ALBERT MELBOURNE parkrun

The First Decade: 2011 to 2021



Written by Vin Martin

Published by Scott Watkins



Albert Melbourne parkrun is held on the land of the Boon Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation. We acknowledge them as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we gather. We recognise their continued connection to the land and waters of our beautiful park and acknowledge that they never ceded sovereignty. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and extend that respect to all First Nations people present in our community today.



Each week at parkrun, volunteers take photos that are then shared online. The photos in this book are taken from those collections. While parkrun acknowledges the photographer at each event it has not been possible for us to link every photo in this book back to a specific photographer. We thank everyone who has taken photos and acknowledge the very important contribution they have made to recording the history of our event and to making parkrun accessible by letting people see the true diversity of participants.



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Chapter 1:
THE BEGINNINGS: 2011 TO 2013

PLANNING

On 2 April 2011, the first parkrun held in Australia was conducted at Main Beach on the Gold Coast in Queensland. That same month in England, Carol Cunningham participated in a parkrun in Hull. Upon her return to Australia, Carol had a vision that parkrun could be established in Melbourne. In her own words (national weekly newsletter, 16 April 2012):

> *On a visit home to the UK, I found out that something exciting was finally happening in my home town of Hull (has been voted the worst city in the UK) so of course I had to check it out. I registered, rocked up, great organisation, very friendly people, ran and won the female race! Then the next week my mum came along and did her first parkrun. If parkrun can get my mum to sign up for a run, then it must be a good thing …. after that I was hooked and decided this had to come back with me to Australia. I wanted to set up parkrun in Melbourne so made some enquiries and got talking to the two Tims (Oberg and Crosbie) who gave me the okay to go ahead and start one up.*

With the help of her friend Emma Wilton, Carol obtained the official approval from Parks Victoria to establish a parkrun around Albert Park Lake and made the necessary connections with parkrun headquarters in the UK. With a parkrun in England already named Albert parkrun – the Australian version was named Albert Melbourne.



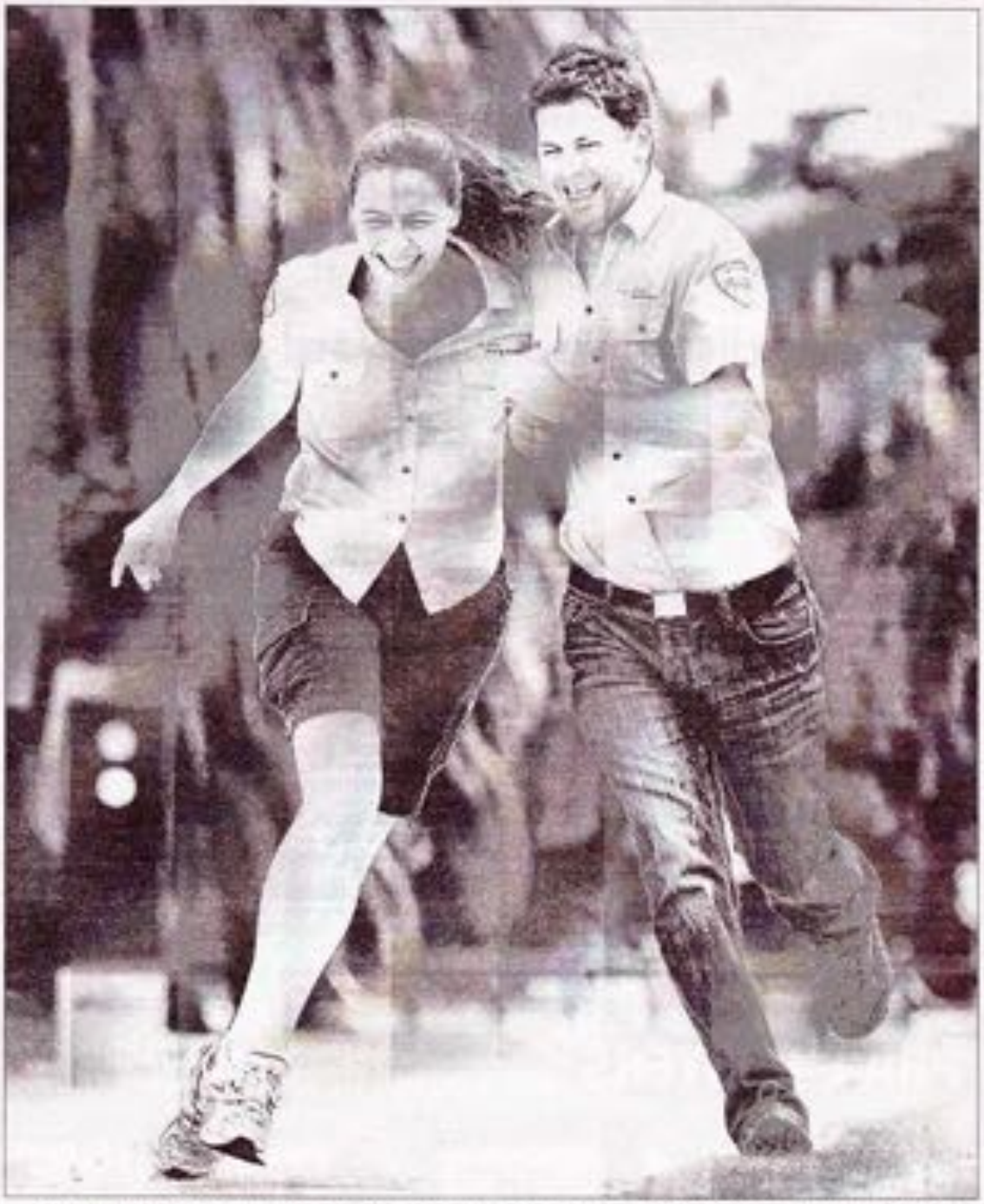
Albert Park is a glorious setting for a parkrun. Published author and keen parkrunner Tony Messenger described the course in his blog in 2012:

> *Only a few kilometres from the main Central Business District of Melbourne we have Albert Park Lake. An artificial lake was created in the late 1800's by moving silt from the natural lagoons and using it as landfill around the lake itself. The lake is home to fish and a multitude of birdlife, with the black swans being one of the highlights as you take in your Saturday parkrun. In spring it is quite common to see the swans with cygnets close behind traversing the paths and roads.*
>
> *The running track around the lake is used quite extensively for organised fun runs, as well as by casual joggers and walkers and is 4.7 km in length. For parkrun the start takes us back 300 metres to ensure we run the full 5kms. The track itself is flat throughout with the first 200 metres or so on grass, the reminder being crushed gravel with a few short concrete crossings near cafes and boat sheds.*

FIRST EVENT, FIRST YEAR

On 19 November 2011 a motley gathering of 64 runners and walkers and about 6 volunteers assembled at the Coot Picnic area for Albert Melbourne's first parkrun. Victorian Road Runners, the South Melbourne Athletic Club and the Crosbie Crew were well-represented among the starters. But so were others who had seen a reference to parkrun in a local newspaper. Participants ran in the rain that day and the following week 32 finishers were drenched again!! And yet they still came, week after week, for 455 parkruns by Albert Melbourne's tenth anniversary. It has rarely rained at Albert Melbourne since. The parkrun flame once lit has never been extinguished.





