

MELBOURNE
BUSHWALKERS INC.

ABN 14 396 912 508



THE NEWS

#902

May
2026



Sunrise on Mt Speculation - 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 4 May

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:

Graham Slack
Kristian Brown
Daruka Bul
Bruce Paule
Kim Kingston
Ivana De Simone
Terrie Horn
Ross Campbell
Mel Brown



Otways fungi - G. Martin

Would you like your trip photos featured in the newsletter?

Due date for contributions to June News: 21 May

Email: news@mbw.org.au



Thank-you to everyone who either attended the AGM in late March or sent their proxy. It is very much appreciated. Also, a huge thanks for voting me in as President for my second year. It really is an honour. It is so pleasing to have the opportunity to give back to the Club, as I enter my thirty-second year as a member.

This got me thinking about the many opportunities we have in the community to offer our services as a volunteer. The following is by no means a comprehensive list but designed as a prompt should you feel ready to "lend a hand".

First up - **MISSION TO SEAFARERS**. Volunteers are welcome to join the team at the Mission to Seafarers Victoria on a wide range of tasks. A pool of drivers is required to hop in one of the 11-seater shuttle buses and pick up seafarers from the docks. Research skills are needed to assist the heritage team, or spend a morning pottering in the garden, or stay at home and use your IT skills to help out with administration duties or even fundraising.



Can you use some free time to support BEYOND BLUE? Check out "Coastrek", the ultimate charity hiking challenge and outdoor adventure with purpose.

BUSHWALKING TRACKS AND CONSERVATION (BTAC) focuses on tracks and trails strategies, exploring opportunities for new tracks, or upgrading existing tracks, articulating a vision that bushwalkers want for the future, and undertaking fieldwork in Victoria's national parks and state forest. BTAC Volunteers carry out hands-on work on tracks and conservation projects. The projects are carried out under the auspices of relevant land managers, by Parks Victoria (in Victorian national and state parks) and the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (in Victorian state forests).

Works traditionally include clearing fallen trees and vegetation from existing walking tracks, building or repairing boardwalks, installing or replacing track markers and signage, and identifying and removing noxious weeds. Their preference is to volunteer in the more remote and difficult to reach areas of the State where there is often no local pool of volunteers for the land managers to draw upon. BTAC encourages and supports bushwalking clubs to do track work with their local land managers.

WILDLIFE VICTORIA is a non-profit charity operating the state's 24/7 wildlife emergency response service. Volunteers are an integral part of what Wildlife Victoria does. The volunteer network will rescue, transport and care for sick, injured and orphaned native animals and make a genuine difference in wildlife welfare.

GARDENS FOR WILDLIFE, MELBOURNE. Private landholders play a big role in ensuring the city has healthy ecosystems and thriving biodiversity. Everyone is encouraged to create a space in their garden for wildlife, providing a habitat with indigenous plants or suitable alternatives. Gardens for Wildlife is active in more than 25 municipalities across Victoria. It is based on the successful Knox Gardens for Wildlife Program.

Leaders Training Day – Saturday 5th September

An all-day event intended for:

- Members interested in leading bushwalks
- New leaders
- Current leaders who want to refresh or further develop their skills

See the Website Activities Program for a detailed description of the Agenda.

Contact noonan1953@gmail.com if you are interested, or

Use the **Expression of Interest** tab on the Website

A cartoon illustration of a very long, dark, segmented caterpillar or worm-like creature. It is shown from the side, with its head at the right end. A thought bubble comes from the head, containing the text: "How the hell do I tell them I haven't a clue where we're going?". The creature is on a simple line representing the ground.

May Safety and Risk Reminders

This month we feature the **Leaders Emergency Checklist** (White Laminated Card), list the **items Members are required to take on a walk**, and ask “Do you remember what **DRSABCD** stands for?



First Aid Safety - DRSABCD: Yes, its **Dangers?**, **Responsive?**, **Send for Help**, **Check Airways**, **Normal Breathing?**, **Start CPR**, **Attach Defibrillator**. See the St Johns Ambulance description in this News.

