

The *Catholic Walker*

February 2026

The Magazine of The Catholic Walking Club of Victoria Inc.



Montane Walking Track, Mt Hotham

Photo: Peter Cosgrave

Annual Base Camp at Mt Hotham reports see page 31

From the Editor

Welcome to the first *The Catholic Walker* for 2026, and a new year of writing and reading about CWCV activities. Our little magazine, first published in 1954, receives considerable support, including financial support for printing and postage from many members, and for this we thank you.

This issue includes the first of a series of articles on Climate Change Action by member, Alan Cuthbertson. The publication of these articles has been endorsed by the CWCV Committee, although the contents are the views of the writer and not necessarily those of the CWCV Committee. The Committee took into account that Catholic Social teaching provides an imperative for action on Climate Change, especially in Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter on Ecology and Climate, *Laudato Si': On Care for our Common Home* (2015), and *Laudate Deum*, Francis' Apostolic Exhortation to all People of Good Will on the Climate Crisis (2023).

And of course there are reports of day walks, a pack carry, the annual base camp at Mt Hotham (more reports of this to follow in the April issue), as well as important information on Walk Gradings.

Happy walking and reading,
Joan Kenny and Jan Wilkinson

Birthdays



February

3rd Peter Wilson
4th Jan Delaney
5th Peter Beriman, Lorraine Kelly
8th Michael Carpinelli
22nd Caroline Vaitkunas

March

1st Harry Martin
6th Priyantha Wirasekara
12th Roy Burns
15th Joe De Giorgio
16th Quentin Tibballs
17th Piero Pagliaro
20th Tony Tucker

From the President

Welcome all to the February 2026 edition of *The Catholic Walker*. With the Festive Season over and the start of 2026, I look forward to another year of walking, fellowship and friendship with club members and their families.

This magazine continues to be produced to a high standard and contains many reports, thanks to walk leaders or those nominated for the reports, interesting articles and general club information. This would not be possible without the amount of work carried out by the Editors, Joan Kenny and Jan Wilkinson. Thank you both for continuing to edit the magazine.

We use a system to grade walks listed on our program. This year will see the transition from our current Walk Grading system to the Australian Walking Track Grading System (AWTGS). The AWTGS, endorsed by the Council of Bushwalking Australia, assesses a walk's difficulty based on several criteria, including experience required, steps, gradient, path quality and signage. An article describing these changes is included in this magazine.

The Walks Committee continue to provide a comprehensive program of walks, social events, camps and future events. This committee can only provide such a vast program with the continued input from all members with suggestions for club walks and events. A big thank you to all those who assist with providing the program and leading events.

2026 is the year the CWCV celebrates our 75th Anniversary. A great achievement! This will be held in May 2026, details to be provided as the planning progresses.

The annual base camp at Mt Hotham over the New Year period was another successful event with a great time had by all attending. It is a great time to share walks and fellowship with the Melbourne Bushies. Reports for some of the walks are included in this edition of the magazine.

I look forward to meeting with you on walks or at events as we move through 2026.

Malcom Merrey

Sherbrooke Forest Circuit

Friday 26 September

Words and photo Caroline Vaitkunas

Leaders: Jan Wilkinson along with Roy Burns.

Participants: Caroline, Krystyna, Gillian, Brenda and Brian C (visitor), Quintin, Harry, Adrian and Mel, Anne and Doug, Rose and visitors Leo, Robert, Tina, Suzanne and Sue.

For those of us not participating in the AFL Grand Final parade it was fortuitous to have the day off anyway to join the wonderful Sherbrooke Forest Circuit Walk, led by our illustrious leader, Jan. The CWCV walk was listed as part of Bushwalking Victoria's, Try Bushwalking Month and it was good to welcome six visitors for the day.

Following very helpful pre-walk information and welcome, we embarked from Grant's Picnic Ground on the aptly graded medium walk that included some steep hills and muddy patches. Poles were an advantage.

Several walkers mentioned the healing power of the forest and how good it was to be among the tall trees, to breathe the fresh air and smell the rich earth unique to such places. Sherbrooke Forest is populated by the world's



largest flowering plant, the magnificent Mountain Ash (*Eucalyptus regnans*). There was also some wattle in flower, and many beautiful birdcalls could be heard, including that of the Superb Lyrebird.

After elevenses, a few participants took a shorter version of the walk back to the cars led by Jan, whilst the rest braved the remaining steep climbs under the expert guidance of Roy. The main group soon met up with Jan at the Sherbrooke Falls, before we headed to O'Donohue's Picnic Ground for a well-earned lunch break. It was all downhill from there back to the start of the walk and a lovely coffee stop to finish a most enjoyable and satisfying day. Thanks to Jan, Roy and all.

Two Short Walks

Sunday 5 October

Joan Kenny and Carole Donnell

*T*he Walks Program offered a 'short (but steep) walk [on Mt Cannibal] to look for orchids, with the possibility of an additional easy walk at another location in West Gippsland.' The Buttongrass Nature Walk in Bunyip State Park was chosen as our second walk. We believe this is the first time this walk has been on the CWCV Walks Program.

Eleven walkers met at 10 am (after putting clocks forward for Daylight Saving) near the Parks Office in Gembrook, where the 'scoping party' had previously received very helpful information about the Buttongrass Walk from the Ranger. We then drove in convoy for 11 kms along Gembrook-Tonimbuk and Camp Roads, through farmland and forest (ablaze with wattles, orange-flowering bushes, heaths and other Spring flowers) to the start of our first walk.

The well-formed Buttongrass Walk winds through a variety of flora including wattles, hakeas, tea-tree, eucalypts and buttongrass. An information board at the start of the loop explains that the walk is named for 'a type of sedge characterised by its long stems and rounded flowering heads' which grows in poorly drained wet heathland. This species grows widely in Tasmania but only in two locations in Victoria (the other location is east of the Grampians

National Park, according to Wikipedia). Unfortunately for us, the information board did not include a photo of the walk's namesake, and so we are doubtful if we actually noticed it! But we enjoyed the short (3.5 km) walk along a corridor of wattles and other flowering bushes, listening to birdsong and enjoying the freshness of the morning. Boardwalks along the damper sections of the track kept our feet dry.