Fun runs: Park Victoria rangers Alannah Gottschalk and Andrew Kelly at Albert Park. Picture: ANDREW TAUBER

Fun in the run for park rangers

ALBERT PARK rangers took to the track yesterday to promote the arrival of a worldwide running movement in Melbourne.

Runners from the elite to the amateur can don their sneakers every Saturday for a run around Albert Park Lake as part of a free 5km event called parkrun.

Parkrun event director, Carol Cunningham said the aim of the event was to encourage all people to have fun while getting active. "You don't have to be an elite athlete to participate; parkrun gives people the opportunity to pit themselves against the clock and improve their own time," she said.

Elouise Winslow and Naomi Selvaratnam

More than 100,000 fitness fanatics from many countries participate in parkruns around the world.

Whether they walk, run or jog, each participant's race is recorded and published on the website so racers can compare their times and compete for the fastest lap.

Chief Ranger, Graeme Baxter said parkrun was a great addition to the park and sure to be a hit with Melburnians.

"We're thrilled that this international running movement will be making a home at Albert Park and we're sure it will be immensely popular."

The first parkrun event is on tomorrow at 8am. To register visit www.parkrun.com.au

Carol Cunningham was well-connected in Melbourne's recreational running circles. She identified the Crosbie Crew as her running club at the time. This network was critical in providing the core of participants and volunteers in the initial stages. The Victorian Road Runners ran a strong promotion in its STRIDE OUT magazine that enticed several early arrivals at parkrun. Stuart Nicol and Andrew Sutherland, experienced runners from the South Melbourne Athletic Club (SMAC), were among the first to roll up their sleeves and volunteer. SMAC runners such as Dani Elle and Greg Payne began their enduring parkrun journeys around this time.

Initially, ambitions for Albert Melbourne were modest. Carol wrote in the first Albert Melbourne Run Report states:

> *WOW, we here at Albert parkrun were blown away with the turnout and were thrilled to see so many happy faces at the end (despite the not so pleasant Melbourne weather). We hope everyone had a fantastic time and please continue to spread the word to family and friends. We now have 182 people registered – let's see if we can hit 200 by the run next week……..*



Many unique features of the early Albert Melbourne parkruns remain fixtures 10 years later: the start and finish areas, the volunteer roles of lead bike and carpark marshal and the 8 am start.

Among the finishers in the first event were several runners who adopted parkrun as a weekend ritual to this day. Kai Ooi developed a strong network of running friends as he pursued a passion for marathon running culminating in becoming a Spartan for completing 10 Melbourne Marathons. Oyiela Litaba ran over 100 parkruns at Albert before spreading her wings with Run Director roles at events at Jells and Gardiners Creek parkruns and becoming an Event Ambassador assisting the establishment of new parkruns.

Participation in the first six months provides an insight into the foundations of Albert Melbourne parkrun as we know it today. The event has always been a beacon for runners coming to live in Melbourne from the UK or interstate. Following an enjoyable first parkrun in December 2011, Greg Watson invited his friends Scott and Joanne Watkins to their first parkrun on 7 January 2012.

Future Run Directors Julie Stokes, Jane Barkman and Jo Buckle all ran their first parkruns in May 2012 or earlier. And some of the broader parkrun community's wandering minstrels ran their first parkruns at Albert in this time: Brendan Peel, Kevin Johnson and Tony Messenger. Tony and Dani Elle led the charge for post-parkrun brekkies at Albert Melbourne by discovering the Daily Grind Cafe early in 2012 which, until its closure in 2015, became a café of choice for post-parkrun coffee and breakfast.

Albert Melbourne soon became a part of the broader running landscape as identities in the athletic and parkrun worlds gravitated to parkrun. Sonia O'Sullivan ran her first parkrun outside Britain in February 2012. Athletics Victoria's Tim Crosbie quickly saw the potential of parkrun and produced the first video of Albert Melbourne parkrun. Tim's recreational running group, the Crosbie Crew, has been a great supporter since these early days too. In June 2012, Paul Sinton-Hewitt, the founder of parkrun in the UK, visited Melbourne to see what all the fuss was about. He ran a Freedom Run with about a dozen lucky parkrunners. Dave Robertson, whose podcasts, videos and interviews have contributed majorly to the sense of an Australian parkrun community, first visited Albert Melbourne in March 2012. As long-time Albert Melbourne regular Kevin Armstrong wrote for the national parkrun newsletter (October 2012):

> *There may not be a famous sporting face every week but as it is Melbourne you never know who you'll find yourself running with!*

Jane Barkman summed up the spirit at Albert Melbourne in this first year in her interview for the national parkrun newsletter (16 October 2012):

> *Q: What do you do at parkruns?*
> *A: Whether I'm behind the camera lens or trying to beat my PB, catching up with old friends and making new friends is a great way to spend a Saturday morning.*

Q: What do you like about parkrun?
A: Where to start??? The people, the camaraderie, the friendly rivalry, the organisation by our AMAZING Event Director Carol, and of course the coffee afterwards!

SUPERHEROES, RAINBOWS AND CAKES

There was a twinkle in Carol's eye when she announced that for the parkrun falling on the Queen's Jubilee Birthday weekend in 2012, parkrunners were requested to wear something British – or at least dress in red, white and blue. Several parkrunners joined in the fun that day, and more was to come. Parkrun equaled parkfun. A few weeks later an Olympic-themed parkrun was held when parkrunners were encouraged to wear the colours of their nation of birth and favourite footy team to celebrate the AFL Grand Final.

On the first anniversary, the theme was Heroes and Villains. There is an album on the Facebook page with a gallery of superstars on display. Carol Cunningham describes the scene in the weekly Run Report:

Many made a huge effort to appear as a superhero or villain (Cruella de Ville, Dracula, Batman & Robin, Wonder Woman, Zorro, Lara Croft, The Hulk, Cat Woman, Flash, Maxwell Smart, Superman, Spiderman, Cakeman?! … and a brief appearance by Yoda mid-run!). It was a very impressive sight and it certainly generated some keen interest and bemused looks from other people out on the course.





Participants wore something Australian in late January 2013 and Carol brought a sufficient quantity of bunny ears for vollies at Easter 2013. In the years that followed, costuming, particularly at anniversary celebrations, became quite a thing.

The costume themes at second and subsequent anniversaries were: 'Zoo for Two' (2013), 'Things that come in threes' (2014), Star Wars ('May the 4th be with you') (2015), Flashback Five (2016) and Rainbow Colours (2017, 2018 and 2019). The popular rainbow theme was celebrated with rainbow shirts, capes, skirts, hats, socks and, of course, cakes.







No anniversary celebration at parkrun is complete without cake. Jane Johnson, Stevie Cairns and Amber Ericksen were among many to bake terrific cakes for post-parkrun consumption at anniversaries. These cakes were heartily enjoyed at the completion of anniversary parkruns, and little went to waste.



