

Brindabella Bushwalking Club



June 2023

Although Canberra in winter can have lovely clear, calm, sunny days, it can also be rather chilly at times. It seems that being a bit older means that one feels the colder weather more and while it is lovely to hike in cooler temperatures, this time of year some of us look to walk in more temperate zones.

The clubs programme includes such walks and they can also be domestic or international. If you are able to join one of these adventures then I encourage you to do so. Whether it be to Queensland, areas on the NSW or Victorian coast or to summer in the northern hemisphere, they all offer choices to spend some time away from the colder weather here in the ACT.

In the monthly newsletters we have previously talked about safety and preparedness when hiking. In recently preparing for some walks ahead, I thought that I had better check my first-aid kit and the absence of some of the more-consumed items meant, unsurprisingly, that a trip to the local pharmacy to re-stock some items was required. So, remember to periodically check your first-aid kit situation. Put it in your diary and act, as it is easy to lose track of what you have used.

I do hope to see you on a walk soon, so until then do take care.....Bill



ORRORAL
OPENS

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Editor - Peter Ford

CONTRIBUTIONS WELCOME

[Email here](#)

A WEEK'S WALKING IN VICTORIA'S HIGH COUNTRY

Leigh Hermann; pics by Maurice, Lucinda and Leigh

One Friday in late April, 12 walkers and 2 non-walking cyclists arrived in Mansfield Victoria for a week of walking in Victoria's High Country. For some of us this was a new region to explore, and we were full of anticipation for what Peter W had in store.



The first point of interest was our accommodation. While our rooms were very modern and convenient, the main building of the Alzburg Resort had been established as a convent in the late 1800s; it later became a girls' school that closed in the 1970s. There were said to be ghosts, which particularly interested one of our group. Alzburg Resort is now a conference centre.

At 300m elevation Mansfield is a small bustling town on the Delatite River about 50 km west of the Mount Buller ski

r e s o r t .

Formerly a farming and timbering town, it now thrives due to the popularity of winter sports, cycling, hiking, water sports and horse riding. With the Alps to the east and Lake Eildon to the south-west, our options for walking were wide and varied.

An easy day was planned for the first day, in Samaria State Park only 20km north of Mansfield, at an elevation of 800m. After a short 4km walk to the pretty Back Creek Falls, we parked at Spring Creek Camping area to explore the Tramline Track, named for the tramline built in the early 1900s for transporting timber. While we didn't reach the braking station, we saw sleeper remnants and examined the ruins of 2 huge kilns that were used to 'season' the timber in preparation for transport (in other words, the timber was baked to reduce water content and thus lighten the load).



Sunday's walk to Mt Stirling in the Stirling – Buller Alpine Park was no doubt the highlight of the week. Peter had very carefully checked weather forecasts; the BOM forecast was spot-on and the weather was sunny and bright (and only a bit cool). Starting from Telegraph Box Junction it was a 500m climb along mostly fire trails to the top of Mt Stirling. From here we had 360° views – Mt Buller on a ridge 5km to the east, the Howqua Valley to the south and the never-ending mountain ridges of the Alps to the east, with the Bogong High Plains in the distance. Wonderful!

Monday was quite a contrast. Heading south-west over the mountains to the western shores of Lake Eildon, we started walking from the Herb Fitzroy Day Visitor area on Collier Bay. No rain, but with the sky heavily overcast,

we followed a track around a headland. It was certainly not the gentle “walk around the lake” that we know in Canberra. The return to the cars was up and over a rather steep ridge – Peter’s chocolate helped the energy levels.



Testing out Bob’s dicky seat meant only one car was needed for transport. For the final day we returned to the Stirling-Buller Alpine Park for a gentle circuit of Mount Winstanley. A relaxed 9km walk with views.

Overall it was a week of varied walking, well planned by Peter and Mary. Many thanks to them both for their work in planning and executing a very enjoyable trip. It was disappointing that Mary was unable to join us. And also thanks to Lucinda’s friend Belinda, who more than once hosted drinks in her very lovely Mansfield home.