A dam, bordered by water plants and ferns, and home to a chorus of frogs, proved a pleasant spot for a leisurely elevenes. And then it was back to the cars on Camp Rd, and off to our second walk at Mt Cannibal Flora and Fauna Reserve.

The drive took us along well maintained dirt roads which had a variety of wildflowers and wattles growing on the verges which helped us retain the sense of peace and quiet we experienced on the Buttongrass trail. It was peaceful, green countryside with farms, horse studs and small settlements along the way. We arrived at the newly expanded and developed Mt. Cannibal Flora and Fauna Reserve carpark to enjoy lunch before taking on the thigh-wearying short 2.3km circuit. The granite summit afforded us wonderful panoramic views of the surrounding lush countryside. It is over 10 years since Mt. Cannibal has been on the Club's walk program and then it was a haven for our expert orchid enthusiasts who found a variety of orchids. This time the orchids were elusive - Barbara soon realised the area was too dry and thought we possibly would not find any. However, to our delight, both she and Joan found a patch of tiny, delicate bird orchids. Other flowers we saw were the running postman, sun dews about to bloom and dusty miller bushes.

Interesting, attractive new information boards about the plants, birds, reptiles and history of Mt. Cannibal gave us a focus as we walked the circuit track. Towards the end of the walk an echidna strolled across the path and as usual this amazing animal was a source of wonder for us all. Lady Lavender's Tearoom, conveniently located a few minutes' drive from Mt Cannibal, provided a pleasant 'old-fashioned' setting for afternoon tea (or lavender lemonade!) Thanks to Caroline, Gillian, Rob, Barbara and Brian, Brenda and Brian and visitors Rose and Gerrit, for joining us (Carole and Joan)



*On the summit of Mt Cannibal (taking care not to step backwards).
Photo: Caroline Vaitkunas*

on these short 'nature walks'. We recommend that both walks be included again on the Club's Program for late September/early October in the future.

CWCV Social - Metro Tunnel HQ, Swanston Street CBD Wednesday 26 November

Margaret Cosgrave (leader)

The gaps in our understanding of the new Metro Tunnel Project, with its five state-of-the-art stations, were filled in today. Eleven of us enjoyed a free, and informative presentation at Metro Tunnel HQ, Swanston Street. We benefited from an engaging team of staff explaining the facts and technology around our rail network, deep below our city. Our excursion included a walk along Swanston Street where we viewed the portals to Town Hall Station, the revamped City Square and an archaeological dig site. Discoveries of teeth, pottery, jewellery and textiles from the dig, gave insights into the commercial frontages of early Swanston Street, Melbourne. With all questions answered and thanks given, we walked about ten minutes further up to State Library Station concourse. Though still a limited opening, we physically gained a sense of art, design and accessibility. Several of us then enjoyed lunch at Gopals vegetarian restaurant nearby.

WALK GRADINGS – TRANSITION TO A NEW SYSTEM

For as long as most of us can remember, the CWCV, like many bushwalking clubs, has used a walk grading system based along the following lines:

Terrain

Gentle	Level and easy walking containing no significant difficulties. Suitable for all walkers no matter what their level of fitness.
Moderate	Could contain some hills or other difficulties like soft sand, rock scrambling or mud but suitable for all people with a moderate level of physical fitness.
Difficult	Would contain significant difficulties. Steep climbs or extreme rock scrambling, climbing etc. Even if the difficulties cover only a small percentage of the walk. Such difficulties must be noted in the Walks Program.

DAY WALKS

Grading:	Terrain:		
	Gentle	Moderate	Difficult
Beginner	<7km.	<5km.	
Easy	<10km.	<8km.	
Medium	<20km.	<16km.	<12km.
Hard	20+km.	16+km.	12+km.

PACK CARRIES

Grading:	Terrain:		
	Gentle	Moderate	Difficult
Easy	<9km per day	<7km per day	
Medium	<18km per day	<14km per day	<10km per day
Hard	18+km per day	14+km per day	10+km per day

That system has served us well for many years, but as our membership has moved to a more senior demographic, there is now often a quandary when rating walks as to what is the most appropriate grade. Is what we regarded as 'medium' twenty or thirty years, or more, ago still medium now? The words easy, medium and hard mean different things to different people.

Your committee's answer to this conundrum is to transition from our current walk rating system to the Australian Walking Track Grading System (AWTGS). A walk grading system initially developed through the Victorian Government's 'Go for your life' initiative to create a national, voluntary industry standard for grading tracks based on factors like experience, gradient, distance, and signage.

This system was designed to provide a clear and consistent way for walkers to assess a track's difficulty before they set out. It was endorsed by the Council of Bushwalking Australia in March 2011, replacing older, less consistent methods. The AWTGS is now used nationally and is becoming evident on track signage in Parks Victoria parks and elsewhere. Bushwalking Victoria supports the use of the AWTGS.

So – how does it work at a practical level?

The grading system assesses a walk's difficulty based on several criteria, including experience required, steps, gradient, path quality and signage. The walk's final grade is based on the most difficult of these 5 criteria, rather than an average. So, some walks will have criteria that meet an easier grade.

HOW WALKING TRACKS ARE RATED

Grade 1: No bushwalking experience required. Flat even surface with no steps or steep sections. Suitable for assisted wheelchair users.

Grade 2: No bushwalking experience required. A hardened or compacted surface which may have gentle hill sections or occasional steps. Walks up to 10km.

Grade 3: Suitable for most ages and fitness levels. Tracks may have short steep sections, a rough surface and many steps. Walks up to 20km.

Grade 4: Bushwalking experience recommended. Tracks may be long, rough and very steep. Directional signage may be limited.

Grade 5: Very experienced bushwalkers with specialised skills, including navigation and emergency first aid. Tracks likely to be very rough, very steep and unmarked.

