



Voice of the Mountains

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THE MOUNTAIN CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA INC.

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Voice of the Mountains

Journal of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria Inc.

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

The immediate part of just over a year has been quite the most eventful period in the history of our Association.

After years of quietly lobbying and responding to public enquiries when they affected us, we realised that we were having no worthwhile impact. That being the case, we decided to change tactics and take a higher profile in public to draw attention to a potentially dangerous development that could bring about the end of Mountain Cattlemen and affect the freedom and livelihood of a great many other people apart from ourselves.

I do not have to relate a chronology of events that are well known, but the net result has been marvellous support from a more aware public and our Associate membership has grown over tenfold.

It was unfortunate that we were left with no effective option but to become involved in the political arena during the election campaign for the Province of Nunawading.

We tried to signal the Government that they would be poorly advised if they persisted in trying to make huge increases to the already extensive Alpine National Park, and that we would resist to the utmost such a wasteful and unnecessary move.

The National Park Extension Bill was introduced into Parliament just before the by-election in an electorate where some political pundits believed it would be a plus for the Government candidate's campaign.

Another political party campaigned almost totally on the environment issue and received heavy support from the publicly funded Australian Conservation Foundation.

With the big guns loaded against us we found after thirty years of gradual retreat that we had to take the offensive with all the strength that we could muster.

To have effective support for our cause in Parliament we had to back the Liberal candidate who subsequently won the election. I must stress that we conducted this effort on the single issue of the National Park extension.

As the Parliamentary Opposition now have the numbers to block passage of the Bill, and have remained firm in that resolve, the legislation has been shelved, but not withdrawn. We can only hope the Government will eventually see the futility of persevering with the Bill.

I must express appreciation and sincere thanks for the support of members who rallied to almost every man, woman and child when called upon. My highest level of gratitude goes to the many Associate members who have given their utmost in positive and generous support for our cause.

With that ever growing circle of friends and supporters I am confident that Mountain Cattlemen are not a dying race and that a much more pleasing and safe alpine environment will be maintained, than if some misguided conservationists were to have their way.

I must devote a line to record the extremely effective work of our Executive Officer, Graeme Stoney, and the efficient and professional manner in which he has carried it out. Also, I can say no less for Sue Silvers, our Assistant Secretary, an Associate member whose ongoing effort and dedication is positively outstanding.

While I hope that we may never have to become so heavily involved in the political arena again, we must continually watch developments. One cannot help but be reminded of the Returned Servicemen's League motto: The price of liberty is eternal vigilance. Our Executive, Members and Associates intend to fight for our rights in 1986 and beyond.

My good wishes go to you all for 1986.

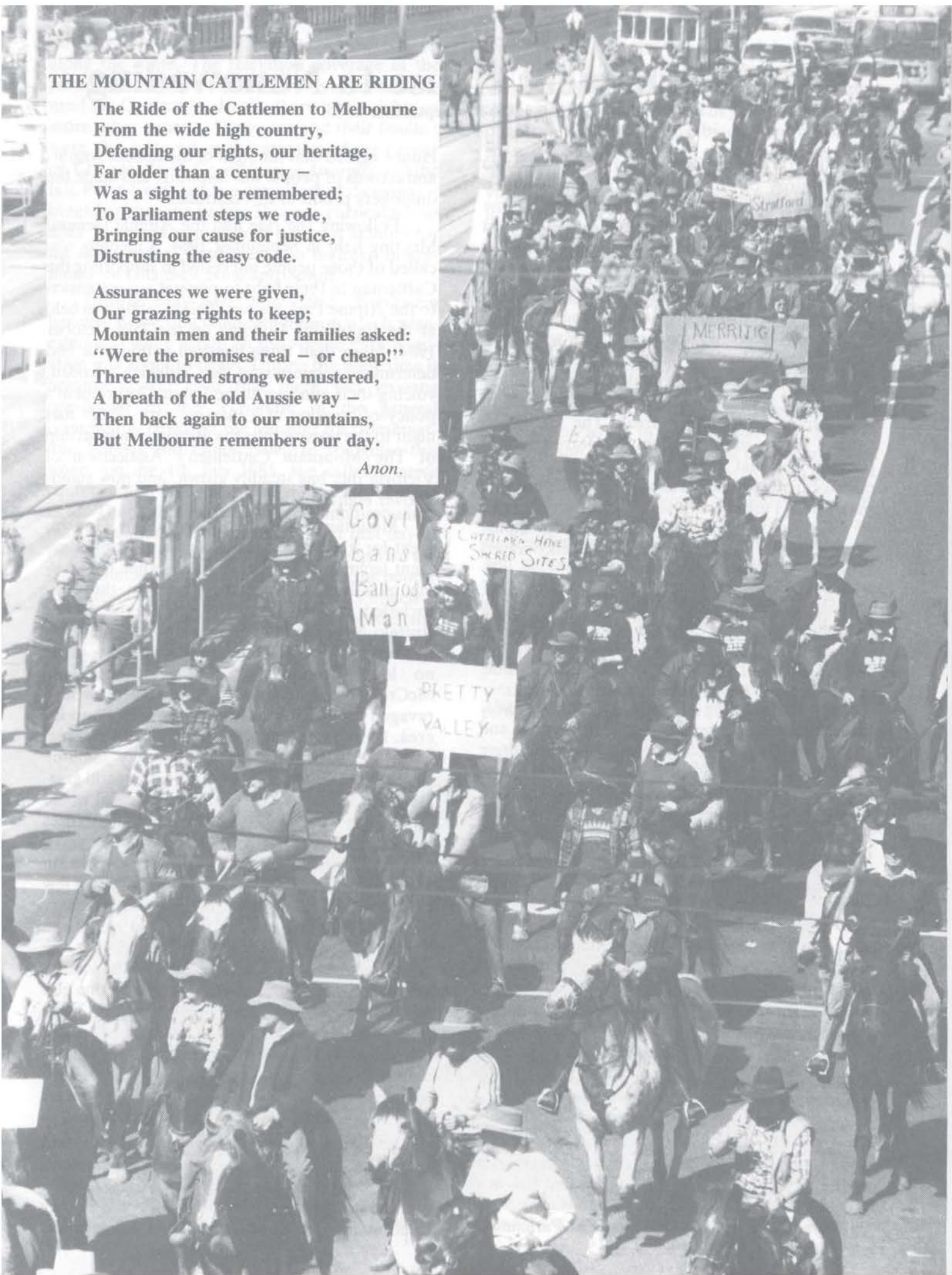
James A. Commins
President,
Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria, Inc.

THE MOUNTAIN CATTLEMEN ARE RIDING

The Ride of the Cattlemen to Melbourne
From the wide high country,
Defending our rights, our heritage,
Far older than a century —
Was a sight to be remembered;
To Parliament steps we rode,
Bringing our cause for justice,
Distrusting the easy code.

Assurances we were given,
Our grazing rights to keep;
Mountain men and their families asked:
“Were the promises real — or cheap!”
Three hundred strong we mustered,
A breath of the old Aussie way —
Then back again to our mountains,
But Melbourne remembers our day.

Anon.



From Parliament House to Nunawading

September 1984 to September 1985.

Victoria's legendary High Plains Cattlemen made history on the 4th September 1984 when they and their supporters rode through Melbourne in what some commentators called 'the greatest display of horsemen since the Light Horse left Melbourne for the war'.

The Cattlemen said they were fed up with dealing with constant inspections, enquiries and submissions to no apparent avail. They were completely against the proposal to double the Alpine Park system on the grounds of cost to the community, loss of public freedoms and loss of vast Alpine multiple-use areas. The Cattlemen further threw into question the correctness of present National Parks Service regulations and management techniques as applied to large alpine park areas. Further, they stated that they intended to push for recognition of the value of alpine grazing, which they claimed should be encouraged rather than discouraged as at present.

Another deliberate tactic of the 'ride' was to draw the fire of the conservation movement which the Cattlemen believed should be brought to account for its extreme views and demands for the alps.

On the morning of the 4th September 1984, three hundred and seven riders, two wagons and more than two hundred people in four wheel drive vehicles moved towards Parliament House to the applause and delight of the large crowd. The then Minister for Conservation, Rod Mackenzie and Planning Minister, Evan Walker, along with Opposition Leader Jeff Kennett, National Party Leader Peter Ross-Edwards and many other politicians, assembled to watch the show from the steps of Parliament House.

After a speech and presentation by Jim Commins of a petition bearing twelve thousand signatures; Clive Hodge and Christa Mitchell presented representatives of each of the three political parties with a Mountain Cattlemen poster.

Premier John Cain did not accept an invitation to attend the rally or receive the petition. A Government media statement described the ride as a pointless grandstanding exercise. Despite this, Mr Cain did meet Jim Commins, Clive Hodge and Graeme Stoney, still in their riding gear, later in the day in his office. By then it had become obvious how popular the protest ride was with the public and the media. Old hands at Parliament

House agreed that the sight of the horses, wagons and crowds of people was inspiring, and made the onlookers proud to be Australian.

Following the ride and the Annual General Meeting held in September 1984, a meeting was called of those people interested in supporting the Cattlemen in their fight to prevent any extension to the Alpine Park system. This meeting was held at the Exhibition Building on the 25th October 1984. More than three hundred enthusiastic and determined supporters of the Cattlemen attended, voicing their concern at the Labor Government's policy of creation of a massive park. From that night to the present time the associate membership of The Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria Inc. has steadily grown, and now stands at over eight hundred.

Mountain Cattlemen attacked the Government for its lack of sensible and correct management techniques in January 1985, when devastating bushfires struck many places in the alps. Included in these fires was one in the Mount Buffalo National Park where protective burning had not been carried out and where, sadly, cattle no longer graze. Veteran Cattlemen, Lyle McCready said, 'What a pity these bushfires have ravaged the beautiful and once well cared-for area. More than a coincidence, it is the first time since the 1939 fires and a great pity that the Beveridges, Westons and others are not still grazing cattle there. The inflammable material would have been cut down and access to fight fires would have been much easier'. The Cattlemen pondered on the thousands of dollars spent on helicopters and Defence personnel when, if a few experienced people had carried out precautionary burning, the effects of the fire would have been minimal. Don Kneebone commented that the 'greenies' who demanded vast areas of the country for their ideals and pleasure expect someone else to care for it, and never appear to help when there is strife. The Mountain Cattlemen are scathing on the subject of the radical elements in the conservation movement who, they believe, have influenced Governments and alpine managers against sensible forest management practices.

In March about 125 horses, two wagons and plenty of atmosphere marked the Cattlemen's entry in the 1985 Moomba Parade. This was to be their contribution to Victoria's 150th Anniversary celebrations. The popularity of the Cattlemen was

obvious from the rousing cheers they received all along the route. The television coverage of the parade, particularly on the News segments, featured the Cattlemen, despite there being eighty or more other entries. Cattlemen and their families were also featured on the morning of the parade on Channel Ten's *Good Morning Australia* and the late Peter Evans made a great deal of them on his breakfast show on radio. This was particularly so after he was presented with a bag of manure for his rose garden. Cattlemen also featured in segments on Channels Nine and Seven.

During May and June 1985, Cattlemen became aware of a mounting tension which suggested that some action on the Alpine Park legislation was about to begin. During the same time it became crystal clear that there was growing opposition to the legislation in the general community. However the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands failed to recognise this when, on the 4th July 1985, she called a press conference at Bennison Lookout, north of Heyfield. There she made the grand announcement that legislation was being introduced that day in Parliament and that she intended to return on the 1st December to proclaim the park for the people of Victoria. A hastily organised but very effective group of Cattlemen and supporters at the site ensured their views on the matter were also made known.

The fact that she was not back in the mountains proclaiming the park on the 1st December was due in good measure to the Mountain Cattlemen and their supporters. They took up the challenge of the Nunawading by-election and made sure that the Minister and the Government were shown in no uncertain terms that the community's views on the radical type of conservation rampant in the early 1970s had changed and rationalised. They demonstrated that what the community perceived as important was more emphasis on the areas of employment and the correct use and management of this country's renewable resources.

The issue of the contiguous National Park has been simmering for more than thirty years. It was therefore quite astounding and ironical that the Nunawading 'draw' and subsequent re-run of the election which in turn decided the balance of power in the Upper House came as the contiguous park Bill was poised for debate in Parliament.

The historic by-election was held on the 17th August 1985. As soon as the date was announced the Cattlemen and a dedicated group of associates and supporters began to put their considerable talents to use. Organised with military precision and working to a step-by-step campaign strategy devised by Graeme Stoney, they launched into what has been described as 'a copybook one-issue political campaign which swung the outcome of a vital State election and changed the balance of power in the State's Upper House'.



During the year M.C.A.V. Members supported the V.F.G.A. "Fair Go" Rally.

The Stoney Strategy was designed on five levels. First, there was a preliminary exercise to make the general public aware of the threat to the Cattlemen and balanced management posed by the Alpine Park Bill. This was followed, secondly, by a ride through the electorate by the Mountain Cattlemen, similar to the Parliament House ride. The next step involved maximum use of media interest to promote the reasons the Cattlemen had decided to support the Liberal Candidate, Mrs Varty. The fourth level consisted of a letterbox drop through the entire electorate of a colour brochure explaining the position of the Cattlemen. The final part consisted of the manning of all polling booths in the electorate on voting day.

