

# The Chronicle

• Keeping our communities informed **FEBRUARY 2026** •

A deep THANK YOU to the amazing CFA and local Fire Brigade who, whilst fighting ferocious bushfires, so bravely put their own lives at risk to save the lives and properties of those affected communities.

**WE THANK YOU SINCERELY**

The past few weeks of horrendous heat and raging bushfires brings into sharp focus the need for strategic, pre-emptive planning and crucially, property preparation, before the Fire Danger Period begins. If January has taught us anything it is that being well informed, attentive and well prepared *in advance* of any threat is paramount.



Just a reminder that the CFA website has extensive information and guidance covering every scenario, and answers clearly what work or activity can or should not be done or undertaken within each of the specified Fire Danger Periods. They also have informational brochures and booklets with this crucial

information distributed throughout our surrounding towns ready for pickup as a handy reference.

## Are You Fire Ready?

The Franklindale Fire Brigade on 19th Oct 2025 opened up the station for the community to present the CFA's new campaign *Are You Fire Ready*.

This was to provide an opportunity for any community member to come and discuss your pre fire season planning and to ask questions or just meet brigade members.

**This campaign will be run again this year in October so keep a watch for notification of the event date.**

Some **key points** to think about before then: if you plan to leave – the timing and safest route; if you plan to stay – are you adequately prepared to defend; fuel load around your house and sheds, and the best time to clean up; do you understand the Vic Emergency app warning system for the state; what is the fire behavior potential where you live? Would a fire truck fit and have clear access to your property?

**Stay safe and stay tuned for more info.**

[www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au)

**\* Benefit Concert \***  
**for fire-affected communities**

**• SUNDAY FEB 8 •**

**With Django Fretts and Jo Huf**

**..... Full details – see Page 2 ....**

## MORNING TEA FUNDRAISER

*Franklindale Fire Brigade Ladies Committee*

**Come along and enjoy a fun filled morning  
Wed. 11th March, 10am-12pm: Yandoit Hall**

Find a bargain on the trading table, buy some delicious homemade and homegrown produce. Catch up with friends and enjoy some yummy morning tea. Raffle and Door prize too.

Help us support our wonderful Fire Brigade and raise funds for much needed supplementary equipment to help them in their great work in keeping our community safe.

**Contributions to the Trading Table and Morning tea would be greatly appreciated.**

**EVERYONE MOST WELCOME.**

Enquiries:

Rhonda Muller - 0407 740 619

Anne Richards - 0427 764 237



**Wednesday 11th March • 10-12pm**

## Franklindale Fire Brigade's new tanker



## Brigades Ladies Auxiliary 50th anniversary

At the end of November '25, the Franklindale Fire Brigade held a community BBQ to celebrate and showcase the newly acquired brigade-owned Tanker, and also, to acknowledge and celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Brigades Ladies Auxiliary – extending many thanks for their support they have given to the brigade and community over so many years.

Many thanks to the community for its most generous support which made this possible and for coming along to the BBQ which was catered for by the Rapid Relief Team.

Thank you all for all the support.  
(Noel Richards, Captain)

# Benefit Concert for fire-affected communities with Django Fretts and Jo Huf

It's been a wild January with fires impacting on so many people, homes, mountains, farms, animals, food systems, plants and wildlife.

Join us for a joyful afternoon/early evening of music and dance, with **Django Fretts** and **Jo Huf** as we raise funds in support of our local fire affected communities and brigades.

**Donations at the door. All donations, large or small will be greatly appreciated and will go directly to the fire-affected communities.**

Don't miss this chance to enjoy fine acoustic music performed in a beautiful setting and supporting our local communities.



Django Fretts

Jo Huf

## Django Fretts

The *Django Fretts* are Castlemaine's very own gypsy jazz quartet. Formed in 2015, the Fretts have an extensive repertoire of tunes taken from the Django Reinhardt songbook as well as a few American jazz favourites. They have played extensively around the goldfields region and beyond, honing their up-tempo sound at markets, gigs, and festivals.

