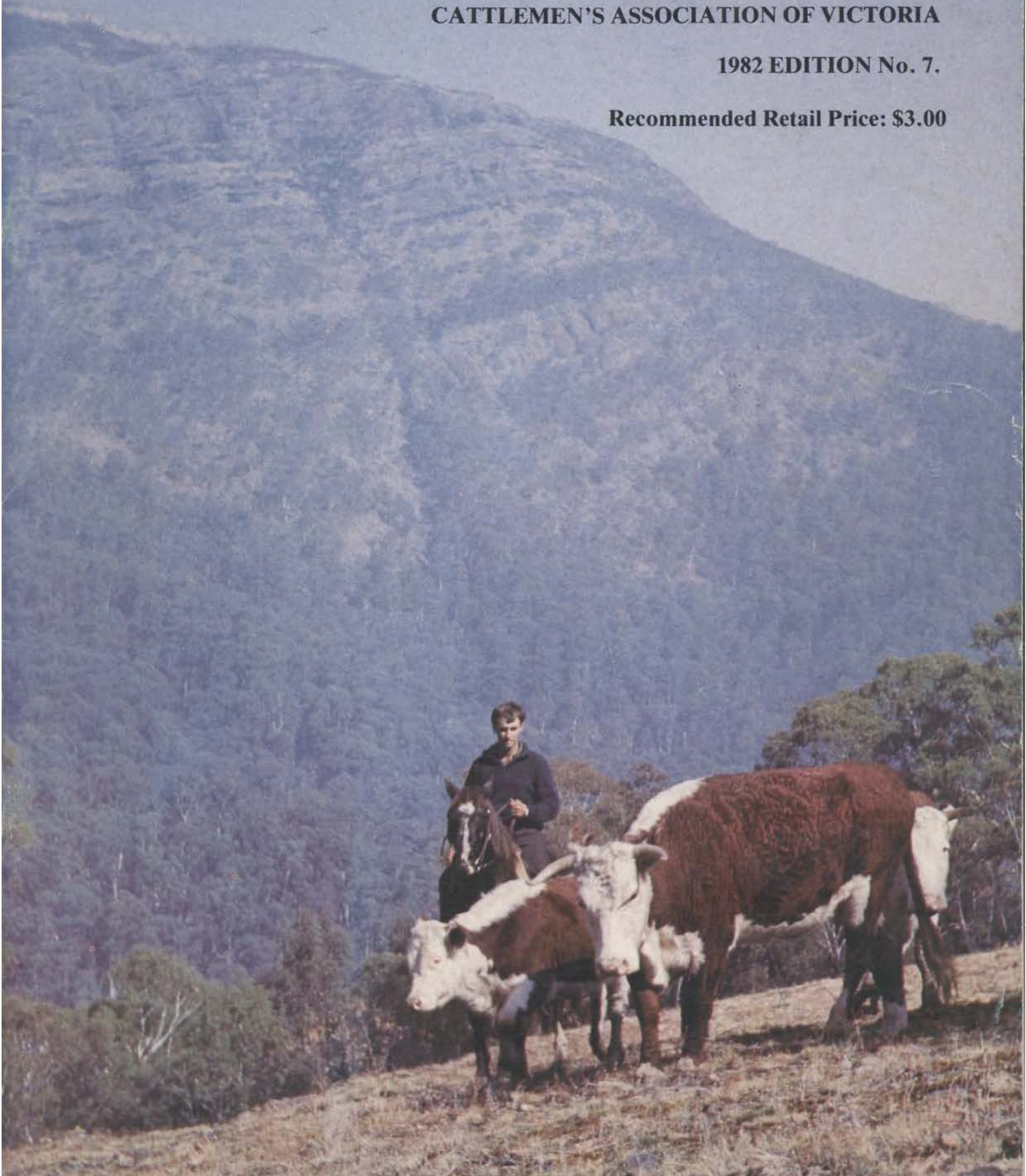


# *Voice of the Mountains*

**JOURNAL OF THE MOUNTAIN DISTRICT  
CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA**

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Association of Victoria

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Cover Photo: Mustering Herefords on the Bluff

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## BEN COOPER

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The cattlemen recognised their stock by their colour and conformation or their ear marks, as in autumn the rib brand would often be nearly hidden by a winter coat. Among younger cattlemen there was some rivalry as to who rode the best stockhorse. He who received the most praise rode home a proud bloke.

A few unbranded cattle, cleanskins, may have been left at the end of the cut-out but a short discussion soon established ownership. Absolute honesty is inherent in mountain cattlemen.

To the north-west of Pretty Valley and overlooking Tawonga hut stands a memorial to Ben Cooper who rode the High Plains for 66 years. Those who read the plaque may think he was the only cattlemen to ride the area for so long, whereas many others rode them for longer. Ben, however, was held in great esteem by his fellows and his memorial stands symbolically for them all.

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# PRETTY VALLEY

story by Jane Barnaby and Tor Holth,  
authors of *Cattlemen of the High Country*.

'Isn't that a glorious sight?' said the cattleman quietly as he gazed across the sunny expanse from beneath his stockman's hat. Before stretched Pretty Valley, a saucer-shaped plain in the middle of the Bogong High Plains, and in the distance milled nearly 1000 head of cattle surrounded by about 20 stockmen and numerous cattle dogs.

Then he cantered easily on with his dogs running behind. As he approached the mob he took command and began giving orders to others to start cutting out.

"There's a couple of yours, Peter," he shouted. And Peter, skilfully guiding his horse with hands and legs, rode quietly into the restless mob, isolated his stock and moved them out in the direction of his yards.

Then began a battle of wit and willpower as a fractious beast veered and charged to break back into the safety of the mob. With his stockwhip snapping, the cattleman and his horse worked as one to outspeed, intercept and turn the beast. When the struggle was won his helpers and dogs held the animals while the cattleman rode into the mob for more.

After a number of head had been cut out, the cattlemen paused for a short time to let the distracted cows and calves mother up. Then the men resumed their work. A few hours and much cheerful swearing later, the huge mob of cattle had dwindled into spokes of animals heading away in different directions towards their holding yards.

The Pretty Valley cut-out is probably the most exciting and spectacular part of the big muster held on the High Plains every autumn.

The High Plains have resounded to the echoes of cracking stockwhips, bellowing cattle, snorting horses and snapping cattle dogs for more than 100 years. They are the world of the mountain cattlemen — superb

horsemen, masters of bushcraft, secure in their element, with a deep love and understanding for the country which supports them.

## THE PRETTY VALLEY CUT-OUT

To the outsider, the cattlemen's presence in the Bogongs is most obvious at the Big Muster and the Pretty Valley cut-out.

Today less than 1000 head are mustered into Pretty Valley on cut-out day, yet imagine the cut-outs of the 1920's to 1940's when cattlemen estimate that there were several thousand head gathered, and the whole muster took weeks.

For years the date to begin the Big Muster was decided at a sports meeting held at Tawanga in March and attended by most cattlemen. If early snow had fallen in February cattlemen took it as a warning to get their stock off the high country within the next six weeks. Any later would risk another, heavier fall. Snow or not, the muster was usually held at the end of March or beginning of April.

From the Fainter Spur would come the Tawanga crowd. From huts in the valley of the West Kiewa River came cattlemen from the Ovens valley — the Blairs, Westons, Briggs, Dibbins, and their relations, the Howards and McMahons. From the Omeo side came the McNamaras, Kellys, Fitzgeralds, Battys, Faithfulls and Greenwoods. For the next few days riders and dogs would be scattered over a region of about 1200 square kilometres scouring the plains, spurs and gullies for stock, and moving them to their holding yards near their huts.

On cut-out day everyone mustered the remaining cattle into a cut-out area until a large mob had gathered. In the 1920's and 1930's and 1940's before the SEC flooded

the area to make a dam, Rocky Valley was the main cut-out area. Here the cattle from Omeo were drafted out and taken on their way. The remainder of the mob would be moved to Pretty Valley where Ovens and Kiewa valley cattlemen cut out their stock.

Sometimes the mob was still so large at five in the afternoon that it would be moved to Tawonga yard nearby and the cut-out continue there all the next day.

Meanwhile, near Mt Jim Artie Dibbin and his father, the Westons and McNamaras would be cutting out their cattle. On Mt Nelse the Ropers, Jim Edmondson and the Battys were working.

In the very early years the cut-out day of the Big Muster was always on Easter Monday. Nowadays the SCA sets a date in April by which all cattle must be off the tops and the cattlemen agree on a day about a week before that for the main muster and cut out.

Pretty Valley was discovered and named by Jim Brown and Jack Wells in the early 1850's.

Early in 1851 George Gray and his brother Ned, with Brown and Wells left Pelican Station at Wangaratta in search of feed after a long drought followed by bushfire had left

their property barren. They drove the cattle up the Mitta. Then, guided by an Aborigine named Larnie, they reached the Cobungra valley. Ned returned to Wangaratta and came back to settle at Cobungra the following year. George Gray, Brown and Wells stayed at Cobungra with the cattle. Within the next three years the stockmen discovered the high plains, including Pretty Valley, in an effort to find a shorter route to the north-east than via the Mitta.