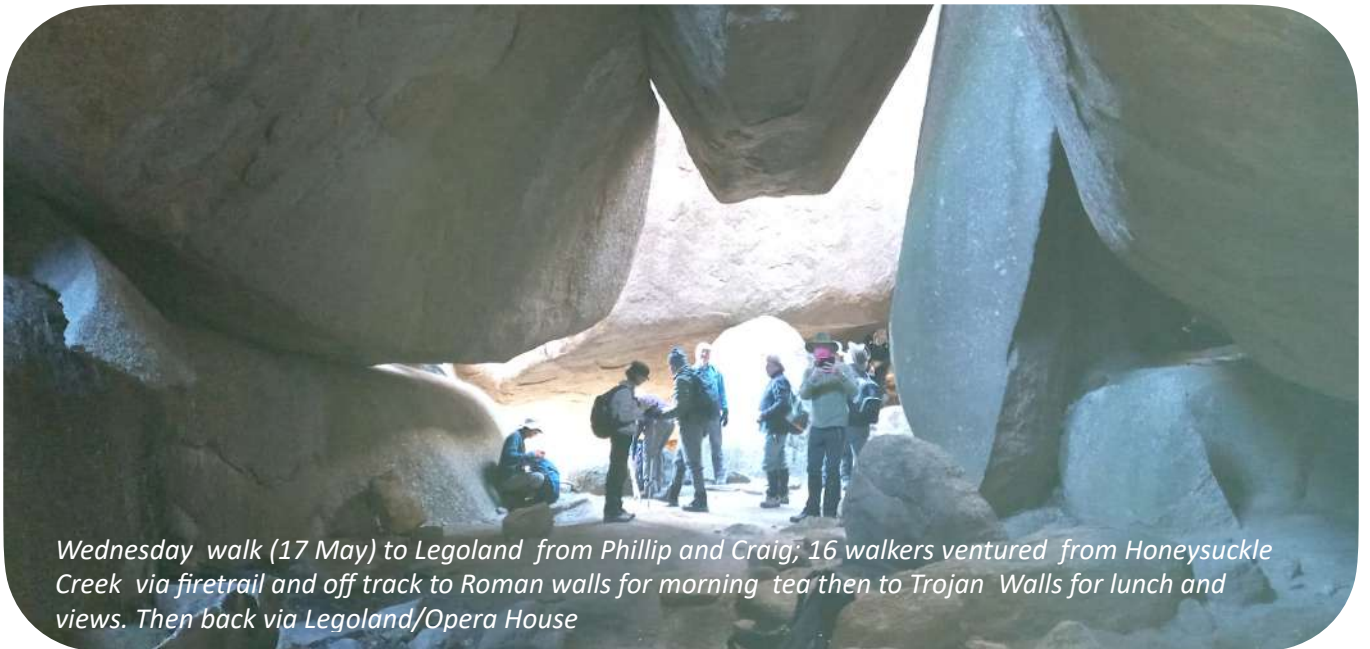


Tuesday was again different. The morning’s walk was a rather stiff “up and up” climb to snow gums on the summit of Mt Timbertop – the name taken by the adjacent Timbertop School (part of Geelong Grammar) that counts King Charles as one of its alumni. Instead of Timbertop students, we met a group of girls from another school that also runs a similar Year 9 outdoor program. In fact over the week we met several school groups on week-long pack walks. Tuesday afternoon was an up and back walk following Plain Creek to a pretty waterfall.

Wednesday had been predicted to be the worst weatherwise so it was the designated rest day. We all explored the town and its several coffee shops and local produce emporiums. In the afternoon for those who needed to walk it was close to town - ‘The Paps’ – a bit of a climb for an outstanding view.



(photos continued next page)



Wednesday walk (17 May) to Legoland from Phillip and Craig; 16 walkers ventured from Honeysuckle Creek via firetrail and off track to Roman walls for morning tea then to Trojan Walls for lunch and views. Then back via Legoland/Opera House



On Booroomba Rock Slabs back in February. Kathy led the walk to Booroomba Rocks and Trig

A Tour around our Website

a brief guide for members

Next to our membership list, which is managed by our Membership Secretary, our [website](#) is central to our club's activities. You probably submitted your Application for Membership via the website, but there is a lot more than that to be found there.

