

MELBOURNE
BUSHWALKERS INC.

ABN 14 396 912 508



THE NEWS

#897 December
2025



Relaxing on Bishop and Clerk, Maria Island, Tasmania - G. Martin

WE ARE A MEMBER OF



Bushwalking Victoria

Members of the Melbourne Bushwalkers Inc meet on Wednesday evenings between 6.30-8.30 pm in the club rooms at:

Mission to Seafarers Victoria
717 Flinders Street
Docklands

Visitors are always welcome!

General correspondence should be directed to:

The Secretary
Melbourne Bushwalkers Inc
PO Box 1751
MELBOURNE VIC 3001

www.melbournebushwalkers.org.au

Next committee meeting: Monday 1 December

The News of the Melbourne Bushwalkers Inc (The News) is published monthly, and is the official newsletter of Melbourne Bushwalkers Inc.

Editor: Deb Shand

Calls for expressions of interest for club activities and extended trips, walk reviews, articles, poems, news items, photographs of Club events, reports of new gear, book/ movie reviews, letters to the editor, advertisements, et cetera are always welcome (maximum 400 words recommended). However, the Editor reserves the right to edit contributions where space, clarity or propriety dictate, and to maintain editorial consistency.

Note: photographs should be sent as separate high resolution files which are capable of being edited.

Please send your contributions as unformatted text files by email to news@mbw.org.au

Closing date for receipt of material for The News is the 21st of the month.

Advertisements should relate to bushwalking (e.g. gear, maps, trips, tours, health and fitness etc.). These may be published subject to space availability and Editor's discretion. For current advertising rates contact the Editor at news@mbw.org.au

New Members

We welcome these new members to the club:

Louise Shuter
Michael Manoylovic
Michael Hillas



Bronze cap - Caladenia iridescens

Safety Guidelines One-Day Walks

With the Melbourne Bushwalkers



ALWAYS CARRY THESE

- Sufficient water, lunch, spare energy food, toilet trowel.
- Pencil, paper, first aid kit, whistle, torch, matches in waterproof container
- Raincoat, warm extra clothing, beanie
- Sunhat, sunscreen

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ...

- get ahead of the leader
 - wait at *EVERY* track junction
- lose contact with the person behind you
 - stop & wait for them to catch up
- make a toilet stop
 - leave your pack on the track

IF SEPARATED FROM THE GROUP

- Don't wander – **STAY PUT** (searchers will begin where you were last seen)
- Intermittently blow your whistle and/or shout
- If night falls, take shelter from the wind

Courtesy Guidelines

For walks with the Melbourne Bushwalkers



BY PARTICIPATING YOU AGREE TO

- Respect the rights of other walkers
- Follow instructions of the leader, "whip" or bus driver
- Turn up on time

CARE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT ...

- Take your rubbish home – even if biodegradable
- Avoid trampling on sensitive, new or rare growth
- Minimise plant damage – don't cut track corners
- Leave wildlife alone – whether native or introduced
- Keep at least 100 metres away from watercourses for toilet stops
- Bury toilet waste at least 15 cm below the surface
- Look after community property including huts

Would you like your trip photos featured in the newsletter?

Due date for contributions to January News: 21 December

Email: news@mbw.org.au



Let's celebrate! We have THREE NEW NATIONAL PARKS! Legislation has recently passed through the Victorian Parliament that creates the Wombat-Lerderderg, Mount Buangor and Pyrenees National Parks, in addition to Cobaw, Hepburn and Mirboo North conservation parks. Also, Wellsford Forest is now part of Bendigo Regional Park. The following is from Matt Ruchel, Executive Director, Victorian National Parks Association:

The story began in the 1990s, when local communities first rallied against logging in Wombat Forest. In 2002, clear-fell logging was banned - a significant step, but not the finish line. In 2017, a formal process finally began to assess the need for proper protection. In 2021, the government acknowledged the findings and agreed to create new parks. Once the legislation is gazetted, a final formality to make the parks official, they'll be under the permanent care of Parks Victoria and the community. We were thrilled to see last-minute amendments from the Greens, supported by Animal Justice Party, Legalise Cannabis Party and the government, that will protect the new sections of Mount Buangor National Park from deer hunting, keeping high-powered rifles away from walking trails, picnic areas and school camps where they simply don't belong.



At our recent committee meeting, we discussed the efforts that go into a fair and accurate Preview description, and the importance of participants taking time to weigh up the information to evaluate their ability. Everyone likes a challenge and gaining the satisfaction of accomplishing things outside their comfort zone, but a little foresight will help keep everyone safe and your leader happy. Always talk to the leader about any concerns or health

issues and never be shy to ask questions. We take the safety of the whole party seriously, and we value our reputation.

Enough of the moralising ... looking forward to seeing you at the Christmas Party. Bernie and her band of volunteers are eager and super keen. Be sure to give them a hearty cheer. If I haven't met you, please come over and say 'hello'.

Susan Maughan



A reminder to members about the MBW Christmas party at 6.30pm on 9th December at the club rooms. Please RSVP to the Social Secretary social@mbw.org.au if you haven't already done so - we need to know how much food to provide!



Spotlight on ... Babak Dadvand

Derrick Brown continues to interview club members

DB - Babak, you've been a Melbourne Bushie for twelve years, I believe. You were born in Iran, a place that most of us don't know much about. Can you tell me about your early life there?

BD - I was born in Kermanshah, a Kurdish city in western Iran, surrounded by mountains and a general disregard for flat terrain. It was the kind of place where walking uphill wasn't a hobby; it was just how you got groceries. I studied English Literature there (because nothing says job security like a degree in 19th-century poetry), then moved to Tehran, where I swapped hills for traffic jams and developed a personal relationship with air pollution.