TIMETABLE FOR TRANSITION

Your committee's plan is to transition to the AWTGS over a period of up to twelve months during 2026. Commencing with the February / March 2026 Walks Program both our old ratings and the AWTGS grades will be recorded for each walk. The reverse side of the Walks Program has been reworked to include the definitions of the AWTGS ratings. This should assist members and prospective members / visitors to better judge which walks are suited to them.

Make yourself familiar with the new ratings, look out for them in 2026 and don't hesitate to talk to a committee member if you have any questions about the system.

A visit to Joe de Georgio by 'old friends'

Peter Matheson and Harry recently visited Joe in his new home, Glenroy Grove in Glenroy. Peter reported that 'Joe seemed pleased to see us, and smiled all the way through our 30-minute stay. He does not know his age (think around 77), and I told him Harry is 80, which produced no response.



But when I told him I am 83, Joe immediately came back with 'Yes, that is getting on!' Thanks, Joe!

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Joe and Celinda.

*Photo supplied by Celinda, who also supplied a photo of two handsome, fit young men—friends Peter M and Joe; the photo was taken 45 years ago! See it on the website.*

# *Potter Museum and Campus Walk*

## *Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> October*

*Jan Wilkinson*

Ten of us gathered on Wurundjeri land at Melbourne University to visit the Potter Museum of Art's exhibition: "65,000: A Short History of Australian Art." It proved thought provoking and unsettling at times given the disrespectful practices shown by the university, and others, towards indigenous people, but it also showcased the knowledge, artistic skill and vision of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and crafts people.

We then adjourned to a quiet nook in the university grounds for lunch, before commencing a leisurely tour of some points of interest around the campus, including Newman College, River Red gums still standing proud that predated the university and "Old Quad", the oldest part of the university dating from the 1850s. The day concluded with refreshments at a café on campus. My thanks to Tom, Joan, Maryna, Carole, Harry, Vanna, Barbara N., Quintin and Rose K (visitor) for joining me. Yet again, Melbourne showed that it has much to offer when one scratches the surface!

# *Jumping Creek Reserve*

## *and Blue Tongue Bend*

*Sunday 12 October*

*Sophie Wilczynska*

The walk started at Jumping Creek Reserve carpark in Warrandyte. Plenty of space to park our cars. There were seven people on the walk: Quintin, Carmel and Malcom, Rose and Gerrit Knauth (visitors), Rob, and the leader, Sophie.

We had lovely weather, sunny and cool, and beautiful views over the Yarra

River. We were walking to the Blue Tongue Bend and back the same way, altogether seven km. It might sound boring, but on the way back you see things from a different angle. We all enjoyed the walk immensely, everyone in a good mood, lively conversations, jokes. Someone even spotted a big crocodile in the Yarra! No kidding, photo attached.



We were trying to identify all the trees which are supposed to be there: string bark-easy, tea trees-yes, peppermints with huge leaves-yes. But we could not find a Cherry Ballart.

The walk ended in Stonehouse Cafe in Warrandyte, again very interesting conversations: Rose and Carmel sharing their interest in craft, others about short-wave radio communication and My Spot site to identify where you are and so on. All in all, one of those perfect days when everything is lovely.



*Photos: Crocodile! (Above, by Sophie). Happy walkers (Below, by Carmel)*

# *Andrew(s) Hill - Kinglake National Park Sunday 19 October*

*Bernadette Madden*

*F*our intrepid walkers set out to conquer this hill climb on 19 October. Paul Roberts, Rob, Corrie and myself met at The Gums campground at 9:30am on a slightly overcast morning, but there was no rain promised and none appeared. It was good to see that the campground was being very well patronised. We began our walk through the campground and onto Blackfish Way beside Blackfish Creek – no black fish were sighted!

After negotiating the crossing of a bitumen road, we began the climb up Stringybark Track and Dusty Miller Track. This is the gentler approach to Andrew Hill so the climb was gradual. We finally reached the official top of Andrew Hill after a climb of approx. 300m—although the ‘peak’ is 625m. Along the way we noted many birds—mainly by sound as they were determined to remain hidden. But later in the day some sharp eyes saw a lyrebird cross the track ahead of us. We also enjoyed a display of wildflowers along the track.

The descent back to the cars was down the steeper side of the Hill – via the appropriately named Andrews Hill Track. We noted some confusion in references to this major feature in the landscape—both Andrew and Andrews seemed to be used with equal frequency. We may need to return to resolve this dilemma.

We concluded this strenuous Sunday activity with a well-deserved coffee, hot chocolate, milk shake and cake at the ‘Songbird’ in Kinglake.

## *Save the Date*

Saturday 21st March is the Vera Newberry Photo Competition social event. Start sorting your photos to select your best photos reflecting the spirit of the club!



# *McClelland Sculpture Park, Langwarrin Wednesday 15 October*

*Margaret Cosgrave*

Ten of us enjoyed sculptures in the sun at McClelland Sculpture Park, Langwarrin. Sue, our guide, explained that the park was gifted to the people of Victoria by the bohemian McClelland siblings. Today it runs as a not-for-profit organization and was generously supported by Elisabeth Murdoch.

Our guided tour wound past a small lake then along compacted tracks-some participants travelled by buggy, others on foot. Around each turn, sculptures sat within a bush setting. We admired artwork of rusted metal, the curves of Carrara marble, with various shapes and expressions ranging from playful to thought provoking. Whether realistic or abstract, each sculpture had an interesting back story. Some of us recognized two of the works which had once graced the nearby Peninsula Link: the giant silver Gnome (Reflective Lullaby-Frankie by Gregor Kregar) and the gently turning leaves of the Tree of Life (by Phil Price). Both have now found a permanent home at McClelland Sculpture Park.

Amongst many favourites were: the musical sounds from Tubular Resonance; the shadows thrown from the wire suspended river rocks of Annulus; and the enormity of the weathering steel merino ram's skull 'Rex Australis: The King is dead, long live the King' (artists: Terrance Plowright, Ken Unsworth and Dean Colls).

We chatted over refreshments at Harry's Café both before and after the tour. We all appreciated the relaxing time in fresh air, enjoying the combination of creativity and nature.

