

The Tumuli

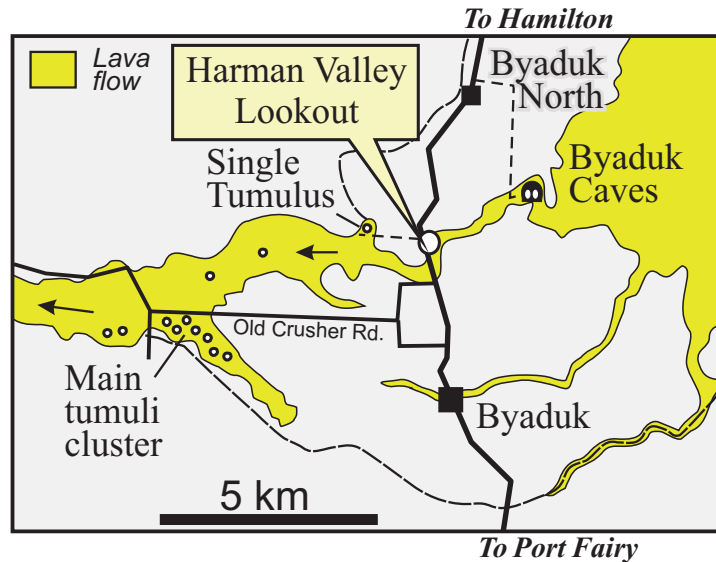
A Tumulus is a house-sized dome of lava pushed up by pressure of liquid lava beneath a thin patch of crust. They are not hollow gas blisters, as was once thought.

How they form

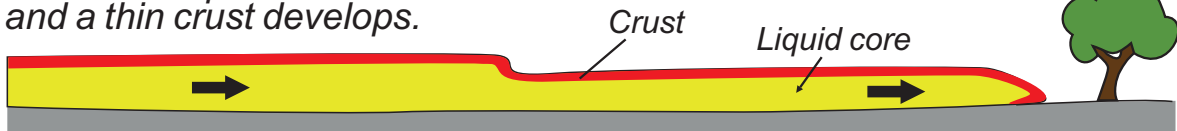
The surface of a lava flow quickly crusts over. Pressure in the liquid lava beneath can heave this crust up to form irregular broad mounds and hollows known as *Stony Rises*. Occasionally we find smaller steep-sided domes called *tumuli*. These must have formed where pressure was localised, or there was a small soft spot in the crust. Just why small areas were soft is not certain, perhaps burning trees kept those areas warm?

We can see how the crust has cracked open and been tilted to the side as it was pushed up, and in places we see bulbous lobes of lava that were squeezed out through the cracks. Usually the dome is completely solid, but occasionally part of the liquid core drains out and the top of the dome subsides to leave a central hollow or donut shaped mound.

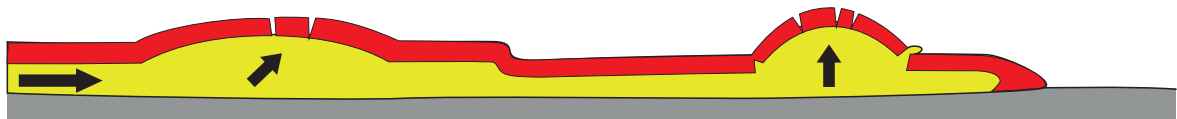
The best examples are on Old Crusher Road, west of the Port Fairy road - see map.



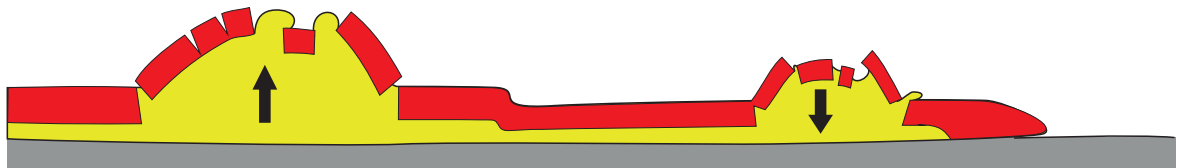
A lava flow spreads and a thin crust develops.



Pressure in the liquid part domes up the thickening crust.



Some tumuli push up, crack open and squeeze out bulges of liquid. In others, the lava drains back and the top subsides.



Finally the whole mass solidifies.