What Members are required to take on Activities (excluding camping gear):

- Adequate clothing for the activity including waterproof rain gear (not a plastic bag!).
- A wide brimmed hat is essential in summer: A pullover or fleece jacket, beanie and gloves in winter.
- Change of clothing, especially in winter. This can be left in the bus or car. A change of shoes is required on bus and car trips to keep the vehicles clean.
- A first aid kit appropriate for the activity and its duration. Even on Sunday Walks where the leaders carry a group first aid kit you should always carry basic first aid equipment. Don't rely on others to do this for you!
- Your personal medications e.g for pain relief, including things like an ‘EpiPen’ and any Inhalers you may require. Make sure to tell the Leader of any conditions that may impact you during the walk so they can quickly respond if needed.
- You need to be fully self-sufficient so carry all your food, snacks, a minimum 2L of water and possibly emergency rations in case of delays.
- Matches in a waterproof container and a torch (now on most smartphones) in case the group is late back, especially in winter.
- Whistle (*in case you become separated or need to relay an emergency signal*), pencil/pen and paper.
- Personal items, including, sunscreen, lip screen, toilet paper, identification, club Green Health Card preferably in the top of your pack in a Zip Bag, some money etc.
- The leader may recommend additional items for the activity e.g. sticks, gaiters, etc.
- If in doubt check the **Introduction to Melbourne Bushwalkers** on the Website or ask the leader.

Leaders Emergency Checklist (White Laminated Card): This card is designed to be taken on walks and lists the key steps in dealing with an Emergency including the Whistle Codes. You can collect a laminated card in the Clubrooms or print the version in this News, trim it up and put it in a Zip Bag.

Members and especially Leaders are encouraged to read the 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

MELBOURNE BUSHWALKERS Inc
EMERGENCY CHECKLIST

- Don't panic!. DRSABCD
- Is it safe for group to remain in location? Or return to the last known location as any search will start there □ Keep warm, stay calm and seek shelter.
- For Sunday bus, phone the driver
- Medical emergencies: who has 1st aid skills?
- Use the injured/ill persons green 'Personal Health Details Card only if patient is not coherent
- Are they carrying medication? Access Health Card details
- Assess early exit options

CALL FOR ASSISTANCE

"000" or "112" on mobile, state following

- Location incl grid reference and directions
- Your mobile number
- Nature of emergency

Use a Personal Locator Beacon if necessary

Make it easier to be located:

- Move above tree line
- Move to clearing or track
- Move to open section of a creek line

Make it easier to be located (Cont):

- Lay a block of bright colour visible from the air
- Smoking fire – if safe to do so
- Direct person to listen for searchers

SEEKING ASSISTANCE

Subject to nature of incident, group size & experience direct two personnel to:

- Walk to higher ground to make contact
- Walk out to summon help
- Guide searcher/rescue back in

Contact the following as necessary:

- A Club Emergency Contact to put a message on the Club's Mobile 0447 489 661
- For serious injuries contact a Club Officer or CEC

DISTRESS CALLS

3 regularly spaced calls (whistle, shouts, banging on a billy, or torch flashes at night)

- 3 blasts – emergency
- 2 blasts – stop and regroup
- 1 blast – acknowledge

..... 02/2022

Note: Available as a White Laminated Card in Clubrooms or Print and put in a Zip Bag

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Issue 902 - May 2026

Recommendations for Personal First Aid Kit for Day Hikes

Jenny Andrewes

Melbourne Bushwalkers requires everyone to carry their own personal first aid kit as well as whistle, torch, pen, paper, and matches in a waterproof container. Use a ziplock bag or equivalent for your first aid kit. Include completed MBW green health card.



Be prepared to manage a snake bite (medical emergency) and blisters (common).