It is sufficient to say that the campaign was a success. Rules were made by the Executive Committee, and were strictly observed. No funds, organisational help or advice was to be accepted from any political party, and as it was, the Cattlemen were more than able to cope themselves. Using the Silvers family home as an office base, and the considerable secretarial talents of Sue Silvers, the campaign swung into gear. For three weeks prior to the date of the by-election the major shopping centres in the electorate were visited by teams handing out car stickers and a flyer explaining our position. The reaction from the public was quite staggering and demonstrated the fact that the community was far more interested in keeping the Cattlemen on the High Plains than in turning the area into a 'greenie dream' park. The media also showed great interest in a press conference announcement by our President, Jim Commins, that the cattlemen had 'gone

political' for the first time in their history. News services on television featured the Cattlemen's campaign in some shape or form every night for a week. Newspapers carried our photographs and stories, so maximum media interest was maintained. The letterbox drop went off on schedule, and a copy of the colour brochure found its way into Mrs Kirner's hands the day before the election. Furiously, she slammed the Cattlemen as being dishonest. It would appear that it takes an election for the Government to listen to what the Cattlemen have to say, since they were merely repeating what they had been saying for thirty years. It was too late for the Government when the Minister was stung to reply. The ride, held a week before the election, was a repeat success of the one through the centre of the city almost a year before. Cheers, shouts of encouragement and support, and television cameras everywhere greeted the Cattlemen as they rode through the streets. A special surprise arranged by Jack and Charlie Lovick was kept for the day before the election. Then, encouraged by them, Tom Burlinson who had played 'The Man' in the film *The Man from Snowy River*, came down from Sydney to lend a hand. Charlie and Jack managed to bring the horse he had ridden in the film to Melbourne so, to the great delight of shoppers at Friday's Ringwood Market, Tom appeared there on his horse, signing autographs and generally keeping the campaign hot.

All the polling booths were manned on the day, a fact which amazed and drew utter fury from the Government. Angrily, they accused anybody and everybody of 'masquerading as a Cattleman'.



Anne Whittam handing out material during the Nunawading campaign, with the assistance of her children.

That phrase soon caught on amongst politicians, the media and others, and was a continual reminder to the Labor Government of their failure at Nunawading.

By early on the Saturday night of the election it was obvious that the Liberal candidate, Rosemary Varty, had easily won the Upper House seat with a 5.9% swing. A Liberal spokesman said, 'There is no doubt that the Cattlemen played an important role in Nunawading. There was enormous public sympathy for them and their cause, since many people see them and the High Plains cattle musters as being part of our living heritage.' What a pity that the Government cannot recognise this simple fact.

It was a year that began with a ride and ended with a ride.

The next question that we have to ask is, what will happen now to the legislation? It has slipped from number one on the Notice Paper to number thirty. Despite that, it and five other controversial pieces of legislation are being left in the Upper House and not brought forward by the Government for debate. The Opposition has made it quite clear that they plan to use their numbers to block these bills as they deem them quite unacceptable to the general community. The fear, of course, is that the Government will wait until illness or some other cause deprives the Opposition parties of their majority, and then they will be pushed through. We can only hope for the continuing support of the Opposition and it goes without saying that Mountain Cattlemen will continue to apply pressure where necessary.

All our supporters can now help by doing the same, and making their views known to local Members of Parliament. In particular, the Opposition members must be encouraged to maintain their stand against the current National Parks Bill. **The price of freedom is eternal vigilance.** If you believe in what the Cattlemen have done, please do your bit and contact your local State Member of Parliament about the pending Alpine Park legislation.



Geoff Burrowes makes a point in his speech at the post-election celebrations.

POLITICS

Cattlemen swing Vic by-election

*For years farmers have bewailed their lack of political clout. But now a small number of mountain cattlemen in Victoria have shown in a copybook political campaign how easy it is to swing an election their way.
Sue Neales reports.*

A copybook one-issue political campaign by the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria has swung the outcome of a vital State by-election and changed

power in the Legislative Council — Victoria's equivalent to the Senate — hung entirely on the Nunawading outcome.

For the legendary cattlemen of Victoria's High Plains, this turned the election into a uni-

on the Alpine National Park question.

Tactics were simple and inexpensive — but incredibly well-organised to get maximum media coverage and to reach as many Nunawading voters as possible.

A strict rule was adhered to

The headlines say it all. From the National Farmer, September 5, 1985.

LOVICK'S Mountain Trail Safaris



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

We Ride The Great Divide

Throughout the summer months, 8-day tours leave Merrijig, travel up the Howqua River, beyond Mt. Buller to the mountains of the Great Divide and on to the High Plains of Mt. Howitt and Snowy to some of the most beautiful and inaccessible parts of Victoria's High Country — areas that cannot be visited except on horseback or on foot.

The Safari is serviced by four wheel drives that meet up with the riders in camp each night and are licenced to carry passengers.

All fresh food carried under refrigeration.

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Write . . . Jack Lovick, Merrijig or Phone (057) 77 5510

THE PHANTOM CATTLEMAN

Or how Graeme Stoney was refused entry to a bar and became the
Ghost Rider in a Tie.

Bryan Jameson

It is unlikely that any item of apparel in the sartorial history of Australia has ever been accorded, or is likely to be accorded, the extraordinary degree of publicity that the Drizabone coat received in the aftermath of the Nunawading by-election.

In the minds of Government members of the Victorian Parliament, this 19th century drover's coat seemed to have assumed the power of Superman's cloak, and the sinister significance of Boris Karloff's opera cape.

Scarcely a day passed in the Parliament in the weeks succeeding Nunawading that references to the Drizabone did not feature largely in Hansard.

Not since Ned Kelly donned his armour at Glenrowan had there been such discussion in Parliament about who wore what and why.

In publicity terms, the promotion of the Drizabone to fetish status by Government members of Parliament was probably worth hundreds of thousands of dollars to the manufacturers. The humble oilskin favoured by mountain cattlemen had become a fashion item.

According to Police Minister Race Mathews, a goodly proportion of the Drizabones worn by canvassers at the polling booths on election day disguised devious members of the Liberal Party masquerading as Mountain Cattlemen.

The member for Dandenong, Terry Norris, recalling the days when he was dressed by the wardrobe department of Crawford Productions, suggested that deceitful Liberals had hired, not only Drizabones, but big hats and elastic-sided boots to persuade the innocent voters at Nunawading that they were Mountain Cattlemen.

It wasn't just rent-a-crowd, Mr Norris said, it was rent-a-cowboy, and he liked this rib-tickler so much that he used it a few more times in the next few days in what laughingly might be called the debate.

The Government was in a corner with the revelation of a polling day plot by the Labor Party to deceive Nuclear Disarmament Party voters with a bodgie how-to-vote card.

At first, the Government tried to down-play this bit of skullduggery as just one of those things that happened in the hurly-burly of street politics.

But it wouldn't go away.

When ALP State Secretary Peter Batchelor finally admitted complicity in the scam, the Government tried to do a Pontius Pilate and abandon him to the mercies of the Electoral Office and the Police.

In Parliament, the Opposition parties continued to sheet the responsibility home to the Government, and it became one of the biggest buckets ever to be tipped on the cherished squeaky clean image of Premier Cain.

Working on the time-honoured ALP rule of 'when in a corner, fight dirty', the Government unleashed Race Mathews to establish a diversion.




**Mountain cattlemen
care for the high country**

AND SUPPORT SENSIBLE AND ACHIEVEABLE CONSERVATION

VOTE 1 VARTY

- You must put a number in each box.
- Please support the fight to stop more public restrictions in the Alps.
- Minor parties cannot win this election, so if they get your first preference please give your second preference to VARTY to safeguard moderate conservation and your heritage.



Authorised by S. Silvers,
28 Cityview Road, North Balwyn
Printed by Bizprint
1/30 Barry Street, Bayswater.

The how-to-vote card handed out at Nunawading by the Association.

The Mountain Cattlemen, their associates and supporters, who had behaved in a typically forthright, open-handed way throughout the Nunawading campaign, were caught in the cross-fire.

The Opposition pursued the subject of the bogus how-to-vote cards with relentless tenacity and telling effect. It seemed to be master of the situation and to have the Government on the run.

From there in on, the situation got uglier and uglier.

It was no longer a case of a petulant Government indulging in temper-tantrums at the loss of the Nunawading by-election.

The Labor Party had been caught with its ethical pants around its ankles, which rather hampered the Government's ability to duck the how-to-vote card issue.

Its usual agility in this area was further retarded when the Opposition revealed that Government advisers had helped dream up the fraudulent how-to-vote scheme.

Then it emerged that Labor MP Cyril Kennedy had gone the rounds of the polling booths at Nunawading with a camera taking happy snaps of anyone in a bush hat or a Drizabone.

This aroused the interest of the Electoral Office and the police, especially when it was alleged in affidavits that he had posed as an Age photographer.

Like a wounded dingo cornered in a blind cutting, the beleaguered Government began snapping and snarling in all directions.

Character assassination behind the cloak of parliamentary privilege became the hallmark of the debate. Associates and supporters of the Mountain Cattlemen were bucketed, their names bandied about in Parliament along with those of the odd innocent bystander here and there.

In an ALP variation of the old 'Reds Under the Bed' theme beloved of Malcolm Fraser, Race Mathews and others in the Government saw Liberals under every Drizabone and bush hat.

They didn't bother to explain why they thought the Liberal Party would bother to infiltrate the Mountain Cattlemen, since at Nunawading the Cattlemen were on the side of the Liberals for the single issue of the alpine national park.

To the disinterested observer, it would have made more sense to accuse the Liberals of trying to infiltrate the Labor Party just as the Labor Party tried to subvert the Nuclear Disarmament Party.

It was great entertainment, except that people were being hurt by having their names mentioned and their motives questioned in Parliament without having any redress, or any opportunity to set the record straight.

The Mountain Cattlemen's Association felt a responsibility to defend its supporters and the innocent people who were being smeared, but its comments and news releases were overshadowed in the media by accounts of the circus in Spring Street.

Members and executives of the Association complained to their local MPs and to Opposition Party brass that the privilege of Parliament was being abused.

Finally, the Opposition Leader in the Legislative Council, Alan Hunt, used the Upper House majority won at Nunawading to invite the M.C.A. Executive Officer Graeme Stoney, to the bar of the House to refute the accusations being made by the Government and to defend the people who had been attacked.

With considerable reluctance, the Association agreed to Stoney's appearance at the bar.

The Association had made its stand at Nunawading on a matter of principle, which happened to coincide with the interests of the Liberal Party.

Having achieved its objective, it sought to withdraw from the political arena and resume its position as a non-political body looking after the interests of its members.

But it considered that it had a duty to take the opportunity offered to defend its supporters on the floor of Parliament.

When the historic day arrived, Stoney, his customary hat, boots and moleskins discarded in favour of a Fletcher Jones suit, brogues and discreet shirt and tie, fronted up to Parliament House.

The Laborites had been raving about Liberals in Drizabones masquerading as cattlemen. Sue Silvers remarked that they'd probably accuse Stoney of masquerading as a politician.

The invitation to the bar was scheduled originally for 11am on 31st October 1985, and Graeme's prepared speech was made available to the media, as is customary, marked 'Embargoed until delivery in the Legislative Council 11am, 31/10/1985.'

On the day, the public gallery of the Legislative Council Chamber was packed. Lord knows who was minding the shop in the Assembly, because everybody except the Premier seemed to

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MIGHTY MITTA MUSTER

On March 9, 1986, the Mighty Mitta Muster will again be held. This year a special category has been included in the Endurance Ride for the first member of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association to cross the finish line and comply with the veterinary inspection.

The Endurance Ride is conducted in two stages over a total of 50 kilometres, with cash prizes and trophies such as bridles, reins and the like awarded to placegetters.

Horse accommodation is available at Mitta Mitta, and further details and entry forms can be obtained from Jack Serpell, Faraway Farm, Mitta Mitta, phone (060) 72 3531.

The day includes many other interesting events, and an invitation is extended to all members, associates and supporters to enjoy the day.

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be in the Council. It was standing room only. No-one told Graeme Stoney what was going on, and he was left to pace up and down outside.

The proceedings began with the Government Leader in the Upper House, Evan Walker, announcing that the Government was withdrawing the convention of granting pairs.

The pairs system is a tradition whereby either party in the house can stand one of its members down from voting when his counterpart on the other side is absent. It is designed to preserve the balance of the parties on the floor when someone has to be away through sickness or on business.

On this occasion, the Liberal Member, Jock Granter, was absent attending a Royal Visit function in his electorate.

Evan Walker's action in withdrawing the protocol of pairing neutralised the Opposition's majority of one, which followed the Nunawading victory.

All was not lost at that stage though, because another tradition is that the President of the Council, who has the casting vote when the House is tied, will normally vote to preserve the status quo.

The President did this when the Government tried to overturn the previous decision of the Council to invite Graeme Stoney to appear.

But then, the Opposition Whip, Roy Ward, went missing from the Chamber.

He was due to fly out to Europe at 1pm on that day, which the Government members knew, and once he was gone, they would have an absolute majority and would not have to worry about the President's casting vote.

Then, the Attorney-General, Jim Kennan, got his hands on Graeme Stoney's prepared speech, by courtesy of who knows?

This was quickly followed by the first edition of the Herald, which with dubious ethics, had either ignored the embargo, or with equally dubious lack of professionalism had failed to check and establish that the speech had not been delivered.

Where is Mr Stoney? he asked, it says here in the Herald he has appeared at the bar of this Chamber. Has anyone seen him? He must be a Phantom Cattleman!

Taking advantage of the absence of Roy Ward and the Opposition's reduced numbers, the Government successfully moved to postpone the invitation until November 12th, assuming that by that time the issue would be dead.

Alan Hunt's face was a study of frustrated fury.

He had let the motion through without calling a division, assuming that Ward had headed for Tullamarine.

Actually, Roy Ward was on the phone in his office trying to re-schedule his flight and listening for the division bells that never rang.