DB - And then you travelled?

BD - Yes, I did the usual tour of Europe: a stint in Copenhagen, where I discovered that Danes are very polite about freezing to death, and then Spain, where I learned to survive on olives, sarcasm, and long siestas.

DB - Have you returned to Iran?

BD - At first, I went back and forth each year, but I haven't returned for some years now that there are a few issues in that part of the world.

DB - Are there any special memories you have from your travels?

BD - I just love the diversity of travelling, just jumping on a plane or train and an hour later being in a new setting with people speaking different languages, having different cultures and histories. There are many favourite places but perhaps Spain would be the closest to my heart. I really liked Spain - the culture and the lifestyle.

DB - How did you end up in Melbourne?

BD - Well, I had put in an application to do a PhD in Denmark but then I was advised that Melbourne Uni was another option, and that one was accepted so I started packing. So, in 2013, I landed in Melbourne, a city with great coffee, confused weather, and a community of people who voluntarily carry heavy backpacks into the bush for fun.



DB - So you completed your PhD and then?

BD - I worked as an academic at Melbourne Uni for a while before I moved to Latrobe Uni to work in teacher education, preparing teachers for primary and secondary settings.

DB - And somewhere along the way you met Adriana?

BD - Yes, we did our studies together in Copenhagen and we've been together ever since.

DB - Then you found Melbourne Bushwalkers?

BD - Yes, I did my first walk in 2013. It was marked "easy-medium." I assumed this meant "pleasant stroll." It did not. Let's just say that I questioned the club's definition of "easy" somewhere around kilometre nine, just before the third uphill and right after being

continued next page

Noticeboard

overtaken by a senior hiker with trekking poles and a suspicious amount of enthusiasm.

At first, I walked occasionally, mostly Sunday bus walks. But eventually, things escalated. My wife Adriana joined the club too. Soon we were doing base camps and later pack carries, and I had somehow agreed to carry a 17-kilo pack up a hill “for the views.”

I’ve now done many walks with MBW. Some involved mud. Some involved leeches. The pack carries stand out, not just for the physical challenge, but for the chance to reflect deeply on my poor life choices in real time. Overseas walks in places like Vanuatu and New Zealand were excellent. Deal Island was also memorable, in a remote, possibly-haunted-lighthouse kind of way.

A couple of years ago, Adriana and I made the leap into leading walks. We started with Sunday carpool walks. We have just moved into leading base camps and perhaps pack carries in near future, which require a lot of pretending you know exactly where you are, even when you definitely don’t. So far, no major incidents. No one has been helicoptered out. Success.

DB - Yes, it’s an uplifting feeling! Other aspects of the club?

BD - I haven’t joined any committees, mostly because I have a full-time job and only so much tolerance for meetings. But leading walks is my way of contributing. I now appreciate how much invisible labour goes into making the club run: the bookings, the admin, the gear management, the last-minute “Can I still join?” emails. Hats off to the people who deal with all that without turning into misanthropes.

As for the club itself? It hasn’t changed much since I joined. It’s still run by the same breed of highly competent people who think “just one more hill” is an acceptable phrase. I admire their endurance. And their ability to organise people with conflicting opinions on gaiters.

MBW has been a constant in my life for over a decade. It’s given me access to parts of Victoria and beyond that I never would have explored alone. It’s taught me how to set up a tent in the dark, how to wring out wet socks with dignity, and how to survive three straight days of dehydrated food.

Would I recommend bushwalking? Yes, but I’d also say there’s no better way to clear your head, test your limits, and meet people who think spending a weekend in the rain is a good time. So yes, I’m still here. Still walking. Still suspicious of the term “easy-medium.” And still packing snacks like my life depends on it. Because sometimes it does.

DB - Would you say that this has been a significant part of your life?

BD - We’ve been members for really long time now. Looking back, I think that our lives would have been a lot drier and a lot less exciting were we not members. It’s now part of our life - our lifestyle.

DB - Thanks, Babak for allowing us to get to know more about you.



Legal liability and administering first aid

The following statements from the Australian Resuscitation Council are relevant to those who are concerned that involving themselves as a Good Samaritan or Volunteer in an emergency may expose themselves to legal liability and thus a disincentive to completing a first aid course. The short answer is that it doesn't.

Guidance Statement 10.5.1 – Legal Issues Related to Responding to Emergency Situations and Resuscitation in Australia

- *Only the Northern Territory has legislation that imposes a duty to render assistance in an emergency. In that jurisdiction, any person who callously fails to provide assistance of any kind to a person urgently in need of it and whose life may be endangered may be guilty of a crime and if found liable may face imprisonment for up to 7 years (Criminal Code Act 1983, s155).*
- *Good Samaritans have complete immunity from civil liability provided they are not under the voluntary influence of drugs or alcohol if they did not cause the emergency, and if they act in good faith.*
- *No Good Samaritan or Volunteer in Australia has ever been successfully sued for consequences of rendering assistance to a person in need. The Courts do not want to dissuade people from coming to the assistance of others.*



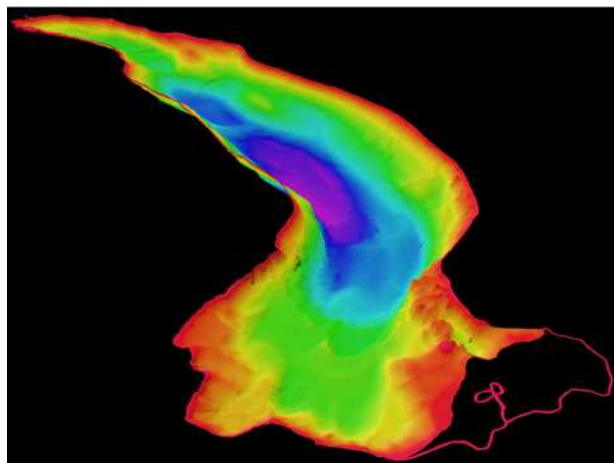
Thus Good Samaritan involvement is encouraged. The figures are stark – if there is Good Samaritan involvement before Emergency Services arrive in the case of a cardiac arrest the victim is more likely to survive. If a Good Samaritan did not involve themselves many lives would be lost who would have otherwise lived.

