



The Melbourne Walking Club Hut

Donna Buang

An Outline History



Robin Bailey

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*“Arrived in the dark to this wonderfully quiet spot,
was a joy after a busy week”*

Hut Visitors Book 6 May 2001

“The Hut is a Sylvan Treasure”

Hut Visitors Book 30 January 2002



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Introduction

This brief history was initiated when copies of Club Minutes and the Donna Buang Hut Sub Committee documents, together with the Hut Visitors Book were being prepared for lodgement in the Manuscripts Section of the State Library of Victoria. When examined closely, it became apparent that the building and on-going development of the hut was a major achievement by members of the Club, but throughout its second life the general Club members made very little use of the hut with its magnificent location.

The history of the hut is shown with a Time Line, which has been derived from Club Executive Minutes, records maintained by the Hut Sub Committee and also from the Visitors Book of the second hut. (The first hut visitors book being destroyed in the bush fire). Some references to the hut were located in the Melbourne Walker, plus some odd documents.

Throughout this document, *Melbourne Walking Club* or *MWC* is used to include the previous Club name *Melbourne Amateur Walking and Touring Club*.

Construction and Maintenance of Hut

The first hut was built by members of the Club on a Permissive Occupancy from the Lands Department in 1930. After the destruction of this first hut in the 1939 fires, the hut was rebuilt by the Forest Commission of Victoria, principally at their expense. It is completely maintained by members of the Club.

Section 1 The First Hut

Timeline

Date	Comment	Leader
1902	Trains to Warburton mainly for timber extraction Significant timber milling above Millgrove and Warburton	
1-2 Nov 1924	MWC Trip Healesville-Ben Cairn-Donna Buang	W.F. Waters
14-15 Nov 1925	MWC Trip Warburton - Donna Buang - Boobyalla	W.F. Waters
19-20 Mar 1927	Boobyalla-Donna Buang walk	Shugg
10-11 Mar 1928	Warburton-Donna Buang-Coranderk walk	Clyde Grant
8-9 Oct 1928	Donna Buang-Wild Dog-Boobyalla walk, many photographs in area of hut by Chris Bailey	R.M. Bailey
May 1929	On motion of Bill Waters and Chris Bailey, the Executive of Club agreed that Club should build a hut on Donna Buang	
21 Aug 1929	Meeting of Club approved erection of hut on Donna Buang	

Date	Comment	Leader
16-17 Nov 1929	Millgrove-Ben Cairn-Donna Buang walk	Bowden
16 Apr 1930	Party hire car to select site for hut	
13-14 Dec 1930	Donna Buang hut opening	Wally Briggs
8-9 Aug 1931	Ski Tour Donna Buang	E.C. Robinson

Section 2 The New Hut

Date	Comment	Leader
1939	Old Hut destroyed after the 1939 bush fires	
8 Mar 1939	Forests Commission (FCV) want a statement of amount expended by Club in erection of hut, and estimate of value of voluntary labour. Waters, Wright and Burroughs to investigate possible new site.	
14 June 1939	Reg Mann, Club Secretary, reported negotiations with FCV, claim of £200 to be submitted by FCV to Govt. Insurance Office; negotiations by Club in abeyance until decision reached Minister of Lands desirous that all new huts erected in areas under his control to be of timber.	
23 Aug 1939	Reg Mann report on negotiations with FCV:-Hut would be erected by FCV at cost to Commission not greater than £200 on the old site or on a new site in the forest area to be selected by Club. Hut would be of timber with iron roof. Hut sole property of FCV, but the Club have full access to it. Hut committee to collaborate with FCV in design and erection of a new hut, no expense by Club	
6 Dec 1939	Report on FCV proposals for replacement	
15 Mar 1940	Construction of new hut may be commenced next week	
20 Sep 1940	Hut Committee Budge Chairman, Scott, Smart, Travers, Wheeler	
12 Mar 1941	Hut nearing completion. Cost £200, extra £20 for lining of walls. Decided Club undertake internal fittings at Club expense and undertake erection of out buildings. Working party of 21 members spent full day erecting framework for outbuildings	