Walks and Social Program

So let's start with the biannual walks and social program. You'll find it [here](#). If you go to the website first, you'll find it prominently signposted and indicated by arrows. On its first page, you'll also find a list of office holders, which you may need if you want to know who does what.

The program also contains other useful information such as the symbols for meeting places, club practices relating to classifying and managing the walks, safety and rules for walkers. This material is also available under separate headings on the first page of the website.

Links

Check the various resources at this page from time to time. For example, if you are planning on travelling anywhere in Australia or further afield, you'll probably need maps and there are some great direct links listed here. There is also a guide to map reading and to the use of the NSW SIX Maps website.

Online routes and maps

As your bushwalking skills and interests develop, you may want to know more about planning walks for yourself or for the club and, if so, you will find much useful information on the [Online Routes and Maps](#) page which is accessed from the banner.

Resources for members

From this banner button, you can find much useful information such as a [Walks Register](#) - this contains information about all walks that have been conducted by the club and is meant as an aid for leaders when selecting walks for the program.

There is also an article about the [Club History](#), a list of all the paper maps we hold for use by members and so on.

As you become more familiar with the club's activities, you may also develop an interest in the 'Archived Newsletters and Trip Reports' section of the 'Resources for Members' page.

For example, if you are planning to lead a walking trip away from Canberra, you can quickly search for any record of the club's previous activities in the area in which you are interested. At the click of a button, this section links you to the newsletter containing a report on your prospective area of interest. International trip reports are included.

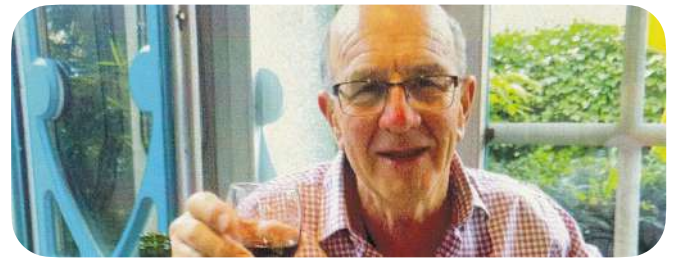
While this section is designed for members, it is, like the rest of the website, open to the public.

Enhancements and Updates

We keep the website as up to date as we can. However, if you'd like to see something added to it or if you believe modifications would improve the information for our members or visitors, please let the webmaster know by [emailing the webmaster](#).

Webmaster and Ed.

Vale Stewart Homan



BBC members will be saddened to hear that Stewart Homan, who, up until reasonably recently was a regular Wednesday Club walker, passed away on the 1st May. He was just a few weeks short of celebrating his 80th birthday. Stewart was always good company on a walk. He had many stories to tell about his experiences in life, from a short stint in teaching to visiting remote aboriginal communities to assist with their welfare issues. Stewart was an affable and generous person who thoroughly enjoyed walking with other Club members. The BBC extends its sympathies to his wife, Moya and family.



This Year in Southern Spain

Our deferred trip from 2020, due to the Covid rules, finally went ahead in April. Our gloves, beanies and thermal tops became unnecessary ballast as the temperatures in April this year were more like July temperatures. Almost every day the maximum was above 30 and records were set in 15 major locations, including 39 degrees in Seville and 37 in Cordoba. Thankfully, the mornings were cool.

Right now, there are severe water restrictions in some areas of Spain and several locations are having to get potable water trucked in. Summer could be very difficult this year.

We found all the information we needed about the walks we did on Wikiloc – see the **Online Routes and Maps** page on the club website for more information about this resource.

We walked in too many areas to cover in this one article, so I'll just concentrate on two. The first of which is Órgiva, where we went to escape the Easter crowds.

Órgiva.