The first cattle to graze on Pretty Valley probably came from Tawonga Station in the upper Kiewa Valley, possibly as early as the 1850's when the station was owned by Thomas Ibbotson. Undoubtedly by that time prospectors and explorers such as Brown and Wells had journeyed up and down the Fainter Spur and brought back word of good pastures on the High Plains.

After Thomas' death in 1855 his brother, Charles, took over the station until 1882 and locals remember that his C.I. brand cattle were taken up the Fainter Spur to the High Plains in summer.

Other early residents of the Kiewa valley who took cattle up to the High Plains and Pretty Valley along the Fainter Spur included John Ryder and Paddy Duane.



Pretty Valley

## THE RYDERS

John and Eleanor Ryder came to Victoria from England in 1852. Their children were John, Thomas and Eleanor. They were among the first settlers in the Kiewa valley, along with the Ropers and the Coopers.

Young John Ryder worked for Tawonga Station before selecting his own land in Tawonga and running cattle. He married Elizabeth Higginson from Geelong and they had a family of four daughters and three sons, William, Walter and Harry. John held run 39 which is still leased by the Ryder brothers two generations later. In that generation Sid, son of William, and Wally, son of Walter, have taken stock to the High Plains most regularly.

Although John Cooper came to Tawonga with his two sons shortly after the Ryders, John's grandson Ben was the first in the family to take stock to the high plains. At first Ben went with Jack Roper and a couple

of years later he joined with the Ryders, before leasing his own run 37 where Rocky Valley Dam is now.

The early Ryders were the main builders of the first Tawonga hut, near Pretty Valley. It is thought to be one of the earliest on the High Plains, being built in the late 1880's.

Paddy Duane stayed at Tawonga hut on the way to his own hut near the present Roper's hut. At one time Paddy was thought to have the most cattle and horses on the High Plains.

There were three huts at Tawonga before the present 'village'. The third saw the most active period of the cattlemen on the high plains, between 1920 and 1940. Sid, Wally, Jack and Vic Ryder were often there, plus Ben Cooper and his cousins Raymond and Reg. Frank Blair from Freeburgh in the Ovens valley sometimes stayed in Tawonga hut, as did Tom and Stewart Hollonds, sons of old Tom Hollonds. The Hollonds leased a run on the Fainter which is now held by Billy Hicks.



Three early cattlemen L to R: Fred Roper, Tom Hollonds and Kyran Mareem.

Paddy Duane.



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A scene from Lovick's mountain cattle round up where guests participate in this annual event.

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# AN OPEN LETTER TO A MOUNTAIN CATTLEMAN

R. Tucker. Upper Ryans Creek via Benalla.

Dear Mr Cattleman:

You have asked me to comment upon your situation regarding the threatened future of your alpine leaseholds. I am but an observer. I can only see what I see and hear what I hear. I have seen the splendor of the Australian Alps through their four seasoned magnificence: I have heard the hooves of the brumby and the slither of the copperhead as he moved through the undergrowth. I have had the Alps thrill me with their delights and allow me the luxury of reminiscing of the land of my youth, many thousands of miles away, where both cattle and sheep were run on the alpine tops for the summer, in order to feed them and conserve the mountain country at the same time.

I can see the days on the slopes of Colorado and Wyoming when groups of no small influence were attempting to legislate the cattlemen and sheepmen off their runs. The arguments and submissions came thick and fierce from both sides. The cattlemen and sheepmen stuck together to a man, and were quite prepared to fight for their runs. Legislation now protects the industry and tradition of running livestock on Federal or Public Lands. The willingness to fight saved the run-holders; it was all that people and governments understood then, and it hasn't changed a bit now.

I see the situation which now confronts the mountain cattlemen of Victoria, and the fate that befell those in the now closed off Kosciusko National Park. I have seen the fear in the eyes of some of the cattlemen as they spoke of the possibility of losing their run country. I have seen them prepare factual, responsible and diplomatic input stating their case to the government, even through this publication. Enough research has been done, both here and abroad, that supports the use of alpine country for not only cattle but controlled sheep grazing as well. Public policy in other countries also supports increased alpine pastoral production even on alpine areas more fragile than Australia's, through symbiotic conservation and soil production/rejuvenation techniques. I will cite examples of the above on request, although all of it is readily available through research organisations, universities, and public documents.

Mr Cattleman, it would be a sad, selfish paradox in today's starving world to shut down productive land for no valid reason; and that is precisely what is happening. Constructive arguments about the lack of harm and indeed, the benefits of high country grazing are wasted on deaf ears, because ultimately that's not the **real** issue. The government attitude appears to be: "Don't confuse us with the facts; our minds are already made up."

If conservation in its purest and most aesthetic form was truly behind the move to exclude cattle from the mountains, then the development of ski villages would be stopped. The high level ski villages would have to be totally demolished before cattle could even be considered to be excluded from the mountains if government bodies were sincerely concerned with pollution and environmental effects. Inefficient disposal of human wastes have turned catchment areas and streams into open sewers which have resulted in the degeneration of aquatic life all the way down to Albury-Wodonga, to say the least. Cattle are not a conservation worry. The hypocritical, two-faced attitude of those who would take away your runs is the big concern.

I have no axe to grind against the ski villages in the Alps. I think there is room for them most certainly, given an improved waste disposal system. The mountains are for people to discreetly use, enjoy, harvest and conserve. Ski villages and cattle are compatible. But, Mr Cattleman, every time legislation hammers another nail in the coffin of your run country, you are being taken for a fool. A fool, because as you lament in your self-pity, nails are

being hammered into more ski lodges in the mountains making a mockery of your eviction in the interests of "the environment" and "conservation". Some politicians, according to recent newspaper reports, have even been accused of being involved in the escalation of this building development while you are expected to lose a large portion of your productive ability to appease the false god of politics.

The more you remain patient, polite, and diplomatic in the face of this travesty, the bigger fool you become. Mr Cattleman, you are a member of the community group which will be expected to pay for, and suffer the injustices and consequences of the forthcoming legislation. You should not try to merely attain compromise regarding this legislation, you should reject it outright. The argument which would attempt to deprive you of your runs is paper thin, and, in the light of goings on in the ski villages, hypocritical and corrupt.

So stop being so polite, Mr Cattleman. You elected those public servants who now serve you with notices of eviction. Revenue from your pockets supports them comfortably while you now ponder your future with uncertainty and fear. Their policy of non-transference of runs is "starving" you to death in as effective a war of attrition as I've seen on a political battleground. Their policy of taking back one run at a time or restricting them is right out of Caesar's **Galic Wars**, "Divide and Conquer". What will it be? Will you become a dying race like the Aborigines, or will you stand up and walk tall?

Remember, anything really worth having is worth fighting for. If you permit a government body, subsidised by yourselves, to evict you from your runs under false pretences, then you deserve the consequences. If you can't stand together with strength right now, then you never belonged up on the Alps in the first place.

Perhaps what I have written has made you angry. I hope so. You may now be saying, "It's none of your business," or "Yankee go home!" I can live with that. But, Mr Cattleman, even though I've never driven cattle with you through the Bennison Plain, or over Mt. Howitt, or on Rocky Valley; even though I've never had the privilege of being a run-holder in the Australian Alps, they still belong to me, a foreigner, as much as they do to you, native sons. Why? Because I've admired the beauty of the basalt, and granite sculptured peaks and plains, all of them works of art, just as millions of eyes have admired and adopted the Mona Lisa as their own, over the centuries.

The tragedy of the Alps being wrenched from your caring hands would affect me as profoundly as it would you. Stand your ground not only for your own sakes, but for Australia's and the world's.

**R. Tucker, Upper Ryans Creek, via Benalla.**

P.S.: My thanks to the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria, and especially to Mr J. Commins, Mr L. R. McCready, Mr C. McNamara, Mr G. Stoney, Mr E. Weston, Mr P. Weston.

Note: Richard Tucker is an associate member of the M.D.C.A.V. He is formerly of the U.S.A. now is living at Upper Ryans Creek.

# BEHAVIOUR AND DIET OF FREE-RANGING CATTLE ON THE BOGONG HIGH PLAINS

The above is the title of a new study on cattle in the High Country. The study is being undertaken as a Masters of Agriculture project at the University of Melbourne and is intended to be completed by October, 1982.

The main objectives of the study are (i) to determine in which vegetation types cattle prefer to graze, and (ii) what the preferred diet is of cattle on the High Plains. The project is now half-way through and I have spent one season observing cattle on the High Plains and it is still too early to give detailed answers to the above objectives.