Date	Comment	Leader
29-30 Nov 1941	New hut opened by W.E. Briggs, assisted by R.H. Croll and R. Mann 100 trees planted to mark the occasion. 48 members present and president F.V.W.C.	
22 Sep 1942	Hut and skiing committee D. Smart Chairman, W. Scott, C. Stringer, G. Travers	
1942	Were transport restrictions, however walkers would often get steam train to Warburton or Yarra Junction, then walk up the existing steep timber tramlines to Ben Cairn or Cement Creek, then on to the Club hut. Weekend steam train to Warburton cancelled because of war.	
1942-43	Annual Report, Lack of transport has been main obstacle to greater use of our "country home"	
1943	Club members would catch steam train to Warburton, then carry their ski gear food etc. up the short cut from Warburton to the Club hut, this would take about 4 hours	
1943-44	Hut committee authorised to build cupboards for skis and food	
1945	First recorded work party, clearing tracks, paving in front of hut (it is still there) A number of Rover Scout parties using the hut (Bill Waters was Rover Commissioner)	
4 Jul 1945	Hut requires painting, FCV offered to supply paint, Club the labour	
11 Nov 1946	First Club bus trip to new hut	
1947	With much snow, many sight seeing tourists on mountain	
29-31 Jul 1949	Official Club ski trip	
21-22 Jan 1961	Water problems, creek dried up and had to be obtained from Ben Cairn road	
10-11 Jan 1965	Many Scouting parties using the hut following Jamboree	
21-22 Jan 1967	Hut painted, new cooking stove	
27 Nov 1971	Club member the late Bill Bertram first visit to hut since February 1930	
2 Dec 1982	Club Executive forms formal Sub Committee to undertake renovations and maintenance of Donna Buang hut. Lance Cranage chairman	

Date	Comment	Leader
Dec – Jan 1982-3	Work parties cleaning hut, repairing windows etc, painting interior	
3-4 Mar 1984	Work on fire place, number of stumps replaced	
April 1985	Much work done, Structural work on ceiling and chimney, hut repainted throughout	
August 1985	FCV issued an occupation licence to the Club for use of hut	
November 1985	Formal guidelines for the operation of sub-committee of Walter E. Briggs Hut Sub-Committee issued Occupation Licence for the hut received from Dept. of Conservation, Forests and Lands. Executive indicated that \$75 may be expended by Sub Committee without approval from Executive Work parties currently improving security by adding metal cladding and further bolts to windows	
August 1986	Noted that Club members not using the hut much Much work done to improve hut security as have been a number of break ins	
29 Nov 1988	New spouting installed, roof nails replaced, roof repainted, roof repainted with rust resistant paint	
8 Feb 1990	New “Dunny” constructed	
3-4 Mar 1990	As part of the continued maintenance of hut, walls of the hut and woodshed repainted	
Feb. 1991	<i>Walkers Creek</i> dry	
26-27 Nov 1993	New stumps under hut, spouting realigned, track clearing	
9 Dec 1993	Last sub committee chaired by Lance Cranage after more than ten years of leadership maintaining and improving the hut.	
1996	Painting of hut, ongoing repairs and installation of new water tank	
9 Feb 1995	Sub Committee recommends that the Hut be maintained but not improved	
13 April 1995	Hut painted inside and out	
9 April 1996	New water tank installed	

Date	Comment	Leader
8 April 1997	Roof painted	
1 Dec 1998	<p>Des Carroll Chairman of Sub Committee states</p> <p><i>In the matter of maintenance and improvement of the hut, the Sub Committee has an unenviable task, with little current use of the Hut by the membership (or others) and with no indication of any change in this situation the Sub Committee might be excused for having little incentive other than maintaining a status quo approach to Hut work parties. If members are not prepared to use this asset for over-night stays, perhaps they could be encouraged to use the Hut facilities for day trips. The Hut is so close to Melbourne (especially to the eastern suburbs) to make day trips quite feasible.</i></p> <p>Parks Ranger has expressed view that Club advise his office if hut is to be used over night for safety and security reasons</p>	
9 April 1999	Lease Agreement received from Parks Victoria, Club to have Public Liability Insurance of \$10M and have own property insurance	
7 Oct 1999	Two gas lamps to be purchased for hut, together with a stove, total cost \$253	
11 May 2000	Pot belly stove donated to Club to be cleaned , sky light to be installed	
8 Jun 2000	<p><i>Momentous Day!</i></p> <p><i>Arrival of pot-belly stove at hut, much exertion by lucky team of Denis and Michael Ward, Bert Huckfield, Des Carroll.</i></p> <p><i>Two foot of snow and plenty of fun and games. Up to our knees in snow at times.</i></p> <p><i>Measurements taken for flue and sky light.</i></p> <p><i>Going home to dry out!</i></p> <p><i>Des Carroll</i></p>	
28-29 Aug 2000	<i>Working Bee to install pot belly stove. This was achieved in difficult conditions. Sago snow was falling some of the time...job finally done and fire lit to test. Present Des Carroll, Don Reed, Michael Ward, Denis Ward and Bert Huckfield</i>	
23 Nov 2000	Proposal to improve level of accommodation beyond a glorified cattleman's hut by replacing mattresses and pillows, a vermin proof kitchen cupboard, repainting inside with gloss white paint, by reducing the general impression of clutter	

