

TRAILWALKER

Issue 175 • Aug 2026

FREE

The Heartbeat of the Heysen Trail



**FRIENDS
OF THE
HEYSEN
TRAIL**

- ➔ Celebrating Success While Planning for the Future
- ➔ The Stone People
- ➔ Deep Creek Endures
- ➔ What's Next?

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SINCE 1930



Published by the Friends
of the Heysen Trail and
Other Walking Trails

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MEMBERSHIP

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FAMILY \$49.50/year

Membership is valid for 12 months
from the date of payment.

TRAILWALKER

Editor/Sub Editor
Tammy Main/Barbara Sedgley



Cover image: On the Heysen
Trail with a view south to the
Elder Range. Photo: Kylie Shield.

Trailwalker welcomes photo
submissions suitable for the
magazine cover. Please email
your high-resolution images to
trailwalker@heysentrail.asn.au

About the Friends

The Friends of the Heysen Trail is a voluntary organisation established in 1986, dedicated to the maintenance, development, and promotion of the Heysen Trail and other walking trails in South Australia.

The Heysen Trail is a long-distance walking trail in South Australia, running from Parachilna Gorge in the Flinders Ranges via the Adelaide Hills to Cape Jervis on the Fleurieu Peninsula, spanning approximately 1,200 kilometres in length.

The Department for Environment & Water (DEW) is the authorised manager of the Heysen Trail on behalf of the SA Government. The Friends volunteers undertake operational maintenance, development and promotion of the Trail in partnership with DEW.

Members of The Friends can actively contribute to the development and maintenance of the Heysen Trail, participate in leadership roles in the regular walking program (catering to beginners and experienced walkers), provide a valuable information source for hikers and help promote the volunteer organisation and the benefits of walking.

New members are always welcome.

COUNCIL MEMBERS 2025

President

Neil Hendry

Vice President

Melanie Sjoberg

Secretary

Vicki Stewart

Treasurer

Rudy Pieck

Council Members

Mark Fletcher

Judy McAdam

Kathy Wright

Daniel Jardine

John Wilson

Paul De Laine

Diana Hulsters

SUB-COMMITTEES OF COUNCIL

Honorary Members

Julian Monfries

Reconciliation

Chair Vacant

STANDING COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Finance & Audit

Rudy Pieck

Office & Administration

Julian Monfries

Promotion: Membership & Marketing

Nick Gray

Trail Development

Melanie Sjoberg

Walking

Paul De Laine

Membership Secretary

Judy McAdam

Founding Patron

C Warren Bonython AO*

END-TO-END WALK COORDINATORS

E2E15 Mark Curtis

E2E16 Kathy Wright

E2E17 Paul Frost

E2E18 Paul Delaine

E2E19 Kristyn Willson

E2E20 Lyn Nottage

TRAIL DEVELOPMENT SECTION LEADERS

S1 VACANT

S2 Jon Westover

S3 John Newland

S4 VACANT

S5 Robert Smedley

S6 John Babister

S7 Robert Ruediger, Ken
Smith

S8 Carl Greenstreet

S9-11 Peter Deacon

S12-13 Dom Henschke

S14 Hugh Greenhill

S15-20 Daniel Jardine
Coordinator*

S19 Simon Cameron

*assisted by Retired Active SA
Bushwalkers

Key Dates

AUGUST

19th – Council Meeting

SEPTEMBER

16th – Council Meeting

OCTOBER

21st – Council Meeting

NOVEMBER

18th – Council Meeting

The Friends of the Heysen Trail acknowledge and respect the Traditional Custodians of the ancestral lands we traverse along the Heysen Trail, embracing the Ngarrindjeri, Kaurna, Peramangk, Ngadjuri, Nukunu and Adnyamathanha peoples.

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→ Machhapuchhre from the Sanctuary reservoir, Nepal. • Photo: Bill Vine

Editorial

Articles, reports and other submissions by members and interested parties are welcome. Article guidelines are available upon request. Contact the Trailwalker Editor at trailwalker@heysentrail.asn.au.

Deadline for the next issue (December 2026):

9th October 2026

The Trailwalker magazine is available by subscription or online at heysentrail.asn.au/trailwalker and is published and distributed tri-annually:

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- August
- December

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Contributors are urged to contact the Editor to discuss their article prior to submission. The submission deadline is approximately 7 weeks prior to the month of publication.

Views expressed in contributed articles are those of the authors, and not necessarily those of the Friends of the Heysen Trail.

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Progressing Well

In my last report, I wished for Autumn rains but after 72mm in 2 days in July and watching my yard fill up with rain, I'm grateful for some drier weather. Unfortunately, the same rain further north has caused some complications with getting into and out of the Trail. Our E2E groups, in particular, have had to work around problems with difficult bus access on muddy roads and other road closures.

Closer to home, our AGM was very well attended. I was proud to showcase our successes and celebrate with some of our longest serving volunteers. Some have been active over 30 years. What a commitment! We wouldn't be the successful organisation working and advocating for the Trail without the generous effort from all our volunteers. Thank you.

Since my last report, the Friends have been making progress on a number of fronts.

- The new website is live and, with some settling in glitches discovered and solved, is working well. We have received lots of positive feedback for its look and ease of accessing information. If you discover a problem when using it, please email the office to let us know and our team will do its best to resolve it.
- Melanie and I met with our brand new Minister for the Environment, Emily Bourke, who replaced Lucy Hood in the recent reshuffle of cabinet. A good thing coming from this is that the portfolio was expanded to include Tourism so it covers our objectives for the Heysen Trail even better.
- Along the Trail, the Wild South Coast Way and Cuddlee Creek sections are open again.
- There is a new diversion working around the construction of the big new Goyder wind farm in the mid-north, and a new part of the Trail to run through the new national park near Burra, Jaki Ina (Worlds End Gorge National Park). This new section will largely keep the Trail off the Worlds End Highway as it heads to Burra with added safety for walkers.
- The Governance Review is being put into action with the appointment of the new Heysen Trail Coordinator position in DEW. I was a member of the selection panel, and the quality of applicants was high. We believe this position will provide much better coordination of the management of the Trail and enable further outcomes from the 5-Year Plan and Governance



review to occur in a timely manner.

In the meantime, good hiking to our E2E 15 group who should reach Parachilna in August. And good hiking to everyone else stepping out on the Trail. Let's hope for blue-sky days and no blisters.

Neil Hendry
President

.....
"Leave the road. Take the trails."
— Pythagoras 45



Welcome new members!

The President and the Council would like to extend a warm welcome to the 178 members who have joined the Friends since the April edition of Trailwalker.

Members and supporters are the life-blood of the Friends, so being a member helps to safeguard this precious community resource for future generations. Thank you!

Our New Council

The Friends AGM on 22nd April 2026 at the BDO Adelaide offices. Please welcome the incoming Council Members listed below.

President – NEIL HENDRY

Joined FoHT in 2016 and completed the Heysen Trail in 2022 with E2E11. Neil joined the Council as President in 2023 and is continuing in his second term in that role.

Vice President – MELANIE SJOBERG

Joined FoHT in 2008 and completed the Trail in 2014 with E2E4. Elected to Council and the President's role in 2017. In addition, Melanie continues as a member of the Trail Development Standing Committee and a generous contributor to the Friends Trailwalker and social media.

Treasurer – RUDY PIECK

Joined FoHT in 2023. Will complete the trail this August, having commenced with an independent group in 2017. Appointed as Treasurer in February this year.

Honorary Secretary – VICKI STEWART

Joined FoHT in 2014 and completed the trail with E2E9. She then joined E2E14 and is completing the trail for a second time. Vicki was a walk leader of the Walk the Yorke trail in 2021/22. Vicki was elected as Secretary in 2022

and is continuing in her second term in that role. Vicki is the initial point of contact for members interested in volunteer activity with FoHT.

Membership Secretary – JUDY

McADAM: Joined FoHT in 2011. Starting the Trail with E2E6, she walked with 2 groups in the first year and completed the Trail with E2E5 in 2015. She helped lead E2E10 and took over the Coordinator's role for the last two years completing the Trail a second time in 2021. She was elected to Council in 2021 and is the Membership Secretary.

DANIEL JARDINE: Daniel joined FoHT in 2008 and after a couple of walks with E2E3 joined and completed the Trail with E2E4. He has been a member of the Trail Development Committee since 2018 where he coordinates maintenance work for the northern half of the Trail. He is also a leader of E2E18.

MARK FLETCHER: Joined FoHT in 2013. Completed the Heysen with E2E8 in 2018, before volunteering as a Walk Coordinator with E2E14. He was elected to Council in 2023 and accepted the Chair of the Walk Committee at that AGM.

