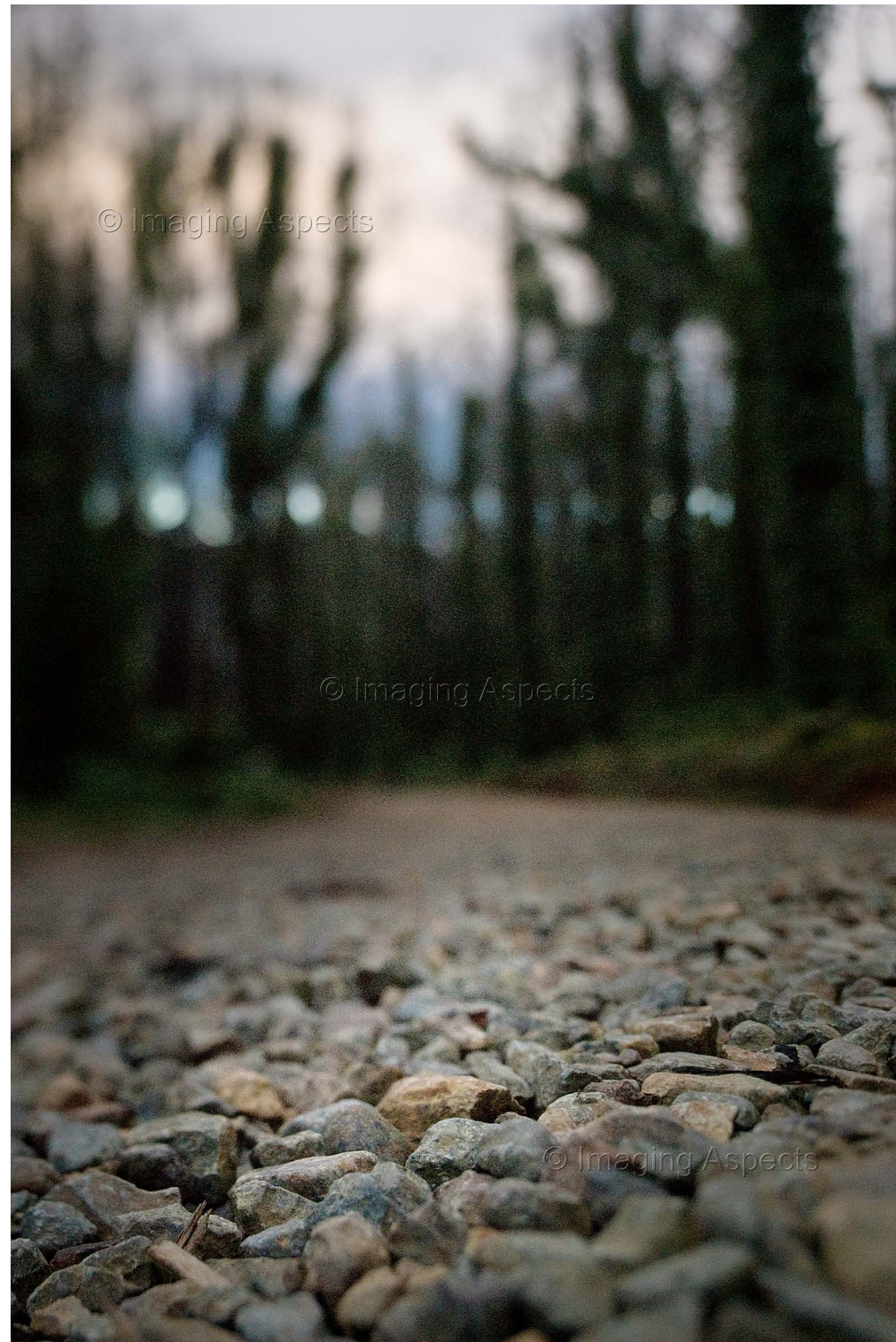


The Rocky Road | by Darren Henderson

# L A N D S C A P E P H O T O G R A P H Y

Mount Gordon: near Marysville, Victoria





# The Rocky Road

S a t u r d a y   A u g u s t   1 4 t h   2 0 1 0

P h o t o g r a p h y   a n d   t e x t   b y   D a r r e n   H e n d e r s o n

IMAGING  
**Aspect**



Living only minutes from Port Phillip Bay, walking along the beach is a pastime that I've been enjoying with increasing regularity, but I'm now seeking more challenging localities which might provide more breathtaking surroundings. Saturday August 14th was the first opportunity I'd afforded myself to get out of town and take up the challenge of a walk above sea level. I chose to head out in the direction of Marysville north east of Melbourne. Devastated by the bushfires of February 2009, I was keen to revisit the foothills surrounding Marysville and Buxton. In particular I wanted to walk up from Stevensons Falls to De La Rue Lookout which has a great vista across the valley to the Cathedral Range State Park north of Marysville.