For SNAKE BITES

- Carry 2 snake bandages - Chemist Warehouse sell Aeroform Snake bandages 10cm x 4.5m
- Familiarise yourself with videos outlining management of snakebite and applying snake bandages, eg. St John Vic - "Snake Bite First Aid Tips"
<https://youtu.be/QQcpaebtwrU?si=RPkHi5A8R4KpHUCz>

BLISTERS / WOUNDS - adjust quantity to length of hike/your needs

- Fixomul /hypafix +/- sports tape to apply to heel/toes etc before hike to prevent blister or at first indication a blister may be developing
- Compeed or gel/hydrocolloid bandaids of various sizes for management of blisters
- Combine dressing pad x 2 for wound, eg Cutilin / Allevyn - wash wound with water
- Light weight crepe bandage to secure dressing
- Small pair scissors to cut bandage / tape

MEDICATION - this is for your personal use and we do not recommend you provide to fellow hikers

- Panadol or ibuprofen
- Antihistamine for sting /allergic reaction
- Anti-diarrhoea meds

if you have an EpiPen / Insulin or have any medical issues indicating you may be at risk of an event on the hike you must inform the leader - this is for your own safety.

CONSIDER below, particularly for longer hikes / pack carrying

- Thermal emergency blanket - essential in alpine /cool areas
- Rehydration tablets - eg. Hydralite - essential in summer months
- Tweezers / tick spray
- Steristrips / bandaids / safety pins
- Heavy crepe bandage for strapping ankle/wrist (use sitting mat as splint)

Use this list as a guide for your personal first aid kit - you may wish to carry a more extensive first aid kit or use other products that you have found beneficial.

DRSABCD action plan

In an emergency call triple zero (000) for an ambulance



D

DANGER

Ensure the area is safe for yourself, others and the patient.

R

RESPONSE

Check for response—ask name—squeeze shoulders

No response
• Send for help.

Response
• make comfortable
• check for injuries
• monitor response.



S

SEND for help

Call Triple Zero (000) for an ambulance or ask another person to make the call.

A

AIRWAY

Open mouth—if foreign material is present:

- place in the recovery position
- clear airway with fingers.

Open airway by tilting head with chin lift.



B

BREATHING

Check for breathing—look, listen and feel.

Not normal breathing
• Start CPR.

Normal breathing
• place in recovery position
• monitor breathing
• manage injuries
• treat for shock.



C

CPR

Start CPR—30 chest compressions : 2 breaths
Continue CPR until help arrives or patient recovers.



D

DEFIBRILLATION

Apply defibrillator if available and follow voice prompts.

© St John Ambulance Australia. St John encourages first aid training as this information is not a substitute for first aid training.

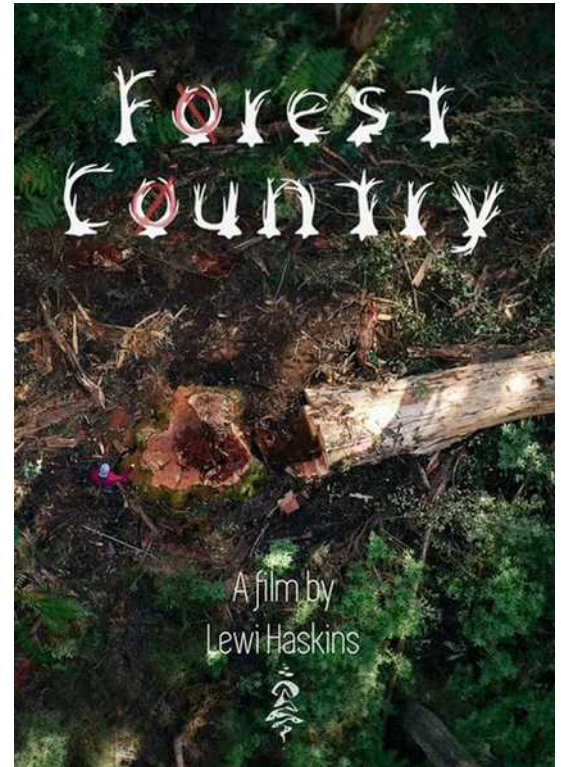
Learn First Aid | 1300 360 455 | www.stjohn.org.au

Wine and chat: Film **Forest Country** – screening and discussion – 27 May 2026

Join Victorian film maker Lewi Haskins and Nic Fox from the Warburton Environment for a screening and discussion of this powerful short film, **Forest Country**. This is a film maker's plea to protect his beloved forest community in the Yarra Ranges from logging.

