

Bendigo Orienteers

01 Newsletter February 2025



Above: Enjoying the bush at a Bendigo O event. Photo by Jenny Ball.

Our club began the 2025 year with the Peter Creely Memorial Fowl and Fizz O event on Sunday morning 9th February. The event was held on the Crusoe map with an early start to avoid the heat of the day. 16 controls were put out by Ross Slater and 2 members managed to find all controls in the one hour allowed – fastest was Craig Feuerherdt, followed by Jim Russell. Fastest female was Sophie Taverna. One control was found to be stolen upon pickup (disappointing). The usual chicken and champagne (juice) was enjoyed by everyone after the event. Thank you Ross for organising the course and thanks to those who helped out at the end and to all entrants. Results are listed on Eventor.

After the event the AGM was held and the following committee was voted in.

President: Neil Barr ?

Vice president: John Wilkinson

Secretary: Prue Dobbin

Treasurer: Craig Feuerherdt

Committee: Julie Flynn, Nola Juniper, 2 more needed.

The annual financial report was passed at the last committee meeting and sent out to members prior to the AGM. Thank you Craig (Treasurer) for your work.

Memberships and event fees for 2025

The club's membership fee for 2025 remains at \$35.00 – this just covers the fee charged to us by the VOA and we make no profit from it. Also our event fees remain the same as for 2024. Please renew your membership via Eventor.

Presidents Report for 2024 (Neil Barr)

What we achieved last season

Organised 20 events. Average of 50 entrants. This is the main reason for the club's existence. Events emerge through a pipeline of activity behind the scenes.

- Fixture development (President)

- Permit application (Peter Forbes)
- Events on eventor (Secretary)
- Irregular map updating (Neil)
- Coordinating the volunteer course setting effort via dropbox folders (Secretary).
- Promoting the events (Anne on social media)
- Event file building (Jim - remunerated)
- Printing of maps (Jim – remunerated)
- Computer set up and operation (various but few)
- Organiser/setter delivers courses.
- Control collection team (On the day volunteers)
- Income from events distributed to where it needs to go (club accounts, levies, reimbursements - Treasurer)

Other background tasks to name a few:

- WWCCs
- Maintaining the eventor database
- Managing equipment and buying replacements.
- Attendance at State (and national) meetings
- Promoting the sport of orienteering.

The club published a book of walks around Bendigo based upon the clubs maps (and a few new ones). The effort was a new approach to promoting orienteering aimed at an audience interested in exploring the local Bendigo bush. Over 600 copies have been sold so far. In 2025 we discover if this effort attracts anyone to the sport.

The work to deliver events is getting more complicated and more onerous due to two major pressures.

Rising compliance burden

I have a sense of history on this – my first time as President was in 2001. Back then the fixture was a blank sheet at the end of year event, it was filled in on the day and that was it. Then permits came – and they seem to become increasingly onerous. Permit negotiations for this year started with an initial requirement for toilets and a traffic management plan for each local event.

Through dialogue with Parks Vic, including creating a statistical indicator of the need for toilets and creating examples of simple traffic management plans, a compromise was reached. In 2025 we avoid the need to supply toilets at most events, but need to have simple traffic and toilet plans for each assembly area we use and to use these to give instructions to competitors. Course setters will be required to use assembly areas approved by Parks, and we need to get this approval before each event. Examples can be seen at <https://sites.google.com/view/bendigo-orienteering-maps/home/real-orienteering-maps/one-tree-hill>

There is a risk that at some point in the future we may be required to provide toilets at each event. I fear this would be a nail in the coffin for most weekly local events. I think the club needs to develop a form of event that does not need permitting as a fall back position – MapRun type technology with start windows open over a whole weekend, with no entry fee.

Shrinking volunteer base

It seems that it's harder to lure people into involvement in club support. We have an average attendance at our event of 50, significantly higher than 25 years ago. Yet the management falls to a small few. Last year the club had 100 members, but less than 1 in 5 attended the AGM. I see a rise in disconnected participation. This is consistent with the research literature on volunteerism across most sports. I looked back over the club workers at a state event 20 years ago – 30. At a similar recent event the number was 13, and most of those 13 were on the 20-year-old list. A demographic transition looms.

We (the sport of orienteering) have been making it harder. Once upon a time it was 4 courses, hanging controls and self-timing and the car boot rule. Today its five courses, more equipment on those courses (stands, locks, SI boxes). Once upon a time every control went out on Saturday morning. Only the fittest can manage that these days.

My unpopular conclusion is that the sport has made a strategic mistake in chasing participation rather than involvement.

Making the 2025 fixture happen

Fixture of 18 local events (+ 3 reserves). Once again, the objective is to ensure there is orienteering within a reasonable drive throughout the season. Based on the survey of members, there are 14 names notionally allocated as organisers of 17 events. This is a much better starting point than last year. See the noticeboard and confirm. If more volunteers turn up, we have at least one vacant event and those three reserve events. If we don't have a volunteer organiser for an event, I will be encouraging the club to cancel.