This quirky town of about 6000 people is 45 minutes' drive (90 minutes in the bus) south-east of Granada and is the capital of the Alpujarras. It became popular with hippies in the 1970s because the local authorities tolerated them squatting in vacant houses and also in their vans and old buses. They came, grew their own vegetables and smoked them. Many prospered and now run businesses, while the descendants of others still live in their vans, complete with chimneys and curtains. I'm unsure about their sanitation arrangements!

Órgiva featured in **Chris Stewart's** bestselling book [Driving Over Lemons](#), which is worth a read.



The traffic was heavy at times

There are some great walks originating from here. One that we enjoyed followed the Chico River (dry at the moment) down to its junction with the once-mighty Guadalefo River, then downstream to what is meant to be a major dam, but sadly is now pitifully low due to the ongoing drought. The walk then climbed on winding tracks and access roads past

olive and almond orchards back to Órgiva. You can also use the bus to access walks from the three popular white villages in the Poqueira valley and from our favourite little town, [Pitres](#).



The old irrigation systems still work well



Abandoned stone houses are everywhere

Aracena.

The second area I'll discuss here is [Aracena](#), the largest town in the Parque Natural Sierra de Aracena, which is dominated by a hilltop ruined castle and church. This town is 80 minutes north-west of Seville by bus. It is famous for its spectacular limestone cave, the Gruta de las Maravillas (the Cave of Marvels), which has featured in numerous movies, including **Journey to the Centre of the Earth** and **Tarzan in King Solomon's Mines**. It is only a short distance to the Portuguese border from here. The countryside was much greener around Aracena, but the locals said it was a very dry year.

There is also an Australian connection, as the original Rio Tinto mines are about 30 km south of here and the company built houses for its management staff in Aracena; we met a couple over coffee one morning – people, not houses. The other Australian connection is the humble gum tree; there are large plantations of them here and, worryingly, they have dropped an awful lot of bushfire fuel for the coming summer. However, the most prolific trees in this area are the ancient cork oaks.

The town prides itself on the walks available. There are signboards on each of the tracks out of town, listing 16 local walks. As you head off on any of these you find it is well signposted. As usual, for us anyway, the hardest part is finding the right way out of smaller villages along the way. Many of the walks do have a village about halfway along, where you can fill water bottles from a fountain or visit a bar. The walks are all on a track of sorts and all would be classified as Easy/Medium by BBC.



Ancient stock route



Early farming equipment

One of our favourite walks here was a circular walk via the village of Linares de Sierra. It had a bit of everything: stone fences and retaining walls, cork oaks, a herd of goats (you transit through private property), traditional narrow winding dirt or cobblestone mule tracks and great views. This was our first visit to this western side of Spain and we might return to see more of it in the future.

Has Spain Changed?

- Accommodation and dining in the big cities costs about 20% more than before Covid.
- The cities and tourist areas are surging with visitors – mostly American and British.
- The price of a coffee, a drink in a bar, food at the supermarket is perhaps 10% dearer.
- Taxi fares remain low – about half the cost of fares in Canberra.
- Prices in the country are unchanged and represent excellent value for our embattled Aussie dollar; e.g., €1.20 for a coffee, €1.50 for a beer, wine from €3 per bottle, €11 for a two-course meal, €45 for a hotel room and €70-80 for a self-catering apartment.
- Almost everything can be paid for by 'tap and go'. The biggest exception is any bus service where you buy your ticket from the driver. One café we visited was cash only and in two other small places the EFTPOS machine didn't recognise our Australian credit or debit cards.
- Tipping is not the custom, but the Americans can't be convinced.

Should you Go?

If the airfare and travel insurance are within your budget (we relied on the insurance provided by our credit card issuer, but didn't have to test it), then the rest of the holiday will be cheaper than the equivalent in Australia. There are some major attractions in the big cities, but once you've seen these, head for the country. The people are laid-back and friendly, the public transport system excellent and the experience is nothing like we have here at home. Just avoid the summer months of June, July and August (in a normal year), because the heat is unbearable.