JOHN B WILSON: Joined FoHT in 2021 to commence the Trail with E2E15. Due to finish in 2026. Joined FoHT's Finance and Audit Standing Committee in 2022. Joined FoHT's Reconciliation Committee in 2023.

KATHY WRIGHT: Joined FoHT in 2015. She completed the Trail in 2021 with E2E10. She is currently Coordinator

for E2E16, a member of the Walking Committee and walking with E2E15 and E2E-3.

Council Members – Newly Elected

PAUL DE LAINE: Member since 2022. Joined the Walk Committee in 2024, and became Chair of the Committee in 2026. Commenced E2E16 in 2022, now leader in its 5th year. Joint Coordinator for The Great West Coast Walk, 2024 Coordinator for E2E18, 2025 Coordinator for the Clare Wine and Wilderness Walk. A retired Senior Project Administrator for the major Construction Industry throughout Australia.

DIANA HULSTERS: Member since 2018. Has walked with E2E13 to Burra Road, and will look to complete the Trail in the future. International career with executive and non-executive roles in tourism, business associations, charities and small enterprise. She holds an MBA, is a Graduate Member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and Member of the Australasian Society of Association Executives.

Council wishes to thank the following outgoing Council members;

Margaret Fletcher and Ross McDougall.

SOUTHERN OCEAN RETREATS

Deep Creek Conservation Park

Renowned as the crown jewel of the Fleurieu Peninsula, Deep Creek National Park offers spectacular coastal views, tranquil forests, and abundant wildlife. Make the most of your visit by staying in one of our charming cottages nestled within the park. With easy access to a variety of graded walking trails - including the iconic Heysen Trail - you can explore at your own pace. From cozy retreats to family-friendly stays, there's a cottage to suit every style and budget.



Pre-order your 2027 Heysen Trail Calendar Now

Order online at heysentrail.asn.au/shop/product/heysen-trail-calendar/



There is still time to submit photos for the 2027 Calendar

Want to share that special moment you captured on the Trail? Submit your photos to the Trailwalker editor for a chance to feature in our Heysen Trail 2027 calendar. If we include one of your photos, you'll receive a calendar free of charge.

Handy Hints:

Must feature the Heysen Trail.

Trailmarkers are a great way to include the logo. Hikers in the shot are good for showing context, but probably not close ups. Landscape only shots are also valued. We like to show off the whole Trail and often get a lot of submissions from the two ends of the Trail. Maybe consider something from middle or one of our hospitable towns?

We are looking for a maximum of four photos to be submitted per person.

Photos need to be landscape and meet minimum specifications: generally, a 7-mega pixel camera will suffice if on the highest image quality setting.

Email submissions NOW to:
trailwalker@heysentrail.asn.au
Last day for submissions will be
Monday 14th of August, 2026.



Trailthinker Quiz

Think you know who you can walk with in SA?

1. Who would take you walking through vines to the sea?
2. Who is celebrating their 80th year in 2026?
3. Who has an owl in their logo?
4. Who will help you walk through wilderness and enjoy a vineyard at the end of the day?
5. What was SARTI's first project?
6. You've finished your working career, who could you turn to?
7. Who celebrated their 100th year in 2025?
8. If you wanted to join other women to hike, who would you go to?
9. Who is the body that leads, promotes and supports all forms of walking in SA?
10. Who will support you on a luxury hiking experience on the Wild South Coast Way?
11. Who has been taking tours in the Flinders and to Japan?
12. If you want to go further north and have help carrying your gear who would you go with?

ANSWERS PAGE 21

→ Trail News

Melanie Sjoberg, Trail Development Committee

The Friends Trail maintenance volunteers are a busy bunch aiming to keep the Trail in good condition and make improvements to help support hikers. Happily, feedback from hikers indicates that the Trail is in pretty good condition overall.

It is a big job along 1200km so it's important to be aware that the hike-in sites, shelters and huts are not "serviced"; especially those in remote areas. Remember to "leave no trace"; please take your rubbish, and leave sites tidy.

Heysen Trail Coordinator

In early 2026 the SA Government advised that it would provide funding for a Heysen Trail Coordinator for the next 5 years as well as additional funds to support trail maintenance. In June the Dept for Environment & Water advertised the new role that will oversee Heysen Trail activity and liaise with The Friends, local government, communities and landholders. The Friends have been advocating for ways to boost the Heysen Trail profile and effectiveness across regional communities, so we look forward to working with the new role.



Cudlee Creek Access

The Friends are pleased that access to that part of the Trail near Cudlee Creek and Union Bridge has been reinstated in time for the 2026 Walk Season. Many thanks to the Department for Environment & Water staff, The Friends volunteers & many others helping to deliver this outcome.

Georgetown Windfarm Reroute

A significant reroute has been installed to navigate around work sites during the construction phase of a windfarm in the mid-north. The Friends appreciate the Aul Energy project team support and cooperation of local landholders to allow the Trail to remain open whilst diverted. Hikers should note that the reroute no longer includes Bundaleer Forest and Curnows Hut so the hut will be closed during this period.

Reroutes: heysentrail.asn.au/walking-the-heyden-trail/prepare-to-walk-the-trail/trail-reroutes-closures/#reroutes

Water Access

Have you been relieved to find rainwater tanks on the Heysen Trail? Did you know that of the 75 along the Trail, 35 were funded and installed by The Friends volunteers? Each tank can cost more than \$2500 - even with free volunteer time - and is funded by The Friends membership and donations.



SOUTHERN OCEAN WALK

the Wild South Coast Way specialists



We specialise in small group pack-free walks along one of the most spectacular sections of the Heysen Trail. If you've always wanted to experience this stunning stretch of coastline in comfort why not join one of our bespoke tours. Our walks include return Adelaide transfers, comfortable homestead accommodation each night, gourmet meals & regional wines, local guides & use of equipment. A proud SA family owned business with over 30 years experience on the Fleurieu Peninsula.



The Friends volunteers are always looking for the next improvement. Trail volunteers have now designed and put in place remote tank monitoring to enable ease of access about water levels. Over the next year volunteers will continue to roll out the system as we aim to cover most of the tanks on the Trail.

Information is on our website: tecpws.knack.com/heysenvolunteers#water-tank-levels/

Camping along the Trail

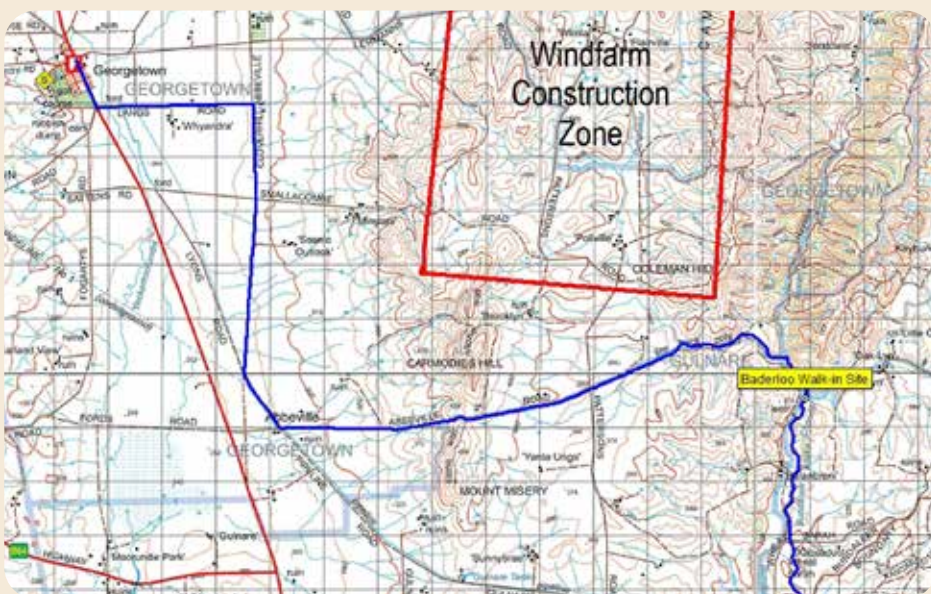
As the Trail has evolved The Friends volunteers have developed and maintain an array of sites from sites with a basic rainwater tanks & platform, where you can pop up your tent, to a diverse array of shelters and huts. Much of the Trail crosses pastoral, farming and private conservation land so it's important to respect that access and only camp at designated spots.

Check out our website: heysentrail.asn.au/.../prepare-to.../accommodation/

Dutchmans Hut (near Quorn)

A series of storms have severely damaged Dutchmans Hut so it is no longer available for hiker use. Parks has allocated the adjacent shearing shed as an interim arrangement while a longer-term solution is considered. The shearing shed has access to water, power and a toilet.

