



# Ben Cruachan Walking Club

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ISSUE 231 — Newsletter of the Ben Cruachan Walking Club — August 2023



Toorong Falls. See page 6 ...

# Ben Cruachan Walking Club



## Committee Members 2023/24

President:	Peter Jennings	0428 230 444
Vice-President:	Elizabeth Davis	
Secretary:	Robyn Kercher	secbcwc@gmail.com
Member Sec:	Ken Free	memsecbcwc@gmail.com
Treasurer:	Marian Matchan	
Publicity:	Kerry Knights	
Newsletter:	Jack Winterbottom	newsbcwc@gmail.com
Walks Coordinator:	Geoff Mattingley	walkbcwc@gmail.com
Tracks & Conservation:	Joe van Beek	
Committee:	Monica Scicluna, Janine Muir, Rob Paterson, Clare Snell, Jodie Wigg	

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## Club Committee meets on the second Wednesday of even numbered months

The next Committee meeting is at 7pm on Wednesday 11 October 2023  
at the Maffra Community Sports Club, 122-126 Johnson Street, MAFFRA.

### Welcome to new members:

**April Freely, Jim and Heather Phillipson, Daniel Prowse,  
Mitchell Wigg (!)**

# Presidential Footnotes

## My Sixth Post

The AGM was held in July in a social setting at the Star Hotel in Sale. The election was chaired by Helmut and resulted in the reappointment of many office bearers and a new treasurer – congratulations and thank you to Marian for taking on the role which for the past few years has been ably managed by Monica who has agreed to continue as an “ordinary” committee member. We also bid farewell to John Cox who was an “ordinary” committee member but did an extraordinary job in updating our website.

### **LIFE MEMBERSHIP AWARDED**

A highlight at the AGM was the awarding of Club life membership to Ken Free. Ken has been a very active member for twenty years and during this time he has led countless walks (particularly in the Mitchell River area), been an active committee member serving several terms as secretary, publicity officer, membership secretary and committee member. He has also participated in track maintenance activities, organising events, mentoring new walk leaders and officers.... the list goes on. He has also been generous with his woodcraft skills in creating items for presentation to previous life member awardees. Congratulations and thank you Ken!

### **AUGUST COMMITTEE MEETING – PLANNING FOR OUR 60th YEAR**

Apart from the regular administrative reports and decisions, a highlight from the meeting was consideration on how to recognise the 60th anniversary of the Club in 2025. Two proposals were suggested and supported.

Firstly, members may recall that life member Norm Williams left a sum of money to the Club in his will earlier this year. The proposal is to put that money towards the restoration of the toposcope on the summit of Ben Cruachan with due recognition of Norm’s contribution and the founding of the Club in 1965. The current toposcope of unknown age is made of wood, has deteriorated and sits atop a plinth that is crumbling away.

The second proposal is to recognise the sixtieth year of the club (2024-25), the diamond jubilee, in some way. This will be a task for the committee in the months leading up to July next year. Some may recall that the Club ran fifty walks in the fiftieth year.

### **THE TWENTY BUSWALKING COMMANDMENTS**

9. Thou shall bring some light, comfy shoes to rest thy weary feet in camp
10. Thou shall carry waxed matches and lighter in a water tight container
11. Thou shall wear wool (I’m a retired woolgrower but didn’t make that one up)
12. Thou shall store thy sleeping bag in a waterproof bag

*Peter*

## VALE

**John Hanlon**  
1944 - 2023



A long serving member of Ben Cruachan Walking Club, John Hanlon, died on 26 June 2023 aged 79 years.

I first met John not long after joining the club in 2003. On a walk to Roaring Mag Falls led by Elaine and Jack, we settled down for lunch amongst the low scrub and quietly contemplated the view to the Mitchell River valley and the hills beyond. Our solitude was suddenly interrupted by the unmistakable sound of bagpipes echoing off the surrounding hills. The piper was none other than John Hanlon who had carried the bagpipes in his backpack and had surprised us with this wonderful lunchtime rendition. It brought a smile to everyone's face and probably gladdened a few hearts.