By 2024 the Victorian government announced the end of native forest logging, only for it to continue in more insidious forms. Film maker Lewi Haskins made himself a promise that if his forest community came under the threat of logging, he would protect it the best way he knew how - through film.

Forest Country is the powerful and deeply moving result of that promise. Shot over the course of a year alongside activists, conservationists, and ecologists, the film bears witness to the ongoing destruction of native ecosystems, the death of endangered wildlife, and the growing risks to community safety.



Follow this link to see a YouTube video trailer:

<https://youtu.be/pFiTgBg2H4M>

All club members concerned about the future of our native forests are invited to come along and engage with Lewi and Nic on this subject close to the hearts of all bushwalkers.

Advanced Leadership Skills Series

For May we are looking at:

[Another leadership theory](#)

This topic covers the theory around:

- Interaction - Expectations
- A comprehensive View of Leadership
- Comprehensive Interaction Expectations

Note: The complete article set is available on the Website



Why I hate Gore-Tex walking boots

Geof Martin

Before I start my rant about Gore-Tex let's start down in the wilds of the Otways on a recent walk, in particular the West Barwon River.

Off I went on a 10km day walk along with my friend Brownie, the kind of bloke who likes to adventure by treating maps as a suggestion. Down, down into the West Barwon valley we ventured on an explorative walk to check out the rail workings of the 1920's Henry's Mill sites. Two hours in, Brownie looked at a wall of dense ferns dripping down into a very muddy gully and said the four most dangerous words

bushwalkers can use - "I know a shortcut". We moved off the trail and within 15 minutes the 'shortcut' became a vertical scramble across loose rock and copious amounts of razor wire grass. Finally down on to the Barwon's banks, sweating profusely and inspecting our bleeding razor cuts, Brownie decides to negotiate the river by crossing a mossy log rather than wade through the water. Well, a lack of friction propelled him along the log with the grace of a trapeze artist and into the cool mountain flow. And with Brownie up to his thighs in water, a timely applause rang out from a laughing Kookaburra - we both smiled and realised the river was now our highway. We spent the next three hours happily exploring the river and its secrets from the past, along with the odd Tiger snake sunning itself on a rock. Satisfied, we exited the river and headed up the trail back to the car with the repetitive sound of our boots squelching and socks taking on the feeling of pulped paper.

Couldn't wait to get those 'waterproof' boots off.



Ok, now onto Gore-Tex - a trade name for waterproof, breathable fabric membrane. It was invented in 1969 and a patent was held until 1990. Gore-Tex and other such fabrics block liquid water while allowing water vapor to pass through and is designed to be a lightweight, waterproof fabric for all-weather use.

Sounds good, doesn't it? Even NASA uses it in space suits - must be good hey! The marketing around these fabrics has been very, very successful. So much so that the manufacturers competing in the outdoor footwear arena are loath to omit adding the fabric to their footwear due to the public perception that it always magically works!! Those who have walked for a long time will remember boots without Gore-Tex and will obviously recognise the disadvantages. Their minds will debate the "Magic Membrane" vs "The Plastic Bag" or "The Bucket" effect. While heavily marketed as the gold standard for staying dry, eventually the penny drops that these expensive boots I bought have significant flaws. The Gore-Tex waterproof membrane in boots prioritises keeping water out over letting internal moisture escape, leading to hot, sweaty feet and long drying times.

The Plastic Bag (Poor Breathability and Overheating)

Gore-Tex is marketed as "breathable," but these boots can't vent moisture as fast as feet produce sweat during hard hiking or in hot weather. Heat trapped by the extra layer makes boots significantly warmer in hot or humid weather. This results in moisture buildup, sweat is trapped, creating a damp environment that increases the risk of blisters and fungal infections. Conversely you stop walking when the day is getting cold and so do your feet from a damp boot.

continued next page



The Bucket (Water Retention and Drying Time)

Gore-Tex is very good when brand-new at keeping water out, but a major frustration is that once boots get wet on the inside from a river crossing or sweat they take much longer to empty and dry than non-waterproof versions. These waterproof membranes are good at keeping water in, as well as keeping it out. Because airflow is restricted by the membrane, these boots often remain damp overnight, which is particularly problematic for multi-day walks.