Hikers are our eyes and ear so please report issues that you find to The Friends: heysentrail@heysentrail.asn.au



Attention Landholders

Heysen Trail Landholder Agreements – Issued by Dept for Environment & Water (DEW)

The Department for Environment & Water (DEW) has updated information to The Friends about the Landholder Licence Agreements (5-year) enabling Heysen Trail access and that will commence from 2026. The DEW Leasing Team completed work on mapping and updating information needed to issue new Agreements. DEW has advised that the new Agreements were sent by post in early 2026, although some are yet to be signed and returned.

If you have any questions or have not received your updated Licence Agreement, please contact DEW Officer Carla Montgomerie Email: Carla.Montgomerie@sa.gov.au: Phone 08 8429 7659 Mon-Thurs. Carla has also requested landholders provide an email contact if you would prefer to receive future Agreements and/or information by email.

Biosecurity – Cleaning Materials

The Friends of Heysen Trail encourages and educates walkers about keeping boots clean and respecting biosecurity. Four volunteers passed on feedback from some landholders that it may be useful to have materials available to improve biosecurity compliance when walkers traverse private property. You may now obtain cleaning and disinfectant materials from DEW State Trails Officer Jarrah Bailey.

The DEW State Trails Officer, Jarrah Bailey is available if you need to discuss Heysen Trail management issues (other than general maintenance that The Friends volunteers carry out). Email: Jarrah.Bailey@sa.gov.au or Mobile 0448 363 263

➔ Trail Etiquette

Walking the Heysen Trail is a Privilege, not a Right

by Daniel Jardine & Tammy Main

The Heysen Trail is one of South Australia's most remarkable outdoor experiences. Stretching 1,200 kilometres from the Fleurieu Peninsula to the Flinders Ranges, it is Australia's longest marked walking trail. Because much of the Trail passes through areas at risk during the fire danger season, sections on private land are generally closed for around six months each year to ensure the safety of walkers, landholders, and the environment.

One of the Trail's most special features is the generosity of the many landholders who provide access across their properties. Around 130 landholders help make it possible for walkers to experience the diverse landscapes of South Australia. Without their support, the Trail would be far more limited and would require much more road walking. We are also mindful of the many neighbouring landholders whose properties border the Trail.

To help preserve these valued relationships, walkers are asked to stay on the marked Trail and respect private property at all times. This simple courtesy helps ensure continued access for everyone to enjoy.

The Friends of the Heysen Trail work in partnership with the Department for Environment and Water to maintain and improve the Trail. Over many years, Friends volunteers have contributed thousands of hours and significant funds to develop and maintain facilities, including hike-in campsites that enhance the walking experience.

The annual fire danger season closure allows landholders to safely carry out important property management activities, knowing there are no walkers in the area.

Access across private land is a privilege that relies on mutual respect and cooperation. By following Trail guidelines and showing consideration for landholders, walkers play an important role in helping protect Trail access for future generations.

Are you keen to help develop the Heysen Trail?

We are seeking volunteer Heysen Trail activity leaders

The Friends Trail Development Committee (TDC) oversees the Heysen Trail Annual Work Plan and identifies maintenance projects based on annual surveys, walker reports and strategic management plans. The Department for Environment & Water (DEW) provides an annual maintenance grant and approves a work program that TDC is required to acquit for expenses and work. The Friends also provides funds to develop the Trail.

We're looking for team-oriented people with initiative and a mix of practical skills in areas such as carpentry, painting or general handywork and use of power tools. 4WD drive experience is also useful given some of the terrain crossed to access the Trail. Yes this is a role that gets volunteers out to various parts of the Heysen Trail.

TDC Activity Leaders need to be willing to take responsibility that includes:

- Plan and coordinate a maintenance project;
- Use a database to prepare, record work hours and outcomes;
- Understand and apply Work Safety Procedures;
- Organise, induct and lead a small team of volunteers; and
- Communicate with TDC and other leaders.

TDC arranges Activity Leader Training through DEW for its Volunteer Safety Procedures. TDC provides training on the database as well as organising First Aid and other skills training as required.

If this sounds like you please provide your contact details and experience to The Friends Office for Attention: Trail Development Committee and one of us will get in touch.

Southern Flinders Ranges

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Mawson Trail Adventurers.



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FLINDERS & BEYOND

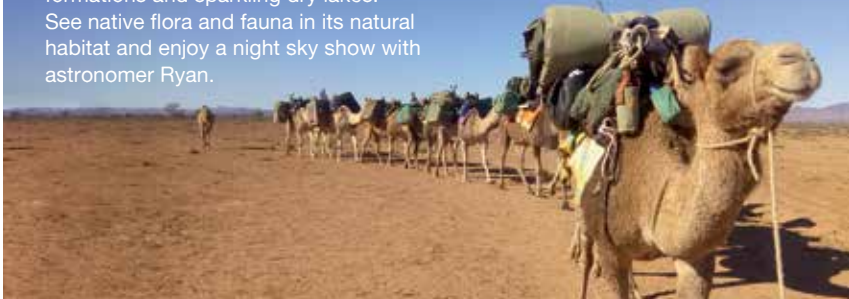
CAMEL TREKS

Join us in 2027 on a trek that completes the Heysen Trail's remote section 'Beyond Heysen'.

Explore hidden treasures of the Flinders Ranges with camels carrying your supplies. Trek through gum-lined creek beds, towering gorges, rare geological formations and sparkling dry lakes. See native flora and fauna in its natural habitat and enjoy a night sky show with astronomer Ryan.

Walking treks fully catered. Swags and transfers included. No roads, no vehicles, no mobile reception; detach from hectic everyday life and enjoy an unforgettable experience that will create memories to last a life time.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
T: (08) 8648 3713
E: info@flindersandbeyondcamels.com.au



HEYSEN EXTENTION JUNE/JULY 2027

Guess who's thru-hiking on the Heysen Trail this season?

In 2024 Kevin Moss completed the Heysen Trail, walking from Cape Jervis to Parachilna (north-bound). He's back again in 2026 to walk it SOBO (south-bound) from Parachilna to Cape Jervis. What a wonderful year to be walking the Flinders, a rare treat to see it with water flowing and bursting with green hues. For those new to Kevin's adventures, you can follow his journey with his youtube vlogs; youtube.com/@goinferal5815

By the time you read this column, we will have a well known leading voice in Australian hiking out on the Trail. Word has it Tim Savage, of the Australian Hiker fame, will be tackling the Trail south-bound also. If you have been day walking the Heysen Trail and wondering about what it takes to thru-hike it, Tim has a wealth of knowledge to share. Follow along on his journey blog at australianhiker.com.au/journeys/2026-heysen-trail/.

For those wondering about the Fastest Known Time attempt earlier in the season, I can share that Johan Botha who was aiming to cover the roughly 1,200 km Trail in just 11 days as part of the "11 Days in May" campaign, supporting mental health charity TIACS, made the call to stop at Tanunda. The will and heart were there, but the body had other plans. The 11 days in May event raised more than \$24,000 to support Australian tradies and blue collar workers. I'd say that was a success and Johan certainly contributed to that success. Johan showed such gratitude for his support crew, sponsors and followers. I hope he comes back and finishes what he started, whether it is at an ultra pace or a more leisurely one to soak up all the Heysen Trail has to offer.

@amongstthewildfollowers



Follow us
@heysentrail
friends

Best of the Heysen Trail on Instagram

Clever creativity on the Heysen Trail at Mount Brown campsite. Christie and Allan had some time to spare and captured the light in a unique way.

End-to-End Season Programme 2026

	1ST WEEKEND	2ND WEEKEND	3RD WEEKEND	4TH WEEKEND	5TH WEEKEND
AUG	E2E MINUS 3 SAT 25 JUL - SUN 2 AUG Leigh Creek Rd - Dutchmans Stern	E2E 17 SAT 8 - SUN 9 AUG Nth Booborowie Rd - Oban - Bundaleer Reservoir	E2E 19 SAT 15 - SUN 16 AUG Nugget Rd - Mt Crawford - Pewsey Vale	E2E 18 SAT 22 - SUN 23 AUG Hamilton - Peters Hill - Gerkie Gap	E2E 17 SAT 29 - SUN 30 AUG Bundaleer Reservoir - Lang Rd - Locks Ruin
	E2E 16 SAT 1 - SUN 2 AUG Horrocks Pass - Broadview - Woolshed Flat	E2E 20 SUN 9 AUG Mt Compass - Kyeema	E2E 15 SUN 16 - SUN 23 AUG Moralana Scenic Dr - Parachilna Gorge Trailhead		E2E 16 SAT 29 - SUN 30 AUG Woolshed Flat - Quorn - Dutchmans Stern
SEP	E2E 19 SAT 5 - SUN 6 SEP Pewsey Vale - Tanunda - Kapunda	E2E 17 SAT 12 - SUN 13 SEP Locks Ruin - Bowman Pk - Mt Zion	E2E 18 SAT 19 - SUN 20 SEP Gerkie Gap - Webb Gap - Burra Rd		
	E2E 20 SUN 6 SEP Tapanappa - Balquhider	E2E 16 SAT 12 - SUN 13 SEP Dutchmans Stern - Eyre Depot - Warren Gorge			
OCT		E2E 19 SAT 10 - SUN 11 OCT Kapunda - Hamilton - Peters Hill			
		E2E 20 SUN 11 OCT Balquhider - Waitpinga			

VERSION RELEASED 4 JULY 2026

heysentrail.asn.au/walks

Walking with the Friends

Check the online walk calendar for the latest updates to the program. For details about each walk, the hot weather policy, what to wear, what to bring and details of walk grades, visit heysentrail.asn.au/walks

Walks Registration

Register for a walk either online at heysentrail.asn.au/walks or by phoning the office on 8212 6299. Walk registration closing dates and times are listed on each walk event page, accessed via the website walk calendar.