The first anniversary was particularly special. No-one knew how long the event would last but there was a feeling that something had been achieved, the beginnings of a community and that was worth celebrating. About 30 parkrunners who had invested considerable time in that first year of parkrun assembled in the top floor of the Kamel Restaurant to celebrate the milestone. Tim Oberg, who established Australia's first parkrun at Main Beach on the Gold Coast, travelled to Melbourne for the occasion. The mood that night was buoyant and optimistic as parkrunners shared the company of friends whom they never knew existed 12 months earlier.

CAROL CUNNINGHAM – THE FOUNDING DIRECTOR



When Carol announced that she was leaving Australia in June 2013 to pursue a career opportunity in Singapore, the issue of succession planning arose. Troy Mytton who had volunteered on no less than 50 occasions in the first 89 Albert Melbourne parkruns took the reins for a few weeks before Joanne and Scott Watkins took over as Event Directors.

At the time, Tim Oberg wrote in the national newsletter:

> *Carol has been Event Director at Albert Melbourne parkrun since day one, and was the sole catalyst for getting the event started.*

Carol's event has grown to reflect her personality with a core group of passionate volunteers and runners forming a United Nations of parkrun in the heart of Melbourne. The community spirit that has developed amongst the Albert Melbourne parkrunners is second to none.

Joanne and Scott, in 2015, also reflected on Carol's legacy:

It still feels strange that there are now many people who come along to Albert Melbourne parkrun that don't really know Carol. If you don't, you, like all of us, are incredibly indebted to the woman who brought parkrun to our city. Albert Melbourne parkrun was the 3rd parkrun in Australia and the first outside of Queensland. In setting up our event Carol truly was a pioneer. We (Scott and Joanne) first attended parkrun at event 8 and were, like so many people, enthusiastically welcomed into this small running event by Carol. There were only 49 people at that event! For the first 20 months of our existence Carol was there almost every week, directing the run, processing the results and doing all the behind the scenes work. We never imagined, when we first started attending, that one day we'd be organising this wonderful event but Carol saw something in us that prompted her to approach us and now, 2 years later, we're still going.

In the entire 20 months in which Carol was Event Director, she never once ran or walked in the event. Within 12 months of living in Singapore, Carol became a founding parkrun event director the second time, launching the East Coast Park parkrun which was the first parkrun in South-East Asia.



GOVERNANCE: CORE TEAMS AND CHANGING OF THE GUARD

After Carol's departure in June 2013, and Troy's departure a few weeks later, Joanne and Scott Watkins became the Event Directors. As at the tenth anniversary, in November 2021, they remain in that role.



Carol surrounded herself with a small band of parkrunners willing to volunteer often in this first year of operation to ensure a sound foundation for the event's future. Danny Bowerin, Dom Cooley, Emma Wilton, George Mihalakellis, Marie Moloney, Julie Stokes, Robert Del Ponte, Paul Walker, Philip Stokes, Troy Mytton and Brad Henderson formed a virtual core team that Carol could call upon to ensure the event's smooth operation.

As participant numbers grew, Joanne and Scott established the core team made up predominantly of Run Directors, Run Report writers (Vin Martin and Felicity Jenkins) and parkrun ambassadors (George Mihalakellis, Oyiela Litaba, Scott Trickett and Ashne Lamb).

There have been 28 Run Directors in the first decade of Albert Melbourne parkrun:

> Ashne Lamb … Beatrice Roberts … Brad Henderson … Carol Cunningham … Danny Bowerin … Darren Birtwistle … George Mihalakellis … Jamie Kleiber … Jane Barkman … Jason Rawlings … Jo Buckle … Joanne Watkins … John Andrew … Julie Stokes … Leigh Ellwood … Liv Drury … Lucy Tayler … Matthew Richardson … Oyiela Litaba … Paul Walker … Paula Harris … Robert Del Ponte … Sarah Mikolas … Scott Watkins … Tanya Huebner … Troy Mytton … Vin Martin … Yvette Radas



Behind the scenes, a lot of work goes into maintaining a parkrun. For example, Joanne and Scott maintain cordial and constructive relations with:

- Parks Victoria, the State Government entity responsible for managing Albert Park Lake and surrounding parklands;
- Other organisations (e.g. rowing clubs) authorised to use the Albert Park precinct;
- Parkrun Australia and parkrun Global (UK);
- The Grand Prix Corporation before and after the staging of the Australian Formula 1 Grand Prix each year; and
- Athletics Victoria.

Without co-operative relationships with these organisations, it would not be possible to have the no-fuss parkrun experience that parkrunners have come to expect at Albert Melbourne.



In the years that followed, Albert Melbourne identities became contributors within the broader national parkrun community: Oyiela Litaba and Joanne Watkins became parkrun ambassadors (volunteer roles that help mentor other events), Alexandra Merrett and Barry Toll joined the Board of parkrun Australia and Scott Watkins has been Chairperson of that Board since 2015.



CHAPTER 2:
EUREKA: July 2013 to December 2016

PARKRUN TAKES OFF ACROSS MELBOURNE AND VICTORIA

By the beginning of 2014, seven parkruns were established across Victoria: Albert Melbourne, Diamond Creek, Highlands and Westerfolds in Greater Melbourne and Shepparton and Balyang in regional Victoria. With the launch of Point Cook parkrun, the eight parkruns across Victoria had more than 1,000 finishers – a far cry from the 64 finishers at the first parkrun in Victoria just 26 months earlier. Parkrun was off and running.

Between 2014 and early 2017 the number parkrun events in Victoria and finishers doubled each year. From 7 events in January 2014, the number grew to 45 in January 2017 and the number of finishers across Victoria grew from 1,000 in January 2014 to 6,600 in the second weekend of February 2017.

With so many choices at their disposal, several parkrunners, who travelled miles to get to Albert Melbourne each week, switched their home parkrun to a location nearer their homes. Many took prominent roles as Event or Run Directors at other parkruns (e.g. Danny Burgess and Luke Brophy at parkruns in Bendigo and Castlemaine, Emma Wilton at Westerfolds, Naomi Crotty at Jells Park, Stevie Cairns at Gardiners Creek, David Ponsford at Studley parkrun, Ross Pentland at Mullum Mullum, Mike Carter and Craig Curtis at Point Cook and Mark Cant at Karkarook – to name a few).



Amber Ericksen famously participated in 212 parkruns at Albert Melbourne with her mother Jenny and son Corey. Most weeks they drove more than 70 km each way to participate in parkrun at Albert Melbourne. A change in residence to eastern Gippsland saw Amber become a key player in the Newborough parkrun which begun in February 2017. Unsurprisingly, Amber has completed more than 100 parkruns at Newborough - and Jenny and Corey have too!



On 13 July 2013 with no warning, 209 finishers, a record for the time, crossed the line. If that number could turn up without any particular promotion, what would be the trend in years to come? We didn't have long to wait. In January 2014 there were three consecutive record attendances - 248, 260 and 270 finishers respectively. On 4 October 2014, there was a new attendance record of 347. A fluke? No way! Once again in January 2015, attendances broke 350 on more than 3 occasions peaking at 368. By the end of 2016 and despite all the parkrun choices on offer around Melbourne, the record attendance at Albert Melbourne stood at 451 or more than double the attendance record two and half years earlier.