The Slow Death (Built-in Redundancy)

These membranes are often prone to failure due to a breakdown from abrasion, impregnation of dirt/sweat/salt and boot failure or poor construction causing either an entry point for water or enhanced "Plastic Bag" effect.

Environmental Impact (Something To Consider)

The manufacture of many of these membranes including Gore-Tex involves PFAS "forever chemicals" and PFCs, which are known environmental toxins. Also, the 'end of life' and disposal of these boots is problematic - as is most of our hiking equipment which we all should consider when making a new purchase.

What's the alternative?

After reading this and you want to rethink your footwear, realistically it's not all that straight forward. As already stated, the manufacturers are so focused on waterproof membranes, that their marketing brains trust can't see that demand has shifted. So go to the outdoor shops, look for alternatives (they are there) and request the retailer source non-waterproof membrane boots/shoes. At the moment your best bet for non-waterproof footwear is trail runners (great for warm weather), full grain leather boots/shoes and some mesh boots/shoes - or maybe go barefoot!

Thanks for reading,
Geof



Camping gear for sale

Many members will remember Bob Oxlade who led legendary walks for the club in Tasmania and other places. He has recently moved into Waverley Valley Care Community and would like to sell his camping gear which he can no longer use. Please Contact Philip Oxlade (Bob's son) on 0478 833 368 to arrange collection.

Medium Golite pack, 72 litre, 710 grams

Containing - Tivec groundsheet

- Big Sky Wisp Tent
- Walking Pole
- Snugpak Softie 3 Merlin -2 deg. sleeping bag cover
- White Silk Sheet
- Gas Stove inc. cylinder with pot
- @ Fizan walking poles - \$150 the lot

Paddy Pallin Sleeping Bag 1.4 kg as new with silk sheet - \$100

Backpack – Macpac Ravine 1.6kg Size 2 - \$40



MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL 2026-27

Membership subscriptions are due 1st April 2026. You are not required to sign an Acknowledgement of Risk form on renewal, however you are advised that payment of fees implies acceptance of the risks involved in any activity you may undertake as a member of MBW. Members are asked to read the following wording regarding insurance cover through Bushwalking Australia.

'In voluntarily participating in activities of Melbourne Bushwalkers Inc., which are described to me by the activity leaders, I am aware that my participation in the activities may expose me to hazards and risks that could lead to injury, illness or death or to loss of or damage to my property. I also acknowledge that I may encounter weather conditions that could lead to heat stroke, hypothermia or being in locations where evacuation for medical treatment may take hours or days. In particular when participating in abseiling or above the snowline activities I am aware that these activities could expose me to additional hazards and risks.

To minimize risks I will endeavour to ensure that:

- Each activity is within my capabilities;
- I will carry food, water and equipment appropriate for the activity;
- I will advise the activity leader if I am taking medication or have any physical or other limitation that might affect my participation in the activity;
- I will make every effort to remain with the rest of the party during the activity;
- I will advise the leader of any concerns I am having; and
- I will comply with all reasonable instructions of club officers and the activity leader`

I have read and understood these requirements. I will consider the risks before joining any activity of the Club. I acknowledge that I will take responsibility for my own actions, that the Club strongly recommends that all participants have comprehensive personal ambulance cover, and that **payment of my subscriptions will be deemed as full acceptance and understanding of the above conditions.**

RENEWAL SLIP

If any of your personal details have changed, update your details through the Members' Area of the club's website, or complete the form below and send it by email to membership@mbw.org.au, or if paying by cheque forward it with your payment to the Membership Secretary.

If paying by cheque or EFT please be sure to clearly identify who the payment is for to assist the Treasurer and Membership Secretary to identify you and ensure your renewal is properly recorded.