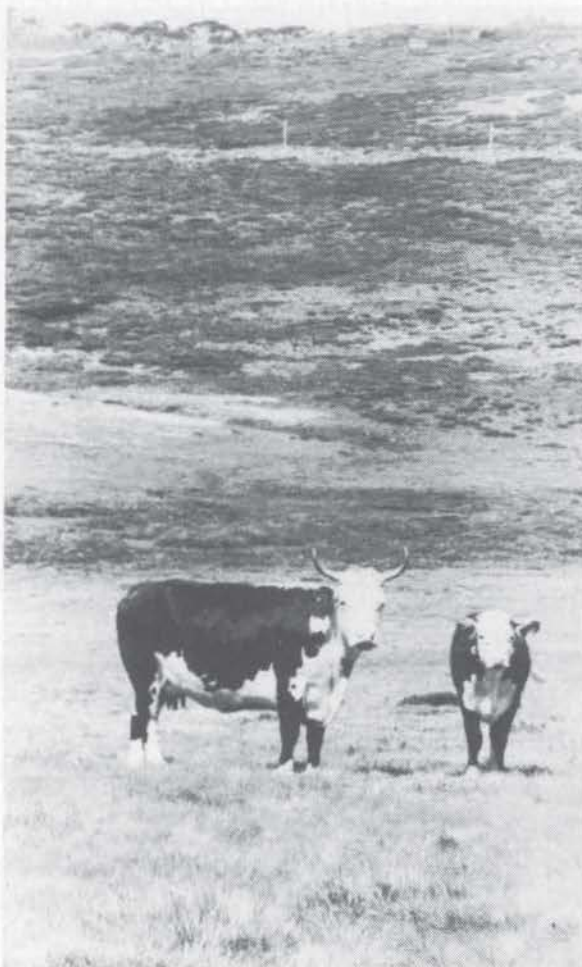
From my observations of cattle movements during the 1980/81 season, it was clear that cattle preferred to graze on the grasslands and shrublands, while they generally did not prefer to graze in mossbeds. However, mossbeds were nearly always used as watering points.

The diet of cattle on the High Plains is highly varied and ranges from *Poa* grass tussocks, to wetland sedges, and shrubs such as *Grevillea* and Alpine star-bush. I have measured the nutritional quality of many of the common alpine plants and found that it is very low, probably below maintenance value. For example, the abundant *Poa* tussocks have a digestibility of 40 per cent and a protein content of 6 per cent, which compares very unfavourably to green perennial rye-grass with a digestibility of around 70 per cent and a protein content of 20 per cent. To supplement their diet cattle graze on sedges and some of the alpine daisies which are more nutritious than the *Poa* tussocks.

This coming season, 1981/82, I will repeat the behaviour observations to determine if there are seasonal differences in cattle movements. I also plan to do more work on the nutritional aspects of the diet of cattle on the High Plains.

I look forward to receiving your comments on the study and to hear about problems (if any) you consider worth investigating with cattle grazing on the High Plains.

Harm van Rees,  
Animal Production Section,  
School of Agriculture & Forestry,  
University of Melbourne,  
Parkville, Vic. 3052.



# LONG LIVE THE CATTLEMEN

Where have all the stockmen gone?

From these mountains, that for generations have been their home.

And where have all the cattle gone?

From the High Plains where they love to graze and roam.

First there came the cattlemen,

They were the true pioneers.

This close-knit band of men

Who blazed the trails and built the huts

That have stood for many years.

Oh, where have all the High Plains gone?

They were so wide, so open and so free.

Since they've kicked the cattle out

They're overgrown, with wild hop scrub,  
Dogwood and ti-tree.

Horse bells in the mountains,

No longer ring their sound.

For the ponies and the pack horse

Have long been sold

To the knackery, for a mere few pound.

Without work, one cannot keep them

Though you wish you may.

To those who kicked the cattle out,

May you live to rue the day.

It is their opinion,

'Twill only hurt a few

By closing up the mountains

Where once the wildflowers and the cattle grew.

And all you hikers, please take heed,

Be sure to wear long pants,

For without the stockmen's burnoffs,

The place it will be full

Of snakes and jumper ants.

But Mother Nature will have her way,

And all our book learned experts

Will want the cattle back to stay.

So next time you're partaking

Of a seven or a ten,

Join me in this toast my friends,

Long live the Cattlemen.

Allan Brewer, "Sylvandale" Herefords,  
Wodonga.



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# AN INTERESTING POINT

by G. J. C. (Rusty) Connley, Benambra.

Over the years there has been a lot of controversy about mossbeds and how cattle grazing the mountains damage these mossbeds and reduce their water productivity.

The relationship between cattle and mossbed damage is grossly exaggerated according to the observation I have maintained over a period of 30 years. The example in on our property at Beloka, north of Benambra.

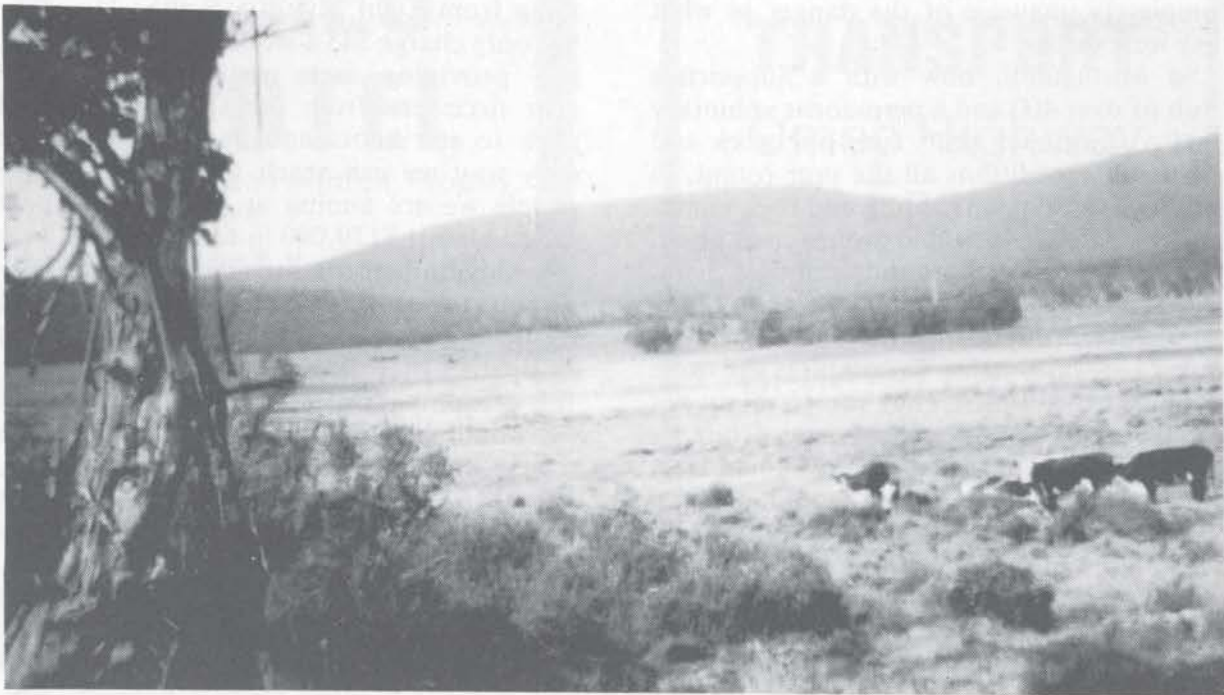
This mossbed of approximately 40 square yards has been subject to several severe droughts, dry periods and cattle have been run in this paddock 12 months of the year every year. The stocking rate has been steadily increased in that 30 year period without damage or change in the area of mossbed or its capacity to store and release water.

In that 30 year period there has been some very dry periods 1967-68 and 1972 being severe drought. The years 1967-1968 the creeks all dried up and we were forced to dig

holes near springs for stock water. A large hole was dug in the edge of this mossbed for water. Today there is no sign of that waterhole. As time went by it gradually silted up and grew over with moss and weed. That same mossbed would be trampled and broken up if cattle did the damage as some critics claim they do. Even with the heavier stocking rate the cattle don't penetrate into the mossbeds any more than 30 years ago. In my judgement this mossbed is in similar condition as it was when we bought the property in 1951.

The problem with a lot of studies done on aspects of the mountains and mountain grazing, logging etc. is that they are done on a short term basis (for example three to five years) and it tends to become an opinion instead of a fact, whereas a long term study produces a more accurate assessment simply because nature is the long term controller of the environment.

"Beloka"



# MITTAGUNDI

At a time when the pack horse is a fast disappearing sight from even the mountain areas of Australia, Mittagundi, an independent, non profit organisation, formed several years ago to provide challenging mountain expeditions to groups of less privileged and unemployed young people, is one organisation that is finding them still very useful.

A group of us, from a whole variety of backgrounds decided to form Mittagundi now four years ago. We felt that there was a lot in the mountains to offer the young people of today, in the form of difficult, but properly organised expeditions of all types. We felt there was no reason why these sorts of experiences with all their benefits, should only be available to those lucky enough to attend the more expensive private schools, and that there was a place for one professional organisation to run such expeditions for a whole range of schools, rather than lots of schools running their own, "in their own spare time" and sometimes completely unaware of the danger in what they were doing.