VOLUNTEERING

Unlike competitive sports where officials and athletes appear to be different species, parkrun only works because participants also take a turn as volunteers. The longevity of parkrun is critically dependent on the

willingness of people to volunteer. However, as parkrun has evolved, the organisation has moved to promote the benefits of volunteering in and of itself. Volunteering at parkrun is therefore not promoted as an obligation. The number and nature of the volunteer roles differs at different events. At Albert Melbourne for example, a lead bike and a carpark marshal are required. Since the return of parkruns in January 2021, after the COVID-19 lockdowns, additional marshals have been required for scanning barcodes so that parkrun events can comply with the COVID-safe policy framework issued by parkrun Global.



Much of the organisational energy at Albert Melbourne has come from people who took on responsibilities of event or run directing in their 30s. Carol Cunningham was in her 30s when she initiated Albert Melbourne. When Joanne and Scott took over as Event Directors in 2013, they were also in their 30s. Many of the Run Directors have also been in this demographic, but not all. In Jamie Kleiber we had a Run Director as young as 7 years of age while the oldest Run Director was Vin Martin in his 60s.

The inclusive nature of parkrun is such that parkrunners of any age are encouraged to take a turn at volunteering. At the age of 6, Katie Hoad is our youngest person to volunteer on 25 occasions, while Peter Bearsley, in his 70s, is our oldest to earn the purple T-shirt.

Maddie Sandall and Ben Jeeves succinctly captured the joy of volunteering in the national newsletter of June 2013:

Q: What do like about volunteering at parkrun:
A: You get to see everyone start and finish, celebrate new PBs, and you get a day off from running...! You also get to meet the other volunteers you may not normally talk to because they're much faster than us and Maddie can't run and talk at the same time.





Some parkrunners make a contribution to volunteering disproportionately greater than their number of finishes would indicate. Our event directors, Joanne and Scott, are exemplars in this regard, but anyone who volunteers 25 times or more makes a tremendous contribution too. There have been at least 77 parkrunners who have volunteered 25 times or more with all or the majority of their first 25 volunteering efforts at Albert Melbourne (n.b. the list excludes many great parkrun contributors who achieved this milestone at another event after starting their volunteering journeys at Albert Melbourne):

> Alex Straube … Alexandra Merrett … Ann Southerington … Barry Toll … Beatrice Roberts … Ben Jeeves … Carol Cunningham … Ceinwen Gould … Chris Long … Christopher Kyndt … Dani Elle … Darren Birtwistle … David Suder … Deb Shuffler … Debbie Collins … Ed Chan … Felicity Jenkins … Fiona Young … Gabriele Suder … George Mihalakellis … Georgia Mills … Glynn Nicholas … Gordon Ewing … Greg Payne … Heather Carver … Jane Elizabeth Johnson … Janice Merrett … Jason Rawlings … Joanne Watkins … John Andrew … Joshua See … Jackie Cant … Jane Sinclair … Jamie Kleiber … Jane Barkman … Jane Elizabeth Johnson … Janet Robinson … Janice Merrett … Jo Buckle … John Warburton … Julie Hutchinson … Julie Stokes … Kai Ooi … Kathryn Griffiths … Katie Hoad … Kaylene Hateley … Kevin Armstrong … Lucy Tayler … Maddie Sandall … Mari Len Villaflores … Mark Champion … Mark Cant … Matthew Richardson … Miwa Tominaga … Monica Wong … Naomi (Tullae) Crotty … Oyiela Litaba … Paula Harris … Peter Bearsley … Peter Logan … Phil Stokes … Rebecca Andrew … Richard Lyness … Rick Drury … Robert Del Ponte … Ross Pentland … Sandra Murphy … Scott Watkins … Stephanie Armstrong … Steve Marshall … Stevie Cairns … Sue Lyness … Tanya Huebner … Troy Mytton … Vin Martin … Warrick Burgess … Yvette Radas





CLUBS

From the earliest days of parkrun in the UK, registrants have always had the ability to nominate their running club. The name of a club appears in the results of a parkrun alongside the finisher's name.

The results at Albert Melbourne and other parkruns indicate the great representation and contribution that clubs make to parkrun. On average, about 10 – 15% of finishers each week identify with a club. While some keen parkrunners are members of several clubs, until 2021 parkrun registration only permitted nomination of one club. Nevertheless, the statistics provide an indication of the most prominent clubs represented among Albert Melbourne finishers.

The five clubs with the highest number of different finishers are:

> Crosbie Crew … Melbourne Midday Milers … Derek Zoolander Centre for kids who can't run good … TXR Runners …. Running Mums Australia.

Taking account of the frequency with which individual club members finish at Albert Melbourne, the top five clubs in terms of runs finished are:

> Crosbie Crew …Melbourne Midday Milers … Purple Pacers … Victorian Road Runners … South Melbourne Athletic Club

The similarities and differences between these lists tell a story.

The Crosbie Crew is located largely in the area near the city and towards South Melbourne. Unsurprisingly, 189 Crosbie Crew members have finished an Albert Melbourne parkrun, and their total number of 2973 finishes tops the table too. Similarly, the Melbourne Midday Milers centre their activities at the famous Tan Track, and are also close by. On the other hand, the other three clubs listed with the largest number of different finishers are more geographically dispersed in their membership so that many register a finish at Albert Melbourne when they visit once or twice as a parkrun tourist.

Among the top five clubs with the most finishes, the Purple Pacers have only 9 members consisting mostly of Albert Melbourne regulars with an average of over 150 Albert Melbourne parkruns per member. The Victorian Road Runners supplied several enthusiastic participants over the years, while the South Melbourne Athletic Club has been a source of willing volunteers as well as regulars among the finishers.

Some clubs had memorable moments.

The Illawarriors were a club made up of Mums, Dads and children coached by Karen Moir in Hawthorn. The Saturday before Christmas 2014 and again before Christmas 2015, they came in droves to Albert Melbourne. Many had never heard of parkrun before, and some have gone on to enjoy many parkruns since.

The War Horse Runners hailed from the UK and consisted of cast and crew of the stage production 'War Horse' which was staged in Melbourne in the early months of 2020. When word got around, several parkrunners found time to attend the production.

Members of the Achilles Club, which encourages running by the vision impaired (VI), often appear in the results accompanied by their VI guides. Albert Melbourne regulars such as Monica Wong, Phil Stokes and Julie Boyd are among parkrunners who have volunteered as VI guides in recent years.

FAMILIES AND PARKRUN

When two or three generations of the one family enjoy a parkrun together, there is something unique about the experience.

Fathers and mothers participate with sons and daughters, grandparents with grandchildren and aunts with nephews. Siblings do it too (their rivalry the one exception to the adage 'parkrun is a run, not a race'). Even babies in running buggies enjoy the exhilaration of the breeze on their face as their parents use the buggies as wind breaks near the 'palm trees of pain'.