Payment to the Membership Secretary, together with completed form (if required) by one of the following methods:

- **(Preferred)** EFT to the club account. **Please ensure your full name and 'SUBS' appear on the transfer.**
(Account Name: Melbourne Bushwalkers, A/c No. 0058-46013, BSB: 013-006).
- Cheque and Renewal Slip posted to Membership Secretary, Melbourne Bushwalkers Inc, P.O. Box 1751, Melbourne 3001

Fees (Please circle your membership category) *

Single member: \$45 *

Concession: \$34* (Proof required **)

Couple/Family: \$90 *

Concession: \$68* (Proof required **)

Notes: * Members who have nominated their Home Club as other than Melbourne Bushwalkers and paid the insurance cover to their Home Club should only pay 50% of the appropriate fee noted above.

** Holders of a Seniors Card or Commonwealth Healthcare Card only are not eligible for a concession.

*** Copies of the club newsletter are only available as PDF files downloaded from the website. **No hard copy subscriptions are available.**

Name: Year of Birth (optional).....

Name: Year of Birth (optional).....

(**Note:** Year of Birth is used for statistical purposes only and not published in any lists.)

Fill in Address, Telephone number(s) and Email address only if changed since last renewal:

Street Address:

Suburb / Postcode

Tel: [H] [W] Mobile:

Email: Home Club:

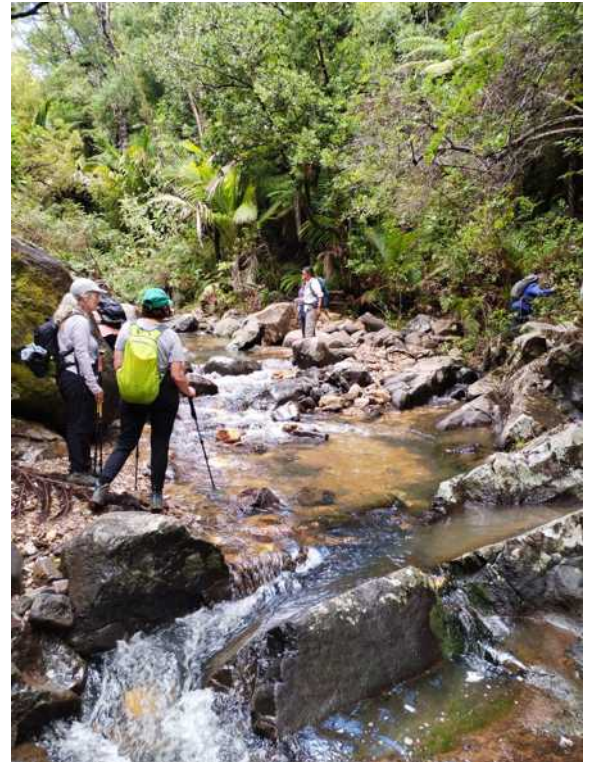
Emergency Contact Tel:..... [H][M][W]

Great Barrier Island – 8-18 March 2026

Janet Wilkinson

I'd seen the trip to Great Barrier Island (GBI) (Aotea) on the club program in previous years, and it piqued my interest. I knew nothing about it and wondered what it offered bushwalkers. In 2025 I put up my hand to join the 2026 trip and I certainly don't regret doing so! Our president, Susan, has led the trip now on 6 occasions and full credit to her for organising the logistics of getting 16 people to and from an island off an island!

I was fortunate to also join Susan, Stuart, Fay and Josh on Rangitoto island (RI) for 3 nights prior to the GBI trip. We stayed in a "bach", the Kiwi equivalent of what we would call a beach shack, and enjoyed exploring on foot this "baby" of an island-only 600 years old! Walks ranged from pleasant strolls on grassy gentle tracks and gravel roads on Motutapu Island, which is joined to RI by a causeway, and the more challenging summit and coastal walk on RI which provided views back to Auckland, and an intriguing walk through dark lava caves. Rangitoto offered contrasting landscapes of jet-black, rough-edged lava flows with lush coastal forest and the birdsong of the tui.