The *Django Fretts* are returning to Yandoit Cultural for an evening of music that will evoke the mood of 30's Paris with authentic gypsy jazz melodies, soaring clarinet solos and acoustic improvisations.

Supported by *Jo Huf* with a set of beautiful bossa nova, this is sure to be a great night.

## Jo Huf – Bossa Nova

Castlemaine local singer and guitarist, *Jo Huf* performs Bossa Nova classics from Brazil's iconic composer, Antônio Carlos Jobim and other notable composers of the time.

Drawing inspiration from iconic singers Astrud Gilberto and Elis Regina, Huf infuses Jobim's classics with genuine emotion and skill, singing in both Portuguese and English.

**LOCATION: Yandoit Cultural, the old church in the bush • Uniting Church Rd (off High St, Yandoit)**

## Yandoit Sacred – Christmas Carols. PLUS, upcoming: 'Into the Sacred'

It was standing room only at our annual Christmas carols gathering last December. This joint Yandoit Cultural and Yandoit Sacred event was supported by Castlemaine Peace Choir, Castlemaine Uniting Church Minister Sarah Tomilson, and some of our Yandoit primary school children with their music teacher - Yandoit resident, Dave Lewis.

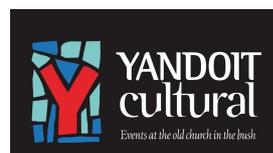
It was a wonderful night of hearty singing, commencing with the choir's hallelujah chorus, almost lifting the roof off the church, followed by the primary school children's rendition of a few Christmas favourites. The choir led us through a series of well-known carols, interspersed with a creative retelling of the Christmas story, followed by supper and conversations under the eucalypts.

*A big thanks to all!*

## Saturday February 7th 2026 • 2.30pm

**Our next Yandoit Sacred gathering is Saturday February 7th, at 2.30pm at the old Uniting church in the bush.** We will continue to explore 'Into the Sacred', with a focus this month on love - imagining and envisioning together how we might co-create the structures which are life-affirming and which reflect our love for one another, for life and for this earth.

[www.yandoitcultural.org](http://www.yandoitcultural.org)



**MORE LOCAL EVENTS:** Discover a wide range of events playing or located in central Vic: from yoga to festivals, concerts, gigs, sports. Find what's coming up in 2026, visit: [www.humanitix.com/au/events/au-castlemaine](http://www.humanitix.com/au/events/au-castlemaine)

Friday 13 February • 7.30pm



Photo: Patrick Kavanagh - Belid Weevil

## Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club

**MONTHLY MEETING:** Friday 13th Feb, 7.30pm

**LOCATION:** Uniting Church Hall, Lyttleton St. Castlemaine

**SPEAKER:** Patrick Kavanagh “**Intriguing invertebrates and concerning trends**”

We are privileged to have local entomologist Patrick Kavanagh launch our new “*Butterflies of the Mount Alexander Region*” brochure at our February Monthly Meeting.

Patrick has lived in a patch of box woodland at Strangways for 30 years. He uses macrophotography to discover the tiny invertebrate life that makes the local ecosystem work. Following the brochure launch, Patrick will share some of the intriguing discoveries he’s made in his yard with a camera and an internet connection. He will also talk about some concerning trends in our invertebrate populations over the past few years and how these trends affect other species.

### Observations

Members and visitors are invited to share their recent interesting observations at the start of the meeting.

Please email any photos as uncropped JPEG file(s) and supporting notes to Jill Williams (jillwill33@gmail.com) by noon on the day of the meeting.

All welcome.

[www.castlemainefieldnaturalists.org.au](http://www.castlemainefieldnaturalists.org.au)

## I spy with my little eye..

**New regular spot: Highlighting our amazing natural environment, wildlife and ecosystem – one pic at a time.**



Share the love...