So Mittagundi, now with a Supporters Club of over 400 and a permanent voluntary staff of four each year, runs one week and two week expeditions all the year round, in walking, rafting, ski touring and rock climbing. As much as possible groups are chosen with a range of backgrounds amongst them, so that a small group of very different young people are brought together as a team who have to work together to complete the quite difficult expeditions. They are certainly not holidays, especially for those fresh from the smog of the inner city. For them just camping, sleeping in a tent, cooking on an open fire, sleeping on the ground on a cold clear night, and doing without electricity and transistor radios, is a big enough shock, let alone walking or skiing or rafting for miles each day on top of it.

But very few go home regretting the experience. It is a lesson in getting along with others, in seeing the value of people as well as money and of experiencing the beauty of one of Victoria's greatest assets — its mountains.

For the unemployed with a dim future ahead of them, it is a break, a boost in self confidence, and an opportunity to successfully complete something difficult and worthwhile, and for a change, feel satisfied with what they have done.

On most of our expeditions we take a pack horse, carrying about 160 lbs of tents, a little of the food and the emergency radio with its 12V motorbike battery. This enables completely inexperienced hikers to take on long trips, without the problem of a pack that is just far too heavy for them.

We have purchased a 400 acre property at Glen Valley, on the Mitta, where we will eventually run a permanent base. We also run a mobile base, from four renovated old Melbourne Tramways buses, presently operating from Eight Mile Flat on the Howqua. We only charge \$45 a week operating at cost, and providing each person with all the gear necessary from the sleeping bag and pack to the boots and parka. This is the only way we can reach the sort of young people we are aiming at. We have in fact raised almost \$170,000 in four years without any Government or outside help, and now run our own four-wheel drives, and have all the necessary gear to operate continuously in all weather.

It certainly has been a struggle for us, and we would like to take this opportunity to thank the many cattlemen of Omeo, Tawonga, Eskdale, and especially Glen Valley and Merrijig for all they have done to help get us on our feet.

There have been so many, too many to mention by name, but we have certainly experienced the true meaning of mountain

friendship and genuine hospitality. Without the cattlemen, their knowledge, help and friendship, Mittagundi would likely never have made it, and it saddens us greatly to see them disappearing from the High Country.

Thank you all, and we hope to see many of you at our Glen Valley base over the years so we can repay some of the friendship and support you gave us when we so badly needed it.

Ian Stapleton.

The Mittagundi crew — Ian, Sue, dog and packhorse.



## OMEO MOTEL

(Esma & Ken Faithfull, Props.)

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# THE FIRST INSPECTION OF THE BENNISON, SNOWY AND HOWITT PLAINS, 1960

Cattlemen have been battling for many years to correct the accusations made regarding the damage done by grazing cattle in the Alpine area.

Alarming reports began as early as September 1959 with the publishing of statements that the High Plains were being overgrazed, with erosion resulting.

Cattlemen felt that these statements were over exaggerated and needed correcting.

With this in mind, the Licola and High Plains Cattlemen's Association organised an inspection of the Snowy, Bennison and Howitt Plains areas.

Invited guests on the trip included representatives of the Soil Conservation Authority, the Forestry Commission, the Graziers' Association and councillors from the Maffra Shire. Soil Conservation Authority members included Mr G. Downs, then chairman, and Mr M. Wood. The Graziers' Association was represented by Dr. P. Lang, Mr F. Caddy, Mr E. Gooch and Mr Bill Officer, then secretary of the association.

It was necessary to use four wheel drive vehicles as the Tamboritha road had not been completed in 1960. From Bryce's Hut the party proposed to continue by horseback

to the Howitt Plains and then onto Mt Howitt.

The inspection began on February 22, following lunch at Heyfield. That night after a bumpy ride along the Wellington River and up the Bennison Spur, the party camped at McMichaels' and Kellys' Huts.

The next day they proceeded to Bryce's Hut, inspecting moss beds and grazing areas along the way. After lunch at Bryce's the trip continued by horseback to the campsite at the Howitt Plains hut.

In the morning an inspection was made, again on horseback, of the Howitt Plains and Mt Howitt areas. They then returned to Bryces' (a few welcomed the sight of the Landrovers) then by vehicle to Kellys' and McMichaels' hut for the night.

The country was found to be in excellent condition, many surprised at the small amount of erosion evident.

There have been many similar trips since the one in 1960 to the Alpine grazing areas, cattlemen were and still are determined to prove that cattle grazing is not harmful, but in fact necessary in the overall management of the Alpine area.

## ERIC CUMMING — ONE OF THE OLD SCHOOL

At 77 years of age Eric Cumming is enjoying a well earned spell as his family take over more of the running of the farm.

However, he still has many trips to the bush in the comfort of his car to inspect his cattle.

It's a far cry from the packhorse and riding horse, needed on the two day ride from Glenmaggie to the Bennison plains in 1944.

During those years, Eric and the late Norman McMichael shared the Mt Arbuckle, Mt Wellington run and for a while the Tamboritha run.

After the death of Norman McMichael, Clarrie Gell of Glenmaggie joined Eric in the lease and it has been known as Cumming and Gell since then.

Eric was president of the Gippsland branch of the M.D.C.A.V. for a number of years.



Pictured is the inspection party clambering up the Bastard's neck from Bryce's to the Howitt hut.



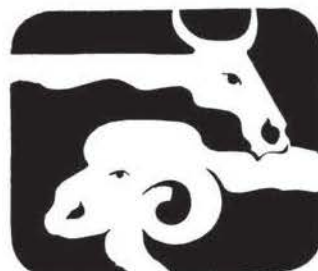
McMichael's Hut during the first inspection of the Plains in 1960 are rear, Val Cleary (District F.O.), Basil Reid (Forests Commission); front, Eric Cumming and Bob Duns-muir.

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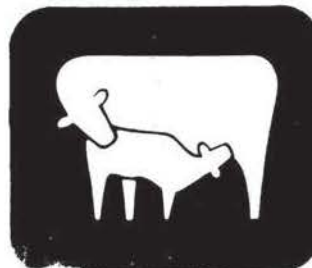
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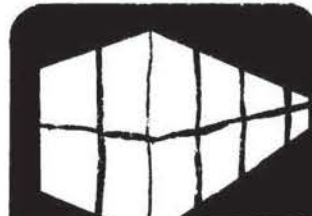
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# Another Stockman Gone Over The Divide

We were saddling for the muster  
Everyone joking and gay,  
Except an old man that stood by the sliprails  
Watching and waiting for us to ride away.  
He lit his pipe and he tapped a stick  
In a rather impatient sort of way,  
Then quietly turning to his old dog, Mick,  
I heard the old gentleman say.  
"How I miss the mountain ranges,  
I used to ride the snowy plains,  
and help them with the muster,  
I can still feel the red hide reins.  
I see my old hack and the clumper with the pack  
followed by a kelpie dog or two,  
I hear the cattle call by the water-fall  
But my mustering days are through.  
There's my old quart pot and my pony at a trot,  
He's now quite lame in the leg,  
The saddle and whip that made many a trip  
and the bridle hanging neatly from the peg.  
Yes, it's hung there for years and often brought back tears  
as my mind goes back to the past,  
But time has moved on, the stockmen have gone,  
Only memories forever seem to last.  
But once more I'll try before I die,  
I'll saddle up and ride  
up the mountain track where there's no going back,  
twill be another stockman gone over the Divide.  
I'll ride along to an angel's song  
and my pony will step with pride  
up that great long track to where there's no way back,  
twill be another stockman gone over the Divide.

Don Kneebone



Don Kneebone.

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## **A TRIBUTE TO THE LATE BILL HANNA**

Bill was manager for G & N at Myrtleford for over 22 years coming to Myrtleford in 1958.

Prior to that he was associated with auctioneering firms for 14 years in the Western District and was known and respected in most parts of the state. Many people had much faith in his judgement and advice.

Gippsland and Northern agents, Geoff Keesh, Kevin Sanderson, Peter Nicoll, Bruce Waite and Bernie Coonan worked with him and have gone on to do well in the auctioneering trade.

Bill was a homely and a good family man and many times helped people in unfortunate circumstances.

Although stricken with cancer some three years ago he never surrendered to defeat, and was always cheerful and uncomplaining.

Just before his death he attended the opening of the plaque on Mount Hotham to the memory of the late Bill Howard, and although acting under great difficulties made a remarkably good speech.

He is sadly missed by staff, clients, friends and his family.

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# THE ECONOMICS OF CROWN LAND GRAZING

— another way of being squeezed out

Runholders have become increasingly concerned in recent years by the escalating cost of Government charges. At first glance these charges may appear small, but only when the overall assessment is made, does the true picture emerge.

Grazing charges on unfenced runs for a limited period of the year cannot be compared with charges for paddock grazing. Fees charged vary and are made with several Government departments, usually by tender initially.