Quentin Tibballs

Another use for LiDAR – exploring Lake St Clair Australia's deepest lake

LiDAR is used in archeological expeditions, for example finding the ruins of buildings covered by thick rainforest, as for instance in Central American jungles. If you own a recent "Pro" type iPhone, you have this feature on it. In this case you might use LiDAR to scan a room to make a record of the arrangement of furniture within it. LiDAR works by sending out pulses of infrared LASER light. It takes longer for that light to bounce back from objects which are further away from the emitter. The receiver of the light, in the case of the iPhone, is its camera.

For the iPhone in the room example, by walking around the room, you can gather a digital file of objects, which then is interpreted by software.



High resolution mapping of Lake St Clair viewed from south, with colours representing water depth, red 0m to purple 163m. Image: CSIRO

Recently CSIRO researchers have explored Lake St Clair in Tasmania, Australia's deepest lake, using LiDAR and a similar-in-principle technique using ultrasound. While producing a high-definition 3D map they also found dramatic underwater cliffs, deep ravines and towering rock formations. They also accurately measured its depth – 163m. Previously this was uncertain with estimates ranging from 160 – 215m.

For more details see:

<https://www.csiro.au/en/news/All/News/2025/November/Lake-St-Clair>

(Thanks to Rob Jung for this contribution)

December Safety and Risk Reminders

This month the main theme is “**safety**”. Members, Leaders and the Club all have key safety roles. Individual members also need to take responsibility for their own safety. When you come prepared then you and your fellow walkers will have more fun and reduce the impacts if something does go wrong.

At end of walk ensure cars start and no-one is left alone (NEW): At the end of car based walks ensure all cars start and are driveable, and no-one is left alone to fix their car e.g. a flat tyre. At least one walk participant with a mobile car must also stay behind to assist (a stranger is not acceptable). There may be more than one location involved if car shuffles were used.

Why walkers need to take a whistle: All walk participants need to carry a quality whistle. Why?

- If you get lost/separated from the group e.g. on a toilet stop, a whistle is the best way to be found.
- If there is an emergency near you, then you can whistle for help (3 blasts)
- If you or others are having difficulty staying in sight of the group, you can whistle for a regroup (2 blasts)
- If you hear a call for a regroup or an emergency and no one acknowledges the call (1 blast is an acknowledgement) you can relay the call (repeat the 2 or 3 blasts)

So you need to have a good quality whistle, those that come on a pack are generally not acceptable - a loud and pea less whistle so they work when wet. Good quality whistles are available from the clubrooms for just \$2. **Get one at the Christmas Party!**

Also don't blow them without warning when close to people or indoors!



Whistle Codes: Remember the Whistle Codes?

- **3 blasts** indicate an **emergency** and all walkers should move to where the signal originated e.g. a missing person.
- **2 blasts** indicate a need to **regroup** e.g. a person needs first aid; the group is too spread out.
- **1 blast** indicates **acknowledgement** and lets everyone know that a message has been heard and is being actioned.

If an acknowledgement whistle is not heard then it is important that a message is **relayed** (repeated) so that all walkers, especially the leader and Whip, are aware of either an emergency or the need to regroup.

Members Yellow Safety/Courtesy Card: This card is a handy reminder of basic safety guidelines for day walks including what to always carry, and what to do in a few key situations e.g. if you become separated from the group. A handy companion for your Green Health Card! If you don't have a Yellow Card then cut one out from this News (p. 2) fold it over, pop it in a zip bag and put it in your day pack. You can also pick one up in the Clubrooms.

What extra things a Leader should carry and check in fire season: An AM/FM Radio (or the ABC Listen App) to check fire *and flood* warnings. While many Leaders have their own radios, good quality radios are available to borrow for free from the Clubrooms. These items are in addition to first aid kits, and mobile phones that should always be carried. The requirements to carry PLBs now applies throughout the year.

As well as checking for Total Fire Bans and Extreme Temperatures, also see if there are any **Community Fire Refuges** (CFR) and/or **Neighbourhood Safer Places** (NSP) in the walk area and driving route (via the CFS Website). See article in this news on CFRs and NSPs.

Members and especially Leaders are encouraged to read these monthly Reminders to stay aware of their responsibilities as participants or as leaders on Club Activities: NEW = a new item; MOD= changed from last time; and the others are unchanged.

Mick Noonan, Risk Officer

Community Fire Refuges & Neighbourhood Safer Places

The Club's fire policies aim to ensure that members exposure to fire risk is minimised through cancelling activities on days of a Total Fire Ban and Extreme Heat. During Fire Season all Club groups especially multi-day groups (for which the fire danger is more likely to change during the activity) need to be able to check with the local ABC station on fire conditions, CFA directions, etc. This requires an AM/FM Radio and/or the ABC Listen App on a Smartphone (in areas with Internet Access).