Walk Cancellations

If you need to withdraw from a booked walk, please notify the leader or the office as soon as possible. The easiest way is to login to your account and withdraw from the walk.

End-to-End walks are not subject to a weather forecast temperature limit, however the walk leader may decide to cancel or amend the event if a weather event is deemed to present a high risk.

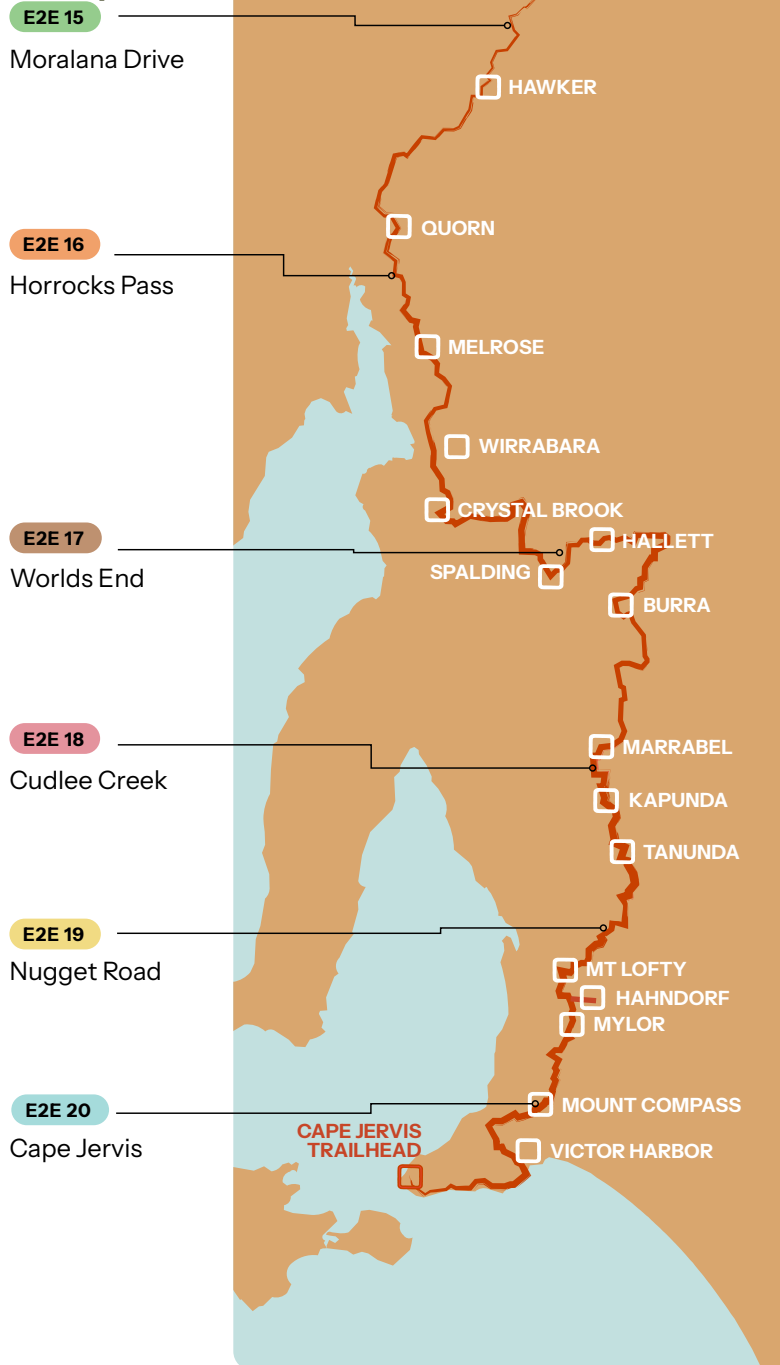
Trail Starter, Trail Walker and Trail Rambler walks will be cancelled if the forecast temperature for Adelaide is equal to or higher than 32°C. Be aware that walks are automatically cancelled when the forecast weather on the day of the walk is for severe storms with damaging winds as per the 7pm ABC News on the day prior to the walk. Refer to abc.net.au/news/weather or bom.gov.au/sa. Your Walk Leader will send an email to all walkers to advise of the cancellation. We suggest you check your emails before leaving to join the walk.

Bushfire policy

If a Total Fire Ban is declared by the CFS in the Fire Ban District where the walk event is being held, the walk event will be cancelled.

In such a case walk fees will be refunded.

Keeping track of the End-to-End Groups



Mark your achievement and help the Friends advocate for improvements

The Friends of the Heysen Trail issue certificates to people who have hiked the entire Heysen Trail from Cape Jervis to Parachilna Gorge (Northbound) or from Parachilna Gorge to Cape Jervis (Southbound).

Apply for a certificate:
heysentrail.asn.au/friends/end-to-end-certificate/

End-to-End Awards

Congratulations to the walkers who received End-to-End awards for completing the Trail up until the **end of June 2026**.

Paul Camus

Phill Deer

Tanya Deer

Steve Diamond

Kate Donald

Maxine Green

Ellen Hutchins

Daniel Jardine

Yvonne Landels

Hannah Pfeiffer



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Friends Season Walk Programme 2026

	1ST WEEKEND	2ND WEEKEND	3RD WEEKEND	4TH WEEKEND	5TH WEEKEND
AUG	SAT 1 AUG Black Hill Meredith Gray	SAT 8 AUG Sturt Gorge Lakeview Melanie Fischer	SAT 15 - SUN 16 AUG Walk the Yorke Gillian Stevens	SUN 23 AUG Sturt Gorge River Trail Loop Kristyn Willson	SUN 30 AUG Dean's Decision Dean Mortimer
	SUN 2 AUG Hardy's Scrub Noeleen Smith	SUN 9 AUG Onkaparinga Robert Ruediger	SAT 15 - SUN 16 AUG Heysen Highlights Heather Jensen	SUN 23 AUG Henley Beach Karen Baker	SUN 30 AUG Chambers Gully Lance Perryman
SEP	SAT 5 SEP Wine Shanty Peter Deacon	SAT 12 - SUN 13 SEP Walk the Yorke Gillian Stevens	SAT 19 - SUN 20 SEP Heysen Highlights Heather Jensen	SUN 27 SEP Crafrers Brownhill Loop Peter Clark	
	SUN 6 SEP Mt Barker Peter Clark	SUN 13 SEP Belair Orchid Ramble Marlene Henschke	SUN 20 SEP Wine Shanty/Mt Bonython Karen Baker		
OCT	SAT 3 - SUN 4 OCT Walk the Yorke Gillian Stevens	SUN 11 OCT Scott Creek Noeleen Smith	SAT 17 - SUN 18 OCT Coastal Series Kathy Wright	SUN 25 OCT John's Magical Meander John Babister	
	SUN 4 OCT Lobethal Lance Perryman				
NOV	To be advised	To be advised	To be advised	To be advised	To be advised

● TRAIL WALKER
 ● TRAIL STARTER
 ● TRAIL RAMBLER
 ● WALK THE YORKE
 ● OTHER

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A Mountain and Two Gorges

Registrations are now open for this extended walking weekend in early September, offering a chance to explore the rugged beauty of the southern Flinders Ranges at a time when wildflowers will hopefully be in abundance. This three-day adventure showcases the spectacular landscapes of Mt Remarkable National Park, with participants traversing three of its iconic hiking destinations – Mt Remarkable, Hidden Gorge and Alligator Gorge.



**Trailwalker
photo
competition**

While taking a break on their Nakasendo walk in Japan, our Friends members caught up on the Trail news.

Photo by Mark Scicluna

We invite our readers to submit photos of themselves or others reading Trailwalker in interesting or unusual locations.