The view towards the Cathedral Range from De La Rue Lookout, Marysville. **November 6th 2000**

I wasn't planning a long walk, rather a moderately challenging ascent. However, my plans were compromised when just outside the township I came to the Falls Road closure. The fires of *Black Saturday* raged so fiercely through Marysville that some areas are littered with burnt out dead trees, whilst other areas contain trees and plants which have begun the process of rejuvenation. The area surrounding Stevensons Falls and the walking track to De La Rue Lookout were so greatly affected by the fires that the road and walking tracks are still closed due to public safety concerns. Mindful of August 14th's forecast 50 to 60 km/h winds, I decided to change my plans whilst becoming aware that anywhere I chose to walk in the fire affected foothills was potentially fraught with danger in the high winds of the day.

Thinking about other places I could walk in the area, I remembered a time over a decade earlier when I'd visited Woods Lookout on top of Mount Gordon. With the help my trusty GPS enabled phone, I'd soon located Mt Gordon Road just outside Marysville. Having driven to the lookout years earlier, I was well aware that Mount Gordon Road was just a rocky dirt track which scaled the southern side of the ridge.

With sunset just a couple of hours away and while daylight persisted, I decided to make the rocky road my walking track. Parking my car just off of Marysville Road, I kitted up and set out on the uphill journey to Woods Lookout. Within metres of leaving the car my calves started to tighten and my breath shortened. Even at a moderate pace the ascent was physically challenging in ways that I couldn't have anticipated; yet it was gratifying to be undertaking the challenge I'd set myself. Except for looking back to ensure I'd not overlooked a photographic opportunity, I was keen to persist knowing full well that beyond every corner in the road was another hill to climb.



A lower section of Mount Gordon Road, Marysville. **August 14th 2010**

For me this short trek was also about measuring my own limitations, since I haven't done any solo hiking or substantial bush walks since I was diagnosed with type one diabetes over eleven years ago. The walk along Mount Gordon Road was as much about pushing the boundaries of physical demand, as it was about measuring my body's response to a controlled period of solo outdoor exertion. Carrying a daypack containing my blood glucose meter, a few snacks, water and my wet weather gear, I was prepared for what lay ahead of me. Complimented by a small amount of camera equipment, my load was worthy of a pony, not a packhorse.

Off the western shoulder of the road was a splintered view made possible because the fires of *Black Saturday* had likewise ripped through this area. Even the Mount Gordon fire watch tower became a casualty of the 2009 bushfires. It was through the rejuvenating tree line and across the valley that I saw glimpses of rain clouds approaching ahead of me as I walked. As a photographer I've learnt to embrace the possibilities that inclement weather and changing conditions can provide — conversely, a windless blue sky day is less likely to change into something worthy of a spectacle.



Corner after corner, I was so engrossed by the challenges the road presented that my mind sometimes wondered, how many more corners I'd have to take before arriving at the summit? Whilst I was already aware that the winds were gusting at gale force on this day, it was what I heard beyond the next corner in the road that engaged my senses. What sounded like a jet airliner taxiing down a runway right in front of me; turned out to be the howling winds of the summit which were in excess of 80km/h. I'd arrived at the summit of Mount Gordon to a familiar view across the valley, but I was surrounded by a largely alien landscape of blackened trunks and torn limbs. As I approached the end of the road I saw the dead, brittle and inflexible trunks swaying in the howling wind. It was here that I was reminded of the possible dangers of falling trees should I choose to walk down the narrow windswept track that led to Woods Lookout.



The opening alley of dead and rejuvenating trees which lead to Woods Lookout on Mount Gordon. **August 14th 2010**

Compelled by the breaking horizon light that fingered through the storm clouds ahead of me, I made my way cautiously to the end of the track and down onto the rocky descending ledge below. All the body heat I'd built up during the walk to the top was quickly eaten away by the wind chill factor, but the addition of a thermal layer and my gloves allowed me find comfort in this forgotten place.