Graeme Stoney, the Phantom Cattleman, as Jim Kennan had dubbed him, was besieged outside the House by the media.

An interested observer among the crowd of journos and photographers while Graeme spoke to the TV cameras was Ken Hickey, boss of the Government's formidable Media Unit.

The Cattlemen's viewpoint got good coverage on metropolitan television, and a lot of air time on radio.

As Stoney loosened his collar in the Windsor Hotel later, someone suggested that if he was the Phantom Cattleman, he was also the Ghost Rider in a Tie.

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CASTLEBURN 13th ANNUAL HEREFORD BULL SALE

Wednesday, June 11, 1986

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(Undercover Seating)

OFFERING 40 BULLS

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Commercial Beef Herd of the year for 1983 and
four times a place gainer.

DARGO HIGH PLAINS BRED CATTLE

**A/c A. J. Treasure and
D. H. & C. J. Mitchell**

Agents: DALGETY FARMERS

THE HUTS JUST SEEMED TO BE THERE

Neil Hulm,

Long winding trails linked the mountains
From the dusty plains up to the snow,
Through mountain ash, heather and herbage;
But it's now a Nations Park, as you know.

Folk would ride up from the coastlands
To take in that refreshing mountain air,
If the weather turned rough, 'twas no worry,
For the huts always seemed to be there.

Large one-roomed huts by a stockyard,
Huts with their high sloping roof,
Walls with weather-board overlapping,
Which helped to keep them snow-proof.

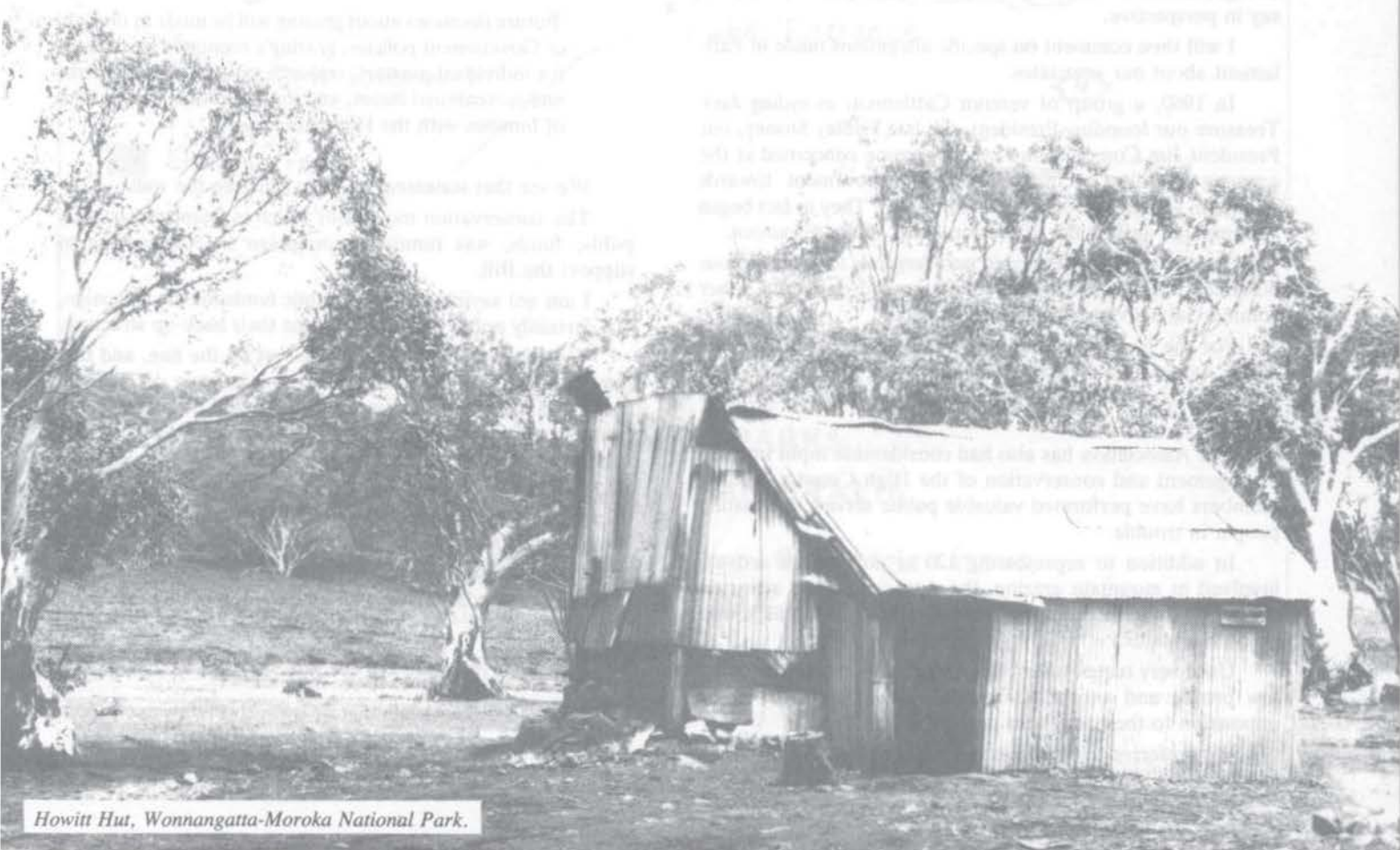
Laws of mountain huts were respected
There'd be food and wood, left to share,
Before campers moved on they'd replace them,
So the huts should not be left bare.

A grand feeling of peace and contentment
While the lantern gave out flickering light,
With camp oven and quart pot a-simmering,
As we settled by the fire for the night.

The boundary fence would be patched up
And the stockyard attended with care;
Or drag firewood back with the packhorse;
But the huts just seemed to be there.

And we noticed an eagle a-soaring;
How those daisies have grown since last year,
The ducks that were nesting last summer,
Will be back, for they're happy up here.

We'd see a high trail in the heavens
Of a jet as it charged through the air;
But our main-stay would rarely be noticed,
For the huts just seemed to be there.



Howitt Hut, Wonnangatta-Moroka National Park.

THE SPEECH NOT MADE AT THE BAR

On the 31st October 1985, Graeme Stoney, the Executive Officer of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria, Inc., was invited to appear before the bar of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Victoria to speak on the events of the Nunawading by-election. This was to be an historical and unique occasion, with Graeme believed to be the first person to have received such an invitation. Previously, the only other person to appear before the bar had attended as a result of a summons, not an invitation. Due to the combination of circumstances detailed in the preceding article, Graeme did not speak that day, and on the 11th November, he declined any further invitation to appear at any future date. The following article is the text of the speech that he had intended to make to the bar on the 31st October, had the invitation been honoured by the Legislative Council.

Mr President,

I wish to express my thanks to the House for allowing me to speak here today and put the record straight.

The facts I will put before you, are to the best of my knowledge correct.

Since the Nunawading election there seems to have been a concerted campaign of smear and defamation in this Parliament to attack the credibility and integrity of the Mountain Cattlemen, their associates, friends and supporters.

Mr President, the issue of the contiguous National Park is not a new one to the Mountain Cattlemen. Contrary to what has been said in Parliament recently we have been fighting this proposal for 25 years, and indeed it was the reason that the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria was founded.

With your permission Sir, I propose to briefly outline the background of our current position to enable you to put what I say in perspective.

I will then comment on specific allegations made in Parliament about our associates.

In 1960, a group of veteran Cattlemen, including Jack Treasure our founding President, the late Eadley Stoney, our President Jim Commins and others became concerned at the growing hostility of the conservation movement towards mountain grazing and Mountain Cattlemen. They in fact began to campaign against the utilization of all alpine resources.

These rumblings developed into demands for a contiguous National Park in which mountain grazing and any other commercial activity would have no place.

For the past quarter of a century, the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria has opposed these demands in the interests of the 120 or so families who graze cattle in the alpine area.

The Association has also had considerable input into the management and conservation of the High Country, and its members have performed valuable public service in assisting people in trouble.

In addition to representing 120 or so families actively involved in mountain grazing, the Association has attracted about 700 financial members from all walks of life in Victoria and other states.

Until very recent times, the Association has maintained a low profile and a completely non-political approach in its opposition to the contiguous park proposal.

We preferred to negotiate and put our point of view to the Government of the day.

During the first round of the Land Conservation Council investigations, we co-operated fully and engaged a consultant, at considerable expense to assist the enquiry.

We were told the result would last until the next century.

Less than two years after those recommendations were accepted, the newly elected Government re-opened the matter and the Land Conservation Council was directed to re-investigate the alps, bearing in mind ALP policy for a contiguous park.

They were told what to do.

That, Mr President, was the turning point for us.

We adopted a higher public profile, but stayed non-political.

We kept out of politics even in September 1984 when we rode through the streets of Melbourne to Parliament House to try to persuade the Government to listen to reason.

They kept saying we were alright - Mr President, we are not alright.

At the State election last March, with the Alpine National Parks Bill in the offing, we deliberately and steadfastly abstained from political action.

We hoped the Government would drop the project.

Instead the Government promoted the Bill as a major issue in the Nunawading by-election.

We had no option but to stand up for what we believed and combat the Bill in the political arena.

The second reading speech on the Alpine National Park Bill states:

'Future decisions about grazing will be made in the light of Government policies, grazing's economic significance for individual graziers, research results, environmental and recreational issues, and the traditional associations of families with the High Country.'

We see that statement as the writing on the wall.

The conservation movement which is financed partly by public funds, was running a campaign in Nunawading to support the Bill.

I am not saying they used public funds for the campaign, but certainly public funds must assist their back-up structure.

We considered that our future was on the line, and that the proposal would wreck the existing balance of National Parks and multi-use areas in the alps; we had no option but to counteract the strong conservation campaign and support the Liberal candidate — Mrs Rosemary Varty.

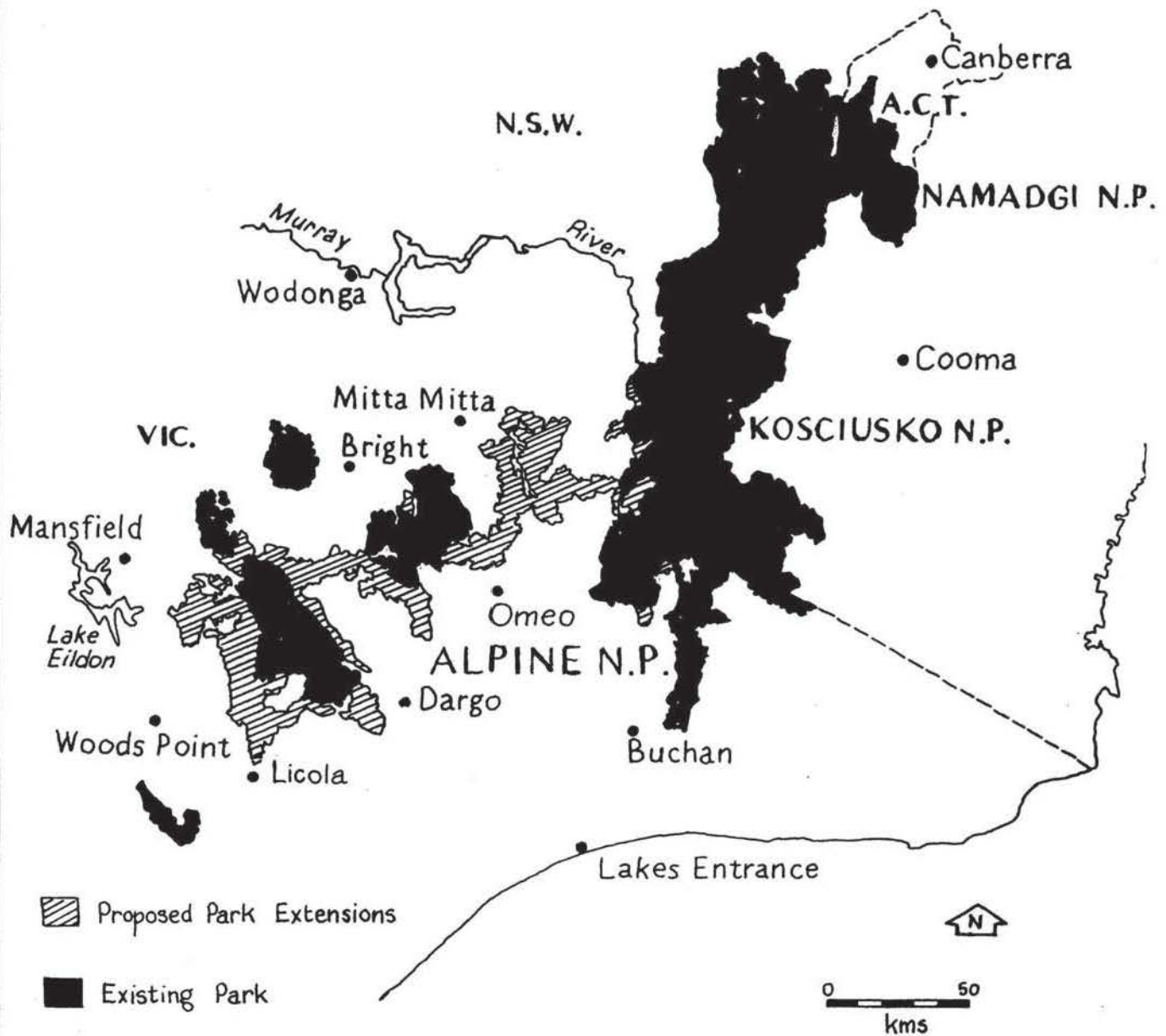
All along the Opposition parties had made it clear that they would oppose the National Park Bill and obviously Mrs Varty had to win to hold the numbers.