Please send your high-resolution photos to the Editor at trailwalker@heysentrail.asn.au

The weekend begins on Friday September 11 with a 16 km circuit to the 960-metre summit of Mt Remarkable, including a section of the Melrose Nature Hike and views across the ranges. Saturday's 18 km Hidden Gorge circuit departs from Mambray Creek, climbing steadily to vantage points over Spencer Gulf before descending into dramatic red cliffs, rock formations and out through native pine forest. Sunday concludes with a 9 km circuit through Alligator Gorge, following the Terraces and Narrows, with striking evidence of the landscape's natural recovery following the 2025 bushfires.

We will be based in Wilmington for the duration of the weekend, with accommodation options listed on the walk registration page. A social pub dinner is planned for Saturday evening, and for those needing to return to work, the final walk will finish around lunchtime on Sunday. Additional walking options may be available for those with extra time and energy.

heysentrail.asn.au/walking-the-heysen-trail/walk-the-trail-with-the-friends/walk-calendar/

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Friends of the Heysen Trail: Celebrating Success While Planning for the Future

Compiled by Tammy Main from Neil Hendry's Presentation



The Friends of the Heysen Trail entered 2026 with much to celebrate, reflecting on a year of significant achievements while acknowledging the challenges that lie ahead in protecting and enhancing South Australia's premier long-distance walking trail.

Presenting at the organisation's 39th Annual General Meeting, President Neil Hendry highlighted a year marked by strategic progress, infrastructure improvements and strong volunteer commitment.

Among the major successes of 2025 was the redevelopment of the Friends of the Heysen Trail brand and website, designed to strengthen engagement with members and the wider walking community. Advocacy efforts also delivered positive outcomes, including a commitment to increased maintenance funding from the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) and the creation of a dedicated Heysen Trail Liaison position.

Recovery efforts following the Mt Remarkable bushfire saw substantial infrastructure replacement works completed, while a new hike-in campsite at Mylor was established to improve the trail experience for walkers.

Despite these achievements, the organisation faces several challenges in 2026. Trail repairs following the Deep Creek fires remain a priority, alongside progressing the Cudlee Creek reroute. The Friends continue to advocate for the long-term protection of the Heysen Trail through new landholder agreements and strategic land acquisitions by DEW. Improving responsiveness from government agencies is also expected to benefit from the newly created Heysen Trail Liaison role.

Membership growth remains another important focus area. Total membership stood at 1,162 at the end of 2025, down from 1,298 in 2024, despite attracting 222 new members during the year.

Volunteers continue to be the backbone of the organisation. During 2025, members contributed more than 13,600 hours of volunteer time, representing an estimated value exceeding \$890,000 based on Volunteering SA&NT's December 2025 valuation rate of \$50.50 per hour. Contributions spanned trail maintenance and development, office administration, finance, promotion and delivery of the walking program.

Trail maintenance remains the organisation's core objective. In 2025,

volunteers and supporters delivered a range of infrastructure improvements, including a new bridge at Chain of Ponds, the establishment of the Mylor hike-in site, installation of a water tank at Argadells, expansion of the tank telemetry system to 33 active sites, and repairs to the sand ladder at Waitpinga.

Ongoing maintenance activities included replacing stiles and posts, remarking sections of trail affected by the Mt Remarkable fire, realigning the Kings Beach section following storm damage, repairing the Jupiter Creek bridge, and undertaking repairs to several Heysen Trail huts.

Route management also remained an important area of focus, with reroutes undertaken at Cudlee Creek, Georgetown Wind Farm and Kuitpo Forest.

The Friends' walking program continued to thrive, attracting more than 1,400 walkers throughout 2025. Six End-to-End groups travelled north along the trail, complemented by extended walking programs on the Lavender Trail, the Willunga Basin Trail and the Clare Valley Wine and Wilderness Trail, as well as Trailstarters, Trailwalkers, Summertime Walks and Walkfest activities.



The organisation's promotional activities remained strong, with three editions of 'Trailwalker Magazine' produced during the year, with 4800 printed copies distributed and over 2000 electronic editions downloaded. The annual calendar continued to support promotional efforts, while social media audiences expanded to more than 11,600 Facebook followers and 2,535 Instagram followers.

Looking ahead, the Friends of the Heysen Trail have identified several major priorities for 2026, including attracting new members and volunteers, implementing new governance funding structures, replacing infrastructure damaged by the Deep Creek bushfire, and progressing development of a new southern trailhead.

As the organisation celebrates 40 years of volunteering, the continuing commitment of its members and volunteers remains central to ensuring the Heysen Trail is protected, maintained and enjoyed by future generations.

Photos: Lance Perryman & Josh West

➤ Right: Members in attendance for the 39th AGM. Top speaker is Neil Hendry, President. Far right speaker is Rudy Pieck, Treasurer.





The Friends of the Heysen Trail and Other Walking Trails celebrated 40 years of volunteering on Wednesday 22 April at BDO Place, Pirie Street, following the 39th Annual General Meeting. Nearly 100 members, supporters and guests attended the event to recognise the long-standing commitment of volunteers who have helped maintain and promote walking trails across South Australia.

The evening highlighted the achievements of Friends of the Heysen Trail and acknowledged the many individuals and groups whose sustained service has supported the upkeep of the Heysen Trail and associated walking routes. Certificates of Appreciation were presented to mark milestone years of contribution, reflecting decades of ongoing volunteer effort.

Thanks were extended to Rudy Pieck (Finance & Audit) for providing access to the BDO Place venue, and to the staff of BDO for their assistance in ensuring the event was a great success.

The evening also included a speech by Jenni Mitton, who attended as Member for Mawson and assisted with the cutting of the anniversary cake, marking the occasion.

Award recipients recognised for their service included Hugh Greenhill and the Retire Active Bushwalkers Club (40 Years), Colin Edwards, Julian Monfries and John Wilson (30 Years), Hermann Schmidt, Richard Webb and Jack Marcelis (25 Years), and Robert Alcock and Simon Cameron (20 Years). The awards highlighted the depth of commitment that has sustained the organisation over four decades.

Photos: Lance Perryman

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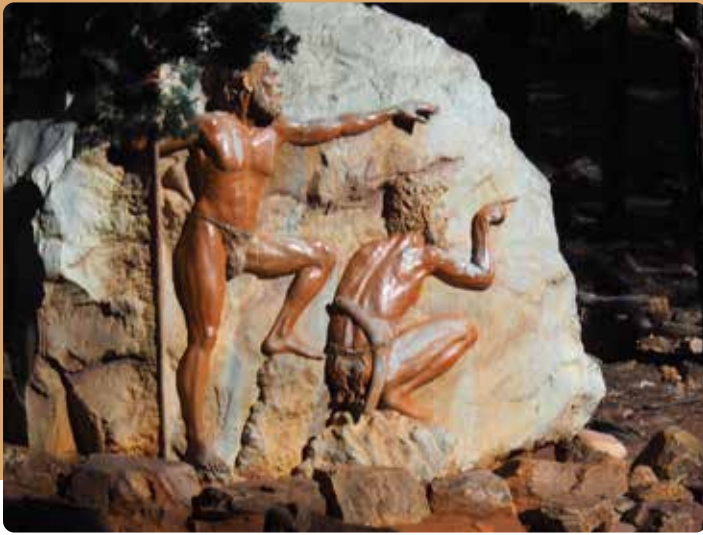
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The Stone People

Walking on Adnyamathanha Country

Simon Cameron

The Adnyamathanha occupy the Flinders Ranges from Mt Hopeless to the Willochra Plain, so Heysen walkers spend many days walking in Stone Country. The Adnyamathanha native title boundary begins at Ikara National Park, and the Willochra overlaps with Ngadjuri campsites. Adnyamathanha means 'Stone People'. It was the name they offered to anthropologists in the 20th century. The same anthropologists described four mobs with different group names, but Adnyamathanha is now the preferred term and applies to their native title claim. The uncertainty regarding the names of Indigenous mobs is not unusual and reflects the loss of culture due to colonisation pressures.

The Stone People lived in the arid north with some of the scarcest resources and observed the pastoral wave overwhelming the Ngadjuri and Nukunu, both mobs they shared language and story with. In the 1850s, any hope that the desert country would deter the spread of flocks was dashed when pastoral leases were declared as far as Mt Serle. By 1857 there were cattle north of Mt Hopeless.

Frontier conflict was prolonged and harsh. Water was the source of most of it, with pastoral leases being ruthless in protecting every waterhole. The 'South Australian Frontier' website lists over thirty conflict sites in Stone Country. The conflict was not only between the Adnyamathanha and pastoralists. A busy ochre trade route ran from Parachilna to the Gulf of Carpentaria, with northern mobs travelling to and from. The Stone People were caught

between these clashing groups, often blamed for stock killings done by trading mobs. Conflict continued into the 1860s—much later than in other regions of South Australia. A disastrous drought in 1865–66 further depopulated the area and removed the stock, quieting the affray. However, the loss of the waterholes was catastrophic, stopping migration patterns and leading to starvation. A ration station was established at Mt Serle and four other depots. By 1894 there were only a few dozen recipients, indicating that population numbers were very low. Children, particularly of mixed descent, were removed to Point McLeay (Raukkan) from 1890.