After a brief sojourn in Auckland to do washing and stock up again on food supplies, we were off to GBI on the 6.00am ferry. (Yes, a rather brutal start time!) We were a group of 15, the 16th joined us a few days later. GBI provided an interesting variety of walks - starting with the gentle Warrens Track with its lush forest and waterfall, and a visit to Glenfern Sanctuary. At the latter, a highlight for some of the group was being able to climb into the canopy of a 600-year-old Kauri tree via a swing bridge and ladder. Talk about a bird's eye view! In the following days we crossed the Te Ahumata (White Cliffs) Track with its history of silver and gold mining, and the more challenging Forest Road and Whitney Track, which involved a rock scramble to Maungapiko Lookout for those so inclined, and numerous river crossings on the Whitney Track. Water levels were higher than in previous years, Susan said, which added to the challenge, but all completed the walk safely despite a few slips and slides on wet rocks and muddy banks.



Night-time entertainment included a BBQ feast on the first night, organised by Susan, freshly caught abalone not once, but twice, supplied by Josh, who we learnt is an experienced abalone diver. (Ask him sometime what the commercial value would be of what he caught!) GBI is a night sky sanctuary, so an ideal place to explore the wonders of the starry sky unhindered by night pollution. Some of us signed up for an evening exploring this with a local astronomer and her telescope. Well worth it!

Half the group also undertook the overnight pack carry to Mt. Heale Hut via Windy Canyon and its sheer rock walls and what seemed like an interminable set of steps and stairs on Palmers Track. But the views from Mt. Hobson/Hirakimata, and later the sunset snapped from the hut deck, made it worthwhile. Unfortunately, on the descent the following day from the hut to the Kaitoke thermal pools, one of the group slipped on the slimy track and broke her ankle. She was airlifted to Auckland to receive treatment and rest before flying home.



Those who did not undertake the pack carry had a relaxing night at a house by the beach.

GBI wasn't finished yet in providing yet more wonderful sights! Our last official day of walking was to Dolphin Bay, and guess what? It was full of dolphins frolicking and slapping the water after leaping high into the air! We sat mesmerised for a good half an hour not wanting to leave. (Funnily enough, a few of the group who went the following day to the same spot to see the dolphins were disappointed. Not one to be seen!)



Our last evening was a night of frivolity at

a local Irish pub to celebrate St. Patrick's Day and our time together. Thanks to all on the trip for your company and good humour and to Susan for making the whole thing possible. A special shout-out, too, to Josh for the assistance he provided to many in the group, and for the effort he went to in catching and preparing two abalone meals.

So, if you see Great Barrier Island on the program again, grab the chance to go there!

Werribee Park and River Walk – Thursday 2 April 2026

Cecily Hunter

The parkland around the historic mansion at Werribee and along the Werribee River provided a most satisfactory setting for a ten kilometre walk on a perfect autumn day for a small group of walkers led by Ian Mair. Some drove to the meeting point in the car park of the historic mansion, others took the train from Flinders St to Werribee and then a bus.

As promised in the preview, soon after setting off along the track, we caught sight of animals at the open-air zoo. Cameras were particularly busy recording two giraffes sunning themselves and a rhinoceros nearby. Resuming our way, we passed by some very old farm buildings into a forest of eucalyptus and then on to open ground and the track along the Werribee River. We stopped for lunch on the riverbank and the more sharp-eyed amongst us caught sight of Fairy Martins fluttering around their nest in the steep cliff opposite.

We returned along the same path to the mansion with time for those who wished to take a tour of the building and explore its gardens. A café was open for refreshments.



Garden of St Erth-Simmons Reef - Sunday 29

March 2026

Ian Mair

The 1850's were a period of dramatic change across Victoria. Gold discoveries triggered a huge population influx, rapid wealth creation, and major social change, turning the colony from a pastoral settlement into a fast-growing and commercially dynamic society. Gold was discovered near Blackwood in 1854–55 and it quickly swelled into a large mining district with a population of around 13,000 to 15,000 at its peak. As the easy alluvial gold was worked out miners shifted to quartz reef mining, including at Simmons Reef west of the township. The Easter Monday Mine worked by brothers Joseph and Alfred Skinner was discovered by them on Easter Monday in 1907. Up until its closure in 1918 their company crushed 2,681 tons for 2,475 oz. of gold.