Our exercise was a one-off political fight, we did not wish to take part, we did not enjoy it, and we hope never to have to do it again.

However — if we have to, we will, and it may not be the Liberals we support next time. Who knows?

I wish to make it plain that we were absolutely open about our campaign.

There was nothing underhand about it.



EXISTING AND PROPOSED ALPINE NATIONAL PARKS IN SOUTH-EASTERN AUSTRALIA

The proposed extensions shown are the single issue that was fought by the Cattlemen during the Nunawading by-election.

With the straightforward approach that we have always adopted, we declared our support for the Liberal candidate on this one issue because we believed that her party's policy would promote the best management of the High Country — long term.

Our campaign is on public record in newspapers, on radio and on television. We openly informed the Liberal Party that we intended to campaign and that we would campaign in support of the Liberal candidate. I think they were a bit non-plussed, but very pleased.

During the campaign we kept them informed of our plans as a courtesy.

It was a fair fight.

We believe that we have done everything correctly, given the frantic nature of such campaigns.

Not one cent of Liberal or National money went to finance our campaign and there were no intermediaries.

We financed it with money raised by our members, associates and friends. We ran it our own way with our own people — Cattlemen, members of their families, friends, associates and supporters. We had more help than was needed. They were all people who believed in our stand on achievable conservation and the use of renewable resources.

They all knew the issue is much, much, bigger than just alpine grazing.

It is not our business which political party, if any, our members and associates belong to, and we went to great pains to explain that it was a personal choice that they took part.

However I know for a fact through conversation, that our team handing out our cards on the day included supporters of all political parties including the Labor Party. Our chief co-ordinator of the booths told me he has never voted Liberal or National in his life. A former senior aide in the Whitlam Government is a staunch Labor man and worked all day at the booths for us.

On that day everyone was supporting us and our stand on achievable and sensible conservation.

Throughout our campaign, we kept aloof from general Liberal Party policies and stuck to the single issue of the park.

Against us were the conservation groups, who were campaigning for other candidates, these people were dressed in T-shirts loudly asking people to vote Democrat and ALP. They wore these shirts on voting day at some booths.

We believe our campaign was responsible for nearly halving the Democrat vote and proved that the community perceptions and priorities on conservation issues have changed since the 1970s.

Our whole campaign was planned, co-ordinated and supervised by me as Executive Officer of the Association, and by our Honorary Secretary, Mrs Sue Silvers, whose home we used as a campaign office.

The Mountain Cattlemen's Association held a meeting at Porpunkah last week.

The feeling among those at the meeting was one of hurt and bewilderment at the vindictive, vengeful attacks on individuals by members of the Government within the protection of Parliament.

I was asked to do what I could to refute the allegations. Our members are most concerned.

Mr President, why wouldn't we be concerned? Our legitimate exercising of our democratic right, has attracted vicious, vindictive attacks which are totally unsubstantiated and have harmed our organisation.

The revengeful attitude by members of the Government confirms our continuing fears for our future as Mountain Cattlemen.

I understand the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, Mrs Kirner, was involved in the Nunawading campaign.

She is also in effect our land lady.

She threatened us for putting our case to the public at Nunawading — it is on record. She has said that we ran a dishonest campaign and that if the Mountain Cattlemen could afford to publish a colour brochure for the Nunawading by-election they could afford to pay more for their grazing leases and she would consider raising our fees accordingly.

We were sorry to see a Minister of the Crown use the power of her office in an election to denigrate a small group who had another point of view.

In this on-going debate about the alps various opinions should be given consideration.

She has her opinion, we have ours.

Everything said in our handouts has been said for years but obviously it takes an election for it to be listened to.

We have had a good working relationship with our previous Ministers and we still hope to establish one with Mrs Kirner, although she has curtly refused our genuine invitation to visit the High Plains and hear us explain our opinions.

It has been claimed in Parliament that the Cattlemen's Association was infiltrated by members of the Liberal Party.

We cannot follow this logic.

They had no need to infiltrate. We were on their side.

When these allegations first started to be thrown around in Parliament they were so outlandish that we regarded them as a bit of a joke.

But then names were being mentioned and innocent people were being smeared and hurt....even their professional integrity and their careers threatened.

Let me deal with a few allegations in detail:

ALLEGATION

On the 24th of October, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Mr Mathews referred to a public meeting in the Nunawading area by the Victorian National Parks Association, which I attended, and which was also attended by a group of people wearing bush clothing and carrying placards. They were obviously upset. Mr Mathews asserted that the presence of this group supported his claim that 'the bona fide Mountain Cattlemen's Association has been infiltrated and subverted by brummies, by bogus members of the Liberal Party and by imposters who substituted themselves for Mountain Cattlemen outside booths at Nunawading....and who conscientiously set out to mislead the Nunawading voters.'

ANSWER

This is a prime example of the smear tactics that have damaged my organisation.

The group at the meeting were not Cattlemen or associates, nor were they posing as such. They were bona-fide bushmen, including deer hunters and their presence at the meeting on their own initiative was their own way of opposing the National Park Bill.

I did not recognise them at the time and did not know they were going to be there.

I wish to read and submit a statement from that group.

The democratic right of the small man to have his say is under pressure in this scathing and uninformed attack by Mr Mathews.

ACCUSATION

Again on the 24th October, Mr Mathews said: 'Mr Stoney realised prior to polling day that a conspiracy was under way to impersonate his Cattlemen by people who were stooges of the Liberal Party.'

ANSWER

Mr Mathews' colourful allegations are blatantly untrue. On what basis can Mr Mathews say what I realised? Did he produce any evidence? I have never spoken to Mr Mathews.

I was not aware prior to polling day or at any other time of any conspiracy to impersonate Cattlemen. There was no such conspiracy. I have already explained that our supporters are drawn from people of all political persuasions.

I have explained that the Liberal Party was not involved in our campaign at Nunawading. We supported Mrs Varty because we believed that if she won the Nunawading seat, the contiguous National Park proposal would not be passed by this House. The Liberal Party have indicated their opposition to the Park for a long time. We made it clear that we entered the political arena for the first time because of a unique situation created by the Nunawading by-election.

We wanted to halt a proposal which we considered to be contrary to the long term interest, not only of our members, but of all Victorians. We were successful and that is why we are now under attack. Mrs Varty and the Liberal Party were merely the vehicles by which we believed we could achieve our objective.

Mr Phillip McGuire has rated many mentions in Parliament and the press recently.

I have no wish to prejudice any enquiry regarding Mr McGuire so I prefer not to comment further unless the House directs me.

I can say that his family hails from Dargo and he has therefore been closely associated with the High Country.

He is an associate of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association, and on that day he and 150 other people offered their services to us.

As I said, his family comes from Dargo.

It would not matter if they came from Sunshine or Toorak.

ACCUSATION

On the 24th of October, the Member for Dandenong, Mr Norris, referred to: 'Imposters who posed as Mountain Cattlemen' and referred to people 'In fancy dress, dressed in hired Drizabone coats, bush hats and with saddle bags'.

He also repeated remarks he had made at another time that Jim Brown of Channel Ten had been an adviser to the Mountain Cattlemen or our associates during the Nunawading campaign, and that the presence of Tom Burlinson, the star of *The Man from Snowy River*, was Mr Brown's brainchild.

ANSWER

Mr President, this continuing defamation of people by accusing them of being imposters for wearing bush riding gear would be silly if it were not so serious. I will deal with this in a minute. Mr Norris's attack on Jim Brown is completely without foundation.

Jim Brown is not an associate member of the Cattlemen.

Jim Brown did not assist in any way with advice on the media or anything else during Nunawading.

I co-ordinated the media side of the campaign.

I believe the media including Channel Ten covered our campaign fairly without fear or favour. I did not see Jim Brown at any of our rallies during the Nunawading election. He did cover a couple of Cattlemen events prior to the election in the



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last 12 months. He used my property to film his popular 'Banjo's Australia' series. This had nothing to do with politics or the Cattlemen's Association. He did film a story on ski touring earlier this winter in which conservation was mentioned but not politics.

Mr Norris claimed that Jim Brown organised the stunt with Tom Burlinson. I have here a signed statement from Charlie Lovick, a member of a well known and respected Mountain Cattlemen's family.

Mr Mathews described the effort as a mosaic of deceit. We describe it as the grass roots having their democratic say.

This had nothing to do with Jim Brown or anyone at Channel Ten. In fact, Jane Phelan, the Channel Ten reporter who did cover the day in my opinion gave Tom Burlinson a rather hard time in an interview.

Jim Brown and the Cattlemen have been professionally smeared by Mr Norris without substance or foundation.

ACCUSATION

On the 15th of October, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Mr Mathews referred to: 'Concern widely held in the Eastern Suburbs that electoral malpractice occurred in connection with the so-called Mountain Cattlemen's campaign waged in connection with the Nunawading by-election.' He also referred to: 'A connection between this malpractice and the Liberal Party.'

ANSWER

Mr President, the Minister once again on this occasion has denigrated our Association and our legitimate effort in Nunawading. By referring to it as 'The so-called Mountain Cattlemen's campaign'. I know of no malpractice that took place during our campaign.

ACCUSATION

On the 23rd October, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Mr Mathews, made repeated references to 'Liberal stooges' masquerading as Mountain Cattlemen 'For the purposes of misleading the electors of the Nunawading Province'.

He referred to 'Bogus Mountain Cattlemen', and accused another member of Parliament of having 'subverted one of the authentic Mountain Cattlemen' by persuading him 'to hand out Liberal how-to-vote cards thus compounding the deception that was being practiced.'

ANSWER

I must admit this charge did fire our imagination. Masquerading? How can you masquerade if you wear a Cattleman's coat? Is it an offence?

I have a suit on. Am I masquerading as a politician? Really Mr President, if Mr Mathews' charges did not affect our standing, which they have, it would all be too silly.

Mr President,

No group can remain unmoved and unaffected against the subjected attacked we have been submitted to.

It hits at the very heart of democracy.

The Cattlemen make no apologies for their action in Nunawading. We did not say anything that we did not mean. We have nothing to be sorry about. We believed our campaign was conducted as openly and honestly as possible.

It was our right to stand up for what we believed.

If we continue to be dragged down by smear, if our land lady uses every means, especially financial, to make us crack because she believes we get our runs for nothing, well then eventually we will have to leave the High Plains.

If this is the price we have to pay for standing up for what we have believed and fought against for 25 years, then so be it.

Thank you and the House for its time, Mr President.

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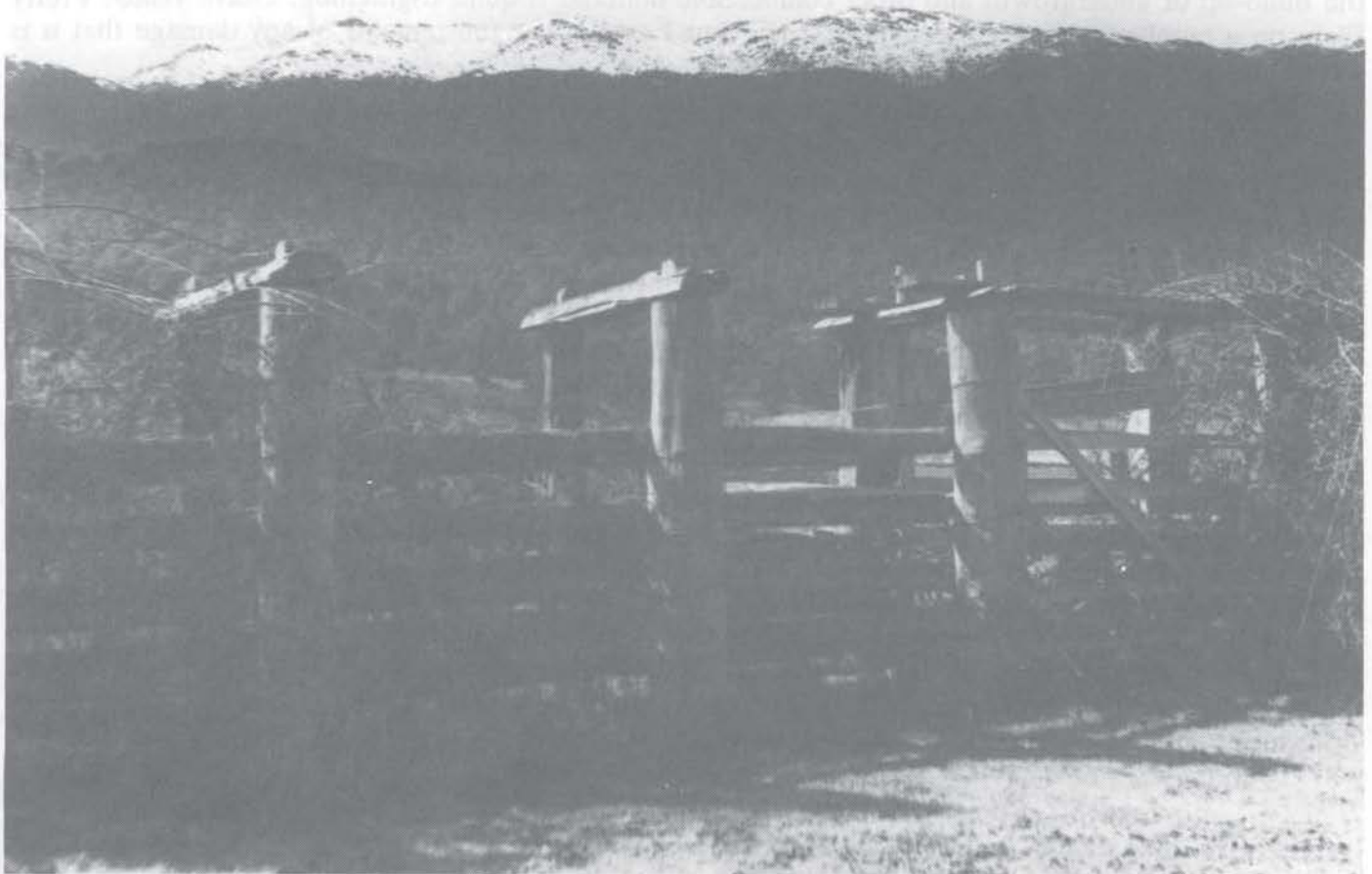
SOME EXPERIENCES FROM THE KOSCIUSKO NATIONAL PARK

John Mitchell

Back in the 1940s, shortly after the Snowy Mountain Hydro Electricity Scheme began, the Kosciusko National Park was formed. However despite this, it was not until about 1958 to 1960 that the Kosciusko cattlemen began to lose their leases. The one hundred and thirty year old tradition of cattlemen in the Snowy Mountains came to an abrupt end. Prior to that there had been massive increases in rentals that had forced some of the cattlemen out even earlier.