The figures relating to revenue collected by the Government for grazing are no doubt available to the public but the amount an individual pays is a matter of private concern between him and the landlord Department.

A number of the factors which should influence the rate of charges can be outlined as follows:

No allowance has ever been calculated for the increased wild flower display, the accessibility, and protection from fire and for visiting hikers and others that cattle grazing on unimproved Crown Land and the people associated with this practice have been directly responsible for.

When cattle prices are relatively high it may appear to some that fees for grazing are low but it must be remembered that the high cost of management also persists through the most severe depressions in the industry.

The cost of droving long distances coupled with some weeks of mustering by a number of stockmen plus regular tours of inspection over many miles adds considerable expense to the operation.

There is a loss of two per cent or more per annum of cattle that either perish, stray or are at times slaughtered or removed by unauthorised persons.

Many families have persevered with their runs through past years and for generations in the most frugal circumstances yet one does not hear of disproportionate wealth being gained from their endeavours.

Defending the cattlemen's viewpoint against heavily subsidised (by Government grant) opposition and the associated submissions to the Land Conservation Council of Victoria and other bodies, have cost cattlemen thousands of dollars and this must be a legitimate cost within our commercial enterprise. A cost which, by the way, should never have been made necessary.

The tenuous terms of occupation for the essentially long term undertaking of cattle raising, also lowers the ceiling value of fair rental.

**There is considerable danger that the fees charged for Crown Land grazing may rapidly rise to an unacceptable level if there is not sufficient cognisance of the above matters by governing authorities.**

Compared with the situation that exists in the Alps of Central Europe, our situation is vastly different. There, all countries sharing that region heavily subsidise the traditional grazing of large herds of cattle and that is where millions of tourists go each year to view the scenery and wild flowers and where natural erosion by the elements is many times greater than that which is occurring in any of the mountains in this country.

James Commins, 1981.

Mountain Cattlemen please note, the president has asked that members keep accurate records of the time and labour used in the management of their cattle runs.

Several members have done a costing on their operation and the results are showing that their total costs are as high or higher than obtaining agistment on a next door farm.

Legitimate costs against the operation can include, droving costs at station hand wages, vehicle costs, food, lease or agistment costs, hut repairs, horse replacements and maintenance, losses at about 2% per year (McGowan's survey figure), and travelling to Cattlemen's meetings and subscriptions.

These figures can be added up and divided by the number of cattle run on a particular lease to obtain a cost figure per year.

# THE HILLS ARE ALIVE TO THE SOUND OF STEVE

The North East will shortly hear the strains of a new song for the district.

The lyrics were penned by a Mansfield obstetrician and the music by Wangaratta composer-in-community Steve Holgate. Titled "Song of the North East" it was sung by a choir of 700 voices at the Country Education Project's "Music 81 Choral Festival held at the Myrtleford Showgrounds on Friday, November 6.

About 30 schools from the Ovens and King areas, together with the Victorian Boys' Choir, attended the festival. A special sound system was brought from Melbourne for the occasion and the two-hour recital was recorded.

The lyrics of Song of the North East, written by Dr. Joan Curtis, were referred to the Wangaratta composer by CEP music

tutor Ruth Jordan. In turn, Steve Holgate has written a four-part harmony for his interpretation of the piece, together with piano and guitar parts.

His composition is interspersed with "breaks" for hand-clapping or the crack of whips. Lyric-writer Dr. Curtis said recently she had written the song, then known as "The Mountains That We Love", about two years ago.

"It had its premier at a birthday party for a local cattleman at Stockyard Creek . . . I've been interested in singing all my life," she said. Dr Curtis said she had given permission for the use of the words of the song when approached by the CEP.

The lyrics for "Song of the North East" are:

When the summer sun is scorching  
All the pastures of the plain  
And the water in the dams is getting low  
The drovers take their cattle  
To the high country again  
To graze in sheltered valleys where  
The sweet snow grasses grow.

So we'll ride, boys, ride  
The rocky mountainside  
You'll hear our stockwhips cracking  
Clear across the Great Divide  
And at night we'll boil the billy  
While the Southern Cross above  
Shines on Hotham, Loch and Feather-  
top  
The mountains that we love.

So we'll ride, boys, ride  
The rocky mountainside  
No track too steep, no ford too deep  
Where mountain stockmen ride  
And at night we'll boil the billy  
While the Southern Cross above  
Shines on Cobbler, Clear and Buffalo  
The mountains that we love.

All through the lazy summer days  
The cattle graze and roam  
And scatter through the mountains as  
they go  
But when the nights turn colder  
Then the leaders start for home  
Remembering lowland pastures  
That escape the winter snow.

So we'll ride, boys, ride  
 The rocky mountainside  
 We'll muster through the gullies and  
 across  
 The snow plains wide  
 And at night our fires burn brighter  
 While a frosty moon above  
 Shines on Stoney, Purcell, Lovick  
 All the mountain men we love.

So we'll ride, boys, ride  
 The rocky mountainside  
 We'll hunt them from the ti-tree where  
 The little poddies hide  
 And at night the camp carousing  
 While a frosty moon above  
 Shines on Buller, Stirling, Timbertop  
 The mountains that we love.

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# A BUSY YEAR

Report by Cattlemen's Liaison Officer  
Lyle McCready

1980-81 was the culmination of years of work by the Association's executive to preserve grazing on Crown Lands. Thousands of dollars have been spent on consultant's fees, every area was inspected and excellent submissions made to the L.C.C.

Prior to the recommendations being discussed in Parliament, Graeme Stoney and I spent half a day at the House, talked to members of all parties and left a copy of our submission with each Party so they were well informed. Of course voting was on party lines — result 10 cattlemen will be phased out of Alpine grazing in 10 years.

This means a drop of 3,000 weaner calves available to annual calf sales, at a time when beef cattle numbers are at a record low, and there is a world shortage of food.

Eventually the public will recognize that our hammering of multiple usages was correct. Our counterparts in the United States of America, after twice the experience in alpine grazing as we have had, are now using every acre which will feed stock.

One of the reasons for holding our "Get Together" in a different district each year is to enable those attending to see for themselves that our modern grazing practices are beneficial to the mountain country we graze.

We as an Association maintain a close liaison with the Vermin and Noxious Weeds Destruction Board, and their inspectors in all grazing areas, members of every branch giving hundreds of hours of voluntary service to this Board.

The average visitor to the alpine area has no idea of the alarming spread of noxious weeds and the problem of controlling them, let alone effecting eradication.

The same situation exists with vermin, which cause stock losses, erosion, pasture damage and kill small native animals and birds.

Our liaison with the Forests Commission on fire spotting, fire fighting and protective burning continue on a voluntary basis.

We will continue to fight for multiple usage of crown lands, and work in close cooperation with those who recognise the sense of Mountain Cattlemen retaining their bush and alpine grazing areas.



Lyle McCready pictured on a recent inspection of the Bluff which is under threat to be closed to grazing.

**Kiewa Valley**  
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# A MEMORIAL TO BILL HOWARD

(Courtesy Myrtleford Times)

There were around 79 gathered up on the High Plains; cattlemen and friends, as the memorial plaque put it. There were cattlemen from the Buckland, from Omeo, from 'over the other side', there were stock and station agents, and of course, friends.

The occasion was the unveiling of a memorial plaque to one of their mates, who has gone before, one Bill Howard, of Harrierville.

The plaque set on a low pedestal made up of local rock, simply states — 'Memorial to Bill Howard, Mountain Cattleman. Born 1919, died 1978. Erected by Cattlemen and Friends.'

The memorial was the work of Jack Dean, assisted by Geoff Morgan, Dick Henning and Lee Street, not forgetting George Best, the local ranger, and John Hall.

Set off the Omeo Road in a clump of eucalyptus pauciflora, the memorial marks the site where Bill often took his stand and gazed out across the Alpine mountains.

Vic Attridge had the privilege of unveiling the memorial. He told of his long years of being associated with Bill Howard; of Bill's deep love for his cattle, which were always among the best to come off the High Plains, and his horses and dogs, especially his dogs.

Bill Hanna and Peter Nichol, both stock and station men, spoke of Bill and his open-house hospitality. Bill never married but lived with his sister down in Harrierville alongside the Ovens River. Walter Ryder said much the same thing — Bill's door was always open and he was always open and he was always ready to help anyone and everyone.

Don Kneebone, the cattleman poet from Bobinawarra, had composed a poem for the occasion.

You listened to the talking, tales of the High Plains; you watched the men and the women, Jack and Phyllis Keating, Tom and Maude Bibby, Lil Staff, Rosa Fraser, John and Ivy Lorimer, Harry Hocking and his party, John Hall and Bill Hicks of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association, and listened to Vic Attridge talking with Jack Treasure. 'Our fraternity is growing fewer,' said Jack. "Another thirty years hence — what?"

"We all had a common enemy which was the weather; we mustered everyone's cattle because we knew that our neighbours were mustering ours. In the past we stuck together, and we'll need to stick in the future."