A native of Northern Ireland, John and his wife Dorothy immigrated to Australia in the late 1960s and, following a brief stay in Sydney, settled in Gippsland and enjoyed a long and successful career as a helicopter engineer at Esso.

I have fond memories of John who was always a great companion on bushwalks and could be relied upon to greet me with "how are you laddie" in his unmistakable accent. We will miss him.

Ken Free

## Club News

### Life Membership

At the AGM in July, Ken Free was presented with Life Membership of the club.

Ken joined the Club in 2003 and has been a very active member of the Club, leading and participating in many walks.

He has served on the Committee since 2008 including 4 years as Secretary, 3 years as Publicity Officer and 3 years as Membership Secretary.

He has contributed to the wellbeing of the Club by participating in Track maintenance activities, organising events, regularly transporting walkers to walks and providing support and counsel to members and officers. Additionally, Ken has utilised his exceptional skills in woodcraft to create exquisite trays for presentation to new Life Members of the Club.

Ken spent many years bushwalking in NSW and the ACT before settling in Sale and has freely shared his experience and expertise to anyone requesting information or help.

Ken was instrumental in introducing the club to walks in the Mitchell River NP, an area he has come to love. This has seen club membership grow with members from the Bairnsdale region.



*Ken joins other life Members Jack Winterbottom, Joe van Beek, Wil Streckfus and Monica Scicluna.*

# Walk Reports

## Tyers Gorge

**Date:** 17 June 2023

**Leader:** Jim Stranger

**Report:** Kylie O'Neill

**Walkers:** Jim, Peter, Max, Gabrielle, Ian, Ruth, Marian, Kylie, Oliver, Dave, Rob, Josie, Catherine.

The promise of good weather must have had an influence on the walk turn out. Thirteen walkers met at Tyers Kindergarten to prep for the walk.

With a short drive to Wirilda Environmental Park, a basic camp area with drop toilets, we parked to commence the walk. As we parked, Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos greeted us from the trees as the morning sun warmed the air.

Passing the Gippsland Water Pump Station, our walk took us along a well-marked track on the hillside following the Tyers River. The area was tall forest of red box, manna gum and messmate with lush fern gullies. For most part, the track was narrow, allowing single file only. Superb Lyrebirds could be heard with many and varied mimicking calls. We walked as far up as "the old pipe bridge crossing", a low concrete wall with remnants of steel tracks, about 5kms upstream.



In 1919 a wooden water pipeline was built from the original Traralgon Weir to supply water to the rapidly growing township of Traralgon. Most of the pipeline has rotted out but the coiled wire mesh that bound the timber staves forming the pipe can be seen in many areas along the track. A small intact section of the wooden pipe can still be seen (see photo) where it used to travel across a steel rail over a small gully – ingenious engineering!

An old steel cable, seen along the track near the

low weir, was apparently used as a pulley system to move timber across the gorge to fire the nearby lime kilns.

We all slowed our steps when there were clear views of the river – all on the lookout for any disturbance of the water that may be a sign of platypus activity. Unfortunately, none were to be seen. Pretty pink heath was in abundance. Brilliant red/green

correa and some residual golden mushrooms were also sighted along the track. We stopped to enjoy lunch in the sunshine on the riverbank rocks and then returned back along the track to the carpark.

Thank you to The Friends of Tyers Park and Parks Victoria – who maintain the track and its wonderful history that so many can enjoy.

A very successful walk, perfect weather, wonderful scenery, great company.

## Ben Cruachan 58th Anniversary

**Date:** 01 July 2023

**Leader:** Joe van Beek and Peter Jennings

**Report:** Debbie Smith

The summit of Ben Cruachan was chosen for this special walk to celebrate the 58th anniversary of the Ben Cruachan Walking Club. It was here in 1965 where the foundation members met and formed our club.

From our meeting point at Maffra West Upper, we travelled in convoy to the junction of Ben Cruachan Road and Mt Margaret Road. The weather was looking a little ominous however with coats, beanies and wet weather gear we set off on the 2km uphill stroll to the car park atop Ben Cruachan. This was a great heart starter for the day with glimpses of the magnificent views to come.