You may be walking, visiting friends, travelling through an area where a fire develops, working outdoors in an area that becomes high risk, a health worker visiting clients, etc. so it is worth understanding what '**Community Fire Refuges**' and '**Neighbourhood Safer Places**' are and the differences between them.

During serious fire danger periods '**Evacuation Centres**' will often be established where people can go when they decide to leave early. For people who don't or cannot leave then '**Community Fire Refuges**' and '**Neighbourhood Safer Places**' are intended to be used **only** as a last resort when all other options for the bush fire survival plan can't be put into action safely.

Community Fire Refuges

There are currently still only five official Community Fire Refuges in Victoria, at East Warburton, Ferny Creek, Millgrove, Blackwood and Lavers Hill. They are designed to strict standards to withstand bushfires. Community Fire Refuges are only activated and opened once there is significant fire in the local area. Community Fire Refuges offer a last resort shelter option if you cannot leave the area in the event of a fire. The presence of emergency services is not guaranteed at a community fire refuge. Safe travel to and from the site cannot be guaranteed. The number of people each refuge can hold is limited.

Neighbourhood Safer Places or 'Bushfire Place of Last Resort'

There are over 350 of these places across Victoria. They are established by councils to standards set by the CFA. They **may** provide some protection from direct flame and heat from a fire, but they do not guarantee safety. They are not an alternative to planning to leave early or to stay and defend your property; they are a place of last resort if all other fire plans have failed. They are also not an appropriate destination when leaving the area early.

They are an existing location and not a purpose-built, fire-proof structure. Many are simply a clearing that provides separation distance from the bushfire hazard (e.g. forest). Not to be confused with Community Fire Refuges, Relief Centres, Recovery Centres or Assembly Areas, each of which have a different and specific purpose. Sheltering at one does not guarantee your safety. They may offer improved protection (e.g. a safer place) if caught in a fire but they cannot be considered as 'safe'.

What's the difference?

Most Neighbourhood Safer Places - Places of Last Resort are open-air spaces such as sports ovals, whereas Community Fire Refuges are enclosed buildings that are built or modified to withstand fires.

LINKS

If you want to know more use the following Victorian links.

<https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/fire-refuges-faqs>

<https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/neighbourhood-safer-places>

Other states have similar constructs e.g. [Bushfire Safer Places](#) on the S.A. Country Fire Service website.

Mick Noonan



Don't Block This Number!

The below article is reprinted from the November Bushwalking Victoria Newsletter.

VicEmergency – Don't Block This Number

If you see +61 444 444 444 pop up on your phone, it is important you do not block it. This phone number is linked to Emergency Alert, a national telephone warning system used by emergency services across the country to send voice messages to landlines and text messages to mobiles within a specific area to warn people about current emergencies.

Emergency Alert is not used in all situations, so it's important to rely on more than just one source of emergency information.

Stay informed, download the VicEmergency app and visit <https://www.emergency.vic.gov.au/respond/>

Summer Fire Season Outlook

The fire outlook for this Summer was not available for the December News. It will be added to the MBW website in the first week of December.



Don't block +61 444 444 444
It's an Emergency Alert



Advanced Leadership Skills Series

For December we are looking at:

Stages of group development

This covers models of group development:
Forming; Norming; Storming;
Performing; Adjourning

This item is particularly relevant to leading extended walks

Note: The complete set of articles is available on the Website



You Lil Bewdy! Beef Biltong Recipe

by Hiroko Nakano

Makes about 700-800g final product

Ingredients

3Kgs Girello* (Silverside cut) beef, raw, trimmed of fat and silverskin

Brine: 325 ml Brown Malt vinegar

120ml Worcestershire sauce

3/4tsp Tabasco sauce (optional)

2tsp dried garlic flakes / 1 tsp fresh garlic, finely minced

150g brown sugar

1 3/4 tsp bicarbonate of soda

90g non-iodised sea salt (**see note)

Spice coating

400g coriander seeds, freshly toasted and crushed

2 Tbs black peppercorns, lightly toasted, freshly ground

2 Tbs Brown sugar

Other seasonings (**See note)



Method

1. Trim beef of all fat present, as fat causes the biltong to become rancid and spoil quickly. Freeze meat for 2-3 hrs, this assists in slicing thinly. Slice meat 15mm thickness against the grain.
2. Combine brine ingredients and marinate sliced meat for 12-24 hours****. The longer the marinade/curing, the saltier and more intense the flavour.
3. Squeeze curing marinade from beef by turning into large meat balls with hands, but be gentle, it needs tenderness
4. Spread spice coating onto a tray and lightly press beef slices into it and coat. Shake off excess.
5. Lay beef flat onto dehydrator trays, maintain 1-2mm space between each piece for even air distribution.
6. Dehydrate at 60°C for 6 hrs, then flip pieces over. Dehydrate for further 4-5 hrs at 50°C.
7. Ideal texture and dryness are when beef can be 'snapped' easily, so it may need further dehydration than specified. Durations can vary depending on your dehydrating unit, relative room humidity and ambient temperature.
8. Store Biltong in labelled Ziplock bags, then in airtight, rodent/pest-proof containers. It should keep for a year or so.
9. If any signs of sweat beads, mould, rancid smells become present, this will indicate that it is 'chuck it' time.