We came home over Hotham. In place of the whitefaced Herefords and the cattlemen and their huts is the new breed of mountain men — the skiers. You look at the ski lodges, you look at the chair lifts, you look at all the bitumen and the parking space for cars. You look at the whole mess that they are making of the mountain, and as one lady put it — 'you feel sick!'

What ARE we doing to our High country? Go up and see for yourselves, and ask the question: Who is fouling it up? The cattlemen or the ski industry?

Think on these things — it is, after all, our heritage.

**Wal Larsen.**

# CATTLEMEN RIDE IN THE MAN FROM SNOWY RIVER

The epic film "The Man From Snowy River" was filmed in the Mansfield area during 1981.

The film stars Kirk Douglas, Jack Thompson and several other well known actors.

Well known Omeo horseman and brumby runner Ken Connley was Jack Thompson's stand-in for the dangerous scenes in the film. Jack and Charlie Lovick from Merrijig were retained by the film company during the filming to supply horses and expertise. Along with other Mansfield locals they rode in many of the horse scenes.

Mountain cattlemen families who were asked to supply riders for the chase scenes included Purcells, McCormacks, Stoneys, Hearn, Lovicks and Connlys.

The film includes some stunning horse scenes, and the scenery is in keeping with the theme of the film. The "man", who is played by Tom Burlinson, according to the

film company is a composite character and not intended to directly portray any character created by Banjo Paterson.



From left: Jack Purcell, Paul Purcell and Christine Purcell pictured at "Spurs Hut" which was constructed on Clear Hills near Mt Stirling especially for the film



From left: Charlie Lovick, Jack Lovick, John Lovick pictured at Harrison's Homestead before the ride. The homestead and outbuildings were constructed on a picturesque spot on the property owned by a member of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association, Mr Charlie Hearn of Merrijig.

Photo courtesy Mansfield Courier

# POLITICIANS

## Interested in Cattlemen's Problems

### STATE LABOR ARE FACT FINDING

Members of the Victorian state labor party have expressed interest in the problems facing Mountain Cattlemen.

Last November a group of labor party officials visited Mt Stirling and Mt Buller to see at first hand the areas to be developed for skiing, and to assess what effect this development will have.

On Mt Stirling Mansfield Cattlemen explained the difficulties they would face with the proposed development. The discussion also covered the Bluff area which is clearly visible from Mt Stirling and Cattlemen's objections to it being eventually closed to grazing were put.

### INSPECTION BY GRIMWADE, TREWIN & OFFICIALS

Last summer a full tour of the Bluff and Mt Stirling grazing areas was undertaken by officials of the Soil Conservation Authority, Lands Department, Forests Commission, Department of Agriculture and Shire Councillors. Several Parliamentarians attended including Fred Grimwade MLC and Tom Trewin MLA.

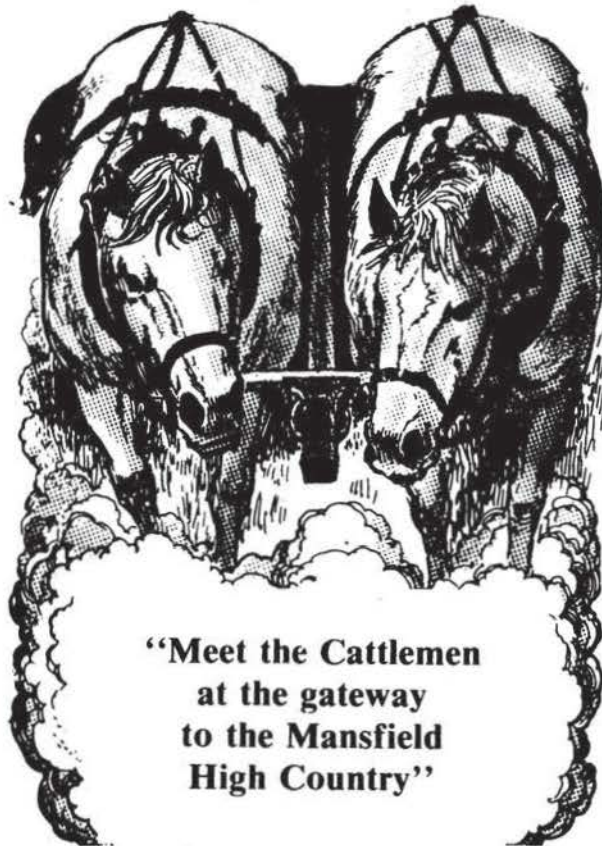
A horseback ride was taken out onto the Bluff and the abundant feed and lack of damage to the area was apparent to all. Various members of the group expressed their amazement that the area was listed to be closed for grazing by the LCC and a lively discussion took place when the horseback party returned to the Bluff Hut, and the waiting convoy of four wheel drive vehicles.



Cattlemen Jack Purcell, left, and Tom Purcell, right, are pictured explaining the layout of the Mt Stirling cattle run to the shadow minister for forests Mr Eric Kent and the A.L.P. candidate for Central Highlands, Mr Tony Marshall. A late snow drift and the summit of Mt Stirling are in the background.

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## **Merrijig**

# SONG OF THE AVON

I have seen mountain and valley and forest,  
Rocky grey outcrop and green mossy bank;  
Tall mountain ashes and blossoming meadows,  
Messmate and stringybark, rank upon rank.

Willows and wattles cast shade on my shallows,  
Wildflowers, grasses and fern deck my brink;  
Grey kangaroos and opossums and wombats  
And smaller bush people come down to drink.

I have been chilled in the white frosts of winter;  
I have been warmed by the hot summer sun;  
Spanking white raindrops have dappled my surface,  
Flooded the lowlands and made dry creeks run.

Bush fires I've seen in the height of the summer,  
Terrified animals fled to my arms;  
Smoke choked and scared them and flames roared behind,  
To lay waste the forests, the towns and the farms.

Once there were black men who lived close beside me;  
Made bark canoes from the living gum trees;  
Hunted and fished for the food that they needed,  
And acted out Dreamtime Corroborrees.

I know hidden glades deep in the forest,  
Places where no white man ever has been;  
I know where men's bones have lain all uncovered,  
Fleshless, un-cared for, grassed over, unseen.

I could tell many a story of heartbreak,  
How men lived rough in the heat and the cold,  
Braving the hunger, the danger, the hardship...  
Men who left home to searching for gold.

Sometimes I'm quiet and sometimes I'm angry,  
Sometimes a trickle and sometimes a flood;  
Raging and surging I've swept away bridges,  
Covering the land with a blanket of mud.

Many a creek joins with me in my journey  
Down from the mountain tops, frolicking free,  
Underneath bridges and curving through Stratford,  
Into the Lakes on my way to the sea.

Dorothy B. Watt.



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## 1982 MOUNTAIN CATTLE SALES

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**OMEO, 10th MARCH      BENAMBRA NO. 2, 15th MARCH**

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# THE SAFARI BUSINESS

## — The best way to see the cattle country

Safaris into the High Country of Victoria are becoming big business with three major operators developing their operations to cater for the demand.

### **Lovick's Mountain Safaris**

These are operated from Merrijig by that charismatic cattleman Jack Lovick and his family. The Lovicks descend from a long line of bushmen and cattlemen. They have had extensive media coverage in recent years. Their Safaris are popular and large numbers of people ride out each week during the summer under the guidance of the Lovick family. Jack Lovick is regarded as a professional bushman and his long experience is of great interest to his guests. Since the accompanying photo was taken Jack has grown his "Father Time" beard for his role in the film "The Man From Snowy River".



### **Frank Peterson — Safari Tours Omeo**

For the people wishing to enjoy the high country around Omeo, Frank Peterson is the man to see. Frank runs both 4 wheel drive and horse trips and people can choose between day and extended tours.

### **Clive Hodge — Mountain Trail Rides of Gippsland**

Clive is the descendant of an early Gippsland pioneering family. He is recognised as one of the best bushmen in Gippsland and is frequently called upon to assist in search and rescue work. His Safari guests benefit from Clive's wide experience and enjoy his mountain philosophy.

Safari operators Jack Lovick and Clive Hodge meet at Lovick's Hut King Billy on the roof of Victoria.



# CATTLEMEN AND THE EARLY SKI TOURERS

In the early stages of cross country skiing, Mountain cattlemen were in demand packing and guiding enthusiasts into remote snow fields along the great divide.

Wally Ryder was one of these cattlemen and was well known by early skiers for his extensive knowledge of his area of the mountains.

One of his clients and friends was the Norwegian Jaasund who became a legend in the Victorian Alps in the thirties as he practised the old Norwegian art of Ski Touring in the winter months.

Photo by Jaasund — 1936 shows Wally Ryder and Rod Bretherton at Tawonga after the three of them had returned from Mt Bogong. They had travelled on horses across Bogong Plains, through the Big River and up the Quart Knob spur to Mt Bogong.

When approaching the summit of Mt Bogong they by chance discovered the snow dugout in a remaining drift which had been used by Cleve Cole as shelter in his last remaining days earlier in the winter of 1936.