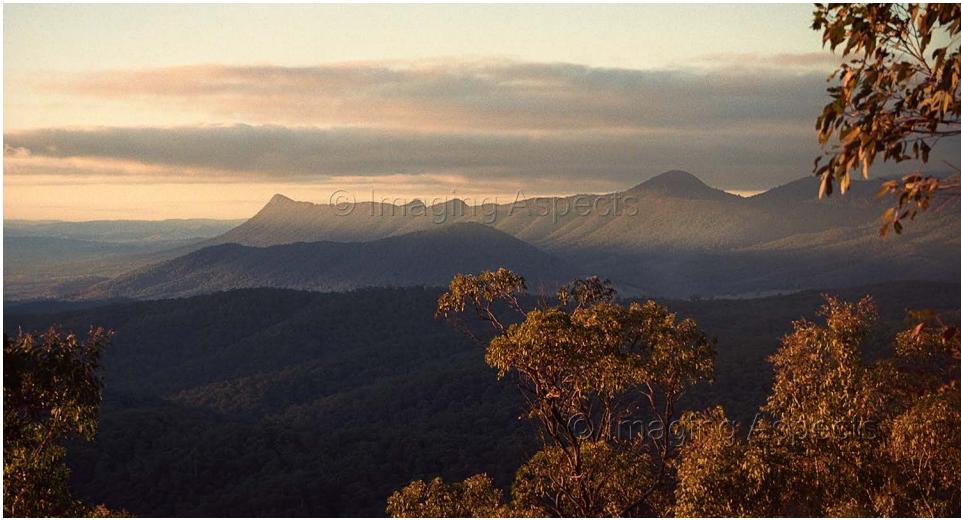
As the end of the day loomed closer the rays of sunlight were fleeting; one moment revealed, the next veiled by the clouds in the western sky. The spectacle was playing out before my eyes, and I in turn was nothing short of exhilarated by the visceral power in nature. So often I've had this sense of things which are far bigger than myself, but rarely do I put myself in a position to fully behold and appreciate the bearing this can have on ones perspective. It's a cliché in itself, but there is something to be said for the effect that clean air and the open spaces of a rural setting can have on your thought process. On this day, my mind seemed fertile in the moment and open to the changing possibilities surrounding me. Literally, I was moved by the wind amidst a scene that would've shaken even the sturdiest of tripods and subsequently did render some of my handheld photographs blurry.



Stripped bare by the fires of February 2009. Woods Lookout, Marysville. **August 14th 2010**

It's often the case when I find myself in an observational role, that I feel calm and connected to the events unfolding. As I surveyed the play of weather and light on the landscape, I began to flow with the elements around me. This was an occasion that was even more satisfying because I'd walked to the top at a pace which allowed me to absorb and begin to anticipate the developing conditions.





The view from Woods Lookout, Marysville across to the Cathedral Range. **June 1997**

Looking across to the Cathedral Range in the distance, I thought about the first time I drove to this very spot and happened upon the vista before me. Like this occasion, my first visit was in the late afternoon during winter, but I experienced far more stable conditions and golden light the first time around. Clearly this place has been changed by the fires of 2009, but the Australian bush has a long history of bushfires which demand regrowth from the land. Whilst natural disasters are often seen to have periodically stripped civilizations of their splendour and tragically their citizens; there's surely something valuable to be found in the change of perspective that loss demands of us as individuals. Importantly the rejuvenation that was happening around Marysville reminded me that any real growth is both vulnerable to the elements and ultimately requires perseverance in time.



The burnt out view from Woods Lookout across to the Cathedrals. **August 14th 2010**



Woods Lookout, Marysville. **August 14th 2010**





Having spent more than half an hour exposed to the winds and the approaching change in the weather, I began to make my way back to the roadside to find shelter from the gale. By metering my blood glucose levels, I was able to see that part of my exhilaration on the summit was attributable to hypoglycaemia. A blood glucose level of 4mmol/L or less presents itself as the symptoms associated with low blood sugar (hypoglycaemia). With a reading of 2.3mmol/L, I was already experiencing an elevated heart rate and what is medically referred to as an “impaired cognitive response”. In an effort to recover my diminished glucose levels I ate a banana by the rocky road and sensed that on this day there was no other response or perspective I’d rather have had in these surroundings.

The light broke through one last time before the neighbouring valley and then the road on which I was walking were both clothed in a misty drizzle. I couldn’t have been more at home with wet weather gear now covering me from head to toe. I began my decent from Mount Gordon along the same road that brought me to the summit. On the downward slope the tension in my calves eased as my quadriceps took up the slack. As I walked back to my car I was carried by a sense of inspired renewal.