Thanks to Joe's fantastic organizational skills, we were greeted at the car park with a warm fire and the billy boiling which was much appreciated in the cool conditions. Judy and Joe did a marvelous job with the catering. We were able to feast on a lovely barbecue along with an assortment of salads and even cake and slices. Thankyou to everyone who was involved with the catering – it was top notch!

After lunch it was a short stroll beyond the post and rail fence, along a Lomandra-lined trail, to the summit of Ben Cruachan. We were rewarded with sunshine and expansive views across the mountain range to the north. What a magnificent place to have our club named after and no better place to celebrate the anniversary.

We then packed up and made our way back down the mountain to the vehicles. A great day had been had by all in the great outdoors.



## Toorongo and Amphitheatre Falls & Noojee Trestle Bridge

**Date:** 15 July 2023

**Leader:** Clare Snell

**Report:** Angela Roughley

Walkers: Angela, Georgia, Geoff, Sandy, Monica, Ken, Gary, Ian, Graeme, Mal, Marian, Judy, Clare

Wow, what a great day! Despite the forecast of a light shower in the afternoon, the weather was perfect for our short walks around the rolling hills surrounding Noojee in Gippsland. The day began at a reasonable hour, meeting in Sale at 8am before picking up other participants along the way as we formed a convoy and headed towards our scenic destination. The first walk was approx. 2.5 kms and took us along the loop which takes in the Amphitheatre Falls, the picturesque riverine environment along the Toorongo River and the Toorongo Falls. This area is described as one of the most beautiful and wettest parts of Victoria with mossy rocks, tree ferns and cascading water. It certainly did not disappoint with the falls having plenty of water going over them.

We then drove back to undertake the Noojee Trestle Bridge and Rail Trail walk. Nestled in amongst beautiful mountain ash forest, the historic 21-metre-high timber structure is the tallest surviving trestle bridge in Victoria and one of the only remaining of its kind in Victoria. It spans a whopping 102 metres.



Fortunately, our walk leader had the foresight to book a table at the Noojee Hotel for lunch because it was packed to the rafters with weekend travellers and a rather large car club taking the opportunity to appreciate a meal in the picturesque surrounds of Noojee. My daughter was particularly thrilled when her dessert came out as an entrée! I think it safe to say we all enjoyed our respective meals and were impressed at the kitchen being able to 'smash out' so many meals so quickly.

Bellies full, we headed to our final walk for the day, Glen Nayook. Nayook is the Aboriginal word for

cockatoo. From the road, you would never imagine it existed. After leaving the cars, the path descends steeply to a small stream which lays beneath a green canopy of huge tree ferns and is surrounded by moss covered boulders. There are approximately 20 different species of ferns within the reserve. This contrasts beautifully with the 40-50 metre mountain ash that tower over the understory. Just magnificent! And that concluded our collection of short walks. Our walk leader Clare, had made a wonderful debut leading her first walk, even managing to keep us all dry!

## Bosworth Road Recreational Area

**Date:** 22 July 2023

**Leader:** Trevor Clues

**Report:** Belle Deacon



On a beautiful winter's day thirteen walkers met at the Bosworth Road Recreation Area in Bairnsdale for a pleasant and easy stroll over the rehabilitated landfill area and the adjacent Macleod Morass.

The walk began on a gravelled path amongst new saplings that have revegetated the area that was a landfill between 1979 and 2004. The site is now home to 40,000 native plantings and looks out over the Macleod morass. On a rise in the middle of the area, the group learned about phytocapping which is a process which prevents the water from the morass become contaminated, before stopping to take a group photo.

The second part of the walk took the group down to the wetlands where we had an opportunity to spot



some of the abundant water bird population. The morass is a 520 hectare freshwater marsh, formed on the bed of Lake King. Well formed paths and boardwalks allowed the walkers to explore the centre part of the morass and witness the birdlife, before stopping for lunch.

A very enjoyable and informative walk and thank you to Trevor Clues for leading.