Participants Tony and Doreen (leader), Jim and Julia, Vanna, Rob, Quintin, Rose K, Peter and Marg Cos.



*'Annulus': shadows thrown from suspended rocks*  
*Photo; Peter Cosgrave*

## *Bike ride along Merri Creek Trail, Fairfield-Coburg Return Saturday 25 October*

*Words and photo Margaret Cosgrave*

**T**oday's bike ride was beside the Merri Creek from Yarra Bend Road to Pentridge. Though we only rode the section between Fairfield and Coburg, the entire sealed Merri Creek Trail stretches from Dights Falls to the Western Ring Road.

The views offered along Merri Creek are a mix of nature and urban landscapes: CERES Community Environment Park and Joe's, one of the last surviving market gardens in Melbourne, are juxtaposed by an impressive

Russian Orthodox Church with five gold domes and the steep sides of the Brunswick Velodrome.

We needed to dismount and walk our bikes across the narrow and wobbly Harding Street Bridge. Another bridge of note was the historic bluestone arched Murray Road Bridge, hewn and built by Pentridge prisoners in 1870.



*Stopping to admire the skilled penal stonework*

We rode past the overflowing weir which is a dam to form the Coburg Lake. The Lake sits in an old bluestone quarry. Just across Murray Road are the grounds of the former Pentridge Prison, Coburg. Refreshments were enjoyed there at The Boot Factory café. Immersed in history and dating back to the 1850s, the Boot Factory was where trustworthy prisoners made shoes and boots. After our coffee and cakes at Pentridge we ‘made a break for it’ and rejoined the Merri Creek Trail homeward bound.

‘Merri Merri’ Creek, means ‘very rocky’ for the traditional custodians, the Wurundjeri. The creek (once quite polluted) looked beautiful today thanks to ongoing care by the Merri Creek Management Committee and supporters.

The five of us had great fun and exercise on our 28 km Merri Creek Trail bike ride.

Participants: Harry, Paul Roberts, Peter N, Peter and Marg Cos (leader).

# *A walk with variety on a cold spring day*

## *Sunday 9 November*

*Caroline Vaitkunas*

**I**n the midst of a patch of wet spring days, nine walkers (Peter N, Marg and Peter Cos, Rose and Gerrit (visitors), Quintin, Harry, Adrian and myself) enjoyed the interesting Gellibrand Hill walk located in the Woodlands Historic Park. Whilst an old favourite of the club, featuring 200-year-old River Redgums, and an enclosed section for the protection of Eastern Barred Bandicoots, the walk was new to a few of us, including the leader. All turned out OK at the top of Gellibrand Hill where we enjoyed spectacular 360 degrees views of greater Melbourne, timed to perfection in between showers and patches of poorer visibility.

Towards the end of the walk lunch was enjoyed under the verandah of the historic Woodland Homestead. Opportunities for close up views of incoming and departing planes at Tullamarine airport are another highlight of the walk. The last leg was a short-cut that took us up the smaller Woodland Hill before arriving back at the cars, proceeded by afternoon tea at a pleasant café nearby. Not sure how many kms we walked but no one was really counting. It felt enough. Thanks to all for a pleasant day.

## **A Big Birthday**

*Tom Buykx*

Last October our one-time member Lorraine Wood had A Big Birthday, her Ninety-fifth. Her large family celebrated it a month later at the home of her daughter, Helen. And four CWCV members had the privilege of sharing in that celebration with Lorraine's children, *Continued on page 26*



# *A walk in the rain...the wind...the thunder...etc*

## *Baw Baw Pack Carry, 6-8 December*

*Words Bernadette Madden, photos Roy Burns and Marianne Trigg*

**W**e met in Erica on Saturday morning in sunshine and enjoyed an early coffee at the place that was advertised as closed, but was open. Once everyone had assembled – Jan W (our leader), Corrie, Krystyna, Roy, Marianne, Mel, Adrian and me – we set out for the Mt St Gwinear carpark. The drops started hitting the windscreen en route but not too seriously, so we were still quite confident in the forecast of ‘late showers’. However, our arrival at the carpark changed that perspective. The entertainment for the next 10 minutes was how to get your wet weather gear out of your pack and on your person without getting out of the car. I can now tell you – that it is possible. We then made use of the very convenient shelter to complete the necessary preparations for a walk in the pouring rain! There were sounds of mutiny – let’s leave some of the cars here and drive to Mt Baw Baw. Our leader ignored such rumblings and we duly formed a circle to discuss our way forward. It was decided that we would walk in two groups and meet at John Gardiner Ski Club – our accommodation in Baw Baw Village.

So, we set off - well covered in our waterproof jackets, pants, with beanies, gloves etc through the rain, thunder, lightning, and wind for a serious climb up Mt St Gwinear (1512m). (Did I mention the temperature? About 2 degrees). As one could easily have predicted, the fast group was soon out of sight. When our group reached the summit of Mt St Gwinear one of our party suggested a photo. Now I don’t know if such matters were covered in the recent first aid training for club members, but I think the effects of thunder and lightning etc were setting into his brain... This walker’s ‘treatment’ was a resounding, “No way” from his fellow walkers as some struggled to stay upright in the wind on the open area which is the summit of Mt St Gwinear. Then the hail started! So, our descent of Mt St Gwinear was more interesting than the ascent.

However, there is some good news in this story. By the time we reached the summit of Mt St Phillack (1572 m) (yes, we climbed two mountains in one day!), the rain had stopped and we were able to sit for a moment in just the wind and the cold. A very fast cup of coffee and a snack equalled lunch break. Mt St Phillack is actually the highest point in the Mt Baw Baw National Park. From there we only had to negotiate another 5 km down the track, which was now a waterfall, and then up to the Baw Baw Village. There



*What a difference a day (or two) makes!  
The summit of Mt St Gwinear on Saturday (left), and two days later.*

were more sounds of mutiny when we reached the village and the most difficult part of the navigation proved to be finding John Gardiner Ski Club. But there the very good news began. Not only did we have comfortable, warm accommodation but also a DRYING ROOM. Never has there been so much glee expressed at the sight of such a facility. At the time my group arrived it was already in use by our advance party, and we added to the collection of jackets, over-pants, gloves drying. Alan and Marg C, and

Maryna, joined us at the lodge having driven up and joined in our activities, including the day walk the following day.