Photo shows packhorse laden with the equipment salvaged from the dugout.

Wally Ryder also recalls that in the summer of 1932 he packed building materials onto the Bogong High Plains where Jaasund was building an SEC cottage near Wallace's hut.

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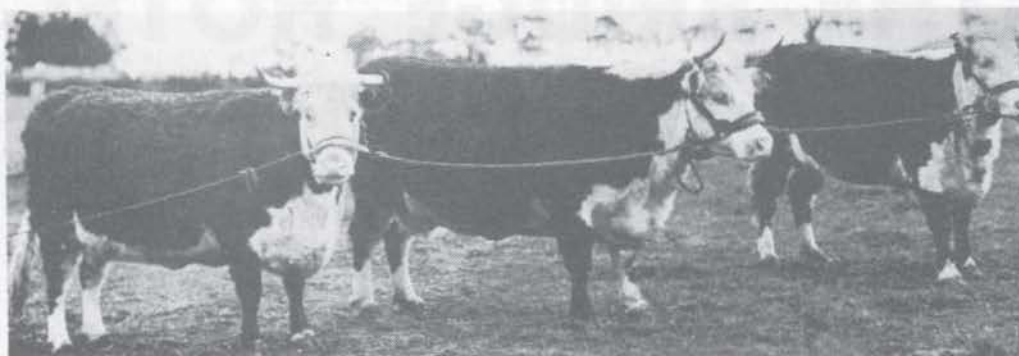


# “GLENTREVOR”

## Herefords

1882 Century of Service 1982

During some recent research we realised that the Yelland family founded the original Treverder stud in 1882 and not 1883 as previously thought.



Group of an early show team.

Left: “Rule Britannia”, “Tocal Lass”, “Myrtle Queen”  
Champ. Sydney Royal. Champ. Melb. Royal. Res. Champ. Sydney to  
“Rule Britannia”.

“Treverder” stud, the forerunner of “Glentrevor” was founded in 1882 on females from J. H. Angus of Angaston South Australia and H. Beattie, Mt Aitken, Victoria. Further females added were almost entirely from Tocal Stud of the Reynolds family at Patterson, New South Wales.

**All interested cattlemen are cordially invited to attend the Yelland family’s Centenary Field Day on their property near Milawa on Wednesday, March 3, 1982.**

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DARGO**

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Where the hills are always green,  
And the Dargo River winding  
Like a living thing between.

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**THE BRIDGE HOTEL, DARGO**

## A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

from Jack Treasure, Dargo

In this letter you will follow my thoughts on our problems.

There is no hope for mountain cattlemen if we pander to the arising tide of bureaucracy. We are only feeding them.

These bodies are destroying all of our mountain environment and will continue to do so as long as government finances are poured into their coffers. They are neither useful or needed and should be phased down to a minimum.

Some government service is necessary, but when they arise to become the bosses of their own destiny and regardless to waste and good balance, then the mountain cattlemen should take up the issue through "The Voice of the Mountains" and reveal the whole scandal to the general public.

## Mountain Safaris of Gippsland



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# DON THE AMBASSADOR

Cattleman, Don Kneebone from Bobinawarrah is one of our association's best ambassadors.

He has travelled widely in the North East and Gippsland speaking to school children and reciting his poetry. Below are some letters of appreciation from the children.

His theme is the bush and the cattlemen. Don has produced a record of his poems and appears regularly at functions to recite his works.

Keep it up Don.

Dear Mr Kneebone,

How are you? Thank you for talking to us and telling us some of your poems about the bush. I really liked listening to your poems. I thought they were very good and interesting to listen to. I have written a poem about the bush but it is not as good as your's are.

From

**Sharon Roberts.**

Dear Mr Kneebone,

Thank you for coming to Fifteen Mile Camp, and telling us nice, fierce and rough poems. I thought it was marvellous how you could remember all those poems out of the top of your head. It must be an honour to have sent one of your tapes to Prince Charles and Princess Diana, and to get a reply of thanks. We listen to your tape when we do about the camp. I would like to see you again. I liked the poem about the fires and the Cattleman's Cup.

Yours Faithfully,

**Jenny Derbyshire.**

Dear Mr Kneebone,

Hi! I am writing to thank you for coming out to see us at Fifteen Mile Creek. I liked your poems. I hope we see you again.

From,

**Suzanne Cairncross.**

Dear Mr Kneebone,

I thought the poems you told us were good. I liked the poem about the boys. The cattleman's cup was good as well. Thank you for telling us the poems.

From,

**Simon Mitchell.**

I think Mr Kneebone is very smart and clever because he knows his poems off by heart.

From,

**Kellie Wallace.**

Dear Mr Kneebone,

How are you? I thought that your poems were very good. We have listened to some of the tape Mr Jackson bought. I liked the one about the Cattleman's Cup and the one about the girls and boys.

From,

**Carolyn Derbyshire.**

Dear Mr Kneebone,

Thank you for coming on Wednesday night. I think your poems are really good.

From,

**Brent Lidgerwood.**



The three fires Mr Kneebone told about must have been terrible. The poem about Mr Kneebone's school days was really good. So was the Cattleman's Cup. He told us a story about people who had burnt two very old houses. People should care more about the bush.

From,  
**Hamish Sinclair.**

I like Mr Kneebone because he tells poems just like no one was there. He is just like a person who died and came back to life. It is fun to see a real good man.

From,  
**Gary Hayes.**

Mr Kneebone is to me a spirit left by all the people he talked about. He has a feeling about him which is actually terrific. He can actually get through to you with history. In his way, he talks in poem and story.

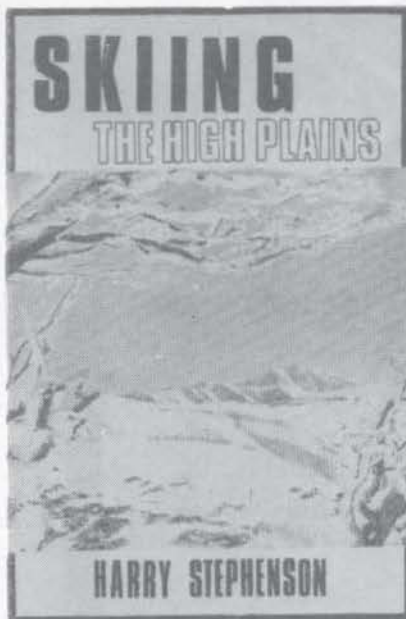
Mr Kneebone has a way to find happiness, freedom. I think he's a man with a good life to remember. he has a dream, which he could enjoy and fulfil. It is easy to think he could be a guardian of life in the bush.

Mr Kneebone isn't a person but a wisp of happiness which he expresses simply.

From,  
**Dianne Simpson.**



Who is having the most fun? Don and the kids are pictured reading the 1981 edition of Voice of The Mountains.



## SKIING THE HIGH PLAINS

by HARRY STEPHENSON

is a collection of stories of the exploration of Victoria's snowfields mainly in the 1920s and 1930s. The chapters, copiously illustrated with old photographs and maps were written by the pioneer skiers who made these early trips.

The beginnings on Buffalo, the history of St Bernard and Hotham, the first ascent and development of Buller, the first trips across the Bogong High Plains, the climbing of Mt Bogong – these stories and all the other exploits of the early ski-tourers are here, to form a valuable historical collection.

Features of the volume are, a selection of 18 full page colour plates, and three 16-page portfolios of snow scenes by the ablest photographers to tour the Alpine area – Edwin G. Adamson, O.H. 'Mick' McCutcheon and the 'indestructible' P.E. 'Mick' Hull.

352 pp. (240 illust.), Crn 4to. Hard Bound, \$17.70 posted

## CATTLEMEN & HUTS OF THE HIGH PLAINS

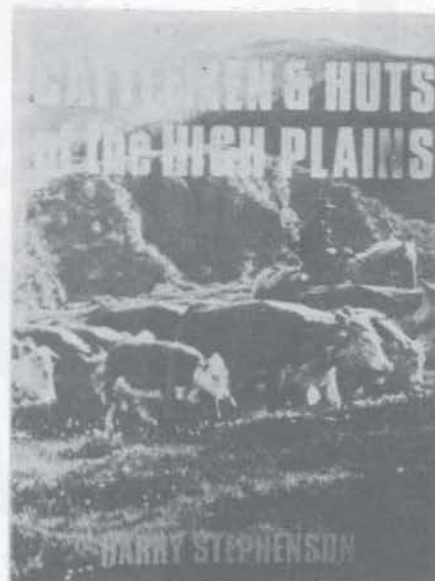
by HARRY STEPHENSON

This book records the history of the mountain cattlemen whose herds grazed in summer the hundreds of thousands of acres of Alpine snowplains of Victoria. Almost every cattlemen's hut known to bushwalkers is illustrated, the old photos depicting the original construction of log or slab sides and bark or shingle roofs – this alone forms a valuable historical collection.

The cattlemen families, the bush identities, the famous cattle stations are all included.