The Adnyamathanha had lived in central Australia for at least fifty thousand years. The Warraty Rock Shelter, above Arkaroola, shows evidence of occupation from 49,000 BCE and includes the earliest use of ochre. The climate was more temperate, and megafauna ruled the plains. The Stone People had arrived before the start of the last ice age, when the drying of the landscape accelerated. They adapted to climatic change. After the arrival of the pastoralists, they continued to adapt by being useful as stockmen, dingo hunters, camel drivers, and muleteers. The Adnyamathanha maintained their connection to Country by working on it for leaseholders.

In 1929, the United Aborigines Mission, with Charles Duguid, lobbied to establish a reserve at Nepabunna, where there was reliable water. This was resumed from Balcoona Station,

then owned by Sir Sidney Kidman, and a mission was established in 1931. Oral histories recount strict discipline and control, but the mission also became a cultural centre, allowing language and story to continue. Yura, the local language, is still strong, with the 2021 census recording more than 250 fluent speakers. It was at Nepabunna that anthropologists such as Charles Mountford recorded Adnyamathanha stories, including rich Dreaming narratives. The creation of Ikara (Wilpena Pound) by two giant serpents or Akurras is told on storyboards near the chalet, and more stories are available in Flinders Ranges Dreaming (1988), published by Aboriginal Studies Press.

Nepabunna became the cultural heartland of the Stone People. They have maintained their culture and have also supported their southern neighbours. A senior Ngadjuri man related the story of Adnyamathanha elders coming to Point Pearce to perform ceremony after the local Narungga and Ngadjuri no longer had senior men. In more recent times, Nukunu men have travelled north to learn traditional carving skills.

This ancient culture is resilient. Their language is strong, and place names help celebrate its survival. St Mary Peak is called Ngarri Mudlanha. Mt Aleck is called Urdlu-warlpunha. Both peaks tower over the Heysen Trail, where walkers can learn these ancient names of the Stone People and marvel at the country.

Rainproof Hiking: What really works?



I never compromise on: **Fully taped seams**, so rain doesn't sneak through stitch holes. A **hood with adjustable drawcord**. I wear a cap underneath to keep rain from my eyes. **Velcro cuffs** to keep water where it belongs. If the jacket is waterproof it's also wind proof. The difference between enjoying the hiking or questioning why I left home.

Roz Garrard
Friends Walk Leader



All clothing has a point of failure so another strategy should be considered: A **thermos of something warm** and a never ending **stash of snacks** keeps your insides working while you're moving. Consider a bothy as a quick and easy shelter to warm up out of the worst of the weather.

Julia Patten
Walking SA Ambassador



Be prepared. We walk the Heysen Trail in winter, so every walker needs to be prepared if the weather changes. Always have a **wet weather jacket** in your backpack for that occasion. If the weather looks bad, always have a **change of clothes** in the car because once you stop walking the chill sets in.

Paul DeLaine
Friends Walk Leader



Baseball cap to keep the sun and rain out of your eyes and help keep the hood of the jacket on. **Snap lock bags** for phone and keys ... waterlogged keys don't help you get home.

Amanda Badenhop
E2E17 Friends Member



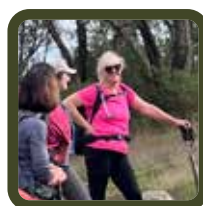
I like to make sure that I have layers that will keep me warm even if they get wet, like **merino wool base layers**. I also keep my pack contents in **dry bags** so that I've got something warm and dry to change into when I get a chance.

Rin Green
Friends Walk Leader



My rule is simple: if I can see a clear horizon through the shower, my clothes will likely dry within 10 minutes. My essentials are a **three-quarter-length rain jacket**, **short wax-cotton gaiters** to keep water out of boots, and **zip-leg rain trousers** that fit over boots when needed.

Dean Mortimer
Friends Walk Leader



That's a tricky toss up between my **rain jacket** not much fun if you're cold and wet and my **bag cover/dry bag** learnt the hard way that my phone is not aquatic. I think my dry bag inside my pack is the ultimate in peace of mind.

Melanie Fischer
Friends Walk Leader



Trailthinker Quiz Answers

1. Willunga Basin
2. Adelaide Bushwalkers
3. Retired Teachers Walking Group
4. Clare Valley Wine & Wilderness
5. The Lavender Federation Trail
6. Retire Active
7. WEA Ramblers Bushwalking Club
8. Wise Women Walking
9. Walking SA
10. Southern Ocean Walk
11. Big Heart Travel
12. Flinders & Beyond

Jackie & Jon Westover



When did you first become involved with the friends?

Jon and I have both been volunteering for around 3 years. I am in the office and Jon does trail maintenance.

Why did you initially get involved with volunteering with the Friends?

We started to walk the Trail with friends and when we were at Worlds End we joined E2E11 (the logistics on your own were getting hard) and completed the full Trail in 2022. We both retired shortly after finishing and decided it would be a good way to give back to something that we both enjoyed and got a lot out of. Living in Inman Valley meant we were close enough to the Trail for Jon to manage a section on the Fleurieu.

What are some activities in which you have been involved?

I have helped out at Walkfest in the Heysen tent, great chatting with all kinds of people interested in walking the Heysen, spruiking the merits of joining and walking with an E2E group. Jon has done some vehicle support.

What is your favourite Heysen Trail town/region?

The Flinders Ranges are pretty special. Staying in Rawnsley Park, camp fires, shared BBQ and the ranges at sunset and sunrise.

What was your fondest memory on the Heysen?

This is difficult to answer as it is such a long trail and many wonderful memories are made along the way. One fun evening was spent having a shared meal in the Gladstone gaol with the E-E gang. We were each given a prisoner profile to act out or explain our crimes and the person's demise. A great history lesson, lots of fun and good banter.

Is there something you'd never be without when you're walking?

Poles and a waterproof jacket

What has been your favourite walk aside from the Heysen Trail?

Locally, The Clare Valley Wine and Wilderness Trail. Jon and I first completed it with Friends of the Heysen. Then I was fortunate enough to walk it again this year. What's not to enjoy with beautiful vineyards, plus the bonus of beginning and ending each walk at a winery. Overseas would be the Coast to Coast walk in the North of England. The Lake district, Yorkshire Moors and Dales are stunning. Staying in the lovely villages (&pubs!) and meeting people along the way.

➔ Volunteer with us

We're always on the look out for volunteers (and Friends!). If you'd like to get involved and support the Trail, here are some current opportunities:

➔ Office Volunteer

Join our friendly team of office volunteers and help keep the Trail running smoothly. Would suit people who can commit one day a week or fortnight, between 10.30am - 2.30pm on weekdays. You'll assist with:

- Using our website/database to manage walk bookings
- Selling maps, books, and Trail resources
- Responding to Trail and walking enquiries

➔ Reconciliation Sub-committee Chair

As Chair of the Reconciliation Committee, you'll advise the Friends' Council on reconciliation initiatives, support Walk Leaders with resources, liaise with Traditional Owners and agencies, and help share stories along the Trail.

.....
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↓ Old Mount Bryan East School House 2025

Old Mount Bryan East School

Melanie Sjoberg's article on the Old Mount Bryan East School rekindled memories of this iconic Heysen Trail shelter and its most famous former student, Sir Hubert Wilkins. Simon Pikusa reflects on the enduring links between place, walking and history.

Dear Editor,

I really enjoyed the piece on the Old Mount Bryan East School in the August 2025 edition of Trailwalker.

The article is right — that old schoolhouse is a welcome and cosy overnight stop in the open, exposed country between Burra and Crystal Brook. It's far easier to drift off listening to the wind rattling the windows than flapping your tent all night. And thinking about Hubert Wilkins once sitting at a desk there is one of those wonderful crossroads where your own walk briefly intersects with the journeys of an extraordinary explorer and adventurer.

I've crossed paths with him three times now, in increasingly unlikely places.

The first is the schoolhouse itself. I'm certainly not the only walker to have crossed Mt Bryan in high winds, my first visit in June 2015 was memorable for that, or in parched, dusty conditions like June 2025, on my second. A litre of water from the school's tank felt more valuable than just about anything else. You can imagine how growing up in the Goyder country might have hardened a boy for the far ends of the Earth.

Next was at a symposium at the Royal Geographical Society in London in October 2025. The doorman directed me to a board listing RGS gold medallists, mounted above my coat rack. And there was Wilkins, 1928, the year after his trans-Arctic flight from Point Barrow to Spitsbergen. Instantly, my mind jumped back to the stone walls, red quoins and green roof at Mt Bryan East.