Stone walls each side of the track



Cork oak

More Information

If you want more information about these or any of the other walks we did, please just ask. I can then email you the Google Earth tracks and downloaded maps.

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Facebook

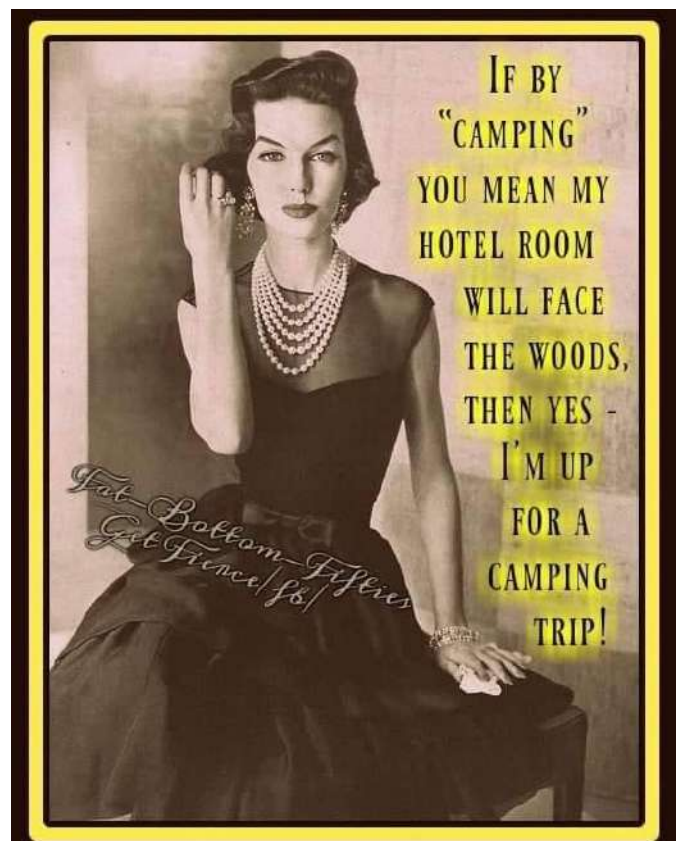
Our Facebook Manager regularly posts photos, walk reports and information about upcoming activities. Please visit [here](#) and see what our members are planning or have recently been up to.

Please send your photos etc. to Heather [here](#)

Classy insults

"He has no enemies, but is intensely disliked by his friends.."

- Oscar Wilde



Call for Expressions of Interest - Walking the Alta Via 1 in the Italian Dolomites, 2024

Are you keen to experience the beauty of the spectacular Dolomites in the South Tyrol region of northern Italy?

The Alta Via 1 (AV1) is the premier long-distance trekking route which traverses through this region, passing through incredible jagged mountains, dramatic gorges and beautiful valleys. Typically travelling from north to south, walkers start out from stunning Lago di Braies and spend up to 11 days walking through to La Pisa or Bolzano, a distance of 121km and a total elevation gain and loss of 7,207/8,248m.

While there are six different Alte Vie (long distance High Routes) in the Dolomites, the AV1 is the most popular and easiest route, with better infrastructure and minimal areas requiring climbing apparatus such as ladders and cables and rungs. As such, walking this amazing trek does not require any specialised climbing equipment or mountaineering expertise.

Undertaking the AV1 does require a reasonable level of fitness. It is, however, less strenuous than other treks such as the Tour du Mont Blanc (TDMB). And unlike the TDMB, once you're 'up' on the AV1, you stay up, with the route rarely dipping below 1,500m. As such, the climbs and descents are much less strenuous than the TDMB or other similar routes.

I am planning on walking the AV1 in 2024, potentially in late August - early September, starting in Lago di Braies, taking up to 11 days to complete the route. Accommodation will be in rifugi (half-board including accommodation, breakfast and dinner). Costs can vary between different rifugi but the average cost for next season is €80 per night. Rifugi book out fairly quickly so we would be confirming the route and booking accommodation (and paying any deposits) in September-Oct.