When three generations participate, that is very special. Who will ever forget Amber Ericksen (Mother), Corey Simmons (son) and Jenny Ericksen (Grandma) driving from near Koo Wee Rup, week in week out to participate in parkrun? Amber and Jenny took up running after supporting Corey in Little Athletics for a few years. Insightfully, the family enjoyed being part of a wider parkrun family. As Amber reflected (national blog, 24 April 2017):

> *Over the past five and a half years, we've met a lot of people. People that were welcoming, supportive, friendly, inspiring, encouraging and fun. People who are on their own unique journeys and became part of ours. Our fellow parkrunners aren't just people to us, they are family. So, whether it's Miwa's laugh, Jane's hugs, Vin's stats, Flick's chats or Carol's warmth, each and every one of our parkrun family mean so much to us and we feel very blessed to have stumbled across this little thing called parkrun.*



Births in recent months mean that Alexandra Merrett and her mother Janice now circle the lake with baby Rebecca in a pusher. Likewise, Chelsey Sellman and her father Glenn now finish most parkruns with a nephew. Tony Guttmann participates sometimes with his son and grandson. Our event Directors, Joanne and Scott, enjoy the thrill of three generational participation when their parents, nephews and nieces visit from New South Wales (where, of course, they are enthusiastic participants in parkrun).

In the national parkrun blog (21 June 2017), Gabriele Suder wrote of her family's experience of staying connected through parkrun when family members lived in different countries, followed by the joy of all being able to run together at a single parkrun venue. As Gabriele's daughter said:

> *"family runs add a degree of healthy competition, making things fun but also making you want to beat the sis and the mum (and hopefully the dad when I become wonder woman)".*

Just like Amber, quoted above, Gabriele reflected on the connections with the broader parkrun community:

> *When you support others who are not part of the family, or you see family members doing so and making a difference, even if small, to another runner's wellbeing, strategy or mindset: There can't be enough opportunities to share and enjoy that.*

One of the joys of parkrun is to see junior parkrunners develop their talent and do well on a larger stage. Rosie Lyness began running 'adult' parkruns in the JW10 category way back in 2013. 150 parkruns and 8 years later, Rosie ran in the 2021 national championships. In her last strong hit-out before the championships, Rosie came second in the junior women's 3,000m at Box Hill. Rosie's parents are keen parkrunners too, Richard with over 100 parkruns and Sue with over 250. Best wishes to Rosie in her athletic endeavours.

Almost 1,000 children aged 10 years or younger finished an Albert Melbourne parkrun over the past decade. All required a parent or guardian to be by their side. We give a big shout-out to all parents who encourage their children to participate in parkrun.

At the other end of the scale Ruth-Mary Faulconbridge has participated at 20 parkrun events at Albert Melbourne (plus 7 more at Chelsea Bicentennial parkrun and 9 volunteer occasions). Ruth-Mary accounts for all but one of the runs by a woman aged over 80 at Albert Melbourne parkrun.

CHAPTER 3: UPSIZING: January 2017 to March 2020

RECORD ATTENDANCES

Entering 2017, Albert Melbourne's attendance record was 451 finishers on 13 February 2016 and attendance exceeded 400 on only one other occasion in the first 266 events. Between January 2017 and 5 March 2020, a further 168 events took place of which 74, or 2 in every 5 events, recorded finishes in excess of 400. Early in 2020, attendances appeared to reach a new plateau above 600, achieving that mark on 4 occasions in January and February 2020.

As attendances grew, so did the need for volunteers. Prior to 2017, volunteers exceeded 20 on only 10 occasions, or 1 in every 25 events. From 2017 to 2020, volunteer numbers exceeded 20 on 116 occasions, or 69% of parkruns in this period.

NITRO AND PARKRUN IN THE FAST LANE

As part of parkrun Australia's ongoing partnership with Athletics Australia, the 'Nitro parkrun' took place on 11 February, 2017. The course was modified to start and finish inside the nearby Lakeside Stadium. In February 2011 some of the world's best athletes came to Melbourne to compete in the Nitro Athletics events held on 4, 9 and 11 February.



Sinead Diver, a VW35-39 runner on the day, ran the fastest parkrun ever by a woman at Albert Melbourne with a time of 16:14. Sinead, who first ran at Albert Melbourne in February 2012, holds the age category records in VW30-34 and VW35-39 categories and famously represented Australia in the marathon at the Tokyo 2021 Olympic Games. Anna Kelly broke the SW20-24 record at the Nitro parkrun and both athletes belonged to the South Melbourne Athletic Club at the time. Jess Dunsmore broke the JM15-17 event record.



The Nitro parkrun broke other records too. The 997 finishers represented the largest attendance at any Australian parkrun at the time. Since then, only one event, South Bank in Brisbane, has recorded a larger number of participants (1,010 on 25/12/19). 60 volunteers (an Australian record to this day) included multiple photographers, tailwalkers, marshals, funnel managers and barcode scanners. Their names represent a celebration of the Albert Melbourne community in 2017:

> Anita Ajay … John Andrew … Kevin Armstrong … Stephanie Armstrong … Tim Baldwin … Jane Barkman … Peter Bearsley … Kathy Buxton … Debbie Collins … Tim Crosbie … Gustavo Da Costa … Laura Del Ponte … Robert Del Ponte … Melinda Dolan … Dani Elle … Bernard Ellis … Ceinwen Gould … Holly Grant … Kathryn Griffiths … Ella Groom … Mia Groom … Roy Groom … Paula Harris … Kaylene Hateley … Katie Hoad … Marianne Hutchinson … Elaine Hynes … Ben Jeeves … Ajay Kavasseri … Rebecca Kirby … Christopher Kyndt … Michelle Lee … Anthony Lewsam … Helen Lewsam … Matthew

Lewsam … Oyiela Litaba … Peter Logan … Vin Martin … Alexandra Merrett … Janice Merrett … Jason Rawlings … Glynn Maree Riseley … Fiona Samuel … Maddie Sandall … Deb Shuffler … Jane Sinclair … Catherine Snell … Penny Stevenson … David Suder … Gabriele Suder … Chantal Suder … Lucy Tayler … Ben Thomas … Eleanor Tickle … Miwa Tominaga … Scott Veen … Nikki Waterfall … Scott Watkins … Joanne Watkins … Monica Wong

Many fast runners in recreational and athletic circles enjoyed a fast hit-out at Albert Melbourne over the years. The course is flat. The gravel surface may take a second or two off a time relative to a flat bitumen track, but the absence of hard corners more than makes up for that. Sinead Diver's VW30-34 back in 2012 is the longest standing age category record, but with the increased popularity of Albert Melbourne following the Nitro parkrun, more than half the age category records have been broken in the last four years. These more recent records include our youngest (Oliver Knuckey, JM10, August 2018, and Charlotte Senior, JW10, November 2019) and our oldest (Ruth-Mary Faulconbridge, VW80-84, November 2017, and Tony Berry, VM80-84, December 2018).



Several current and former athletes who run on the international stage (e.g. Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games) have finished parkruns at Albert Melbourne parkruns, some during training for these championships and others in twilight years beyond their time as elite athletes. Among the roll call in this group are: Sonia O'Sullivan (Ireland), Sebastian Coe (UK), Martin Dent, Lisa Dick, Susan Kuijken (Netherlands), Anna Thompson, Sinead Diver, Ben St Lawrence, Charlotte Purdue (UK), Benita Willis and Steve Moneghetti. Let's see in years to come how many more names we can add to this list, including perhaps some junior parkrunners who participated in the last decade.