Discussion regarding the source of the names of the mountains proved interesting. One version is that Gwinear began life as an Irishman (Fingar), was converted by St Patrick and sent to Cornwall as a missionary using the name Gwinear. He was beheaded in Cornwall and became a ST Gwinear. His sister, Piala also went to Cornwall and had some association with a Church in a town known as St Phillack in Cornwall. Or perhaps had an associate named Felac who became a saint- hence St Phillack. The common thread is that both these mountains are named in honour of two Cornish saints who knew each other and/or were related. Beyond those facts, there are many variations. Prior to these names being applied, the area was the traditional home of the Gunai-Kurnai people and was an important gathering place for Gunai-Kurnai and Wurundjeri people for ceremony and trade.

After conquering such heights on Saturday, we were ready for an easy day on Sunday and walked up Mt Baw Baw (1564m). And the sun was shining. Other activities included jigsaws (thanks Alan for providing such entertainment); crosswords (thanks Margaret) and Reminiscing – I think we have Jan to thank for finding that one which tested out memories of past decades. Thanks also to Corrie for our Advent reflection on Sunday evening around the fire which prompted spirited conversation.

On Monday morning we woke again to fine, cold weather and we looked forward to the walk out. We decided we would do this as one group as it was not too cold for people to wait at some of the more interesting spots along the way. We left JGSC in all our woollies and raincoats for warmth – some even wore their overpants. But when we reached Bloomfields Picnic area, there was a serious amount of disrobing as the day was proving to be warmer than we expected – or perhaps it had something to do with the uphill before lunch. We reached Mt St Phillack and enjoyed the sights in brilliant sunshine and then on to Mt St Gwinear for lunch. We obliged Adrian with several photos here. Then it was downhill after lunch all the way to the cars by whichever route you found yourself on.

A great weekend pack carry with a difference as promised by our leader – although I don't think the weather was the difference she actually had had in mind.

# Anglesea Heath

## Sunday 2 November

*Words and photo by Peter Wilson (with the assistance of Chat GPT!)*

**W**ith an early start in view of the forecast of a warm day our party of Rose, Shirley, Bernadette, Greg, Wanda, Tony F, Corrie, Harry, Peter N, Carole, Maree and Joan, and myself, gathered at Anglesea for our day's exploration of the Anglesea Heath area. Eleven for the full walk and Maree and Joan for some local exploring.

Having enjoyed the walk, despite the weather getting quite warm in the afternoon, and having returned home, it was time to put "pen to paper" for an article for the Walker. On looking back on my library of articles I discovered four previous items describing the same walk, 2011, 2012, 2019 and 2022. What to write that I hadn't written before?

*Then an idea. Bushwalking Victoria recently gave a demonstration of the abilities of Chat GPT. So – a quick sign up (there's a free version) and then a request to Chat GPT to combine the four previous articles.*

*Chat GPT takes over from here! (With some very minor editing of the Chat GPT version by me.)*

### **Exploring the Anglesea Heath: A Decade of Walks Through Victoria's Botanical Treasure**

Over more than a decade, members of our walking group have returned again and again to the Anglesea Heath—drawn by its remarkable biodiversity, shifting landscapes, and the coastal charm that frames its expansive heathlands. Each visit, whether in autumn sunshine or steady rain, has revealed new flowers, changing land use, and fresh perspectives on one of Victoria's richest natural environments.

#### **A Landscape of Exceptional Diversity**

Parks Victoria describes the Anglesea Heath as *the richest and most diverse vegetation community in Victoria*, home to around a quarter of the state's

plant species. Over 80 species of orchids grow here, alongside grass trees, banksias, wattles, heath, and a variety of seasonal wildflowers that have repeatedly delighted walkers.

Across multiple visits—from May 2011 to October, 2022—our groups have been greeted by vibrant displays of yellows, blues and purples, sometimes even orchids in Hawthorn Football Club colours! Each year, walkers commented on how abundant and varied the flora remained, in part because this hilly terrain was unsuitable for farming and therefore left largely untouched since Wadawurrung Country first sustained Indigenous communities for thousands of years.

### **Beginnings Along the Anglesea River**

Most of our walks began near the Anglesea River bridge, or riverfront, following the water upstream toward Coogoorah Park. Even on the wettest day, as in 2011 when the group took shelter for an early lunch, the river corridor remained a gentle introduction before the track diverged inland toward the heath.

High water levels occasionally complicated access; in 2019 a blocked river mouth caused flooding across the entry road, requiring a detour into the Reserve. Nonetheless, the transition from town into bush was consistently smooth, with Coogoorah Park acting as a natural gateway to wilder country.

### **Into the Heath and toward Mount Ingoldsby**

Once inside the heath proper, the tracks passed through open woodland, patches of heathy scrub, and occasionally recently burnt areas—evidence of controlled burning programs. The route commonly wound toward Mount Ingoldsby, the rise offering sweeping views across the heath and, in earlier years, toward the open-cut Anglesea Coal Mine.

Lunch on Mount Ingoldsby became a recurring pleasure. Groups enjoyed its shade, grassy patches, and panoramic vantage point, though with one caution noted in 2019: *“Whoops; don’t sit on that orchid!”*

The summit also revealed other aspects of local land use. In 2011, we observed bore-drilling equipment associated with the Anglesea Borefield,

part of Barwon Water's broader plan to supplement Geelong's water supply from a deep aquifer 700 metres underground.

### **The Coal Mine and the Changing Industrial Landscape**

The Anglesea Coal Mine and power station formed a recurring point of interest in earlier walks. Alcoa's open-cut mine, worked since the 1960s, once fuelled the power station for the Point Henry aluminium smelter and powered a significant portion of its operations. In 2011 and 2012, walkers could peer directly into the pit; by 2019 fences had been strengthened and access restricted as rehabilitation planning intensified.