## Mitchelldale River Walk

**Date: 29 July 2023**

**Leader: Ken Free**

**Report: tcl (to come later!)**



## Snow Shoe Shuffle

**Date: 05 August 2023**

**Leader: Joe van Beek**

**Report: Jenny Bull**

This is a highlight in my walking calendar and I'm sure it's the same for many BCWC members. Joe says he has never seen so little snow on the Baw Baw peaks at this time of year. The plan to hire snow shoes was abandoned a few days prior to the hike. July has just been announced as the hottest month globally since records began and we are not immune to the effects of climate change here in Gippsland.

But we still had a fabulous day and were able to enjoy the beautiful mountain environment.

We met at Erica. Strzelecki Bush Walking Club were also meeting to do their annual snow shoe shuffle so we had lots of friendly banter as we car-pooled to head up to the St Gwinear carpark. Joe had coordinated with the "competition" so we took alternate routes.

BCWC took the clockwise route. Overcast, cold and slightly drizzly. We walked a short distance up the walking track behind the information board and Joe announced we were heading off to the left into what looked like impenetrable bush. It was the little used track the club has previously used, which had been clearly marked with pink ribbon by a Strzelecki member a few days prior. Steep slippery downhill to the creek and equally steep and slippery uphill for a couple of kilometres. The track was strewn with bark, and as we climbed out of the gully we were showered in shards of ice as the wind blew through the treetops. This continued all day, some pieces up to 6cms long and curved in the shape of the tree limb from which they fell. We stopped for a welcome break sheltered by a massive rock formation, but it was short and sweet. The risk of chilling off was high.

Up out of the gully onto the Baw Baw Plateau, we joined the Australian Alps Walking Track. This is snow gum country which is a delight to walk through due to the colours and gnarled shape of the trees. Some of us got very wet feet on this section. Thank heavens most of us had taken Joe's advice to wear



gaiters. We paused briefly at the rock shelter which is at the junction of the AAWT and the route back to Mt St Gwinear. One of our crew decided to lunch here with the protection of the shelter. The rest of us headed 1km further along the track to lunch at Mt St Phillack which is the highest peak on the Baw Baw Plateau (1556 m).

We did see a bit more icy snow here and crossed paths with the Strzelecki mob as they headed down the route we had come. Then 2kms to the peak of Mt St Gwinear – no views to be had, and once we got to Jeep Yard Flats, we again took a picturesque side trail into the bush before re-joining the walking trail. And it was well worth it – caught site of the lyrebird we had been listening to all day perched in a tree.

11kms all up in very cold conditions. Thanks to Joe for your careful guidance.



## Historic McMillan's Walking Track Maintenance

**Date:** 09 August 2023

**Leader and Report:** Joe van Beek

Five members of the BCWC assisted Parks Victoria with maintenance work on a significant section of McMillans Walking Track within the Grant Historic Area. The section is a benched track leaving Brewery Creek Track not far from Talbotville and following the embankment of an old water race to the Wongungarra River. As with much of McMillans Walking Track, it was constructed in the gold rush era of the 1860s. These tracks were built to a specification which required a minimum width of 4 feet (1.2m) and a steady gradient to facilitate movement by miners with pack horse or on foot pushing a wheelbarrow. To obtain the minimum width it was necessary in places to hew into the rock and build up the outer edge with dry stone walling. There is still ample evidence of this construction work along this 1.9km section of track.

This section of track is also significant in the his-

tory of gold mining in Victoria. In 1864 a member of McMillans track cutting party stumbled onto gold bearing quartz at the point where the track departs Brewery Creek Track. McMillan recorded in his diary "Tuesday April 12 Remained in camp. Some of the men found a quartz reef which appears to be very rich ... most of them leaving." McMillan named the reef "Pioneer" after his favourite horse. Whereas the alluvial gold mining rush in the Crooked River Goldfield in 1861 was initiated by Howitt's find of payable gold in the Good Luck Creek, some 9 km upstream, this event on Pioneer Reef set off the quartz mining rush in 1864 which was to last much longer than the alluvial workings on the Crooked River.