Since returning home I’ve also considered further the forecasts and measurements that had been a part of my decision making process on August 14th. Namely, that Saturday had a forecast top temperature in the low teens (°C), winds in the lower gale force range and the prediction of rain. Couple this with the fact that Mount Gordon stands at a mere 773 metres above sea level, below which the township of Marysville stands at 418 metres. So my afternoon’s walk probably saw me ascend an elevation of only a couple of hundred metres, along a road which allowed for a return walk of just a few kilometres. It’s clear that the mental and physical nourishment I experienced that day weren’t the result of heeding a negative forecast or the sense that I wasn’t going to be challenged by the road that lay ahead of me. No place remains the same and no experience is ever exactly as we anticipate; all of which are virtuous reasons to put one foot in front of the last and get amongst it.

Mount Gordon Road heading south away from Woods Lookout, Marysville. **August 14th 2010**



# Print Purchase

Darren Henderson  
+61 419 391 261  
info@imagingaspects.com  
www.imagingaspects.com

The images contained in the 'Landscape, Street and Projects' sections of the Imaging Aspects web site are available as affordable photographic prints.

Rather than place a high price tag on my craft, I'd prefer that a broad audience has the opportunity to enjoy the actual prints as a part of their daily lives.

To purchase a print, simply send an email to:  
[info@imagingaspects.com](mailto:info@imagingaspects.com)

Your email should contain a brief description of the photograph you'd like to purchase, the size you'd like the print to be and your postal address. To confirm your purchase a response will then follow containing a PDF invoice and a low resolution version of the image. Payment can be made via PayPal or a money order in Australian dollars. All prints are gently rolled and shipped in a sealed cardboard tube. Your print order will arrive within three weeks of payment being received.

**IMAGING**  
**Aspect**

## Print Purchases

Photographic prints are available in two sizes:

Images can be printed at the smaller print size of **12 inches** for **\$33** plus shipping.

The larger print size is **24 inches** and is available for **\$77** plus shipping.

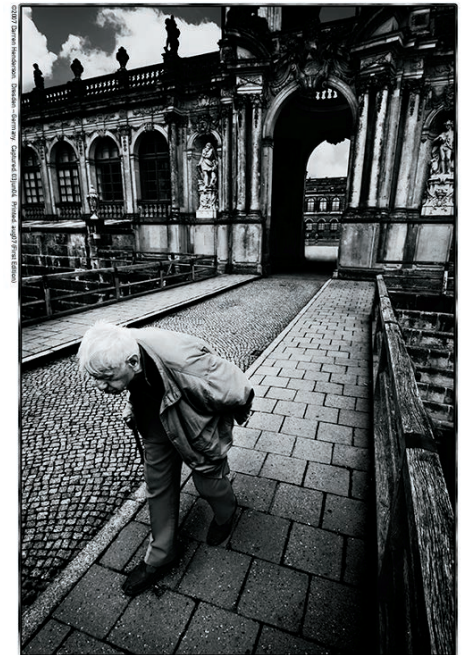


- 12 inch prints \$33ea
- 24 inch prints \$77ea

The purchase of a print does not constitute the sale of reproduction rights for a given piece of artwork. Copyright of all photographs remains with Darren Henderson.

## About Printing & Editions

The mechanical reproduction of a photographic print is not limited to a given quantity, edition or size. Artificially imposing these limits on photographic reproductions has always been a falsehood designed to elevate pricing by limiting availability. If you choose to purchase an image, it's probably because of the value you've placed on the work — not a belief in its limited availability. Creative works should be evocative and enjoyable to both the creator and the beholder. It's for these reasons that I endeavor to make my photographic prints affordable and readily available.



In the captioning of my prints, the reference to an 'edition' beyond the first is representative of a work that's been re-interpreted since the production of earlier prints. Contrary to the prevalent outlook of contemporary collectors, I hold later editions as a more mature interpretation of an image. All purchased prints will be subtly captioned with the locality of the subject, the date on which the image was captured and the month & year in which the print was made.



“Clearly this place has been changed by the fires of 2009, but the Australian bush has a long history of bushfires that demand rejuvenation and regrowth from the land. Whilst natural disasters are often seen to have periodically stripped civilizations of their splendour and tragically their citizens; there’s surely something valuable to be found in the change of perspective that loss demands of us as individuals.”