I have not been able to discover exactly what motivated the decision, but it set a precedent for similar hard, long-reaching decisions with fairly unwelcome implications. Someone fairly high up in the Snowy Mountains Authority wrote a hard-hitting report that grazing in catchment areas for the dams would cause siltation in the Scheme's reservoirs and there were further claims of damage to bogs and mossbeds. We all knew that such claims could not be substantiated, but this did not stop the Kosciusko National Park making it a by-law of management that cattle grazing be no longer permitted in the Park. This was not by Act of Parliament, but simply a by-law of that particular park. That policy has been adhered to ever since.

The same could happen in Victoria. Should the proposed National Park be proclaimed this year, Cattlemen would be completely at the mercy of the National Parks personnel. They, and they only, could write a by-law that would see an end to grazing in the park. They would not require an Act of Parliament. I write this as a totally realistic and uncomfortable warning as to the future of the Victorian Alpine region.



The Geehi Yards in the Kosciusko National Park. Formerly used by the Nankervis family, they were overgrown by blackberries by the time this photograph was taken in 1972.

This type of action has already been seen where the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands has declared that it will not transfer the 100,000 acre Mount Pinnibar grazing lease with Tom Groggin Station which is currently up for sale. That leads to the tragedy of Tom Groggin no longer being a viable proposition.

What I am saying is that once a National Park is proclaimed, it is the signature of one bureaucrat that will put an end to grazing. That will be a tragedy of the first order, but there is a large number of greenies and radical conservationists pushing for just that. It is our Association that must push to stop a massive National Park being proclaimed. We have to put up a strong argument, and we must remember, that the park has been part of the Labor platform for a long time.

Kosciusko without grazing for twenty-five years and the strong arm of a National Park administration leaves much to be desired. I am not saying every action of the administration has been a disaster, in fact some of their policies are quite worthy. It is just that some of their others may not have been thought out quite so well. In that regard I cite the removal of huts in the park, Albina hut in particular. I do not wish to go into the pros and cons of the demolition of Albina Lodge, however those of us who paid to build it, and no doubt many others, saw a strong case for preservation. Irrespective of opinions expressed, the administration did exactly as it wanted to do, and Albina hut and many others were demolished.

My personal viewpoint is that selected areas could be set aside, but only small areas should be wilderness. This was the conclusion of the 1979 Lands Conservation Council of Victoria report. Having lived all my life against a massive park, I see the disadvantage of such expense, waste and bureaucratic dithering that goes on. Dr Frank Moulds, Chairman of the Forests Commission in the early 1970s, proposed what he referred to as the multiple use concept. In theory and practice it was a very good concept. Despite this the present Victorian Government is trying to legislate to repeat the mistakes made in New South Wales.

If you have recently driven past Tom Groggin Station and had a look at the New South Wales bank of the Murray River, you will see that the area resumed by the park is totally covered by blackberries. Noxious weeds and vermin have been found to be beyond the control of the park administration. Then, looking at the area around Pretty Plain where the Chisholm family ran cattle some twenty-five years ago, the build-up of undergrowth and other combustible material is quite frightening. I have visited Pretty Plain on a number of occasions quite recently, but I cannot see the remains of any damage that it is alleged in conservation circles was done by cattle.

A National Park is a cost to the community, a cost to the taxpayer and a drain on already over-stretched Government budgets. Would not this money be better directed in making agriculture more viable? It comes back to the Government versus private enterprise argument. No Government agency can run as efficiently as private enterprise where efficient production is the dominating motive. I wonder what percentage of Victorians actually want a massive National Park, or if it is just a vocal minority. What do they claim is wrong with the management of cattlemen in the mountains over the past 150 years? The conservation movement must realise that when they take an extremist approach, that while they may get a favourable response at the present, the pendulum will swing the other way and what the conservation movement has battled for over the years will go down the drain unless they take a more balanced approach. This is already beginning to happen in New South Wales, with Mr Griener as Leader of the Opposition threatening to cut off the northern end of the Kosciusko National Park.

Mrs Kirner claims that the National Park will not be a cost over and above the present Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands administration. I fail to see how this will be achieved, since it has not been the case in Kosciusko. Further, there is also the statement that cattle will remain in the proposed National Park. No one has said for how long that will be allowed to happen. Presumably that will be in the hands of the National Parks Service, who will at some time in the future be pressured into withdrawing leases. Once a Bill has been drafted and introduced into Parliament, as is the case of the National Park legislation, it remains on the books. If the park is not proclaimed now, that legislation can always be re-introduced later, and the park proclaimed some time in the future.

POSTSCRIPT: John Mitchell and his family have many years experience from which to speak of this area. It was with some sadness, however, that we recently heard of the death of his father. The late Tom Mitchell was a Mountain Cattleman and for many years the Member for Benambra. He passed away in February 1984, at the age of 76 years.

A MOUNTAIN HERITAGE LOST

Neil Hulm.

Could I be told what a heritage is,
Surely it's something we see,
Is it to hold, or give away?
That's not the way its strikes me.

We must have parks, reserves and such,
Essential, I would think we all agree,
But without any votes, a handful of blokes
Can close land, from the Plains to the Sea.

A fair control is a different role,
But the grazing stopped, shut down.
Have you ever known of country men
For heritage, close down a town?

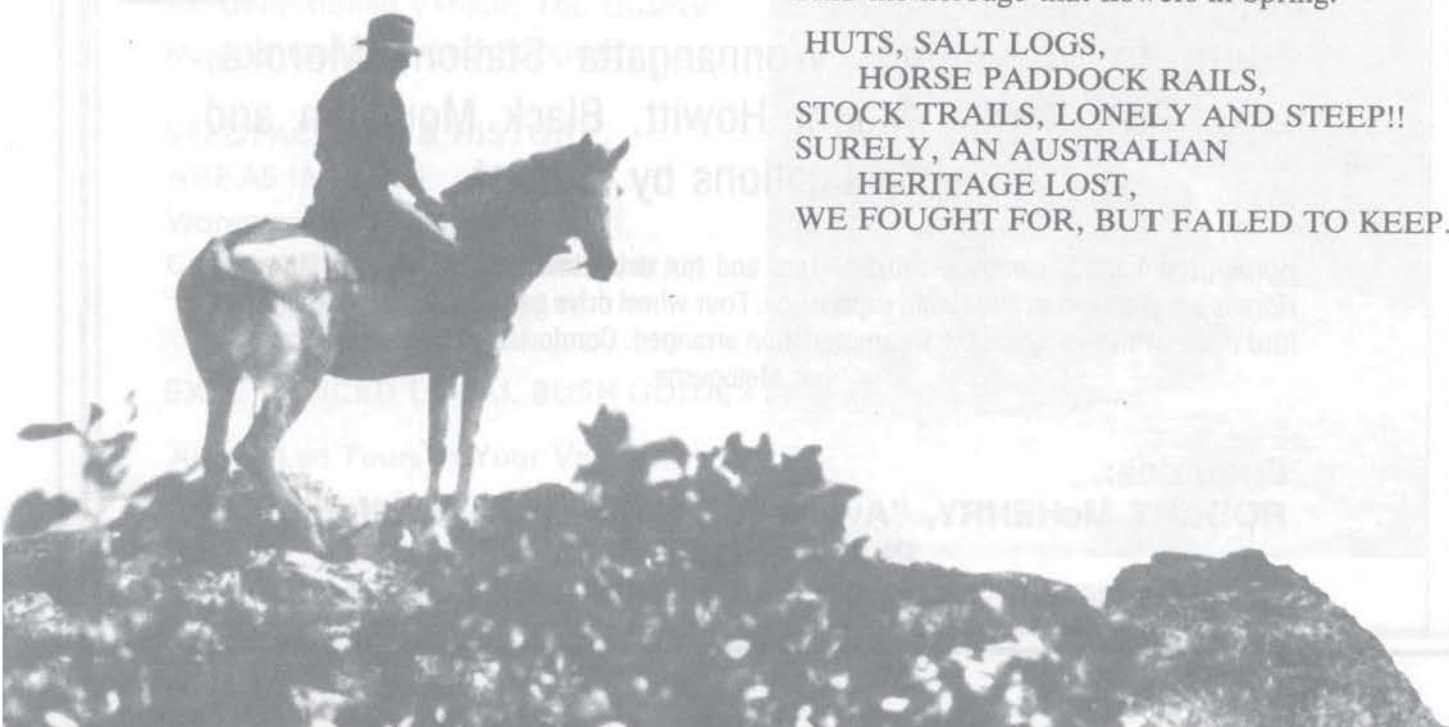
PACK HORSES, PACK SADDLES,
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HUTS, SALT LOGS AND HORSE
Paddock RAILS,
STOCKYARDS, DOGS, SHEEP
AND CATTLE,
AND LONELY STEEP STOCK TRAILS!!

Bush fires now burn red hot and turn
To black dust, that was thick grass and sticks.
Controlled burn was slow on leases years ago,
The snow grass remained firm and thick.

Our heritage strongly guarded,
While another one thrown away.
In the same place, on the mountain face
One banished, the other will stay.

Swarms of bees in the Snow Gum trees,
Honey birds hover and sing,
The beautiful scent from the heather
And the herbage that flowers in Spring.

HUTS, SALT LOGS,
HORSE Paddock RAILS,
STOCK TRAILS, LONELY AND STEEP!!
SURELY, AN AUSTRALIAN
HERITAGE LOST,
WE FOUGHT FOR, BUT FAILED TO KEEP.



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THE BUSH DANCE

Throughout 1984 and 1985 suggestions were made for various social functions. Anne Whittam very kindly took on the job of Associate Social Secretary in April 1985, and soon assembled a willing team of expert helpers. The first social function, a bush dance, was planned for the 29th June. The night was a tremendous success with tickets for a maximum crowd being sold, and the profit of \$3,500 was a great boost for funds.

The dance was held in a pavilion at Berwick Showgrounds, with many taking the advantage of being able to camp there for the night. Music was provided by "The Cobbers", all suitably dressed in Mountain Cattlemen windcheaters. The music began at eight, and within two minutes everyone was up and dancing. Husbands were dancing with wives, fathers with children and grandfathers with grand-daughters. It was a delightful family night. There was a stall selling the usual Cattlemen windcheaters, stickers and posters, a delicious supper and a monster raffle that seemed to go on and on and on.

Owing to a massive power failure shortly before midnight, the festivities came to an early close. Perhaps this was a blessing in disguise as everyone got home safely and those who stayed overnight were able to cope with the mammoth task of cleaning up the next day. We hope this wonderful success can be repeated in 1986, so stay tuned as funds need a boost and a good night is assured for all.



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A VALLEY OF GLENS

By Linda Barraclough and Minnie Higgins

**The story of the
people and
places of the
upper Macalister
River in
Gippsland**



This Major work on the settlement of the area from Glenmaggie through Licola to Glencairn covers aspects of discovery, first settlement, nearby goldfields, selection, fires, floods, droughts, rabbits and other vermin, early tourism, the Glenmaggie Weir and the Depression. It includes a separate section on the early families, including many with high country runs. Families particularly mentioned include: Carpenters, Chesters, Colemans, Cummings, Cummins, Fullertons, Garveys, Gells, Gleasons, Greens, Hendersons, Higgins, Kellys, Kendalls, Macfarlanes, McMichaels, Maxfields, Molphys, Monds, Rahillys, Reids, Riggalls, Ryans, Shaws, Sweetapples, Timms, Williamsons and Wilsons.

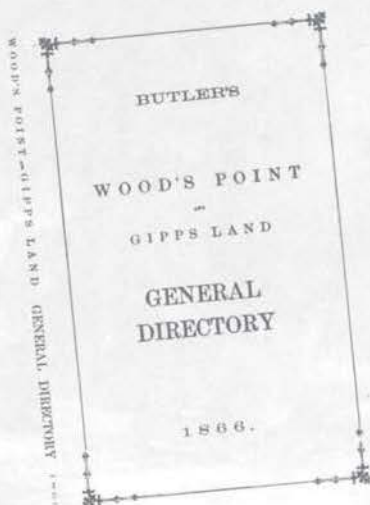
The book contains many early photographs and makes extensive use of maps.

A pre-publication offer is to be made available. Those wishing to purchase copies in advance at a reduced price should send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to:

BOOK OFFER, P.O. Box 86, Bairnsdale, 3875, prior to 30th June, 1986.