*The climb to Mt Ingoldsby*

By 2022, the power station had been demolished and the mine—gradually filling with water—was entering a new phase of transition. There was a bold proposal for an Australian incarnation of the Eden Project: a world-class eco-tourism and environmental education site intended to celebrate the elements and reinterpret the legacy of the former coal operation, but that plan hasn't been mentioned for some time. For the moment the work appears limited to landscaping and the slow filling of what will become a large lake.

### **Wildflowers and Wildlife**

Across all four walks, the heath's wildflowers remained a major attraction. Even in late autumn, 2011, walkers noted thriving displays of wattles, heath, banksia, and grass trees. Spring visits in 2012 and 2019 were the most

spectacular, offering orchids, pincushion flowers, and vast colour palettes across the heathlands.

Ecosystems here support an array of wildlife too, including Crimson Rosellas, Bronzewing pigeons, honeyeaters, and nearly thirty mammal species—though sightings were less frequently noted than the ever-present floral displays.

### **Coastal Connections: Beaches, Clifftops and Point Roadknight**

Most routes eventually led back toward the coast. Depending on the tide, the group either followed the beach—sometimes with only a narrow strip of sand available—or took the inland road behind the dunes to Point Roadknight. When conditions allowed, the beach provided a beautiful and refreshing finish to the day. Clifftop sections of the Surf Coast Walk also featured regularly, providing sweeping views toward Aireys Inlet and its lighthouse.

### **Returning to Anglesea**

All walks concluded back in Anglesea township, often with a celebratory afternoon tea or coffee near the river. These moments offered a chance to reflect not only on the day's adventures but on the continued evolution of this landscape—from wild heath to industrial site and now toward ecological restoration and eco-tourism.

### **A Place Worth Returning To**

Across 2011, 2012, 2019 and 2022, each walk affirmed the Anglesea Heath as a place of beauty, resilience, and ongoing transformation. Whether explored under autumn rain or spring sunshine, the heath's abundant flowers, varied terrain, and intriguing intersections of nature and industry have ensured it remains one of Victoria's most rewarding walking destinations.

*The Editors would be interested to know your thoughts on this AI generated report!*

# *The Diamond Creek and Yarra River Trails Eltham to Heidelberg Sunday 16 November*

*Tom Buykx*

*T*he trails along Melbourne's many creeks and few rivers offer pleasant and varied walking on a variety of surfaces in a variety of environments. It is pleasant walking on these trails. Quite often one has no sense of being in a metropolis of some five million people.

Our party of four, Carole, Quintin, Rob and Tom, set off from Eltham Station to follow the trails along the Diamond Creek and Yarra River downstream to Heidelberg. With the railway line on our right, we soon came to its antique single track timber trestle bridge over the creek's flood plain. A bridge you would not be surprised to see on an abandoned line in a one-time timber logging area. Numerous times plans for an upgraded replacement have foundered on the need to protect the habitat there of the rare Eltham Copper Butterfly. We did not see any of them.

The creek's propensity to damaging flooding is evident in several places where the remaining abutments of previous footbridges are more than three metres below the present bridges, and the banks are badly eroded. We walked past the spectacular Eltham High School and across the grassy Barak Bushland, then went under Main Road. Turning right we passed the Diamond Valley (very) Miniature Railway, without seeing any of its trains.

Then followed a stretch of the trail parallel to very busy divided four lane Fitzsimmons 'Lane.' There are some very large and impressive properties here on what may have been the original lane. Once across the Yarra River we turned left off, and then under, the 'Lane' to watch the antics of some young kayakers in the rapids there. Coming downstream they capsized to their right, rolled under their boat, and came up on their left. Then they'd go upstream again, turn around, and do the whole thing again, presumably for fun (but I did not hear them laugh).

We now entered Westerfolds Park and had a break at a handy bench. We then followed the river downstream, where possible on a dirt track between the river and the concrete footpath, sheltered from the wind. But not from the rain that began falling gently, so parkas on, and then it eased off again and the rain stopped. On the uphill to the big footbridge on the river two walkers approached us: Bernard and Ben, as arranged. The party now was complete, and we continued until, near Odyssey House, we saw beside the track a suitable table at a suitable time for lunch. I need not say more, other than that all the time we kept a wary eye on the dark clouds approaching.

And when we moved on the storm broke. Boy, did it come down, and the deafening thunderclaps! Water, inches deep, flowing over the track. An experience none of us had had for a very long time. It did not last long, though, and when we reached Bonds Road it was fine again. Ben had his car there and decided it was best for him to take Bernard home, and we farewelled them. We had no more rain for the rest of our walk, but many large puddles to avoid. Along the way we were pleasantly distracted by lots of blue wrens flitting around. What marvellous little beauties. With the Rosanna Golf Club straddling it, on our right, we crossed the Plenty River at its confluence with the Yarra River. Plenty of water coming down!