Throughout these years it was common to see around 30 finishers with sub-20-minute times. Regular first finishers set the pace for others to follow, enabling many to record satisfying PBs. As at June 2021, Kate Seibold has recorded 17 first female finishes, followed by Deborah Anne Niccol (15), Sinead Diver (11), Ana Carlotta Rodriguez Velarde (10) and Niamh O'Reilly (10). David Ridley (16) has recorded the most male first finishes, followed by Jacob Gifty (13), Jimmy Goulis (10), Adam Peel (9) and Robert Baker (8).

Age category ratings provide another perspective on exceptional performances. Nine parkrunners have recorded age ratings in excess of 90%, meaning that their event time is within 10% of the fastest parkrun run anywhere in the world by a parkrunner of the same age. An astonishing 390

parkrunners have recorded an age grading in excess of 80%. Many parkrunners on this list are visitors from other international, interstate and local parkruns. However, it is satisfying to see parkrunners work towards their highest age grading over months and years. Janet Robinson, Monica Wong, Andrew Ross, Julie Boyd, Luke Goodman, Christine Woolley, Michael Phillips, Jonny Earl, Rachel McGuinness, Peter Bence, Petrina Trowbridge and Kate Seibold are among Albert Melbourne regulars during the past decade to feature among these 390 high performers.

PARKRUN TOURISTS AND NOMADS

The explosion of new events across Victoria and Australia in these years encouraged parkrun tourism and enabled many parkrunners to change their home parkrun to a venue closer to home.



Others saw the fun to be had in parkrun tourism, visiting places across Melbourne, in regional Victoria, interstate and overseas. It is said that parkrunners traveling overseas pack their parkrun barcode first and their passport second.

Everyone enjoys the occasional change of scenery gained by participation at venues close to home, other venues within a 2-hour drive, and yet others on the doorstep of favourite interstate holiday destinations. Parkrun tourism is the term used to describe such adventures. Some parkrunners never tire of the thrill of participating at different venues - should we call them parkrun nomads?

With its proximity to the centre of Melbourne, Albert Melbourne often sees a boost in the number of finishers around the timing of major events (e.g. the Australian Tennis Open, the AFL Grand Final) and when people come from interstate or overseas to visit family and friends (e.g. December / January).

Albert Melbourne was the beginning of parkrun journeys for many well-known parkrun tourists. For example, Brendan Peel began his parkrun journey in January 2012, recording 68 finishes at Albert Melbourne before catching the tourist bug big time!! At last count, Brendan has run at more than 230 venues across Australia.

Paula Harris and Monica Wong, both keen volunteers at Albert Melbourne, also regularly take the opportunity to enjoy a parkrun elsewhere in Victoria. Paula, who has volunteered as a Run Director at Albert Melbourne every year since 2014, has run at more than 60 different venues, as has Monica. Among the many cool statistics about Monica's parkrun journey is that (as at May 2021) she holds VW65-69 age category records at parkrun events in two countries: Lalor parkrun in Australia and Precint 18 parkrun in Putrajaya, Malaysia.



Oyiela Litaba, who ran in the first Albert Melbourne event back in November 2011, used parkrun tourism as a celebration of friendship:

> *After a couple of years, parkrun events began to spring up elsewhere, and became an excuse for parkrun tourism; exploring the state, discovering new places and consolidating friendships on the road. I owe a big thank you to Kathy Buxton for indulging my early enthusiasm for launches and distant events and to her*

welcoming family and friends who've accommodated us in various parts of country Victoria. Thanks also to Miwa for the many early morning journeys closer to home, to my other more recent 'touristing' companions and to my family in the UK for joining me (and driving me around) over there. (Run Report, October 2016)

It is not unheard of for parkrunners migrating to Australia to find a parkrun soon after arrival, even within the first few weeks. As Julie and Phil Stokes explained in a national parkrun weekly newsletter dated 25 September 2012:

Q: What do you like about parkrun?
A: Definitely the social aspect. Meeting great people of all running levels, some of whom become very good friends.
Q: What is your most memorable or funniest parkrun moment?
A: We really have too many to mention, but our last parkrun at Poole was incredibly memorable - we were given a great farewell by the team. Likewise, our first parkrun at Albert Park where we were greeted and welcomed by everyone there and made to feel at home - which was quite amazing given that we'd only been in Australia for one week! parkrun does that - turn up with your barcode and you are among friends.



Chapter 4:
REFLECTIONS: LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD

BEING THERE

Albert Melbourne has been fortunate to have a solid group of parkrunners who turn up week in, week out.

Some parkrunners have finished large numbers of Albert Melbourne parkruns, while others have volunteered on many occasions. The following parkrunners have more than 200 involvements with Albert Melbourne, finishing or volunteering officially or unofficially more than 200 times at Albert Melbourne over the past ten years (that is they have turned up at least twice for every 5 parkruns held so far):

> Alex Straube … Alexandra Merrett … Amber Ericksen … Barry Toll … Chris Long … Chris Parker … Ben Jeeves … Chris White … Corey Simmons … Dani Elle … David Suder … Deb Shuffler … Debbie Collins … Felicity Jenkins … Gabriele Suder … Georgia Mills … Glenn Sellman … Gordon Ewing … Gustavo Da Costa … Jane Barkman … Janet Robinson … Jason Rawlings … Jenny Ericksen … Jo Buckle … Joanne Watkins … John Andrew … Julie Stokes … Kai Ooi … Kathryn Griffiths … Linda Zanutta … Maddie Sandall … Mark Champion … Matthew Richardson … Melissa Ross … Miwa Tominaga … Monica Wong … Nick Hales … Paula Harris … Peter Bearsley … Philip Stokes … Rebecca Fowlds … Rich Neish … Samantha Straube … Sandra Murphy … Scott Watkins … Sue Lyness … Vin Martin … Warrick Burgess … Yvette Radas

Of this list, four parkrunners have more than 300 finishes at Albert Melbourne – at least 2 finishes for every 3 parkruns held at Albert Melbourne (data as at November 2021): Dani Elle (327), John Warburton (325), Vin Martin (314) and Ben Jeeves (307).