Finally, the Australian Easter Orienteering Carnival is being held in Loddon Shire over Easter and the following Anzac Day weekend. Seven events in 10 days. It's an Orienteering Victoria production, but our club will be deeply involved. The main organisers are Ted, Margi, Julie and Chris Norwood. The amount of work this group has undertaken is quite incredible. They deserve our support.

Many of the major players have long connections with the club.

- Good Friday – Prologue jointly organised by Bendigo and CHOC
- Saturday the course setter is Clare Brownridge (I am controller) and organised by Nillumbik Club and Melbourne Forest Racers.
- Sunday at The Granites organised by Yarra Valley Orienteering Club.
- Monday at Tarnagulla the setter is James Robertson and the event is organised by Bayside Kangaroos.
- The following Friday, Jim is setting a two race event near Dunolly, helped by Bayside Kangaroos.
- The Saturday Vic Middle Champs is at Wehla Hill organised by Melbourne Forest Racers.
- Sunday of the Victorian Long Championships at a new full map of Mt Korong. I am course setter. Dandenong Ranges OC and Bendigo are sharing organizational responsibilities.

I know I am biased, but I think this is potentially the best collection of terrains ever assembled for an Australian orienteering carnival. At the end of it our club will own the maps. I am donating them to the club.

Future Vision

Twenty-six people entered our Fowl and Fizz event and most stayed for the AGM. Seven of those present were members of other orienteering clubs, but all of those seven are regional residents. I can think of quite a few more residents of central Victoria who are members of Melbourne clubs. There is a gradual migration of Melbourne orienteers towards Kyneton, Castlemaine and Bendigo. The Bendigo fixture normally provides between 60 and 70 per cent of the Victorian bush orienteering fixture. Our region is home to the most extensive collection of quality bush maps in the state. It's important to me and I expect to you that we maintain a quality fixture of events.

In the future I would prefer to think in terms of a Central Victorian orienteering network rather than in terms of clubs. If you live in the region and attend events regularly, you are part of this network, no matter what club you belong to. Help us keep this going. We can use the Bendigo fixture as a framework to broaden the opportunities to organise and set events on our extensive collection of maps.

On to elections

To make all this work, we really need a solid effort from club members. We need:

- Workers for the major events – Good Friday, Anzac Day and Anzac weekend Sunday.
- Organisers for our local events
- Fill all the committee positions for the year.

I foresee at some point in the relatively near future the club will not have enough people willing to take on the roles of club management. When that happens, it is interesting to consider what happens to the club and its fixture.

- A smaller team tries to run the club, burns themselves out and leaves the sport (we have seen this in limited cases already)
- Put all events on hold and wait and see. Maybe someone puts his or her hand up – Me in 2023.
- Revert to local training days
- Fewer more expensive events delivered by commercial arrangements
- Disband the club

The latter isn't an idle possibility. The Bendigo Bushwalking club (I think once part of Bendigo Orienteers) came within a whisker of folding last year. It was saved by new younger faces taking on the task of resurrecting the club. I hear it's a different club to what it was. New generations will take a different direction and the older generation isn't happy. If you aren't involved you can't complain.



**AUSTRALIAN
3 DAYS
ORIENTEERING
EASTER 2025**
LODDON SHIRE, VIC

Merit badges for members who entered OA events during 2024.

The following members are eligible to receive merit badges for their OA efforts during 2024. The club is happy to pay for these if you want your badge. Please advise John Wilkinson (johnwbmw@gmail.com) ASAP if you want your badge. Well done to those listed.

Neil Barr	M65	Silver
Charles Brownridge	M70	Bronze
David Brownridge	M40	Silver
John Chellew	M80	Bronze
Prue Dobbin	W65	Bronze
Julie Flynn	W65	Silver
Nigel McGuckian	M65	Bronze
Alison Radford	W70	Silver
Tony Radford	M75	Gold
Charlie Richardson	M35	Bronze
Thea Richardson	W21	Bronze
James Robertson	M21	Gold
Jim Russell	M60	Gold
Dianne Searle	W80	Silver
Peter Searle	M80	Silver
Keely Williams	W16	Gold

SUMMARY OF UPCOMING Bendigo O EVENTS (Details are on Eventor).

15th and 16th February Bendigo ToDay (Org. Jim Russell)
15th March One Tree Hill (Org. Colin Walker).
29th March Browns Reef (Org. John Wilkinson / Jenny Ball).
Helpers are always needed at these events.

CHANGE OF NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Thank you to people who helped me prepare the newsletter during the last few years. This task will be taken over next month by Dianne and Peter Searle.
Email: pd.searle@bigpond.com .

Bendigo Bushwalking book

Copies have been reprinted and are available from local book stores or contact Julie Flynn at our events.

END