Walk there today in the recently created Wombat-Lerderderg National Park and the signs of past activity are still evident in the remains of water races and mine openings, but time has all but hidden the scale of operations with an estimated length of over 1km of tunnels (adits) up to 115m below the top of the main shaft in the Easter Monday Mine alone. Our 16km circuit started from Jack Cann Reserve near The Garden of St Erth. Simmons Reef was the gold mining township on this site when Blackwood was a thriving gold town.

The climb to reach the site of the Easter Monday Mine was steep and steady, getting steeper as we approached the main shaft opening. Our leaders had outlined some of the history, illustrated with old photographs from the local Blackwood and District Historical Society, which brought a new appreciation to the challenges of the time. As I struggled to climb the final slope I could only reflect that the miners must have been tough!

The Wombat-Lerderderg National Park is crisscrossed by a network of roads and tracks at times leaving you wondering which way to go. Our planned route wove an interesting path through the maze. The surrounding forest features open eucalypt woodlands with messmate stringybark the main tree type. The intense colours of fungi glistened in the sunlight. Historically labeled a "ruined forest" by 1899 due to logging, it is now secondary regrowth (last harvested in 1980) with good understorey. A break mid-morning amongst the trees was very pleasant.

On flatter ground after our break, and mainly heading downhill, we were now into our stride. A walkers' trail guided us down a long spur to the banks of the Lerderderg River whereupon a preselected spot was found for lunch. After lunch an old water race, now a section of the Great Dividing Trail, made an ideal walking track as it contoured its way around the hills and gullies back to where we had started.



The forest landscape with the history of its recent human engagement, and guaranteed a new level of protection, will continue to be a favoured destination for walkers. Combined with the charm of Blackwood as a spot for post-walk refreshments it made for a very enjoyable walk. Special thanks to our leaders, Stefan and Therese, for their careful planning and research.

Upcoming activities

May 2026

Sun 3	DAY: Wombelano Fall-Andrew Hill (Kinglake)	Bus	E&E/M	Bernd Neubauer & Bettina Brill
Mon 4	MTG: Club Committee Meeting	Pvt		Susan Maughan
Thu 7	DAY: Mordialloc-Sandringham (train based)	Pvt	E	Sharon Carr
9-10	PC: Fryers Ridge circuit	Pvt	E	Robert Ian Mair
Sun 10	DAY: Eltham River & Pettys Orchard	Car	E/M	Jan Colquhoun
Wed 13	DAY: Darebin Creek	Pvt	E/M	Jerry Grandage
16-2	PC: Larapinta Trail-West to East	Pvt	VH	Jill Allen
16-2	PC: Larapinta Trail-East to West	Pvt	VH	Geoffrey Martin
Sun 17	DAY: Olinda Forest Walk	Bus	E/M&M	Judith Shaw & Indu Devanath
Mon 18	DAY: Nortons Park-Jells Park	Pvt	E	Doug Pocock
22-24	BC: Port Campbell (Hostel accommodation)	Pvt	E	Halina Sarbinowski & Robert Ian Mair
Sun 24	DAY: Mortimer Res-Windy Point (Gembrook)	Car	E/M	Andreas Meister
Wed 27	DAY: Dandenong Ranges National Park	Pvt	E	Elizabeth Gwynne
Wed 27	SOC: Film-Forest Country & discussion	Pvt		Lewi Hoskins
Thu 28	SOC: Darebin Creek Trail	Pvt	E	Bernadette O'Connell
Sat 30	DAY: Mt Charlie	Pvt	E/M	Helen Graesser
Sun 31	DAY: Yarra Valley Rail Trail & Winery	Bus	E&E/M	Theo Mertzandis & Brett Daniel

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



Vanilla lily, Mt Hotham - D. Shand