Notes:

* Girello beef is a terrific cut as it is lean, and inexpensive (as far as beef cuts go). Aim to have 3Kg beef net (after trimming), so if any silverskin (white sheath) or fat is visible on the meat at the butchers, purchase 100-150g more for waste allowance

**non-iodised sea salt is strongly recommended as iodised salt can cause a bitter aftertaste

***Other suggested seasonings/marinades to experiment with:

Asafoetida; Chilli flakes; Commercially produced Biltong Powders (beware- these may be very salt or hot);

Cooking Japanese Sake; Cumin seeds; Curry powder/s; Fennel Seeds; Garam Masala; Herbs, fresh or dried (use less, flavour is more concentrated) e.g. dill, parsley; Mirin; Smoked/sweet paprika

**** marinade meat in Pyrex or glass bowl to prevent metal reactions with bicarb and vinegar, which causes an undesirable food taste

Memorable Bushwalking Moments – Part 5: I remember

Barbara Goldfinch

Walks were chosen according to ability and area of interest and/or charisma of the leader. Singing bush ballads in Gronow's furniture van promoted camaraderie. Social activities, including barn dances, were "events not to be missed".

Equipment: Today there is an amazing array. In the 1960's, there were 2 brands of packs – Paddy Pallin and Mountain Mule. Boots versus sand shoes was hotly debated, sandshoes being simple footwear, not like today's joggers. Parkas were waxed japara. There was little choice of clothing; no zip locked bags, "M and B" cans obtained from chemists were great for dried foods; no prepackaged meals as available today, favourite recipes being eagerly traded; canned gas was available but not popular; no self-inflating sleeping mats or high-density foam. Some inspired bushies invented their own equipment. Army Disposals and Auski were the only suppliers of equipment until Lock Wilson started trading.

Walks:

Wonnangatta base camp, 1977 - In 35-degree heat, we hiked 20 miles to the Wongungarra River and cooled off fully clothed in creek crossings. Exhausted but happy.

Yurek (The Prom), 1967 – a shared hot shower at Tidal River costing one shilling. **1968** - Andy Price fell sustaining some injuries. Sealers Bay, **1969** - some inspired individual carried a heavy spear gun and weights hoping to catch dinner. No fish were caught.

Mt Muller to Mt Erica, 1967 - Scrub-bashed across the Baw Baw Plateau risking the prickly jaws of undergrowth tearing at legs, scrub swiping faces, hindering progress. Lunch in the sun on a grassy plain, refreshed by a cool breeze, simple pleasures. Forget the effort, pretty close to heaven really.

Lerderderg, 1969 - Gisborne, Sardine Creek (possibly) - "This road's going in the wrong direction. I don't know where we", declared Mic. We camped on a spur above, hopefully, Sardine Creek. Continuous Rain. A good fire was lit using home-made fire lighters - rolled newspaper, dipped in spirits- a home-made bomb. "Just where had we spent last night?" mused Mic the next day.



Swimming in Wongungarra River



Contemplative rather than crossing contours

Skiing Mist amongst the snow gums. Brilliant sunshine. Untrampled glistening snow. Swishing downhill. Wilkie roof ski jump. Once, leaving Wilky we skied across Rocky Valley Dam. Graham led we followed. Halfway across, two fellows on a skidoo approached us, we shouldn't be there. Do we turn back or go forward?

So why did I walk? I enjoyed the bush, the exercise and in reaching places only accessible by my own effort. I enjoyed the company of other walkers. Many faces parade before my mind, some now bush-bashing in that great skyway above. Many faces who enriched my life. I hope I enriched these in some small way. Thank you.

Burrunj Black Range - 24-26 October, 2025

Sinéad Hanley

After camping at Cherrypool Reserve, brimming with frogs and white Spoonbills perched in river gums, we started our off-track walk toward Mudadgadjin Shelter, a small rock art site that holds a quiet presence of ancient stories from the Jardwadjali people.

From there, we skirted the base of the Burrunj Range, followed by a steep, rocky ascent to the top of the cliff line. The overgrown track made navigation and cairn spotting an engaging task for the front group, while a chorus of orchid-spotting kept things interesting. Soon everyone was spotting orchids: Grampians spider orchids, donkey orchids, wax lips, delicate pink lady fingers, not to mention the fringe lily. It seemed like there was something new to spot every few steps.



As we climbed along the top of the rocky range, the views were simply breathtaking – a sweeping panorama of the Western Grampians stretching out across the horizon. A spectacular view not seen by many. As the day progressed, it was again kept interesting as it was a cairn to cairn amble to our campsite. With a small rock shelter, it was much more overgrown than the last time the group visited, and we had fun picking out places to pitch a tent, especially knowing that there was a big rain front expected overnight.

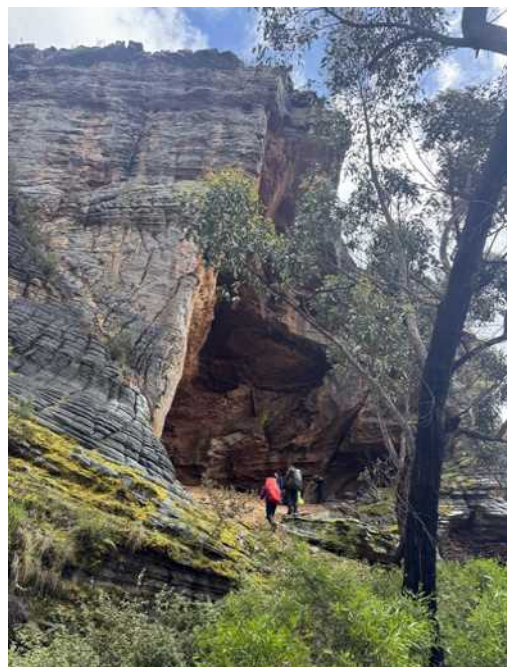
The next morning we walked through rain and a lightning storm following the rocky range towards Wildman Cave. A little further along the ridge line, after more rock hopping and scrambling, we climbed steeply through limestone and sculptural rock formations to the mysterious, magnificent cave.