Unfortunately after the March 2019 bushfires burnt through this area, blackberry has bounced back in abundance. When BTAC cleared the track in March 2022, the section of track along the old water race was, in places, totally obscured by blackberry. Walkers had not been able to find their way through. Hopefully a program of spraying and regular clearance will help preserve this historic section of track.

It was a cold and foggy start on 9 August when the team met up at the depot in Dargo but it soon warmed to a perfect working day as we made our way through Grant and Talbotville to the start of the track. With lack of rainfall in recently, the crossing of the Crooked River was straight forward. Armed with chainsaw, brush cutter, hedge trimmers, loppers and rake, the team cleared a basic way through to the Wongungarra River and then turned back and started attacking the blackberry in earnest. The work by the BCWC and Parks Victoria team involved cutting the blackberry and other vegetation back from the track as well as clearing logs and fallen trees to ensure the track is fit for walkers. A surprising amount of work was achieved in the short working day we had. Thanks to Gary, Robyn, Tony and Sue for their great effort. Special thanks to Gary for all the driving. Thanks to Bec, Tehan and Camila from Parks Victoria for organising the day, working alongside of us and giving BCWC the opportunity to work on this wonderful historic walking track.





## Angusvale to Jurgensons Point

**Date:** 24 June 2023

**Leader:** Marion Matchan

**Report:** Elizabeth Davis

Walkers: Marion, Peter, Katherine, Colette, Elizabeth, Geoff, and Ken.

It was a frosty morning, but showing promise, as we drove into Angusvale carefully avoiding lots of wallabies and admiring the mist in the valleys. On the first part of the track we discovered increased signs of wombat activity, with lots of digging and their square poo decorating the whole length of the track. We ran into two deer hunters, unusually using bows, just before entering the beautiful flat rocky part of the track which runs beside the Mitchell River. It is overhung by kanooka trees. An amazing sight was four geese happily paddling in a still side pond of the rapidly flowing river.

Leaving the flat, we wound up to the drier ridge. The easily followed track follows above the river which is often visible below, and at its current level, usually heard. Morning tea was taken on a sunny slope, facing east, where we thawed out in the welcome sun. We had a lovely view of the rocky cliff on the opposite bank, marking where Roaring Mag sometimes flows.

So far, the track had been in very good order, but a couple of hours after leaving our vehicles, we turned left onto another not-as-distinguishable track, to wend our way downhill to the river. We emerged from the scrub on the river bank opposite where Sandy Creek flows into the Mitchell River, at Jurgensons Point. There was still plenty of room for us to sit on logs to have lunch, despite the river being as high as any of us had seen. After lunch we retraced our steps and were able to discard several layers of jumpers in the now warm sun. We were pleased to see the geese still in the same spot, seemingly able to navigate the fast flowing river.

Thank you Marion for a great day on one of the Club's favourite walks.

## Mitchelldale River Walk

**Date:** 29 July 2023

**Leader and Report:** Ken Free

**Report:** [here](#) 'tis

Walkers: Marian, Gary, Neil, Col, Briany, Liz, Sue, Tony, Catherine and Ken.

On a July day, which seemed like early spring with a cloudless sky and forecast temperature of 19 degrees, we met at Beverley's Road for what promised to be another great day in the Mitchell River NP.

**Ben Cruachan Walking Club**

The walk started at the top of Czydel's Road, just off the Angusvale Road, with views of the Mitchell River valley shrouded in low cloud/fog below us. We followed the old farm access road downhill in a roughly north easterly direction, taking in views of the surrounding hills which had a healthy covering of trees. At the foot of the hill we took a left turn along another old farm road which originally led to a river crossing marked on the topo map with "Swinging Bridge". We diverted off this old road with a gentle downhill meander to what was once a cleared grazing area that I have called "2 Trees" due to the 2 large old eucalypts which have surrounded themselves with a circle of healthy offspring. We chose this special place for a leisurely morning tea break.

Following our break we followed the Mitchell River downstream along a footpad no doubt kept relatively clear by feral deer and wayward cattle that have crossed the river for the greener grass. The river was looking particularly good with morning sunlight glistening as it flowed through rapids and seemed to pause at wide bends before hurtling through the next lot of rapids.