The Book will be launched on Saturday, August 30, at the "Back to Glenmaggie". An invitation is extended to all former residents and descendents of early families to return to Glenmaggie for the week-end, and further details can be obtained from: Mrs. Jill Smyth, Post Office, Glenmaggie, 3858.

WE ARE PROUD TO ANNOUNCE THE PUBLICATION OF . . .



This book is an exact copy of an early directory of residents around Woods Point and Gippsland. Over 3,000 people are listed, in many cases street by street through the towns and in order of travel along the tracks to the goldfields. A number of commercial advertisements are included, and there is an extensive section of general local information.

Localities included are: Healesville, Glen Watts, Fernshaw, Black Spur, Fisherton, Maryville, Woods Point, Matlock, Harper's Creek, Raspberry Creek, Gaffney's Creek, Drummond's Creek, Paradise Point, Jamieson, Jamieson River, Port Albert area, Sale, Stratford, Grant, Maffra, Tanambra, Bald Hills, Stringer's Creek, Happy-go-Lucky, Toongabbie, Rosedale, Berwick, Oakleigh, Dandenong, Bairnsdale, Bruthen, South Tambo River, Little River, Swift's Creek Diggings, Omeo Diggings and many other places too small to mention.

The directory has been produced in a strictly limited edition of 200 numbered, hard copies at \$16 posted and a paperback edition at \$9 posted.

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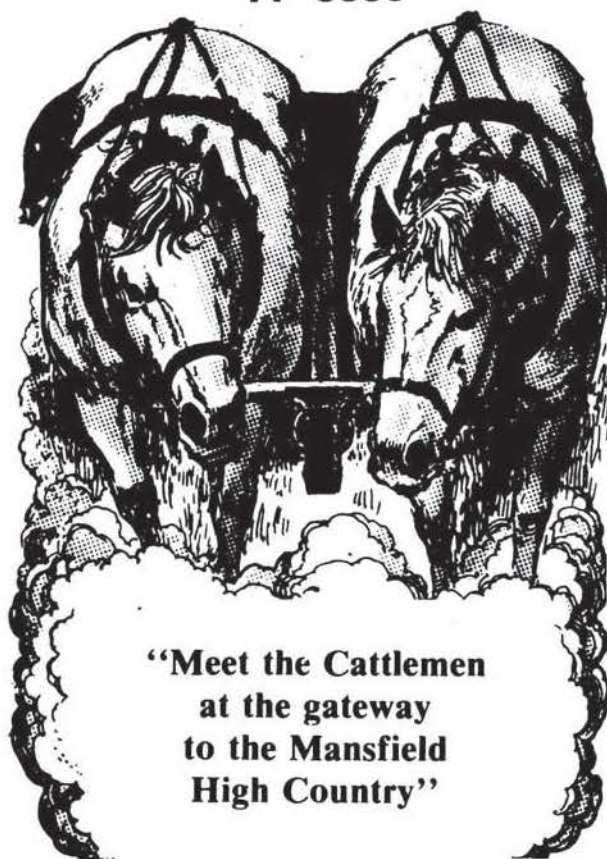
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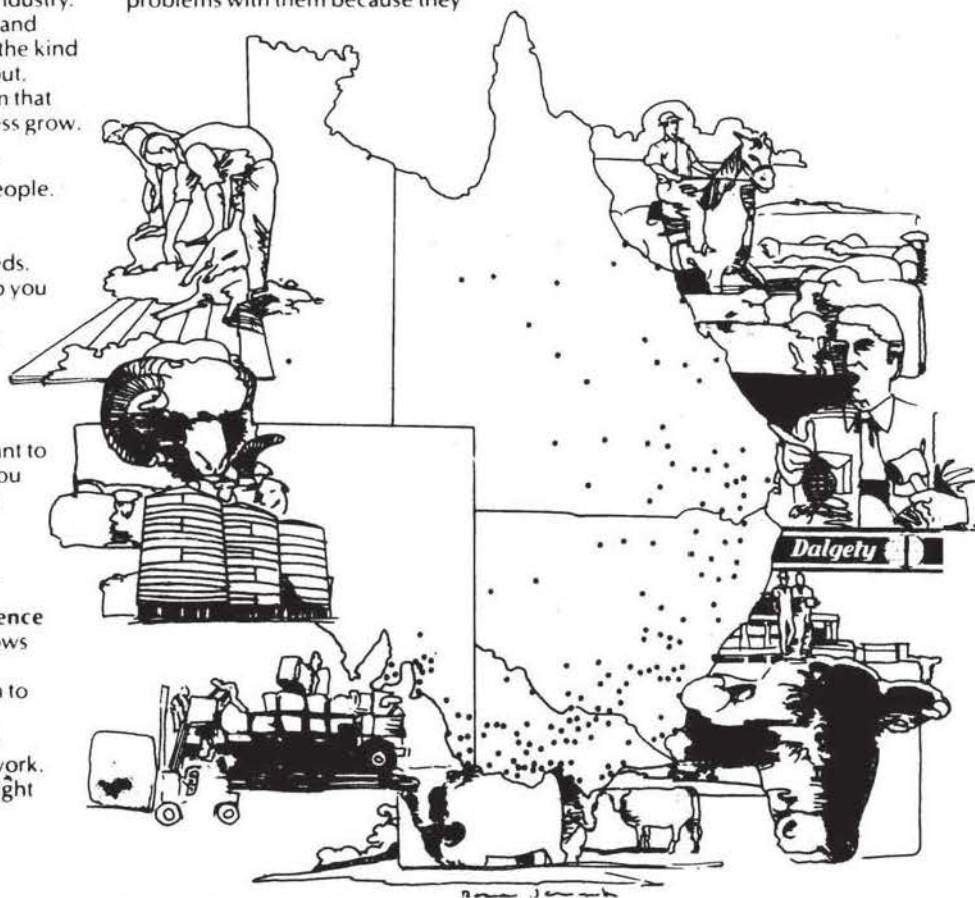
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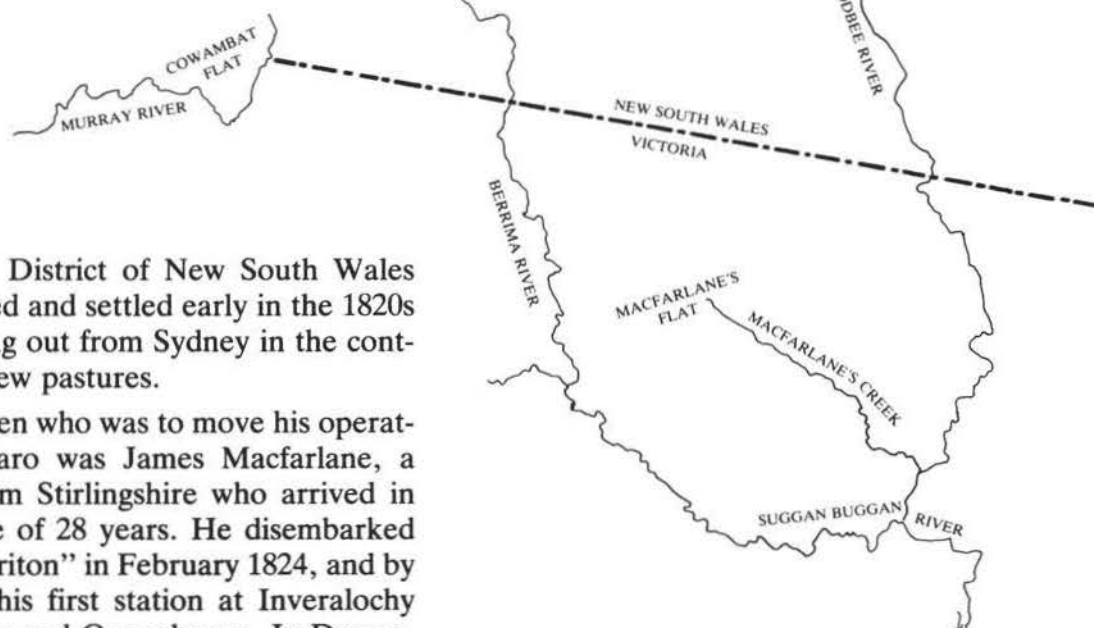
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The news was received with regret, as Voice of the Mountains went to press, of the death at Heyfield on the 23rd January, 1986, of Norman Fullerton Chester, at the age of 82 years. Norm was the founder of the stock market in Heyfield, and for many years the manager there for Dalgetys. He held an auctioneer's licence for over 60 years, and apart from being a mountain cattleman in his own right, was responsible for the Autumn Sales. He had a lifetime dedication to stock, and this years Autumn Sale will be saddened by his passing.

ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS ON . . .

Linda Barraclough



The Monaro District of New South Wales was first discovered and settled early in the 1820s by graziers pushing out from Sydney in the continual search for new pastures.

One of the men who was to move his operations to the Monaro was James Macfarlane, a Highland Scot from Stirlingshire who arrived in Sydney at the age of 28 years. He disembarked there from the "Triton" in February 1824, and by 1828 had set up his first station at Inveralochy between Goulburn and Quenabeyan. In December 1830, two promissory notes he had written to the Government Farm at Emu Plains for cattle having been dishonoured, he chose to move south and squat near Delegate. He set up Currawang Station there, just north of the present Victorian border. At that time there was no Port Phillip, or Victoria, it was all just southern New South Wales. When he began grazing cattle at Macfarlane's Flat as an outstation in 1834, he was not to know that was going to make him one of Victoria's first settlers. It is even arguable that he may have been the first.

By 1835 the pressure for land on the drought-stricken Monaro was acute, so Macfarlane, George McKillop and a man called Livingstone, explored as far south as Omeo. Liking what he saw, Macfarlane returned there the next year with cattle. At the same time the Pendergast brothers set up at Benambra and Edmund Buckley began grazing stock at Tongiomunje.

James Macfarlane later transferred his main interests to Heyfield, a station taken up for him by his nephew Malcolm Macfarlane. The staunchly Presbyterian old bachelor died in Melbourne on the 27th July 1860 at the age of sixty-seven years. It was not until ten years after his death, in 1870, that the border was surveyed. Then, with the aid of stone cairns on the major peaks such as Mount Wellington and Mount Useful, a dotted line was drawn across the map. Macfarlane's Flat was found to be firmly on the Victorian side. Even had he still been around to contend for the position

of Victoria's first settler, it is doubtful if James Macfarlane would have sought the glory. He was not of that stamp.

Just over one hundred and fifty years after his stock first grazed that flat, the Victorian people celebrated the anniversary of settlement. Much was heard of the Hentys of Portland and the beginning of Melbourne. Little was heard of James Macfarlane and the other Mountain Cattlemen with him, or the other Gippsland case of the Andersons of Western Port. To redress this imbalance, a one day seminar was held at the Gippsland Institute of Advanced Education on the 11th October 1985. Run by Patrick Morgan from the Centre for Gippsland Studies at the Institute, speakers on the subject of the Cattlemen were Vic Webber from the Shire of Omeo, Jim Commins and Tor Holth.

The main thought that all who attended would have taken away was the theme introduced during the session on Bass Strait settlers. Dr Stephen Murray-Smith pointed out that the Bass Straiters started out as a group of isolated communities and that the three main groups the seminar concentrated on, the Kurnai Aborigines, the Straitsmen and the Cattlemen, have remained isolated communities to this day. Precariously they hold onto their existence, affected much more by the remote environments in which they lived and still live, than by the massive external forces that have so determined the lives of the rest of Victorians since early last century.

THE 1985 GATHERING AT COBUNGRA

The weather was almost perfect on the weekend of the 2nd and 3rd February 1985, when three thousand people came to Junction Plain on the Victoria River, just outside Omeo, for the annual 'Get Together' of Mountain Cattlemen, associates and supporters. This was the largest of the Cattlemen's gatherings held so far, with enthusiasm and support just as high as it had been the previous September after the successful 'assault' on Parliament House.

A feature of growing significance is the riders who come in at various stages of the gatherings. This year these varied from family groups of four or five through to organised tourist parties of twenty or more riders. Some arrived at the site on the Friday before the proceedings started, and others arrived during the Saturday.

Saturday afternoon also saw a new event at the gathering. The trials for the packhorse race were held and it looked as if competition would be hot for the final on Sunday. That evening long queues formed outside the marquees for the traditional barbequed 'mountain steaks' before an evening of entertainment commenced.

A number of politicians and candidates in the forthcoming election took the opportunity to be seen supporting the Cattlemen's cause and their speeches on Saturday evening caused considerable interest. Gus Mercurio, who has been to several gatherings since filming of 'The Man', again lent his support at the microphone. Despite this, the speech that attracted most attention was by Tom

Barry. Mr Barry, a member of one of the families that lost runs as a result of the declaration of the Kosciusko National Park, has turned to the real estate markets for a livelihood.

'Every nation, every individual, needs a hero, whether it be Allan Border for making our cricket team half reasonable again, or the Eureka Stockade or the Diggers at Gallipoli,' said Mr Barry. 'One of the greatest heroes we ever had was 'The Man from Snowy River', and this has been recognised by people like Peter Ustinov and James Michener. Today you are forbidden to ride a horse in Mount Kosciusko National Park — it's like the MCG without cricket'. Mr Barry said that the time had come for the Mountain Cattlemen to stand up and fight for their heritage. The Mountain Cattlemen were the real conservationists, he said, 'Not a heap of academics and bureaucrats who never blazed a trail in their lives and never earnt any wealth for the nation'. Needless to say, his speech was well received. Other speakers to follow included Jeff Kennett, the Leader of the Opposition, and MLC for Gippsland, Barry Murphy.

At the conclusion of the speeches the music began, and it was not long before everybody was enjoying either the dancing or talking to friends not seen since the gathering at Holm's Plain.