Please send through a pic of your favourite local cohabitant: e.g. lizard... spider.. fungi.. fauna.. favourite bug, etc, etc, ...and yes, even one of those sadly maligned snakes!

e: [chronicle3461@gmail.com](mailto:chronicle3461@gmail.com)

Above: Koala - Spotted 900m from Yandoit central! (23 Dec '25). How lucky are we?!!



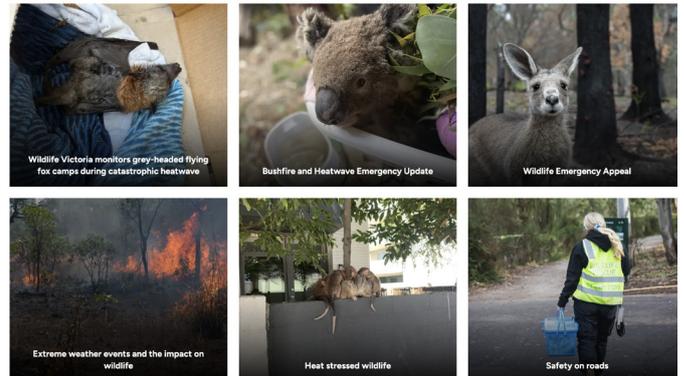
Photo: Kell Wooster - Bursaria spinosa

## Sweet Bursaria!

The one plant that seems to be thriving in the high summer heat is the native Sweet Bursaria, *Bursaria spinosa*. With sprays of sweet smelling white flowers and dark green foilage it is really standing out. Plus the buzz of insects which can be heard as it is a great food source for them when not much else is flowering.

Would highly recommend planting this one, put your orders in at local nurseries now for planting in autumn. Popular with local landcare groups as they are the main food source for the threatened Eltham Copper Butterfly (also found in Castlemaine).

## Wildlife under Heat Stress



[www.wildlifelifevictoria.org.au](http://www.wildlifelifevictoria.org.au)

**2026 is off to an incredibly difficult start for wildlife across Victoria. The recent heatwave threatened the lives of countless native animals, and bushfires have further inflicted devastation across the state.**

Even though the bushfires are no longer making headlines, Wildlife Victoria are still responding to reports of animals with burns and other injuries caused by these fires.

Animals that have been affected include koalas, kangaroos, possums, wallabies, blue-tongue lizards, and many species of birds.

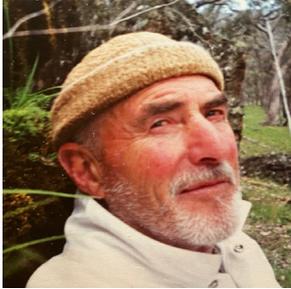
The destruction of native habitat for wildlife caused by these fires is devastating and will have ongoing impacts for our iconic wildlife.

**If you find native wildlife impacted by fire or heat, please call Wildlife Victoria on 03 8400 7300.**

## Farewell to two more local elders

Over the past few years we have lost a number of local elders, people who have lived in Yandoit, Clydesdale or Franklinford for all or most of their lives, locals who have contributed significantly to the fabric of our community. In December 2025, we farewelled Eric Sartori (from Franklinford) and a week later we farewelled Joan Sartori – (nee Ramsey from Clydesdale/ Strangways). Below is a tribute to Eric Sartori. The next edition of the Chronicle will include a tribute to Joan Sartori.

### Vale Eric Sartori



Lifetime Franklinford/Yandoit resident, Eric Sartori, died in November 2025. A large crowd of locals, family and friends paid tribute at the funeral in Daylesford, followed by burial at Franklinford cemetery and a generous afternoon tea prepared by our local CFA ladies committee.