He was in good company. Tom Longstaff the same year, Kenneth Mason (Abode of Snow) the year before and Freya Stark on the right. Together with names who wrote books I'd devoured from the public library as a kid — the stern Douglas Mawson, the enigmatic Robert Falcon Scott and the driven Eric Shipton. They built huts, drove dog sleds, shot seals and walked on ice. And, like many others in South Australia, I also walked the Flinders with Warren Bonython.

Inside the RGS, the entrance opens into a hall with a fireplace framed by portraits of Scott and Ernest Shackleton. A corridor leads to the Map Room (the maps live elsewhere now), a theatre, and other rooms branching off. The timber floors creak as you walk. You can almost

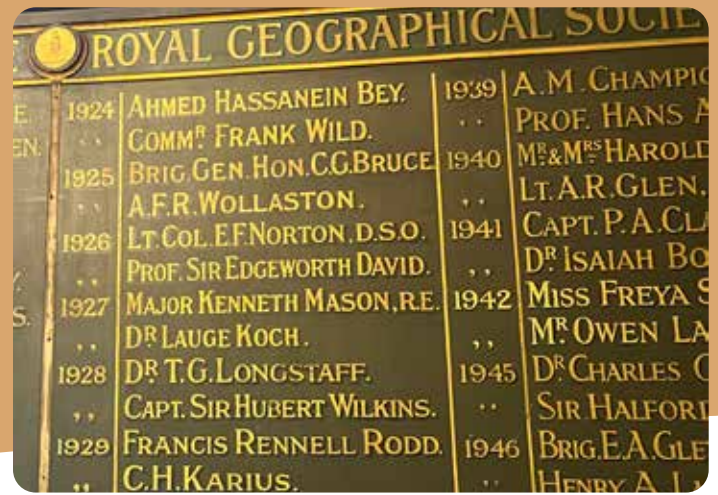


↓ Mount Bryan 2015



↓ Mount Bryan 2025





hear the accumulated murmur of debates, lectures and conversations from people who had seen lands few others ever had. Similar, perhaps, to the old schoolhouse in the middle of the night.

That day's symposium was about the relationship between maps, indigeneity, empire and contemporary exploration — the sort of thing I guess many Trailwalkers would find interesting, so I've included a link below.

Wilkins, after all, navigated across the polar regions with a sextant and a sundial. He was an early adopter of new technology, but also a deeply thoughtful, reflective person. A real polymath from the Mid North, educated in a one-teacher school.

Which makes it odder that the third place I keep seeing him is in the men's room at Adelaide Airport.

Best regards,

Simon Pikusa (Brisbane)

rgs.org/events/talks-on-demand/challenging-maps

Books on Sir Hubert Wilkins:

The Last Explorer: Hubert Wilkins, Australia's Unknown Hero by Simon Nasht (2005)

The Incredible Life of Hubert Wilkins: Australia's Greatest Explorer by Peter FitzSimons (2021)

Photos: Simon Pikusa

↑ Top: Portrait of Sir Hubert Wilkins at the Adelaide Airport

↗ Top right: RGS Gold Medalist Board

→ Right: RGS Map Room

↘ Bottom right: RGS Interior



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Deep Creek Endures: Fire, Recovery and Renewal

Jane Formato & Barry Duykers

The recent bushfire in Deep Creek National Park was a difficult and significant event for all involved in caring for this special place. It brought periods of uncertainty and challenge, alongside a strong collective response from firefighters, volunteers, and the wider community. The following account reflects on both the impact of the fire and the resilience that has since been observed across the park.

Summer is always a time of extra vigilance in our country as long dry spells without rain mean that the landscape is tinder dry. Deep Creek National Park had not seen a major bushfire since the early 1980s but all this changed at 4.42pm on February 1 this year when Barry's CFS pager went off for him to join his Rapid Bay crew and attend a grass fire that afternoon, near Blowhole Beach Road.

Conditions were challenging with strong winds and limited day light hours meaning support from firefighting aircraft would only be for a few hours before nightfall set in that

evening. With the fire having started in steep terrain crews had no choice but to wait for it to come to them. In the 2 weeks that followed hundreds of volunteers from around South Australia as well as interstate crews helped us battle the blaze until it was finally brought under control.

On the second day of the fire when it became apparent that this was a major incident SA Power turned off electricity in the area for safety reasons. When we went to each cottage to salvage food and leave fridge doors open it was a very surreal feeling leaving them not knowing whether we would ever see these buildings that we have looked after for more than three decades intact again.

As a CFS volunteer you are allocated a particular area to fight and have no say over where you are positioned on the fireground as these decisions are made by a central command. This was very frustrating for us as we obviously were anxious that our cottages at various locations throughout Deep Creek National Park would be safe. Throughout those 2 weeks Barry was stationed in other areas including Cape Jervis and Fisheries Beach and



it came as a shock to learn via others that the shed and tank infrastructure at Goondooloo Cottage had been lost.

However, things could have been much worse. The fire came very close to this iconic cottage but we have rebuilt our infrastructure and it is once again fully operational to live another day!

Now that the dust has settled we are able to stand back and assess the impact which has been profound. Deep Creek National Park will of course recover as it did in 1980 and 1983 and in some ways this event represents a once in a generation opportunity to witness first-hand how nature responds.

It is a story in two parts. At first sight, nature has rebounded in a spectacular way.

Within 2 weeks of the fire being brought under control we saw the pyrophilous (fire loving) fungi that had laid dormant all those years emerge triumphantly as its moment had arrived!

Then there's the prolific epicormic growth on all the eucalypts, the Xanthorrhoea that have seemingly almost instantly grown lush green leaves and will produce spectacular flowering spikes in the coming months. But in other areas such as the lower reaches of Aaron Creek and Blowhole where the fire reached higher temperatures the impact will take much longer to recover. And of course, as is so often the case, introduced plants were among the first to re-appear and have since flourished.

In the days and weeks that followed news reports tended to focus on the loss of vegetation but there was little mentioned of the impact the fire had on the Park's fauna.

To some extent birds and kangaroos could move to other areas but other smaller creatures paid a heavy price. It has been encouraging to see signs of life when we have conducted our guided walks since the fire.

As most readers would know the Trail from Trig Campground to the Deep Creek Waterfall remains closed as the stairs that led to the waterfall were destroyed during the fire. These stairs had a special significance to us as Barry was part of a crew that constructed them back in 1998.

Fortunately, we have been able to make minor adjustments to our Southern Ocean Walk and Fleurieu Gourmet Tour so that guests can continue to enjoy this beautiful part of the world.

It's fair to say that in recent years Covid, the algal bloom and the fires have presented us with significant challenges. However, we have been encouraged by the messages of support from our loyal customers who have enjoyed staying at the cottages over many years and continue to support us through these times. Deep Creek National Park has, and will continue to be a very special place to visit.



Photos: Jane Formato

↖ Top left: Goondaloo Cottage shed after the fire.

← Left: Epicormic growth on the eucalypts.

↑ Above: Xanthorrhoea, reproduction is greatly enhanced by fire.

↓ Below: Pyrophilous (fire loving) fungi.

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Currently walking with E2E15, I am a Fearless Fiftener. Please contact me if you think you might need a celebrant - always happy to have a chat.

John Wilson, Civil Marriage Celebrant

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What's Next?

Bill Vine



As participants approach the final year of the Friends' organised end-to-end program, thoughts inevitably turn to a pressing question: what is next? For some, the journey marks an ending; for others, it opens the door to new adventures. In this article, William reflects on the path he and Jennine chose to follow and shares how the answer to that question unfolded for them.

After E2E13, Jennine and I looked for a new challenge and decided that a stroll through the Himalayas was just the thing. So, in October 2025, we set out on a ten-day trek to Annapurna Base Camp (ABC) with G Adventures. Our little group of fourteen trekkers, representing seven nationalities and ranging in age from 26 to 69, along with two Nepalese guides and six porters, set out from Birethanti in the foothills of the Western Himalayas. For the first two days we headed towards the mountain village of Ghorepani, following the Bhurungdi Khola River and steadily climbing as we went.

Overnight accommodation on the trail was in Nepalese teahouses, simple hotels built from tin, wood and local stone offering very basic accommodation and occasionally a hot shower. What they lacked in facilities they made up for in hearty Nepalese and Western food served in communal dining rooms. The porters' meal of choice was Dal Bhat, the seemingly bottomless Nepalese staple they claimed fuelled their remarkable carrying capacity – "Dal Bhat Power: 24 Hour" was their cry. These teahouses could be found in villages along the trail and provided trekkers with breakfast, lunch, dinner and everything in between. They also acted as shops along the trail, selling basic necessities and snacks.