In due course we arrived at a collection of farm buildings, marked on topo maps as "Scott's Farm" with a very rustic farmhouse building probably built in the late 1800s with a stone chimney and eclectic mix of extensions and modifications (see below). This was our chosen lunch spot with views of the old farm orchard in the foreground and the Tabberabbera ridgeline high above us in the distance. This was a day for wildlife, with sightings of soaring Wedge-tailed Eagles and wombats, one of which posed for photographs during the lunch break.

After lunch we picked our way along the riverbank downstream to Bull Point where the Wentworth River enters the Mitchell River. We rested, skipped stones, took numerous photographs and recharged our energy reserves before undertaking the tough uphill slog on Czydel's Road back to the cars.

This was a most enjoyable day in the newest and northern-most area of Mitchell River National Park with the opportunity to ponder on the white settlement history, the apparently healthy wildlife (especially the wombat population) and the fantastic views of the Mitchell River. It's one of my favourite walks, and so close to home.



# Walk Previews

Distance	Hills	Tracks
S -- Short <10km	1-3 -- Easy, suitable for beginners	1-3 -- Graded open terrain. Well formed tracks and paths
M -- Medium 10-15km	4-7 -- Medium, reasonable fitness required	4-7 -- Bush, minor scrub. Some rock hopping, scrambling
L -- Long 15-20km	8-10 -- Hard, strenuous. Fit walkers only	8-10 -- Bush, thick scrub. Rock hopping, scrambling, creek crossings, use of hands
X -- Extra long 20+km		

**Please register with the Walk Leader before the day of the walk.**

see website for further details - <https://www.bencruachanwalkingclub.com/upcoming-walks.html>

Walk Name	Date	Grade	Distance	Leader	Contact
Old Port Trail, Port Albert	19/08/2023	M-1-1	11 km	Belle Deacon	belledeacon1987@gmail.com 0492 853 318
Mississippi Track	20/08/2023	M-2-2	14 km	Debbie Smith	adsmith@westnet.au; 0487 388 460
Jack Smith Lake	27/08/2023	L-3-4	17 km	Peter Jennings	pnjennings@gmail.com; 0428 230 444
Social Evening	13/09/2023	Digestive	50 m	see website	
Wirilda Track	14/10/2023	3 walks	various	see website	joevanbeek@bigpond.com; 0411 749 799
FedWalks 2023	21-22/10/2023	lots	variable		
Wilson Prom Weekend	27-29/10/2023	various	various	Monica Scicluna	joe.monica@hotmail.com; 0431 777 460
Balook, Cyathea Falls	05/11/2023	L-4-3	19 km	Peter Jennings	pnjennings@gmail.com; 0428 230 444

## Heads Up Annual Wilsons Prom Weekend

Monica Scicluna is organising the 2023 Wilsons Prom Weekend Gala Extravaganza for the weekend of 27-29 October. We will occupy a lodge at Tidal River. The Prom is the planned site of the 2024 Bushwalking Victoria Federation Walks Weekend and this will be an excellent opportunity to have a look around around.

Monica organises a short walk on Friday afternoon, a longer walk on Saturday and a short walk on Sunday on the way out. It is only 2.5 hour drive to get there from Sale through lovely countryside. It is always an excellent weekend, very social. Highly recommended and usually fully subscribed in an instant!

Details on the website.

## Heads Up Larapinta Walk 2024

Ever wanted to visit the Red Centre and walk the 220km Larapinta Trail? Having now completed 7 of the 12 sections, I thought club members could be interested in doing an end-to-end next winter (July-August). If we packcarry, it will cost around \$650 for food drops, trail fees, and transport from the finish back to Alice Springs.

Even if only mildly interested, email me, will form a potential group - no commitment until early next year. Negotiable decisions will be dates, number of days, kilometres per day, rest days or not and so on. Flights and Alice accommodation to be done independently.

How about it? Once I know if there is any interest we can work through some of the challenges. Email Robyn Kercher at [secbcwc@gmail.com](mailto:secbcwc@gmail.com)