

**A HISTORY OF 50 YEARS OF
THE BRISBANE CATHOLIC BUSHWALKING CLUB**

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*The following is based on information taken from
various club records and articles written over the years.*

When Father William Hayes was assigned to the Parish of Yeronga from the mountain-studded Parish of Beaudesert, he took with him the deeply-rooted love of the outdoors that had first been ingrained in him by the lush, green fields of his native Ireland.

Happily, he discovered in his new parish, an equal enthusiast named Raoul Mellish and one day was discussing with him, the striking appeal of a high mountain peak named Mt. Barney.

This mountain was situated in the Rathdowney district and the two of them decided that, whenever parish duties allowed, they would endeavour to visit some of these places. Thus began the association of Father Willie Hayes and Raoul Mellish, the actual founders of the club.

Raoul was already an experienced bushwalker with a special attachment for the Glasshouse Mountains. Early in September 1957, the two organised a visit to the glasshouse district and ascended Mt. Beerwah of that group. After the climb, tea was taken by the banks of a large pool on the north western side of Mt. Tibrogargan. This is where the idea of forming a Catholic club to cater for both the spiritual and material needs of bushwalkers was first thought about.

A copy of the Sydney Catholic Bushwalkers' Constitution was obtained and Archbishop Duhig was called upon to give permission for the Brisbane Catholic Bushwalking Club to be set up. This was received with His Grace's encouragement.

The first organised walk was at Mt Tibrogargan on 1 December 1957 and the club celebrated its 50th anniversary by holding the same walk on the 1 December, 2007; with the current members being joined by some of the original walkers for this special occasion.

The first meeting of the club was held on the 10 January, 1958 with fifty people in attendance. The nominated committee was:

President/Chaplain – *Father Willie Hayes*

Outings Secretary – *Raoul Mellish*

Secretary – *Rosemary O'Brien,*

Treasurer – *Col McLellan,*

Outings Recorder – *John Power*

A General Committee consisting of :

*Pat Goodwin, Neal Reville, Vince Arthur and
Vince Maume.*

Even in the early days of the club there was regular discussion of building a shelter for bushwalkers and/or a chapel/shrine to Our Lady Of The Way and, in 1963, Raoul Mellish advised that Mr Brian Drynan had generously offered oral permission for the club to build a hut on one acre of land in the Mt. Barney lower portals area on portion 43, Parish Palen, County Ward.

Starting in 1965 Keith Condon and Paul Tracey were instrumental in organising many working bees and *Yalburra* was blessed and opened by Monsignor O. Steele and Father Kevin Aspinall on Sunday, 19 March, 1967 with almost 150 people in attendance. The hut is still in use with many visits by club members and of course the annual 'club hut feast' being held on the anniversary of its opening.

In 1960, with Father Willie Hayes as the celebrant and the 58 people who had made the climb with him, the club started a tradition that continues to this day, of holding Mass on top of Mt. Barney on Exhibition Wednesday.

The club celebrated its 50th anniversary on 30 March 2008 with a Mass by Archbishop Bathersby followed by lunch. Many past member from all over Australia and overseas attended and we were honoured to have Willie (who travelled from Ireland) and Raoul, join us for this special occasion.

The Brisbane Catholic Bushwalking Club has maintained the original aims of Willie and Raoul by serving the spiritual and walking needs of the Catholic population.

We thank them for their foresight every time we find ourselves standing on an isolated lush green valley floor or on top of a mountain gazing at spectacular views.

The following is an update of the Club's anniversary celebrations.

In 2010, on 11 August, about 150 past and present members of the Brisbane Catholic Bushwalking Club, including nine from the original gathering a half-century ago, joined celebrant Archbishop John Bathersby of Brisbane for the celebration of their 50th Mass.

Raoul Mellish was now deceased, but Father Willie Hayes in Ireland sent greetings for the anniversary with the recollection that the privilege of carrying up the requirements for the Mass was a somewhat dubious one as the altar stone itself was a foot square and weighed quite a few kilos. However, Father added that the Mt Barney Mass was one of the highlights of his time in Australia and, indeed, of his life.

Following a picnic lunch after Mass, Pat Lawton entertained the crowd with stories from some of the 48 times she had been involved.

Original climber, Brian Wilson, shared his memories of the first climb and a second one, a few months later, when he assisted in the laying of a plaque, a club badge and the altar stone.

Another original climber, Mary Ferro, was joined by the other eight from the first Mass for the cutting of a celebratory cake.

For Archbishop Bathersby, the August Mass in 2010 was his third and during it, the names of the 37 deceased members of the club were read out in fondness and reverence.

Twenty priests have joined club members over the years for the climb and to celebrate Mass.