Day 2 started with us crossing the river on the first of many steel-wire and aluminium suspension bridges. These new bridges were built by the Government to replace the old bridges found throughout the country, made from rope, wood and prayers. Crossing the river, we faced our first major challenge, the 1,000-step stone staircase that carries trekkers out of the valley to the ridge above. Walking through thick rhododendron forests, the weather was hot and humid, and the walking was heavy going. It was a tiring introduction to what was to come and we wearily stumbled into Ghorepani late on Day 2.

Day 3 started pre-dawn with a mad, breathless scramble up to the top of Poon Hill to watch the sunrise over the Western Himalayas. The day dawned bright and clear and, at 3,210 metres, the views were both figuratively and literally breathtaking. Back down to Ghorepani for breakfast and then eastward for two days to the crossroads town of Chhomrong, climbing mountain ridges, descending into river valleys and back up again, the high point being the mountain pass of Thapla Danda. The effects of altitude sickness were not to be taken lightly, with most walkers taking Diamox and, once we got over 2,000 metres, the guides conducted regular resting heart rate and oxygen saturation tests. They also kept a close eye on all of us, looking for symptoms. Such was the concern that two of our trekkers elected to stay behind in Chhomrong with one of the porters and await our return from ABC in four days.

There is no vehicle access to Chhomrong. All supplies are carried there and beyond either by porter or donkey train. The donkeys themselves are only allowed as far as the village of Bamboo, so everything beyond that must be carried by hand. We were amazed at their ability to transport such large loads of food, gas bottles, cookware and other supplies. One remarkable fellow was seen carrying sheets of corrugated Colorbond steel on his back to ABC. Because everything is carried by hand, there is no meat available or single-use plastic water bottles allowed beyond Chhomrong. Water was plentiful and we could top up our reusable bottles or bladders from mountain springs in villages, delicately flavoured with a water purification tablet, or from boiled water supplied by the teahouses.

Leaving Chhomrong, we headed north-east for the next two days, walking alongside or above the fast-flowing Modi Khola River, fed by glacial melt and mountain springs cutting through a narrow, steep-sided valley, its walls towering two kilometres above us on either side. The thick jungle >



Photos: supplied by Bill Vine

- ☞ Top left: Machhapuchhre from the Sanctuary reservoir
- ☞ Top right: Bill Vine having a rest at Machhapuchhre Base Camp
- ☞ Above right: Dinner at the ABC teahouse
- ☞ Bottom right: Preparing to leave the teahouse at Chhomrong



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eventually gave way to stunted alpine trees, leaving us fully exposed to the sun and reduced ozone coverage. Always climbing, except when we dipped down to cross mountain streams feeding into the Modi Khola, we eventually reached the alpine tundra at Machhapuchhre Base Camp (MBC) at lunchtime on Day 6. MBC sits at the end of the Annapurna Sanctuary, a broad east-west valley carved out by a long-since receded glacier. Above the southern moraine is a wide strip of tundra bounded by the cliff-like edge of the moraine and the adjacent valley wall. It was here that mountain herders once brought their flocks to graze during summer, giving the sanctuary its name.

After lunch we commenced the steep climb out of MBC towards the broad glacial basin where the track levelled out. It was here we expected to get our first glimpse of Annapurna itself, sitting at the head of the valley. Up until now it had remained hidden from us by the surrounding mountains and valley walls, but we were to be disappointed as clouds, and eventually fog, obscured the mountain, offering only brief, tantalising glimpses. ABC itself sits at 4,130 metres, nestled at the foot of the mountain range where the moraine and valley wall squeeze the strip of tundra to nothing. Originally used as the stepping-off point for climbing Annapurna, the world's tenth-highest mountain, today it mainly services trekkers. We finally reached it late in the afternoon, stopping for the obligatory photos in front of its famous welcome sign before retiring to our rooms to freshen up before dinner.

Day 7 started pre-dawn with temperatures below zero. From ABC we climbed even higher to the sheer edge of the moraine to get uninterrupted views of the face of Annapurna illuminated by the rising sun. Blessed with clear weather, the mountain was revealed in all its grandeur, rising another 4,000 metres above us. The air was so clear we could see wisps of snow being whipped from its peak by the jet stream. Eventually we reluctantly dragged ourselves back down to ABC for breakfast before packing up and retracing our route through the valley.

Going down is much faster than going up but this time we were the ones with a spring in our step, encouraging weary and winded trekkers on their way up. We reached Chhomrong in the early afternoon of Day 8 and carried on to Jhinu Danda where we were reunited with the rest of our team. The more enthusiastic trekkers completed the three-

kilometre return trip down to the valley floor to soak in the hot springs. Jhinu Danda was a bit of a "party village" that night as, for most trekkers, it marked their last night on the trail, but we were not finished yet.

At the start of Day 9 our group continued further down the mountain and crossed the longest suspension bridge in Nepal, 287 metres long and swaying 140 metres above the Kimrong Khola River – trekkers must give way to donkeys on the bridge. For the next two days we headed south, initially continuing alongside the Modi Khola before climbing up and over the mountain ridges. We reached Pothana on the evening of Day 9 just ahead of a torrential downpour, the first real rain of our trip. For us it would be the last night with the porters, so the music was turned up to compete with the rain and we danced the night away with them. What we did not realise at the time was that our downpour translated into heavy snowfall at higher elevations, closing the trail at Deurali and trapping trekkers higher up for several days.

The next morning, Day 10, was a relatively short walk, all downhill, finally emerging at the village of Dhampus where our transport was waiting. We bid farewell to our porters and travelled on to Pokhara for an afternoon of washing and relaxing.

While the trek in total was only 128 kilometres long, we managed to achieve a cumulative total of over 10,000 metres of elevation gain. The climbs were sometimes tortuous, leaving us short of breath and our hearts pounding in the thin air. One thing that struck me was how close our little group became on the trek, with everyone looking out not only for each other, but for other trekkers as well, offering help, encouragement, water or food, whatever was required. I think I found the camaraderie and friendship just as rewarding as the stunning scenery and beautiful clean air of the Himalayas. The knees are now knackered, but it was worth it.

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Photos: supplied by Bill Vine

- ↗ Top right: 'The Team' of trekkers
- ↗ Above right: Sunrise from Poon Hill
- Right: Hillside temple
- ↘ Bottom right: Crossing the mountain streams
- ↙ Bottom left: Gray Langurs on the track





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Akurra Trail Leigh Creek

Sally Henery

Just before Mother's Day 2026, on a warm autumn day, four walkers—two mothers and two daughters aged from early 30s to early 60s—hiked the Akurra Trail at Leigh Creek, in the Northern Flinders Ranges of South Australia.

The Akurra trail, located in the Northern Flinders Ranges of South Australia, highlights the interlinked relationship of language, culture, tradition, and country. Waterways, hills, rocks and copper deposits reflect the journeys of Spiritual Ancestors. You are invited to view this land through the eyes of the Adnyamathanha people, to learn Muda (History, Songline) and uncover the significant flora and fauna of this ancient place.

Way markers guide users along 10.5km of remote bushland, departing from Leigh Creek township. Signs provide rich information about Adnyamathanha language, Muda, flora and fauna along the way.

(information in italics is from visitleighcreek.com.au)

We found it to be a well-marked rocky track, with our devices recording a total distance of 11 km by the time we returned. The information advises

starting at the medical centre; however, since then, the medical centre has been demolished and a new one built in a slightly different location. Using the markers and an offline map in Avenza, we easily found our way. A slight early hill climb revealed spectacular views over Leigh Creek township and the magnificent Northern Flinders Ranges stretching out in all directions.

A lot of thought has been put into the trail, with two loops ensuring it is not entirely linear, and offering interesting discoveries on both the outward and return sections. Keeping to the right at each junction ensures you stay on track. Interpretive signs at the beginning, middle, and end share Adnyamathanha cultural knowledge, including information about plants, birds, animals, and Muda, and were both interesting and informative.

Following recent heavy rains, a very full Aroona Dam was a welcome sight at the furthest point of the walk and provided a pleasant rest stop. We spotted several large (dinner-plate sized) turtles, a small mob of kangaroos, and a couple of ducks. The picnic table and seating



Photo: Sally Henery

↖ Top, left: Aroona Dam

↑ Top: Akurra Trail map

are positioned for sun-seekers on a cold winter's day; however, on this warm 20°C day we opted to sit in the shade on the rocky banks, which were not particularly comfortable but adequate.

Keeping to the right again at each junction, the return journey was as interesting and enjoyable as the outward leg. We arrived back at our vehicle parked at the Leigh Creek Medical Centre after four hours, exactly as the trail information had advised.

All four members of our group would happily recommend the Akurra Trail as a stunning, varied, and engaging hike for anyone visiting the Leigh Creek area with a moderate level of fitness, good hiking shoes, and four hours to spare.

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