Sunday morning started slowly at Junction Plain, after all the festivities of the previous night had continued into the small hours, so people were slow to get moving. That did not last long, with



The scene at the start of the packhorse race.

the Cattlemen's Cup again the highlight of the weekend, including as it did an attempt by Ken Connley from Benambra for his third win in succession. The crowd was not to be disappointed and watched intently as the horses galloped at full stretch across the flat before weaving amongst the trees and clearing several jumps on the course. Tension was high as Ken Connley urged his mount 'Ace' on his third victory, with Peter Faithfull and Rusty Connley in very close pursuit. It certainly was stirring stuff that once seen cannot be forgotten.

The final of the packhorse race was also held on Sunday, and again the skill of the Cattlemen was on display for the large crowd of spectators. After securing the packs on the horses it was necessary for the contestants to traverse the course without breaking the eggs entrusted to their care. Damian Beaumont of Cobungra was the eventual winner, with Clive Hodge of Valencia Creek second. Graeme Stoney from Mansfield, who crossed the line first, was unfortunate to be disqualified after his horse dropped the pack a length from the finishing line. Frank Ryan from the North-Eastern Branch took out a special prize for the best pack.

Most of the three thousand present started on their way home Sunday afternoon. As they departed from the most successful gathering yet held, they may have noticed the Mountain Cattlemen's flag flying over the site. Beside it was the flag for the 150th anniversary of the State of Victoria, to remind all that the tradition of the Mountain Cattlemen is as old, if not older than our state.



Ken Connley and his mount "Ace" after their victory for a third year in a row.

David Treasure moving along during the packhorse race.



THE CATTLEMEN

Evan McKenzie,

I talked with a man of the mountain
at rest by a fallen log.

By his side stood a sturdy stock horse
as he stroked the head of a dog.

We joined other men at the stockyard,
an overnight stop for the flow
Of cattle brought down from the mountain,
to winter in safety below.

All men of sound education
not out of place in the crowds,
But truly at home in the saddle
where cattle graze close to the clouds.

That night in the warmth of the log hut,
by the firelight's shimmering glow,
They talked of the coming of winter
with an early onset of the snow.

They spoke of the beauties of nature,
of wildflowers and birds that they cherished;
But also of bush fire and blizzard
in which both men and beast had perished.

There's a new danger to the cattlemen's future—
a threat to withdraw the right
For cattle to graze in the mountains—
a threat that all must fight.

Since white man came to the mountain,
the pastures have always thrived.
With the cycles of nature and grazing
the flora has always survived.

Through our history, the bellow of cattle
and the stockwhip's echoing crack
Have been heard from the tree-filled gullies
and along the winding mountain track.

Cattle bred on the mountain
are wanted throughout the land.
Without this constant source of supply,
there is no way to meet this demand.

We all have our thoughts sentimental,
so let's consider before it's too late
If cattle are barred from the mountains—
the legendary cattlemen's fate.



Doc and Mick Higgins at the Holm's Plain yards in the early 1950s.



DOC . . .

It was in the spring of 1932 that Doc rode up to the sliprails on our home at Hickey's Creek, during the Depression when work was hard to get. He offered to work for his tucker, and Dad readily agreed as he needed help. Dad had cleared a portion of the 80 acres, and was anxious to get a crop in. Doc took over the ploughing with the three horses and the double furrow plough, a job in which he took great care. Doc loved horses.

Doc stayed with us for several weeks and during that time, we came to know him well. He loved to spin yarns, and we three kids were avid listeners. He told us all about his early life, and that he was born at Jericho on the Jordan River in 1896. At an early age he ran the mail on horseback from Aberfeldy to Woods Point and Matlock, and claimed to have had someone at the other end in the winter to take him off his horse and defrost him as it was so cold he couldn't dismount unaided.

Later, Doc had gone to Cowwaar, where he worked for William O'Brien, tending his horses. He became well known around the area, and is still remembered there as a colourful personality.

Shortly after the outbreak of the Second World War, Doc enlisted in the Artillery 2/4 Field Regiment and served in Syria and New Guinea. After his discharge he returned to the bush, working for a time for J. C. Higgins at Glencairn, and then moved on to Glenfalloch where he worked for the rest of his life.

The shearing, taking the cattle to the high plains, and the musters were the highlights of Doc's life. He always rode in the lead of the mobs, and delighted in pulling the traffic over. He was a useful worker, tending to the menial tasks that always had to be done, and was ever ready to see to the needs of animals.

John Wilson Doherty left this life suddenly on the 5th March 1973, at the age of 77 years. Sitting on a log watching a friend saw firewood, he collapsed and died. He was buried in the Heyfield cemetery with the R.S.L. service in the presence of his many friends. They will always remember him, not just as a drover and stockman, but above all as a gentleman.

Minnie Higgins.

SILENT VOICE OF THE MOUNTAINS

A. G. Simmons

My spirit stood atop the bluff
And heard the silence ring,
As my senses strained to feel it even more.
Silent sound, that strange sensation,
Dormant power thundering;
The soundless soul of nature's very core.

Silence ringing of conception,
Of a crackling, crashing birth.
Thrusting seas aside to hold imposing place
As a mountain range of grandeur
Heaved this monument of earth;
Then it settled to a silent sleeping grace.

Silence ringing of a glacial age,
The drum-roll, rumbling path;
Thrice they came to carve a beauty in their way.
The relentless, grinding power
Left its shattered aftermath
To the spirit of this silence of today.

Silence ringing of a mountain storm,
Of lightning blinding white,
Wind and hail and thunder deafening the ear.
Now they're gone and here's the Milky Way
To blaze throughout the night,
And the silent dewdrops cry a mountain tear.

Silence ringing of the hunters
As they stalk the Bogong moth;
Hear the laughter, hear the pounding of their feet.
Now their silence is a sadness
Since they met the settlers' wrath;
Now the carefree hunters never more will meet.

Silence ringing of a snow-stream
As it hurls its weight below
In a violence of froth and bank and bend.
From the laden plains of Dargo
As she gently thaws her snow;
All these sounds are in the silence which you send.

Silence roaring in the forest fire,
The fury of the flames...
A bushman screams a warning to his mate.
The panic-stricken wallabies
Take flight from nature's games
And the warning for the bushman is too late.

Silence ringing from Magdala's rise,
From Kosciusko's height,
Silence haunting me from Cobbler's silhouette.
O'er the Crosscut Saw and Speculation's
Hazy awesome sight;
Silence pounding in my ears, I hear it yet.

Silence ringing from an alpine bloom
And through the snow gum's twist;
Silence singing from a bird no longer there.
Snap a twig; it sounds forever,
Hear the sun and hear the mist,
Hear these gifts of mountain nature, ever rare.

Silence ringing midst the mighty trunks
Where nature builds her church
Using mountain ash and alpine ash, so steep.
Thrusting upward, ever skyward
In the neverending search
For the light, refused their holy base, so deep.

Silence crying up the gullies;
Silence reaching from every peak.
Silent memories of toughened pioneers.
Silent too, the luckless digger;
Rest in peace, ye blessed meek;
Yours the lonely grave inheritance, these years.

Silence ringing out its silent prayer,
This message from the past.
The lovely, silent bush calls out to me.
My love returns as silently
To landscapes made so vast,
For I love each blade of grass, each rock, each tree.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION???

One of the main issues rarely addressed by those who advocate a massive extension to the Alpine National Park in Victoria, is the cost to the taxpayer. During December 1984, in an attempt to find out just how much the Government thought this park would cost, an application was made under the Freedom of Information Act to the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands, asking:

1. The estimated cost of the declaration of the Alpine National Park,
2. An outline of how the park would be managed, and
3. The various tools the Department will use to manage the park.

Because of her formal training as a legal secretary, the Cattlemen asked Assistant Secretary Sue Silvers to undertake this task, and she administered the application throughout. The application was made on the 18th December, and was shuttled around various Government Departments until a letter was received on the 18th February advising that the Department had extended its time for reply to the 1st March, well outside the 45 days required by the Act and, by coincidence, two days before the State election. Despite this, a further letter was received on the 20th February, declining to supply any information at all, claiming that it was to be the subject of a cabinet submission, and therefore exempt.

The Mountain Cattlemen, refusing to accept this, applied for an administrative review, and were again refused the information, so an appeal was made to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. A preliminary conference was held there on the 24th July 1985, at which the Cattlemen were represented by Graeme Stoney with assistance from Tim Barker of the V.F.G.A. It has been suggested by some who were there that Graeme Stoney has missed his true calling, this time to the legal bar, as his presentation of our case, along with the unusual admission of a dozen or so Cattlemen to the proceedings, won the day. Under close questioning by the Chairman of the Tribunal, officers of the Department were forced to admit that **little or no costing had been done**, and the matter was adjourned to the 23rd September. It was also ordered that a further conference be held between the Cattlemen and the Department, and this took place on the 11th September. On that date, well after the Nunawading by-election, the Department agreed to supply the information requested.

On the 22nd November 1985, almost a year after the original application, the requested details were received. The proposed park was estimated to cost slightly over 2.3 million dollars in the first two and a half years. **This is the figure that it was admitted had not even been calculated at the time of the Tribunal hearing. Despite that, nineteen days before, at the beginning of July, the Minister had stood at Bennison Lookout to announce that the Bill to declare the park had been introduced that day into Parliament. She did not say then that it had not even been worked out how much the park was to cost the people of Victoria.**

The Mountain Cattlemen have written to Mrs Kirner, asking why her Department took so long to answer their request for information. Given the leadup to the present situation, it is unlikely an immediate reply can be expected.

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From:

A. G. SIMMONS
47 Hilda Street,
CHELTENHAM, 3192

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

The Snowy Mountains of N.S.W. were closed to grazing, 1958-59. Now in 1986 the Victorian Alps unfortunately, may be beginning to receive the same treatment.

Having spent a large amount of time during the last 40 years in the Snowy Mountains of N.S.W. attending to the duties of caring for sheep and cattle on leases, a period of time spent working on the Snowy Mountains Scheme, many trips by horse or by car, droving, fishing or perhaps just driving through the mountains for a day trip, but always observing the old tracks, herbage, snow grass, trees or whatever else that may be about to have a look at, I would like to voice my humble opinion on the same.

To me, there is only one conclusion to arrive at. There is plenty of room in the mountains for conservationists, parks, controlled grazing of sheep and cattle, trail walks, fishermen etc., without doing damage to the earth or the vegetation upon it.

We saw the Snowy Mountain Scheme begin with surveyors carting their camps and equipment through the mountains on pack horses, also in Land Rovers in the limited areas in which they could travel. It was not long after that there were huge bulldozers ripping acres and acres of topsoil and herbage, thousands and thousands of tons of earth and rock from many areas of the face of mountains. As each job was finished the topsoil was spread and graded back onto the scarred areas, then sown with grass seed and supered. Had this country, especially the steep areas, been subject to erosion, the storms would have ripped the freshly laid earth to pieces.

The mining areas of Kiandra remain the same today as they did 40 years ago when I first saw them.

After closely observing conditions of tracks, creeks, herbage, etc., on thousands and thousands of acres, in the Snowy Country, over a large period of time, the only difference I find is a huge build up of dry, thick snow grass, in the last 15 years or so.

This will only go one way. The same way it went in the late 60's, by fire in the extreme heat of the year, that did and will scorch and ruin everything in its path, including the roots of the snow grass, up to four or five inches below the surface of the ground.

Victoria, leave the stock and the stockmen in the mountains, and you'll not only save another heritage, you'll also probably save a number of bushwalkers as well, and one does not have to be Nostradamus to figure that out!

Victoria, do not let this happen to you. Keep the mountains controlled, not closed.

According to records, the grazing of sheep and cattle in the country around Kiandra during the summer months began back in the 1830's, 150 years — less the last 20 odd — of summer grazing without damage to vegetation or causing erosion.

The stockmen won't hurt the mountains — they love them far too much.

Neil Hulm, Lavington

Voice of the Mountain appreciates the generosity of Neil Hulm of Lavington, N.S.W., in allowing use of poetry from his published anthology, **Where the Snow Grass Grows**, stories in verse from the mountains, the plains of the Bland, the Tumbarumba area and many other. It contains over 50 works, and may be purchased for \$8, including postage from Mr. Neil Hulm, at 361 Cheyenne Drive, Lavington, N.S.W., 2641

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MOUNTAIN TIME

A. G. Simmons

Like a bird on the wing, time's a wonderous thing
As are snow gums and natural fountains.
And to me time is best when I'm able to rest
All my cares and ride into the mountains.

Where the beef cattle graze and the distant blue haze
Slows our pace to the way God intended.
Where the stars of the night are abnormally bright.
Where the camp fire and bush sounds are blended.

Yes it's blissful to dream by a swift alpine stream
Letting minutes drift by into hours;
See the woollybutts climb beyond all care of time
With your feet in a carpet of flowers.

Where you've no need to race; let your horse walk its pace;
Take in Cobbler and Clear and The Fainter.
From the Razorback's blade, let the light of day fade
On the work of the Master Creator.

When my time comes to die I would choose that I lie
Here in peace near the head of the Murray,
Where the cool mountain breeze murmurs soft through the trees;
Where I've never found reason to worry.



Looking towards Wonnangatta.