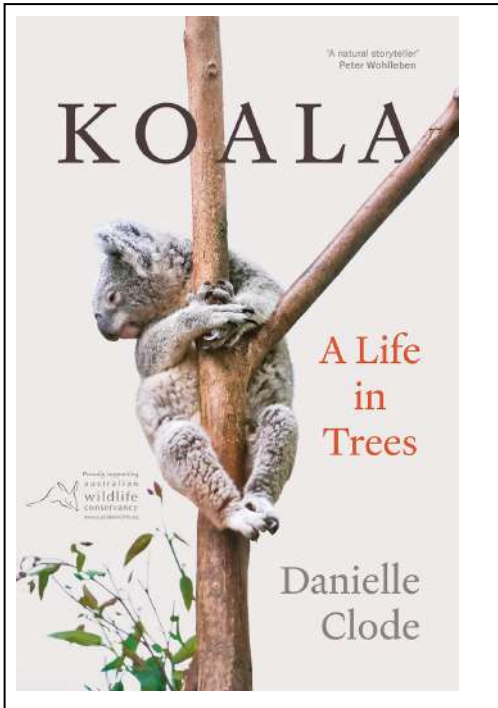
Sound exciting? Interested? Call or email Luisa Dal Molin to register your interest in joining this exciting BBC walk in 2024:

Ph 047 829 7775; Email luisa@brownsdon.com.au.



Image by Giuseppe Milo - Imported from 500px (archived version) by the Archive Team. (detail page), CC BY 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=72749737>.

**Recommended reading: *Koala, A Life in Trees*
by Danielle Clode, 2022**



Reviewer: Ann Villiers

Koala is a delightful book to read, filled with fascinating information, combining personal experience with deep research to explain the life and history of these iconic marsupials.

A u t h o r
Danielle Clode,

is a biologist and natural history author based at Flinders University. She takes the reader on a vivid journey into the life of koalas, where they came from, how they live, and what their future may hold. Clode draws on a wide range of knowledge systems including botany, ecology, Indigenous knowledge, evolution, anatomy, and toxicology.

I learnt some fascinating details. For example, koalas are the only species to have fingerprints other than humans, chimpanzees and gorillas. Clode writes: "I've heard that their fingerprints are so similar to human ones that if they were found on a crime scene, they would be included in the forensic examinations."

Then there's the matter of eating preferences. Koalas are specialist feeders. "Of the hundreds of species of eucalypts found across Australia, only seventy or so are recognised as koala food trees and, of these, any one



individual koala might only eat three or five or ten different species." Koalas eat up to half a kilogram of leaves a day, and they do, in fact, eat non-eucalypt species from time to time.

Researchers have found that the koala's liver has an exceptional ability to metabolise toxins from this diet, but this has some interesting side effects. Koalas are notoriously hard to treat for diseases because their bodies treat antibiotics and anaesthetics like toxins, to be neutralised by their livers.

Eucalypts are not homogenous and this presents potential problems when relocating animals, say after bushfires. "While koalas from one location are all generally able to eat the same kinds of leaves, many koalas that have been moved from another location will simply refuse to eat the leaves that the local koalas eat."

And koalas are tricky animals to keep overseas. In 1984 Australia sent six koalas to Japanese zoos. The zoos built custom-made enclosures and had grown eucalypt plantations. But not all koalas thrived. They proved incredibly expensive to feed, three times more than an elephant and seventeen times more than a lion. A local newspaper reported that the cost of feeding just one koala was more than the annual salary of the city's mayor!



A local met on the Great Ocean Walk, 2022

But perhaps what struck me most was the section discussing koala smarts. These animals are often described as slow and stupid. "Far from lacking cognitive skills," Clode writes,

"koalas almost certainly need excellent spatial mapping skills to help them navigate their complex arboreal environments."

Clode also points out that there are very few wild animals that seem aware of the potential of humans to be useful, yet koalas do approach humans when in need of assistance, as we've seen during bushfires. Clearly, we need to rethink our ideas of animal intelligence.