The story goes that a Scottish shearer hid out here for around 20 years in the 1860s, and it is still surrounded by the whisperings of folklore. Wildman cave is large and open, with a smaller side chamber featuring a stone wall – part of his makeshift home and one of four caves he inhabited. Eating lunch in the cave with a view out to the distant ranges, you can understand why he chose this spot for a hermit life.



The path continued across to another small stone-walled cave chamber and then

down. It was off track through head-high thick scrub back to our starting point. A big thanks to Ian for leading this wild and adventurous walk through the Burrunj Black Range.



Mt Buller via the West Ridge - 1-4 November, 2025

Sal Mililli

Leader: Ian Mair

Adventurers: Anita, Andreas, John T, Romana, Roger, Michael, Bettina, Richard H, Mark S, Alex, Keith, Sal and Wendy

Cup day weekend is for some about a horse race, but for others it's a weekend where surprising weather is no surprise. The instagrammable West ridge track is described on the internet as challenging and not for the fainthearted, I thought due to the steep and demanding climb.

Our three day journey started in sunshine. Day 1 led from Mirimbah along the Epic bike track, then following Doughtys Rd to the West Ridge track with the first night's camp at Round Hill. Spotting orchids and birdlife along the way provided entertainment for a 10km day which was uphill all the way.

Day 2 started in brisk but clear weather with a forecast for change. We followed the west ridge track to the summit, one eye on the splendid views over the surrounding ranges, but the other regularly peering back at the big grey wall of weather gobbling up all behind us. We raced the threatening front to the top of Buller but as we caught our breath at the iconic pyramid shaped summit fire tower, the rain started. The rest of the day we walked in heavy rain and mist, stopping at Howqua Gap Hut and contemplating a stay there for the night to escape the unrelenting wet, but eventually pushing on to the planned destination, Bluff Spur Memorial hut. A good decision it turns out as the camping area wasn't the quagmire that Howqua Gap was. What was more, three kind young lads had beaten us to the hut and had the fireplace roaring. We decorated every corner of the hut with dripping gear and relished getting warm and dry.



Some decided to sleep in the hut for the night and others elected to use their tent but the reward for all was waking next morning to Christmas: 10cm of snow lay all about. Unfortunately the fire in the hut oven had gone out overnight, so the morning's entertainment was lighting the fire with the few matches and the five pieces of paper we were able to scrounge between us. Mission accomplished after much huffing and puffing, but ironically once we had cleared all the hanging gear a cupboard was revealed. It contained many packets of matches and a Costco size pack of firelighters.

Day 3 we meandered back down into the Delatite river valley back to the cars. There were several river crossings, some on log bridges and some demanding wet boots and cold toes. Meanwhile snow, sleet and pelting rain provided the tempo. I wonder if that earlier mentioned "not for the fainthearted" description is more applicable to the alpine conditions rather than the climb. Never underestimate our magnificent high country.

All credit to our leader, Ian, for keeping us safe through sun, wind, rain, hail and snow on a thoroughly wild and exhilarating hike.



Mount Bogong and the High Plains Circuit - 1-4 November, 2025

Simon Coleman

Introduction

This weekend was everything I didn't know I wanted it to be. For years, I had fantasised about surviving in the wilderness, experiencing the adventure vicariously through TV shows like *Survivor*, off-the-grid documentaries, and more recently, the SBS series *Alone*. Despite all these daydreams, I had never truly spent a night in the bush. That changed when I decided to join a hiking club.

Joining MBW

At the start of 2025, I joined MBW with very little, if any, bushwalking experience. I invested in a pair of hiking boots and took myself on a couple of practice walks before joining the Sunday bus walks. Gradually, I stepped up to multi-day base camps, a beginner's pack carry, a base camp for testing pack weight, and finally learned how to dehydrate my own meals. The club gear sale was an opportunity to pick up some bargains, and with my kit sorted, I felt ready for my first multi-day pack carry: the Mount Bogong and High Plains circuit, Melbourne Cup weekend 2025.



The Adventure Begins: Day Zero: Friday, 31st October

I caught a lift with our fearless leader, Petras and hiking icon Bernadette, whom I first met during her talk on New Zealand's great walk, Te Araroa. Bernadette's presentation was the first time I realised that hiking could be cold and wet, not just sunshine and native bush. During the 4.5-hour drive Petras presented us with an hilarious business card he created – "Pedro - Mountain Man Philosopher". Like any good gag this hovered on the edge of "is this guy for real or is he pulling our leg?". Over the weekend this was the source of much philosophical discussion and debate and mockery - what does it take to be a mountain man, should it be gender neutral, why do we do all this wilderness stuff anyway? Is it really to commune with nature or some sadistic torture?

All up, seven of us met at Mountain Creek Camping Ground at the base of Mt Bogong. We lit a fire and cooked corn on the cob and jacket potatoes in the hot coals while discussing the hiking plan for the next four days. The forecast was not looking good for the second half of the hike, with rain and possible snow expected. We decided to walk the High Plains circuit anticlockwise so that, in case of snow or poor visibility, the snow poles would guide us off the mountain. We agreed to keep an eye on the weather and cut the trip short if need be. It was evident that our group had plenty of experience, with knowledge of the mountain trails and meteorology.