For many on these lists and others with deep experience of parkrun, the parkrun experience involves hearts and minds – they feel that they receive more out of parkrun than they contribute, and they contribute lots. Here are published quotes:

> *I was very pleased with my first foray into timed running. The 5k relaxed and friendly format was terrific and the weather accommodating. The organisers were more than just really well organised; they were also enthusiastic, energetic and friendly in abundant measures. I'm new to running (a New Year's 2013 resolution) so it all helped get me around the course as did having other people to run with. I had set an optimistic sub 25minutes for my first run and was thrilled to smash that by 3 seconds (small*

smash...). Looking forward to improving on it but this may take a while. Thanks parkrun. (Chris Parker, national newsletter, January 2013)

Q: What do you like about parkrun?
Definitely the people and the new friends. We've lived in Melbourne for 8 years but have not previously been part of any sort of community group - possibly because we're work-a-holic D.I.N.K.s! Going to parkrun has definitely helped improve our work/life balance. (Joanne and Scott Watkins, national newsletter, January 2013)



Albert Melbourne parkrun is home to a large bunch of friendly, helpful and fun runners who welcome all newcomers of all abilities with open arms. If you'd like to run sub 20 mins or even improve to sub 35 mins, you'll find someone who will pace or assist you just about every week, with the encouragement and camaraderie kicking on for a while after the run in one of the local cafes where coffee, juice or breakfast is a must. (Tony Messenger, national newsletter, December 2012)

What do you like about parkrun? Kevin - I love the social side of it but more so the community atmosphere. Jane - I love the

encouragement and the people, I've made some lovely mates since joining and every single one of them inspires me to do more, and do it better. (Jane and Kevin Johnson, national newsletter, May 2013)

The friendships that have developed are treasured and cherished, many times bringing tears to the eyes when people recount the stories of the support they have received from others towards achieving their best ever times. Often people unknowingly inspire others to greatness, as they become unofficial pacers being chased down from behind. Other running angels have knowingly given up their chance at a PB to guide/push/abuse/encourage convincingly their fellow parkrunners to run/walk faster than they ever thought possible. This encouragement and motivation have seen many parkrunners go from 5km specialists to marathon runners and beyond. (Dani Elle, July 2015)



I like to run – not too fast and not too slow. ..... . All of that could happen without parkrun. But parkrun makes it better. It's better because of friends and, yes, community. It's either community or benign (idiosyncratic) cult: all that, "no barcode, no result". Give way to boats and swans. 10-year-olds keep your parents within arms' length. Keep left. Keep the lake on your left. Always run counter-clockwise. It is a nice kind of weird - all that clapping for first-timers. Doubtless there are many reasons why people come to parkrun – but in a complicated world - a community built on a

shared activity (passion?) to run 5km round a lake counter clockwise seems a pretty good thing to me. I can get my head around it. (Mark Champion, Run Report, October 2016)

I never expected parkrun to be more than a group of runners getting together to run 5km. But … it's so much more than that. parkrun is the different people you meet, the friendships formed, the expansion of your social network, getting that 'head clearing' time from the work week before. Some parkrunners go for time, some go for a finish, but all are filled with the same positivity, vibrancy and zest. So many friendships made, and it all starts with a 'Hello'. After all, we are all social beings looking for a place to belong. (Kai Ooi, Run Report, Oct/ Nov 2016)



I rocked up to Melbourne hating running. I wanted to love it, but I found it so hard. I never did any consistent training, so kept on starting from fresh each time (so it was hard!). Meeting like-minded people got me up (most!) Saturdays so my training became regular. Then I became quicker. Then I started going further. Then came the trail runs….and the marathon…. oh, and an ultra-marathon! I needed more and more challenges, and

wanted to see how far I could push my body. I now do half ironman triathlons and have no idea what is next. What I can say is that parkrun, and specifically the bunch of nutters I call my friends at Albert Melbourne, has helped me get to achieve all of this over the last four years – and I thank each one! (Kathryn Griffiths, Run Report, Oct / Nov 2016)

100 runs later, I am an avid fan of parkrun (or Perk Run when you add up the benefits.) It is now the centre-piece of my fitness regime and I love it. Friendly people, good-natured competition, always someone to chase and even though there is ALWAYS that moment around the 3K mark when I ask myself why the hell I am doing this, a few minutes after I cross the line I always feel fantastic. (Glynn Nicholas, Run Report Oct / Nov 2016)



I then found myself talking about parkrun more and more. My passion was growing week by week. And still continues to grow! My eyes light up whenever I'm talking about parkrun. Initially, my friends, family and colleagues would roll their eyes every time I mentioned it – but that has never stopped me! parkrun is my thing. So much so that I never miss parkrun. Unless I have a running event or race or unless I'm away in a location that doesn't have a parkrun. Every Saturday morning come wind, rain or shine, either volunteering or running, I'm there. And with a big smile. To me, parkrun is more than just a 5k run every Saturday morning. parkrun is a community, it's a family. I've met so many new people whom I now call my friends and whom I would never have crossed paths with otherwise, it's genuinely amazing! (Sarah Mikolas, Albert Melbourne News, March 2020)

Deb Shuffler turned to verse to reflect on parkrun:

A shout out to parkrunners 

A soft shuffle
Hungover, awake, big night,
Night in, kids, family
The run director speaks
We hear
The shuffle of night befores

A rustle to start
Go hard, complete
I'm here, the why
The noise blares, unheard
We feel
The intensity of goals unspoken

The run begins
Keep going, no crying
No stopping, no vomiting
Keep going, coffee
Imagined, real
The buzz of mantras

Flags waving
Elation, exhaustion
Ending, beginning
It's done, the finish crossed
We see
The collapse of success

A soft shuffle
Smiles deserved
Ambling, Breakfast
We know
A majesty of swans
A motivation of parkrunners

Deb Shuffler (Run Report, December 2016)

FOLKLORE

The lake is the centrepiece of Albert Melbourne – literally. Try to cut a corner and you finish in the lake. Without the lake there would be no black swans. And without black swans there would be no mascot named Albert the Swan.

John Andrew was first to fall in the lake. Paolo Villaflores did too. Dom Cooley recalls efforts to retrieve an errant football that was kicked into the lake. One Christmas Day, Scott Watkins arrived at parkrun on an inflatable swan. Once on Facebook, Albert Melbourne claimed that the bridge and walkway connecting east and west sides of the lake (that is set up each year, temporarily) would remain as a permanent fixture. That claim was made on one day only, April 1st.

Albert the Swan is almost an identity in himself. A stuffed toy, Joanne Watkins is the proud custodian of Albert the Swan, bringing him along to parkruns for photo shoots and various celebrations. More than one J10 parkrunner has attempted to adopt Albert the Swan as their own, but on last reports, he is safely living in lockdown with his custodian.



Even Steve Moneghetti had his photo taken clutching Albert the Swan when he last visited Albert Melbourne. Steve had a speaking engagement that morning with Athletics Victoria but his good friend and keen parkrunner Paul Cashin invited Steve to grab a bite to eat at the Emerald Hill Café where about 30 parkrunners assembled that morning for post-parkrun brekky. At the cafe, Steve shared some tips with eager listeners on improving their parkrun times. Steve's speaking engagement began a little later than scheduled as a consequence.

Even when there is no official parkrun conducted (e.g. during the COVID lockdowns), the Albert Melbourne community carries on. Hundreds of

parkrunners at Albert Melbourne and around Australia have tuned in to Joanne's cooking exploits on Saturday mornings at 9 am. Viewers are advised in advance on Facebook of the item to be cooked or baked, and encouraged to purchase the ingredients to bake along with Joanne in their own homes. Throughout 2020 and 2021, while in lockdown, Joanne hosted over 50 "(not)parkrun bakeoffs" on Facebook Live each Saturday morning.



Every parkrunner has their own favourite anecdote or funny moment in their parkrun journey. Some involve a close friend or two who are subject to secrecy while others are in folklore and known widely. These anecdotes and moments are nurtured and remembered at post-parkrun brekkies at cafes such as the Daily Grind (pre-July 2015), Emerald Hill Café (July 2015 to late 2019) and, in recent times, Nine Yards.