Date	Comment	Leader
12 Dec 2000	Discussion at Executive on future of hut, no conclusion reached	
21-22 Dec 2000	Chimney of pot belly finally sealed and ceiling repaired	
18 Jul 2001	Barry Revill new Chairman of sub committee	
1 Apr 2009	<p>Formal Lease with Minister for Environment and Climate Change, for period of 7 years with review 1 April intervening years. Rent \$104 +GST. (Rent review Consumer price index) Permitted Use Bushwalking Club and limited overnight accommodation for Tenants members and others. Expiry date 31 March 2016.</p> <p>In addition to standard Lease conditions, following are some specific items</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Must notify Parks Manager at least one week prior to using hut overnight, providing details of duration of stay -Must retain the historic and aesthetic character of the Premises -Copies of Lease are held by Club Secretary and the Hut Sub Committee chairman, and also in the Club Archives. 	

Section 3 Donna Buang Hut Average Usage

These statistics have been derived mainly from the Visitors Book of the Hut, the original of which is deposited with the rest of the Club archives in the State Library of Victoria. A copy of this book is held in the Hut.

These figures are regarded as reasonably accurate, some visitors may not have made entries in the Visitors Book, however the Sub Committee Chairman has kept records of the issuance of keys to the hut at various times, when these are compared with the entries in the visitors book, there is a very good correlation.

1941 - 2009

Year	MWC Day	MWC W/E No.	MWC W/E Average	MWC Longer	MWC Work	Other Groups	Break Ins	
1941		1						
1942		10	2.8					
1943	2	7	2.8	4				
1944	2	5	2	2				a
1945	5	13	4.3	2	2	1		
1946	1	11	5.2	4	2	1		

Year	MWC Day	MWC W/E No.	MWC W/E Average	MWC Longer	MWC Work	Other Groups	Break Ins
1947	1	5	4	1	1	1	
1948		5	4.4	1		1	
1949		8	4.3	2	3		
1950	3	4	3.2	2			
1951	5	5	3	3			2
1952	3	5	5.2	1			1
1953	3	5	3		1		
1954	3	9	4.4	1		4	
1955	1	3	6	2	1	3	
1956	1	8	3.7	4	1	4	
1957	2	8	3.2	2	1	4	
1958		3	4.6	1	2	3	1
1959	4	3	5.6	1	1	3	
1960	1	11	8	1		6	
1961		5	3.6	1		3	
1962	2	7	7		3	3	
1963	2	2	6			1	
1964	2	4	3.5	1		4	1
1965	2	11	4.8	2	5	2	
1966	1	5	4.4			3	
1967		4	8	3	2	1	
1968	1	2	5	1			1
1969		1	10	1	1		
1970	1	2	2.5	1	1	1	
1971	1	2	5	1	1	4	
1972		4	6.5	2	1	2	1
1973	1	4	3	2		3	
1974	3	3	6	5	1	1	
1975	1	1	2	5		1	
1976	1	1	7				
1977	-	-	-	-	-	-	
1978	1	1	5			2	
1979		1	3	2	1	2	
1980	1	3	5		1		
1981	2	6	4.4		1		
1982		2	10			3	
1983		1		1	1	4	
1984	1	1	2	5	3	4	
1985		2	5	1	3	1	
1986	2	5	4.2		3	1	
1987		3	4	1	1	2	
1988		5	3.6		3		
1989	2	6	5.6		2	1	
1990	1	3	5		1	2	

Year	MWC Day	MWC W/E No.	MWC W/E Average	MWC Longer	MWC Work	Other Groups	Break Ins	
1991	1	4	5		1	1		
1992		5	5		1	4		
1993		5	4.6		2	1		
1994	2	8	6	2	3	1		
1995	3	5	3	2	1	2		
1996		3	6			2		
1997	2	5	4		2			
1998	4	1	4		4			
1999	4	3	3	4	2	1		
2000	4	1	5		2	1		
2001	5	3	6	1	1			
2002	1	2	6.5	1				
2003		4	11		1			
2004	1	4	6			1		
2005	3	2	7	1				
2006	3	3	5	1	2	1		
2007	1	2	6	1	2			
2008	2	1	9	1				
2009	1	3	6		2			

- MWC Day All visits which lasted only one day, including work parties and Club visits. They have not been detailed as they could include large MWC groups and also small day visits
- MWC W/E No. Number of visits by MWC members which lasted for two days, it does include work parties
- MWC W/E Average The average attendance for weekend parties
- MWC Longer Visits by MWC members which lasted more than two days
- MWC Work Visits by MWC hut work parties
- Other Groups visits by non MWC groups, usually for a weekend. These groups were Scouts, Rover Scouts, Church groups, other walking clubs etc.
- Break ins Recorded break ins to the hut in the Visitors Book.