Finally, we crossed the Banyule Flats with their sports ovals and kiddies' playgrounds. Coming back into Heidelberg it was uphill to the station and the end of our walk, with a break for refreshments along the way. A walk with a memorable meteorological event, an event endured in good spirit. Thanks to my walking friends.

~~~~~

A Big Birthday *Continued from page 17*

grandchildren, great grandchildren and other relatives and friends. It was a happy crowd of some 60 to 70, from babes in arms to Lorraine's contemporaries. Lorraine, still in good health, was a CWCV member from early 1990's to early 2020's.

Photo on page 17 by Rose Cheong

Back row: Rose C, Barbara and Brian D

Front row: Tom and Lorraine

Williamstown to Altona Wetlands

Sunday 30 November

Peter Matheson

We all met at Williamstown Beach Station at 10.13am (some of us arrived a bit earlier). The day's walk was from that station to Altona Station. Ten of us set off and, within five minutes, a decent shower of rain descended upon us—parkas on. We then used a toilet as there were to be none on the walk. The rain stopped and we continued to the Jawbone Sanctuary where we came across volunteers weeding etc. One woman told us that there were small birds to be seen, that had recently arrived from up around Siberia way. The young are born there and simply open their mouths to take in mosquitoes that breed 'like rabbits'. Not too many birds were visible, but we saw more as we left the sanctuary and continued on towards Altona.

The concrete path was flat and maybe a bit hard on the feet. Some small lakes had been constructed, so we saw a good bit of water. When we came to the Brunswick City Anglers Club we stopped for lunch, looking at where Kororoit Creek enters the bay. Plenty of water. A few of the party commented on the hidden gems there in the West (being a westerner, I am very familiar with the treasures we have). As it started spitting rain, we did not linger over lunch and went on our way, crossing Kororoit Creek on a bridge. Part of the grandstand of the old Williamstown Racecourse still stands (having closed in 1948), and there was much colour in the plant life (possibly saltbush) growing in the area.

*One of the many
viewing and information
spots along the
wetlands. Photo
supplied by
new member Gerrit
Knauth (left)*



Between Seaholme Station and Altona Station, we came across a Werribee train stopped, with fire trucks removing passengers, and a police presence. One of us heard there had been an 'incident'. This closed the line and replacement buses travelled between Altona and Newport for our return post coffee. Not long after this, we reached Pier Street, Altona, and headed for the coffee spot the club usually frequents. Not a long walk, but from the comments, a bit of an eyeopener for some. My thanks to Quintin, Gerrit, Tom, Margaret and Peter Cos, Rob, Bernard and Ben, and Caroline for coming out to the West to provide company for me on the walk.

~~~~~

## *Climate Change – an obsession*

*Alan Cuthbertson*

I am obsessed with Climate Change. Margaret would say it is an unhealthy obsession. As part of my therapy, I am writing this article, and a series to be published in *The Catholic Walker* this year. Hopefully they will stimulate your thinking.

I have read a lot about Climate Change and conclude that the best-case scenario looks pretty grim. The worst looks diabolical. As bushwalkers we will be less able to walk because of storms, floods and bushfires. There will be no skiing and no trips to the Great Barrier Reef. In the worst situation, economic collapse will mean we can't afford trips. We are lucky. Most of us are old and will not see the worst of it. However, our grandchildren will.

We cannot rely on governments. We must each do all we can to minimise our impact.

What do I do? As part of my therapy, I talk about it—a lot. Sorry! I protest—with little effect. I get arrested (17 times and counting). I hope it inspires others. I have invested \$70k in my house. I have saved half of that already and each year save \$5-10K. I don't use petrol, I don't use gas. I generate most of my power and excess goes back into the grid to help others.

You can do the same. Arguably you *must* do the same. We caused the problem and we must lead in the solution. For our grandchildren.

*Alan's first article, 'Climate change Action—Your Responsibility' will be published in the April issue.*

# *Lerderderg Gorge, Lerderderg State Park, Coimadaí*

*Tuesday 23 December*

*Words and photo by Rose Thomas*

**A**fter a short drive from the Western Highway, Bacchus Marsh, we arrived at the MacKenzie's Flat Picnic area (located at the southern end of Lerderderg State Park) to begin part of the Lerderderg Circuit Walk along the Lerderderg River. The locality of this walk is in the suburb of Coimadaí (pronounced KOM-eye-duh), a name which comes from an Aboriginal word meaning 'Resting Male Kangaroo'.

According to Wikipedia, Lerderderg River emerges from the Great Dividing Range, cutting a 300-metre-deep gorge as it winds its way south. Perhaps the name Lerderderg is a corruption of the Wurundjeri word 'Larderdark', from 'larh', meaning 'stone house', and 'dark', meaning 'peppermint gum'.

Off we went, Margaret and Peter Cos, Harry, Caroline and I, crossing the river four times, via logs and rocks, some steady and some not so steady. Harry made it across much more quickly by just walking through the water, boots and all.

*Four river crossings before lunch,  
and the same four on the walk  
back!*



We walked and chatted along the way, noting a herd of feral goats up on a steep hill. Sadly, they were damaging vegetation and causing erosion; we saw rocks tumble down into the river as the goats made their way up the steep hill. We stopped for elevenses high up on the rocks, with a great river view, then as we returned along the same route, (including those four river crossings again), Peter shared his knowledge of the lifecycle of cicadas, prompted by the sight of many empty exoskeletons clinging to the trunks and branches of trees.

We thoroughly enjoyed the stunning river gorge views, the scenic Graham's Dam (a very inviting serene pool to visit on a summer's day), the sounds of various birds, the sight of a bird of prey circling in the sky above us, and the many opportunities to wonder and marvel at the beautiful, rugged landscape of vertical rocky cliffs.

Scheduled by popular request following a successful walk this time last year, just two days prior to Christmas Day, we were hoping this short walk (6.6km) would also be a mini-retreat from the noise and busyness of preparations for the festive season. And our hopes were definitely realised.

At the Royal Hotel, Bacchus Marsh, a leisurely lunch from a Christmas menu was enjoyed by all.

See you again next year?

## *New Member*

A warm welcome to Gerrit Knauth, husband of Rose, and  
also a keen walker.