This is a unique volume recapturing and recording an era whose history is fast becoming lost. To the bushwalker, the bush lover and the historian, this piece of Australiana will become a collector's item. (Now in its 4th edition.)

372 pp (360 illust & maps), Crn 4to, Hard Bound. \$15.00 posted



## CORRYONG and "The Man from Snowy River" District by The Hon. T. W. Mitchell, C.M.G.

No run-of-the-mill history, this book is a colourful and thought-provoking account of the development of the Upper Murray since 1837. The author deals with the Aborigines, Discovery and Early Settlement, The Pastoral Scene – Beef Cattle, Sheep (and Rabbits), Horses, The Dairy Industry, as well as the growth of the area which brought with it Education, Local Government, Churches and Transport. The author's life has been a busy one, with study at Cambridge, London, Sydney and Harvard, USA, skiing and snow exploration in four continents, war service (including the years 1942-45 as P.O.W. in Changi), politics, scouting and local government. However, one senses, above all else, his great love and understanding of 'the land' and the snow-clad mountains that look down on his 'Towong Hill' cattle station.

No family has had a greater influence on the Upper Murray than the Mitchells, and no man is more qualified to write the story than the author.

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# *Rhonda Villa*

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## THE WOMEN OF THE HIGH PLAINS



The late Mrs Harry Treasure was featured in the Women's Day in 1960 when she was 80 years old and when she could still ride up to the Plains in nine hours.

They must have been a brave and hardy lot, the early women of the High Plains. With their families they ventured into the bush, never complaining about the loneliness or the hardship, accepting it as it came. For some their only memorials are piles of chimney stones and gnarled fruit trees where the clearing once held a family home which brought the bush alive with the sound of laughter and children's voices. In too many cases even their names have been forgotten, for while a man's name may live on in our lore the women who made the bush houses homes, in every sense of the word, are allowed to slip away from us through time.

Some have been remembered. One of the earliest was Mrs Denny Connolly, who was born Margaret Scott. She was the daughter of John Scott, an early settler at Delvine near Bairnsdale, and arrived with her family in the 1840's after an epic wagon trek from the Monaro. She married Denny Connolly at

Cooma in 1851, and they lived at Lindenow before moving to Dargo a few years later. There they ran the hotel at Cowra, which still stands today, providing supplies for the miners on the Upper Dargo diggings. Their children were to include another Denny Connolly, who is still remembered today as a bushman, and Catherine who married Alexander Guy. After a long life around Dargo, Denny and Margaret Connolly retired to Lindenow, where Margaret died in 1922 aged 90 years.

One of her contemporaries at Dargo was Mrs Emily Treasure, who came to Dargo with her husband George, in 1878, carrying her nine month old son Harry in front of her on the saddle. Two of her children were carried in on armchairs on another horse, these chairs being the first furniture in their two-roomed hut. The former Emily Langford had been born in Berkenshire in England, and came to Australia with her family.

She married George Treasure in the Blue Mountains in 1869, and went with him to the minefields of Beechworth and Wandiligong before coming to the High Plains.

During the years they were there her home became the centre around which the High Plains gold rush revolved. With her family she managed the general store, butchery, hotel and post office, supplying a population of up to 1,000 inhabitants when all provisions had to be brought by pack-horse from Harrierville, 32 miles away, before being packed out to customers up and down the creeks and rivers during summer and winter, often through snow, rain and floods.

She reared a family of nine boys and two girls there, moving with her husband and the younger children to Lindenow in 1900 due to her husband's health. After his death in 1901 she brought the family up alone, and lived a long and full life to die there in 1939 aged 89 years.

Her son Harry's wife, Mrs Clara Victoria Treasure, was to be another lady of the High Plains who will long be remembered for the spontaneous and gracious welcome she accorded to all at her homes at "Rock-alpine" and "Castleburn". A school teacher before going to Dargo, she was as home on a horse as she was in her kitchen, and still following the muster until a short time before her death in 1967.

The women of the High Plains should be remembered, be they the first ones like Margaret Connolly and Emily Treasure, or those who came later, such as Mrs Emily Gregory. She rode sidesaddle across the top from Mansfield to Glenmaggie in the 1920's, accompanied only by a 14 year old boy, to register claim to land at Glencairn. Theirs would have been a lonely life, in the glorious country where they were to live, love, and bring up the families which are still there today.

Linda Barraclough.

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# The Boy From Cabbage Tree Creek

(from the Bairnsdale "Every Week")

From western lands a showman came  
by many an outside track  
Who had a horse no man could tame  
and blanky few could back  
For oh! he was a factious nag  
an outlaw so to speak  
Until he struck a nasty snag  
away at cabbage creek.

A noble horse indeed was he  
so fearless strong and brave  
(So very strange it seemed to me  
that he should misbehave)  
A product doubtless of the range  
where he was lord and king  
A showhorse now, alas how strange  
A demon of the ring.

"Come line up boys," the showman cried.  
Your feats have long been sung.  
You ride for glory and the pride  
of Croajingalong.  
There stands a prad unconquered yet  
who never yet was rid  
You ride for glory and a bet  
of twenty golden quid.

Tall bushmen came to view the fray  
from Bonang and beyond  
and some rolled up from Bindi way  
and some from Jarramond  
and bushmen vied with blokes from town  
to ride this horse by heck  
to break his stubborn spirit down  
or break his blanky neck.

"Waltz out," cried one, "this outlaw steed  
This crock you claim can buck  
The twenty quid I sorely need  
so I will try my luck."  
And then his strength began to fail  
the showman stood aghast  
his peerless pet so wild and hale  
had met his match at last

And thus excitement grew intense  
the bushies simply roared  
As "Springback" leaned against the fence  
his rider still aboard.

From this the broken horse was led  
from this his waterloo  
His head hung low, his pride was dead  
his heart was broken too.  
And thus his victor, young and rash  
so humble yet so strong  
just gathered in his bit of cash  
and bade the crowd "So long".

Bushman.

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# The Old Man's Muster

by Alan Simmons, Merrjig.

I was sitting there poking the campfire  
with my ear to the bubbling stew,  
While my eyes were on neighbouring mountains  
and the sky and the depth of its blue.  
The knife-edge of spurs and the ridges,  
the gullies so dense and so deep.  
I drank in the beauty before me  
as a picture to treasure and keep.

The camp-oven seemed to fall silent  
so I tossed on some sticks and a log  
As the distance sent sounds of the cattle  
and a rider's voice called to his dog.  
Then my mind drifted back to the old days  
when I'd wheel 'round a beast at horn's tip,  
With the undergrowth crashing beneath me  
as the rifle-shots snapped from my whip.

These days it's my sons do the muster  
but I still come up here for a look  
And a listen to sounds of the old days  
while I tell folks I just love to cook.  
There's an eagle now drifting below me  
then the warm air allows him to rise  
And I'm home just as much in these mountains  
as that eagle's at home in these skies.

My Dad built the hut in this clearing  
while I was the lad at his side  
And he taught me the lore of the mountains  
as he taught me to fish and to ride.  
His teaching was harsh on occasion  
but now as my mind starts to drift,  
I recall how, he too loved this country  
and he passed this to me as his gift.

I lift up the lid, sniffing deeply,  
of the stew which is pretty-well done  
And the eagle still drifts o'er the vastness  
as he bathes in the breath of the sun.  
Then a darker patch crosses the valley  
as a cloud makes its way to the west.  
It's the magic of nature performing  
a dance in the show I love best.

There's some dust rising down by the river  
    where the cattle will drink at the ford.  
Then they'll follow their lead down the Howqua  
    as though led down there by the Lord.  
So the boys won't be long in returning  
    they'll drink beer and no doubt make some noise  
And the peace of this scene will be shattered  
    but that's life; I know boys **will** be boys.

The beat of the hooves sounds arrival  
    and they laugh loud of dangers they've had,  
While I'm greeted as "Silly Old Bastard"  
    but the youngest bloke still calls me Dad.  
Danny has poured me a whiskey  
    but others find fault with the food.  
So I tell them they're tasting the flavour  
    of the best stew that's ever been stewed.

They play pranks and they out-boast each other  
    and their wild boisterous fun makes me glad,  
For it wasn't so long (I'm reminded)  
    when the wildest of all was their Dad.  
The sun lights a glowing horizon  
    with a beauty, a splendour superb  
Then even the loudest fall silent  
    it's a scene not a voice should disturb.

Now the horses are feeding close by me  
    and my sons talk in quieter tones.  
I give thanks to my God, who is nature  
    and forget all the aches in my bones.  
Some men need a church to feel thankful  
    for the wonders Creation bestowed  
But I'm lucky — the alps are my altar  
    and the bush gets my prayers that He's owed.

## Contributors

All contributions to next year's magazine  
will be gratefully assessed for inclusion.

Opinions, Poems, Bushman's Stories  
and Photographs are all suitable.

Advertisements are also valuable!

Please forward to **Graeme Stoney,**  
**Minto Park, Mansfield. Ph: (057) 75 2212.**