Day One: Staircase Spur to Bogong Summit

Our leader's description was spot on: "We start with a bang storming up the undisputed heavyweight of the Victorian Alps. It's a 1,400m vertical grind up the brutally honest Staircase Spur – a name that doesn't sugar-coat. It's 4-5 hours of relentless uphill, but if the weather gods are kind, the reward is summit views that will make you forget the burn in your calves. At 1,986m, this is the roof of Victoria." After a rest and lunch at the Summit Cairn we crossed the Summit Plateau and headed down Quartz Ridge to Bogong Creek Saddle, where we set up camp for the night. The camp site seemed to be on top of a giant ant hill, but as the sun dropped below the horizon, the ants went to bed in time for us to do the same. One of the pleasures of my first night on Bogong was drinking water from the fresh mountain stream – pure snowmelt with fresh minerality. Delicious!

Day Two: Grey Hills to Bogong High Plains

We followed the Grey Hills to the Bogong High Plains, encountering more ants, waterfalls, and constant views of the Mt Bogong Summit Cairn. We became aware of another group of hikers travelling the same route as us. I affectionately referred to them as the Coburg Fellow Travellers. We continuously played cat and mouse passing each other on rest stops. Lunch was amongst the tussock grass where I learned a lot about hiking food, dehydration and dehydrated food hacks from Matthias and Sinéad. Nam and Petras debated weather apps and



maps which was fine by me, they were pretty much mitigating risk and increasing the likelihood of me getting home alive. We followed the eastern road towards Mt Nelse, communed with grasshoppers and black caterpillars, and took the opportunity to swim or soak our feet in crystal-clear ponds before retiring at Ropers Hut for the night.

Day Three: Big River and Cleve Cole Hut

The day began with Pedro the Mountain Man rehearsing for his VLOG. Our fellow travellers made haste and left for Cleve Cole Hut before us. Hot on their heels we made the 900-metre

descent to Big River where we caught up to them preparing for a skinny dip at the river crossing. We willingly moved our philosophical discussion further up the track before tackling the 900-metre ascent up to Cleve Cole Hut. As the forecast predicted low clouds and rain rolled in making for atmospheric views of the spectacular waterfalls. Some of us opted to stay in the hut while others pitched their tents as snow began to fall. It snowed throughout the night and by morning it had shrouded the tents which now resembled igloos.

Day Four: Eskdale Spur and the Return

Snow continued to fall, well more like blew in sideways. If I'm over selling this story, I tell people we walked off the mountain in a blizzard. This was my first experience of walking in snow. I was scared (overselling the story again), would I be dry and warm, was my clothing up to this extreme test? Was I going to die? Like white noise the snow pelted the side of my raincoat hood while stomping out a path in 15 centimetres of fresh snow, only millimetres inside I was dry and toasty warm. My anxiety subsided and I settled into the rhythm of my warm breath inside the cocoon of my hood. We headed up towards Mt Bogong summit and turned off at Eskdale Spur which led us down below the tree line into a winter wonderland. We stopped in at Michell's Hut, meeting our fellow travellers again. Some heated up hot chocolate for their morning tea while I ate snow off tree branches, spotted rabbits hopping among the frosted bushes and fantasised about meeting Mr Tumnus in this Narnia winter wonderland. We continued down out of snow and into rain at the base of the spur, following Mountain Creek back to the campground and our cars. We rounded off our weekend adventure with a Moroccan lunch in Myrtleford.

Reflections: In Search of the Wilder People

During one of our conversations, Petras raised a thought-provoking question: what does it truly mean to be a mountain man? This question resonated with me, prompting a reflection on the idea itself. In the spirit of inclusivity, I decided that in our context, the term should be gender neutral—so, "Wilder People" felt more fitting. With that settled, I began to consider why we, as Wilder People, choose to immerse ourselves in the wilderness. While the desire to experience the natural world is certainly a driving force, I realised it goes beyond simply communing with nature or seeking out spectacular views. The reality is that we willingly subject ourselves to a fair amount of discomfort for these experiences. Carrying a heavy pack over challenging terrain tests us on multiple levels, demanding careful planning, physical stamina, and mental resilience.



Sometimes, I wonder whether this hiking business is a kind of self-imposed challenge—a way to push the boundaries of our physical, psychological, and even spiritual endurance. The demanding conditions, from steep ascents to nights spent in snow-laden campsites, are what create the lasting memories that stay with us long after the view has faded. Of course, these adventures are also about escaping the constant hustle and bustle of daily life. The wilderness offers a unique opportunity to decompress, to find tranquillity, and to meditate in the steady rhythm of the bush. It's a chance to be fully present, to let go of everyday worries, and to challenge my own inner Wilder Person with each step. Ultimately, it is this very challenge—pushing myself and embracing the adventure—that will draw me back to the wilderness again.

Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend - 6 November, 2025

Helen Dobbyn

This 10km Thursday walk took place on a sunny spring day with a group of six walkers, three of whom had never visited the park. We followed well-made paths and enjoyed the lovely old red gums along the Maribyrnong River. We were lucky to see a tawny frogmouth along the way, and two shallow river crossings added a touch of excitement!

There was historical interest with an old farm site with original buildings at Horseshoe Bend, along with lush community gardens. We climbed to the top of the escapement for lunch and seemed on top of the world

surveying the river valley, ring road and distant housing.

Thanks to Jopie for organising the walk - Brimbank Park is well worth a visit and has a cafe where we finished the walk with a coffee.