*This tribute was prepared by family members.*

Eric was one of six pupils attending Franklinford School in 1941. Franklinford had done well in local interschool sport up until the war, when the opportunity to be involved in sport became limited. Upon moving to Daylesford Tech, Eric played rounders for a short period. He then had a run in a football team where a teacher made the comment “why didn’t you say you could play football?” From that point, Eric went on to dominate sport as a Junior, Senior, and Open champion. Interschool sport on the Hawthorn Oval was a day to remember with Eric breaking the under 14’s record for 75 yards with a time of 9 seconds.

Returning to work on the farm was perhaps an unwise decision as there was no transport available for football training. Although, an attempt was later made at age 18, but the speed and early ability was lost. Early days for Eric and his brother Keith on the farm were good. Rabbits were still in large numbers which meant that shooting, trapping, and ferreting was a good source of income. At this time, trout were introduced in the creek with some reaching up to 10 lbs in weight. Although sadly this came at the expense of Blackfish, a native fish which has not been seen in the last 80 years.

Eric’s father George and brother Keith built a new dairy in 1951. This brought some changes to the farm. Milking machines were installed, the demand for milk products increased, tractors replaced horses, and stationary hay bailers were an improvement (but still hard work). It was around this time that Eric played tennis for a few years in the Strangways Association. This was a worthwhile exercise in getting to know people in the area, especially as Joy played for the Sandon team.

Eric’s father passed at age 55. This was a major upset as he had just built a new house with timber cut from trees on the property. Eric had worked with the bricklayer and also shown his skills in woodwork and engineering that continued for a lifetime.

Joy and Eric married in January 1962. They stayed with Eric’s mother Rose for some time before they took on the job of restoring the old 1860’s homestead that had fallen into major disrepair. Soon, Brett, Mark, and Carolynne came along, and the years of solid work effort continued as Eric strived to maintain a herd of artificially inseminated Jersey cows.

In 1969 a fire started near Maryborough and was approaching Hepburn at 5:30 when the wind turned south, taking the fire into Franklinford and Yandoit. A spot fire burning near the house was dealt with. But then, out of water, Eric looked across to see fire running up the side of the new hayshed he had built, and Joy had helped fill with 3000 bales. 90% of the farm was burnt and fencing in the bush area was obliterated, creating work for the next few years.

In 1995, Eric and Joy joined the Farmstay program, welcoming guests to their property and sharing their way of life. This initiative not only helped to supplement their income during times of low dairy prices and droughts but also introduced them to new people and perspectives.

Eric rode and maintained farm bikes for 65 years. A very efficient workhorse in the dairy scene, the bikes were also well tested by Brett, Mark, Carolynne, and their cousins as they rode around the country.

30 years ago, 150 acres of the property was closed to allow trees to regenerate as large numbers of kangaroos had put pressure on native shrubs and grass. It’s interesting to note that due to this, freshwater mussels and the native Galaxia fish survive in the Blind creek. Over a lifetime much effort has been spent on Larnibarramal Yaluk (Jim Crow Creek) which runs through the property. A long-term commitment is needed to preserve riparian plants like callistemon and leptospermum, a name change alone is not enough.

Introduced to divining in his 20’s, Eric connected with others around the world to realise he had a strong ability in this area. Using a single angle rod one can pose the question “take me to a freshwater aquifer”, identify the aquifer, and follow it similar to a GPS. A rod is only used as a pointer; the skill appears to be purely from the mind. One may look into the quantum world for answers, but be content with just a glimpse into the unknown.

Eric was a member of Franklinford school and hall committees, served 40 years as Anglican church treasurer, 50+ years with the CFA, 60+ years as a Franklinford Cemetery Trust volunteer, and was an active member of Landcare.

**NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS:** Any and all contributions are welcome. The next issue is scheduled for April/May 2026.

Please email any contributions/photos to e: [Chronicle3461@gmail.com](mailto:Chronicle3461@gmail.com)

**Thanks to the following contributors for this February issue:**

*Nikki Marshall, Jill Williams, Anne Richards, Noel Richards, Dan Richards, Liz Butler, Kell Wooster*