We look forward to your company on many future walks, Gerrit.

~~~~~

Death of a CWCV Foundation Member

John Nuttman died in December 2025, aged 95. The 10th Anniversary edition of *The Catholic Walker* (1951-1961) includes a photo of John on the Club's first Christmas extended (10 day) walk from Mt Stirling to Lake Tarli Karng and Newry. John, and his wife Marilyn, attended the Club's 70th Anniversary celebrations in 2022.

Please remember John, his wife Marilyn and their family in your prayers.

A week in the High Country

27 December 2025 to 2 January 2026

Bernadette Madden

*D*ecember 27th rolled around again and the annual pilgrimage of the Catholic Walking Club headed to the High Country. This year our destination was once again in the region of Mount Hotham where 15 members stayed in Tanderra Ski Lodge, one at Asgaard Lodge, and eight others camped at J B Plain camping area. In addition to these 22 keen walkers, there were 15 others from Melbourne Bushwalking Club (Bushies) staying at Asgaard Lodge. The two clubs did a combined walks program for the week. When that is put in one sentence it sounds so simple...

We enjoyed two planning meetings and with a program of 15 walks, the matter of choosing was a little complicated. This was assisted by cheese, nibbles and drinks of your choice which were necessary sustenance for the tasks of deciding on which walk and/ or changing the walk to suit preferences or destination, time, speed, effort etc, etc. Then of course comes the task of sorting out how we will get to and from the walks. However, thanks to the art work (aka map) provided by Quentin Tibballs and the organisation provided by Bernadette, all was sorted in record time.

On the second last evening, the combined walking clubs showed that they are much more than bushwalkers, with an evening of entertainment provided for the group, by the group. Some people were barely recognisable!! But all proved that both clubs hide a multitude of talent. Australian Idol, eat your heart out!

New Years Eve was celebrated with dinner at 'The General' and then *Auld Lang Syne* was sung at 9:15pm AEDT, because it was then NYE in Chatham Islands (in the Pacific, east of the South Island of NZ).

Stay tuned for more exciting details of the week in the mountains with reports from others who were there.

Mt Feathertop and return via the Razorback

Sunday 28 December

Rose Thomas

Corrie, Jan, Adrian, Mel, myself and seven others from 'Melbourne Bushies' gathered for a 7:30am start from Diamantina Hut/Great Alpine Rd. (Quentin T led another group from 'Melbourne Bushies', commencing at the same point, an hour later than us). We were hoping the early start would buy us some time for walking at our own pace and possibly have cooler weather conditions at the start, given the 22km length and 800m ascent of this return Grade 4 (AWTGS) walk.

Having thoroughly enjoyed walking part of the Razorback on a previous trip to this beautiful part of Victoria, I was looking forward to the opportunity to take on the challenge of summiting Mt Feathertop, 'one of Australia's most magnificent peaks', 'a bushwalking icon' (as described by Glenn Van Der Knijff, author of *Victoria's Bogong High Plains*, 2016).

Morning goal: to reach the summit

Strategies: stay focused and equipped

Actions:

- Put one foot in front of the other, repeat.
- Follow Corrie's steady, consistent, rhythmic pace.
- Pull the beanie down firmer during the very strong morning wind gusts.
- Stick to the track.
- Watch where you step, repeat.
- Walk uphill, walk downhill, repeat often.
- Take a brief rest for snack and drink.
- Reach 'The Tree' by High Noon to climb Feathertop and return in one day.

Did we? Yes, we arrived at 11:10am at The Tree, heaps of time, nailed it!

Midday goal: to enjoy reaching the summit

Strategies: relish the experience of being on the summit

Actions:

- Gaze at stunning scenery in whichever direction you look.
- Be grateful for such magnificent views.
- Smile at the camera for celebratory photos.
- Sit together and eat yummy lunch.



Rose at the top!

Photo: Jan Wilkinson

Afternoon goal: to return in good nick, in good time

Strategies: stay focused and equipped

Actions:

- Put one foot in front of the other, repeat.
- Stick to the track.
- Watch where you step, repeat.
- Walk uphill, walk downhill, repeat often.
- Slap on sunscreen when needed.
- Look for a shady spot to take a drink of Hydralyte, repeat. Repeat.
- Pause anywhere(!) to take a drink of Hydralyte, repeat. Repeat.
- Rest (lie down!) on the grassy knoll before the last leg of the walk.

Thanks to Jan for your outstanding leadership.

[See Rose's photo of the view to Mt Feathertop from 'The Tree' on page 36]

Mt Loch – Derrick Hut

Sunday 28 December

Peter Naughtin

The Mt Loch walk starts at the new Visitor Centre on the main road into Hotham, past the village. There is underground parking there, which is good as it is cool when you return to your car after a walk. The walk is 13 km and involves a fair amount of climbing to the Derrick Hut turn off. You pass a number of the big ski runs and cable car stations and wonderful views of the Razorback track, all the way to Mt Feathertop. We stopped at the Derrick Hut turn off for a rest and drink. The final 900 metres to Mt Loch is a particularly beautiful part of the walk, with great views of the mountains ahead, in the wonderful blue colour that a sunny, cloudless day can give you.

We arrived at the track for the final climb to Mt Loch, which is short but very rocky, and care is needed to navigate the track with poles. At the summit there was little wind and marvellous views across to the village and towards Mt Feathertop; you could even see the top of Mt Bogong in the distance. We stopped here for 30 minutes to enjoy the views and take photos.



CWCV and Melbourne 'Bushies' at the cairn on Mt Loch

Photo: Peter Wilson

The return takes you back along the rocky trail to the main track below. At the Derrick Hut turn off a number of walkers decided they would not walk to Derrick Hut, and they returned to the cars. The rest of the group began the gradual descent, following the snow pole line down to Derrick Hut. We did not see the range of wildflowers here that we had seen in previous years.

The descent is gradual and takes you into a gully and on about 1.5 km to the hut. Some had lunch in the hut, while others enjoyed their lunch outside. There is a toilet there, and a marvellous snow gum with many branches (ideal for a group photo). [See a photo on the CWCV website]

The return is a climb up along the same track to the main trail. By this time it was getting hot, and we began the descent, then the ascent back to the Visitor Centre. There was a fair amount of climbing on the return trail, hard going in the full afternoon heat. We arrived back at the Visitor Centre about 2.00pm. This is a good place to relax, with water and drinks for purchase from machines. We were glad to have cool cars to drive back to the lodges in, thanks to the underground car park; we arrived back at the lodges about 3.00pm.

The April issue of *The Catholic Walker* will include many more reports and photos of Mt Hotham activities.

Roamin' Catholic

The mystery of the origin of the unsigned "Roamin' Catholic" cartoon in 1990s issues of *The Catholic Walker* continues. Rob Giebels has provided this photo of a mug bearing the cartoon which he recalls buying in Melbourne 30 or so years ago. Rob thinks it might have been made in Korea, but there is no helpful information on the mug. Thanks, Rob.

It seems that Roamin' Catholics are here, there and everywhere...!





THE CATHOLIC WALKING CLUB OF VICTORIA INC.

Woiworung Country

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*Mt Feathertop, viewed from
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