Maria Island - 12 -16 November, 2025

Sam Weaner

As my first trip to Maria Island, I didn't know what to expect, other than the mild concern over a name that rhymes with pariah. After a well-coordinated plane to bus to ferry transfer we departed Triabunna on the way to the island with its peaks awaiting us in the distance, encouraging us to meet their challenge. The first afternoon gave us plenty of time to settle into our bunks and explore the local areas, with scattered groups exploring the Fossil Cliffs, the



Reservoir (to check on our water supply), or a sunset walk to the Painted Cliffs. As darkness fell, glimpses of aurora danced for those who looked in the right direction. Plenty of pademelons, wombats and Cape Barren geese in the courtyard required careful manoeuvring to keep from tripping on the way to our rooms.

Day 2 led us to challenge Mt Maria (711m). We monitored the forecast with a sense of foreboding among lively debates about BOM's new web design. We were eager to get into the bush, as the start of the walk was met with cool breezes off the water. Entering the cover of trees led us through creek crossings and a path meandering up towards Mt Maria. A beautiful tiger snake wriggled in a tree hollow, its slick black scales glistening in the sun as it was mildly disturbed by the eager eyes admiring its beauty. As we reached a steeper part of the hike, the rain dutifully arrived showering us with a bit of sleet. Thunder rolled through making us consider our elevation and arboreal surroundings with underlying concern. A few practical hikers



Along the track

considered their footing and the change in weather as an opportunity to toss up the choice of a treacherous climb and a warm tea in the comfort of camp. Tea prevailed. A few dredged onwards with hope, until they reached the scramble. Pausing for lunch, the choice between slick boulders and descent led to the responsible option. No regrets, as we were content in our choice, at least until we passed other eager hikers heading upwards as the sun came out. We were also pleased that the early descenders cleared out the leeches, leading us to understand which hikers were the tastiest while others had the armour of sensible leggings.



In the evening the forecast for aurora led us out into the chilly wind, with some solace on the leeward side of Oyster Bay pines. The clear night gave us plenty of stars and rows of the Starlink satellite network, but our chilled bones were not awarded with dancing lights.

The third day led to an additional dozen eggs being boiled or fried which often appeared at various times of the day for morning tea and lunch. Today's destination was Bishop and Clerk with more success expected in the



weather and mental forecasts. Meandering by the cemetery, airstrip, Fossil Cliffs and onward into the bush led us to the trail to the summit (620m). Delightful weather accompanied us as we zigzagged through the scree upwards to the top. Helping hands supported the final push to the peak. Whales showed off in the distance while sparrows danced behind our victorious poses for the camera against a spectacular view of the surrounding area. Jubilant in our achievement, weary legs descended to sea level.

Day 4 provided the option of a cycling adventure or a luxury boat tour (inclusive of seals and dolphins). New destinations awaited us...if we could just get

over the next extensive hill, while the kookaburras laughed at us pushing our bikes. The spectacles of Return Point, Encampment Cove, Frenchs Farm, Point Lesueur (to check on the weather equipment) and McRaes Isthmus (14k) made the journey worthwhile. The sun came out while we were on the isthmus giving us the delight of dipping our toes in the water and dancing in the squeaking white sands, while saving a few beached scallops. Many practiced their photography talents on artistic shell and wood displays.

Daily rituals of cheese and wine gave us a break from the day with banter of past adventures, planned expeditions, history lessons and family origins, and discussions of moss and fungi. These events had to be defended from visiting bandicoots, currawongs and Tassie devils, eventually leading to the sophisticated addition of a snack table.

The final morning gave us time for a final meander, as we left the isle refreshed and potentially ready to re-enter civilisation with exciting tales to tell. Special thanks to Jill Allen for coordinating a spectacular trip and leading us to amazing views. And kind regards to all fellow hikers providing joyful camaraderie in a fabulous location.



Upcoming activities

December 2025

Mon 1	MTG: Club Committee Meeting (Video)	Pvt		Susan Maughan
Thu 4	DAY: Woodlands, Wetlands & Braeside Park	Pvt	E	Phillip Geschke
5-7	BC: Marysville & surrounds	Pvt	E&E/M	Tanya Chambers
5-7	BC: Mt Buffalo & Mt McLeod, the steep way!	Pvt	M/H&H	Ray Thomas
5-7	PC: Heathy Spur-Ropers Hut	Pvt	E/M	Anne Wilkins
Sun 7	DAY: Rosebud Foreshore-Arthurs Seat	Bus	E/M&E/M	Bernd Neubauer & Glenn Swane
Tue 9	SOC: MBW Christmas Party	Pvt		Social Secretary
Wed 10	DAY: Woodlands	Pvt	E/M	Meredith Quick
12-14	PC: King Spur & Mt Speculation	Pvt	M/H	Robert Ian Mair
12-14	PC: Helicopter Spur-Stanley Name Spur	Pvt	M/H	Gina Hopkins
Sun 14	DAY: Barwon River, Geelong to Buckley Falls	Car	E	Indu Devanath
Mon 15	DAY: Sandringham to Elsternwick	Pvt	E	Sharon Carr
Tue 16	MTG: Introduction to MBW Mapping Utility	Pvt		Robert Ian Mair
Sun 21	DAY: Coliban Aqueduct & Fryers Ridge	Bus	E&E/M	Grant Roger & Quentin Tibballs
23-27	BC: Xmas in Yarra Valley	Pvt	E&E	Janet Hodgson
26-1	PC: Mt Jagungal Circuit	Pvt	M	Robert Ian Mair
27-1	BC: Mt Hotham over New Year	Pvt	Var	Quentin Tibballs

For detailed preview notes and program updates, please refer to the activities program on our website:
https://mbw.org.au/mbw_activities/MBW_activities_program.php