COMMUNICATIONS, CONNECTION AND FRIENDSHIPS

Facebook, e-mails, websites, Wikipedia, Instagram, Twitter – parkrun features on all these platforms. Some parkrunners (e.g. Dani Elle a few years ago) use their own widely-read blogs to espouse the benefits and joys of parkrun.

Beyond the official communications and informal chat groups, there are many examples of the parkrun community connecting in informal settings and enduring friendships formed through initial contact at parkrun.

Parkrunners who met at Albert Melbourne have attended milestone birthday celebrations, weddings, engagements and wedding anniversaries. Parkrunners have organised to travel to or participate in running adventures across Victoria (e.g. Two Bays, Great Ocean Road Running Festival) and beyond (e.g. marathons in North Korea and Disneyland).

Cross-fertilisation of running club memberships is a valuable spin-off from connection at parkrun. Recreational runners have become aware of the possibilities of joining a registered athletic club (e.g. South Melbourne Athletic Club) while parkrun provides a more relaxed setting for registered athletes off-season.



Many experienced runners in parkrun ranks have willingly shared running tips with newcomers. However, several parkrunners have found pathways to professional coaching suited to their distance and trail running goals. Well-known Albert Melbourne parkrunners became coaches. Chris White is the Head Coach and founder of GoRun Australia. Jason Rawlings is also a coach at GoRun Australia and organises the Studley Park Run Club.

Song, stage and literature also feature as spin-offs of the parkrun experience. Albert Melbourne “parkbook” is a book club that has met every few weeks for three years after parkrun events at the Boatshed Café by the lake. In 2021, Monica Wong took part in “The Best, The Fairest, The First” a Melbourne Writers’ Theatre production celebrating the lives of women in sport. In late 2020, Julie Boyd wrote and published “The Rise and Fall(s) of a

Would-be Runner" (Tellwell Talent), a book on her running adventures here and abroad Between 2013 and 2020, several parkrunners were keen members of the community choir, "Melbourne's Got Soul" which sang several well-known tunes including "Baby, now that I found you" that could aptly apply to parkrun.

ILLNESS AND INJURY

Several parkrunners have been challenged with serious illness and injury. Some take time out from parkrun for treatment or convalescence. When they return to run, walk or jog another parkrun, there is joy for them and inspiration for others.

Sadly, as time goes by, we will lose the presence of members who pass away. But their memories and spirit remain.

In the past decade, we lost keen parkrunners Jim Grelis and Janie Forsterling after valiant fights against terminal illness.

They both enjoyed the fun of parkrun. Janie's daughter Sarah and her fiancé Toby ran at Albert Melbourne on their wedding day. Jim enjoyed many a post-parkrun coffee with friends at the Emerald Hill café and was a member of the choir Melbourne's Got Soul with many parkrunning friends.

BRIGHT FUTURE

The future of Albert Melbourne parkrun looks bright. COVID safety provides some challenges in the short-term (e.g. event cancellations, dispersed pre-event briefings, volunteer numbers) but in the long-term parkruns should return to normal, built on the sound foundations of the first decade.



Today's core team supporting Event Directors Joanne and Scott is a mix of parkrunners who had never heard of parkrun back in 2011 and others who have been on board for much of the journey. The current crop of Run Directors includes Sarah Mikolas, Beatrice Roberts, John Andrew, Matt Richardson and Paula Harris who are ably supported by prolific volunteers including Martin Van Run, Adrian Shiel, Jacqueline Shiel, Fiona Young, Joshua See, Ram Thirumoorthy, Lauren Maserow, Peter Logan, Debbie Phillips and Lisa Millar.

So long as a healthy proportion of first timers and long-term Albert Melbourne participants continue to place their names on the volunteer roster for upcoming events, Albert Melbourne will remain the parkrun we all know and love.





STATISTICAL SNAPSHOT: 2011 to 2021

As at 20 November 2021

Number of Albert Melbourne parkruns? 455

Number of finishers? 26,863

Number of parkrunners who have volunteered? 1,684

Average number of finishes per participant? 4.7

Average number of volunteering involvements per Volunteer? 5

Larges number of finishers in an event? 997 (11 February 2017)

Smallest number of finishers? 30 (3 December 2011)

Largest number of volunteers at a single event? 60 (11 February 2017)

Smallest number of volunteers at a single event? 5 (10 December 2011)

Fastest time – female: Sinead DIVER 16:14, (11 February 2017)

Fastest time – male: Luke MATTHEWS 14:39, (25 December 2018)

Highest age grading: Lavinia PETRIE - 102.8% (7 February 2015)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The story of Albert Melbourne's first decade would not have been possible without the ready availability of archival sources such as parkrun Australia's newsletters and blogs and Albert Melbourne's weekly Run Reports. Most of the photos are taken from the albums stored on Albert Melbourne's Facebook page. The statistics quoted in the report are largely drawn from the database maintained by parkrun Global, headquarters for parkrun across the world.

The organisation of more than 450 Albert Melbourne parkruns that constitute the event's first decade required sustained commitment by Event Directors (Carol, Troy, Joanne and Scott) and willingness of many parkrunners to volunteer for one of the roles necessary for the safe and smooth conduct of each parkrun. Thank you to all volunteers who made the first decade a reality.

Parks Victoria enabled and supported the conduct of a parkrun around Albert Park lake. Thank you, Parks Victoria.

Thank you to Scott Watkins for assisting with editing and blending the text with the photos.

Vin Martin
November 2021




parkrun
8am SATURDAY
FREE !!
EVERYONE WELCOME

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Most people who really know Albert Melbourne parkrun know Vin Martin. Since Event 1, Vin has been a core part of what makes parkrun at Albert Park so special. Vin loves a chat, loves a story, loves a stat. He loves meeting new people and loves making connections. He is constantly thrilled and surprised by discovering new things. Vin has experienced all of the highs and lows in the history of parkrun in Melbourne. He has found, and sadly lost, dear friends. He has thrived and suffered and recovered and thrived again. Vin has been a friend, a companion, a connector and a collector of all the good news and stories that together help make parkrun more than just a run in the park. Vin has compiled statistics and anecdotes that have filled hundreds of event reports. For many people, being mentioned in such a report was something they never dreamed of. There are a few refrigerators that have featured Vin's reports as proud parkrun participants sent their mention home to Mum and Dad.

As the current custodians of the event it has been an absolute privilege for Joanne and I to be able to grow and get to know, our local community. I want to pay particular tribute to Joanne, who really has been the key organiser of our parkrun. Her strength, commitment and pride in facilitating a smooth, safe event every week is remarkable. Indeed Joanne often says that her favorite compliment is being told that the event was "well organized".

Collecting the stories, statistics and photos for this book has been a mammoth effort and one that only Vin could have achieved. For 10 years he has kept the stories, confident that the tiny running event that Carol began would one day be worthy of re-telling. For the tens of thousands of people that have walked, run or volunteered at Albert Melbourne parkrun over the first 10 years, this is your story, as told by Vin. From all of us, thank you Vin.



Scott Watkins
November 2021