THE BAW BAW CLEANSKIN

H. J. Stagg.

About the middle of December 1974, Bluey Janes and I went to Baw Baw to have a look at the cattle we had taken up there a month or so earlier and to see how they were settling down as we had taken three bulls up with the cows, one which had not been up there before. We rode round for two days reasonably satisfied with things as we had shifted small mobs of cattle to different places that looked more promising. On the third day we were returning to camp about four o'clock, a bit earlier than usual as we were coming home that day, when about three miles from camp and over five from the nearest yard we came on a mob of about 20 cows and calves and amongst them a mongrel ill-bred mickie bull, a bit over two years old. He looked like he had been through two hard winters in the snow both as calf and the previous winter. He was just starting to put on a bit of condition and wasn't very big and not particularly wild, just a bit fidgety. As it was too late to do anything with him that day we reckoned we could come back again early in the new year to attend to him when we had fresh horses and dogs.

Well, when the time came to go back to attend to the young bull, Bluey was too busy on his farm to make the trip so he sent one of his sons, Ricky in his place with me to do the job. Now Ricky was a big lad, just over 15 years old, very solid mostly bone and muscle. He had been given a new nylon lasoo for Christmas and he was anxious to try it out. He was mounted on his father's horse 'Old Grey' and accompanied by two pretty good bush dogs. I also had two fair dogs.

We rode for three days and we couldn't find that darned bull. We saw nearly every beast that was up there and reckoned he must have taken off to pastures new somewhere but we decided to have one more day to try our luck. Late on the fourth day as we were coming back to camp, there he was with a mob of about 15 cows and calves. The dogs rounded them up in a fairly clear place that had a few granite boulders sticking up here and there and two dead snow gum stumps that we planned to let him wind himself around on if we could rope him, but the bull had other plans. He had small sharp horns about eight inches long and just cocked a bit making them real good for roping.

Ricky had a few throws with no luck and the bull stayed right in the middle of the mob which made it a bit harder. I told Ricky that if he roped a cow we would have to cut his lasso to get it off her. I had a short rope round my horse's neck to take over if we got the bull up to the stump. After a few misses with the rope the bull started to get restless and we had the mob fairly close up to the stump. I managed to make a good throw and the bull put his horns right through the loop and we reckoned we had him.

He didn't look very big and I told Ricky to get off his horse and hang on to the rope round the stump while I tied the horses up to the other stump about five yards away, and not to take his eyes off the bull. I quickly tied the horses up and turned round to see Ricky picking himself up off the ground and the bull starting to gallop off down the hill with a rope flying in the air and the four dogs at him giving him merry hell. Ricky had been wearing a new pair of jeans and one leg was ripped from the fork to the bottom just like chaps.

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Well, Ricky wanted his lasso and I wanted the bull so we went after him with the horses moving along pretty fast. The bull went down a steep hill onto a small tussocky flat on the banks of the Cascades Creek where the dogs had stuck him up. We got between him and the crossing in the creek. If he had crossed there he would have made for some rough scrubby country but he headed back towards the cows up a steep place through a thick patch of snow gum saplings. As he was disappearing into the saplings I caught the end of the lasso and tied it onto a sapling and when he got to the end of the rope he twisted round one of the saplings and hung himself back down the hill just the way we wanted him. We tied the horses up and had a spell for a few minutes then I took the short rope and walked in behind him to catch him by the tail and then Ricky would take over while I put the short rope on him and got the lasso off as Ricky didn't want it cut off. I came up behind him and was just about to grab his tail when he swung round the sapling and charged down hill at me. With 30 foot of rope to spare I ran back at right angles to the rope hoping he would snag himself again on a sapling, but no he didn't. He was very close to me when a stick got between my legs and I fell heavily. You think fast then, you have to and as I fell I turned onto my back and met the bull

with my boots and spurs, but he got past them and I reckoned he was after a more vulnerable spot. I grabbed him by the nostrils with one hand and one of his horns with the other hand to try and hold him off a bit but I could just steady him a little. Although he was making some savage rips at my throat we were sort of rubbing noses, so to speak. I was hard against a bunch of saplings on the downhill side and couldn't roll away and my hands were slipping on his nose, so I called out to Ricky to get a rock and come in and kill the bastard. Ricky acted quickly and did something that I would never have thought of doing, but my word, it was effective. He jabbed both of his thumbs into the bull's eyes and yelled out for me to run. I did just that.

The bull ran backwards with tears streaming out of his eyes and tangled himself up pretty well and I got the short rope on him and rescued Ricky's lasso. While Ricky hung on to his tail pulling him down hill I castrated him in about five seconds flat, tied my pocket knife on a long stick, Ricky got clear and I cut the short rope and the bull went backward down hill for ten yards and made off. I said to Ricky, "That was a smart trick, did you learn it playing football?" He said "I thought the bull was killing you". "I thought so too", I said.

We never saw the bull again.



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CATTLE THEFTS AT ABBEYARD

The longest and most expensive cattle stealing case in Victoria's history finished at the Beechworth court on the 29th November, 1985. The case, which began on the 6th November, was described as the most complicated so far handled by the Police Livestock Squad and involved witnesses who travelled from as far afield as Perth, Sydney and Brisbane. It followed an earlier hearing, for which one witness travelled from Alice Springs.

It was alleged that in March and April of 1983, Robert John Stewart Spicer, then having charge of Sugarloaf, south of Myrtleford, sold two truckloads of his neighbour's cattle at the Mernda Market. The 66 cattle, including 20 breeding cows, all belonged to Mr Bill Moore of the adjoining Abbeyard property, and were valued on rock bottom drought prices at \$20,000. Only ten of the animals were recovered, and since they had been bought at open market, they could not be returned to Mr Moore. Had the animals been valued on the more normal prices prevailing later, along with their offspring, they would have been worth about \$50,000. It was further alleged that Spicer received about \$10,000 from the sale, which was spent a short time later.

The jury at the trial found Spicer guilty, and he was remanded in custody to Melbourne for sentencing by his Honour, Judge Dixon. After the jury returned its decision, counsel for Mr Moore applied to His Honour for a restitution order, but this was refused on the grounds of Mr Moore having already commenced civil proceedings.

On the 6th December 1985, Spicer again appeared before His Honour, Judge Dixon, this time at the Melbourne County Court. In his pre-sentence address, Judge Dixon drew attention to the importance of the deterrent aspect of sentencing in crimes of this nature, the fact that the rural community looked to courts to protect them from such thefts, and that Spicer was not "a young man who indulged in some youthful indiscretion". He was then sentenced to three months imprisonment on each count, making a total of six months.

Mr Moore, 68, whose property was first farmed over 100 years ago by his grandfather, noted wryly that in his day "rustling was treated very quickly and satisfactorily, and at no cost to the ratepayer". Mr Moore's loss has not only been financial, as he has also lost the nucleus of a fine herd that had become his pride and joy after years of breeding.

The trial, costing literally thousands of dollars including legal aid for Spicer, did not result in any feeling of confidence for cattlemen that future thieves would be dealt with in any different manner. Jim Commins, speaking on behalf of the Mountain Cattlemen, described the penalty as lenient, especially considering the value of the property stolen. Graeme Stoney, also on behalf of the Association, expressed concern that with remissions the sentence could be effectively reduced to about a month in prison. Contact was made by him with the Department of Public Prosecutions to express dismay at the leniency, as it was thought that such a light sentence would discourage police from again undertaking such a complex investigation, that the effective sentence was only the amount of time witnesses had been tied up at the Beechworth court, and that it could become "open slather" in future for rustlers who realised that \$20,000 was not bad value for an effective month in prison, should they even be caught.

The Department of Public Prosecutions has replied that the concern by the Cattlemen is understood, but that as the sentence is within the appropriate range, it does not intend to interfere. They further advised that His Honour felt he was unable to make a restitution order as the evidence was not sufficiently clearcut to be able to put a figure on the size of the loss suffered, but that Mr Moore was entitled to take civil action should he so desire.

Cattle theft continues to be a major concern to run holders, especially with the advent of "paddock butchers" who have even gone so far as to claim on occasion that they thought the cattle were wild and available for anyone to take. Without the deterrent of stiff penalties, there is little except the watchful eye of locals and a lot of luck to stop them. A spokesman for the Police Livestock Squad has expressed concern regarding thefts of cattle from the high country, recognising that a problem does exist. He suggested that all cases of cattle theft should be reported, and that the squad would welcome discussion from any run holders who even feel they may have had stock stolen.

YOUR CHURCH — HIS BUSH

A. G. Simmons

A thought has often stirred me as I've eyed cathedrals tall;
These man-made mounds of building blocks don't house my God at all.
He dwells in airy canyons, on plains, in hills, on seas.
His voice I hear, though not from choirs, but drifting in the breeze.

He gave us all things beautiful, all creatures great and small,
Why try to lock Him in a church, a temple or a hall?
Why teach of sins, now gone, by Christ upon the Cross?
Just look towards the bushfire's path to see His dreadful loss.

His body is a river gum, the branches are His limbs.
His face is in the rising sun and sunset as day dims.
His fingers are the blades of grass, His locks, the cloud strewn skies
And pools and lakes and billabongs must surely be His eyes.

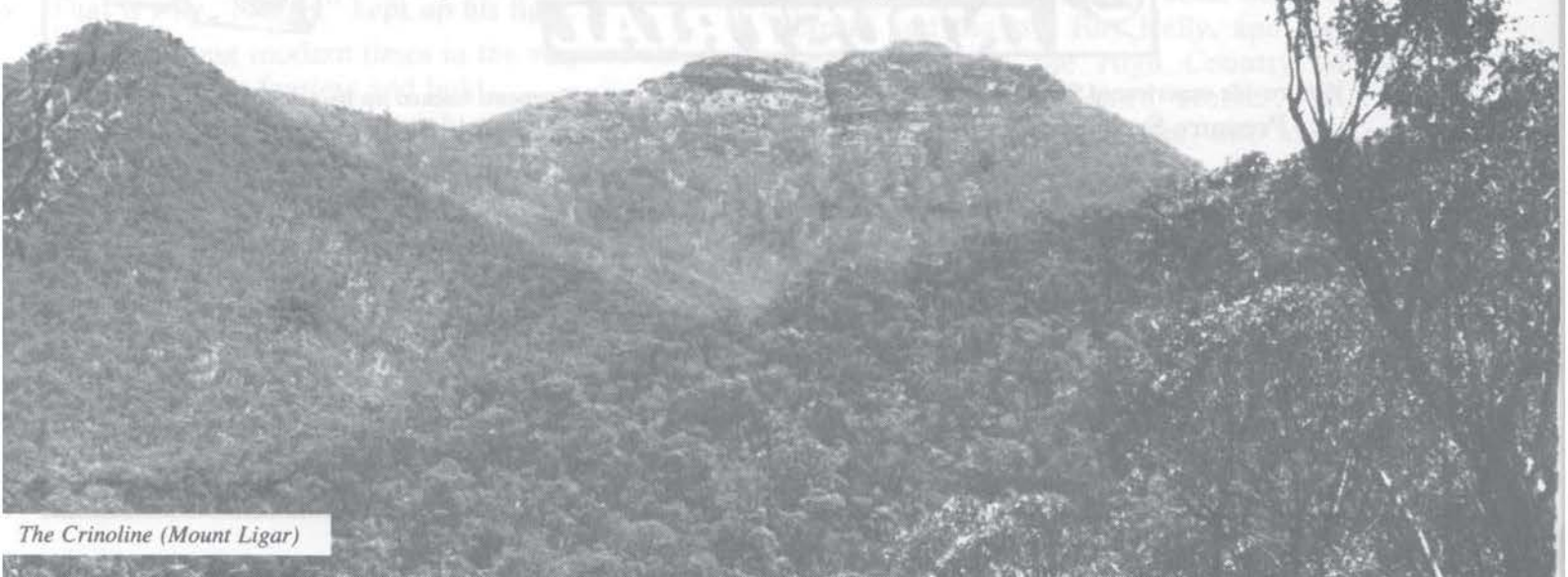
The rivers, streams and creeks supply His life-blood to the land,
Now feel His heart beat, feel His strength, throughout the mountains grand.
His hands are rocks, His toes are roots, the flowers are His smile.
He moves with grace in bird and beast, so walk with Him awhile.

I hear His words in whispering winds, His songs on sand-swept beach,
Though rarely moved by what I hear from preachers as they preach.
His sound is everywhere so sweet, the creaking of a bough,
The crickets, dogs and warbling frogs; I hear Him singing now.

I need no artist's painting of what he thinks is His face.
I want no Bible, no prayer book, I'll eat and not say Grace.
Yet I walk with Him and feel His touch, so gentle as I slumber
His lightning thrills me in the night, I revel in His thunder.

Why study books and learn the tunes? To worship's not to ponder.
His nature's everywhere to touch; so worship as you wander.
His breath is in the air you breathe, His heart beats with your feet.
You kiss Him when you sip the stream, you hug Him as you eat.

I don't blaspheme, I only know my God is nearer now,
Than when I tried to meet Him through your thee, and thy, and thou,
So throw your pennies in the plate, support the Holy See,
Or stroll along the old bush track and share my God with me.



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Farewell old Mate

I lost today my best bush mate,
Who by now has walked through those
pearly gates.

The angels, no doubt, will listen in awe,
As "Nugget" tells tales of our
mountain folklore.

How I envied him, to have seen what he had,
And how he battled through times,
Some good and some bad.
His life it took a pioneering course,
For "Nugget" he was born in the age
of the horse.

His time, it took in a life on the land,
Listening to "Nugget", he has his life
in his hands,

He loved to tell of the bush in the past,
And it made one realise how times move
so fast.

I respected him for the things that he did,
And in his hatred of parks, nothing was hid,
To sit by his fireplace made of rock,
It was great listening to
"Nugget" turn back the clock.

In those early pioneering days there
were big cattle drives,
To their snow leases in the mountains so high,
Now they are all closed, and "Nugget"
often asked why,
We never did any harm but
kept the mountains alive.

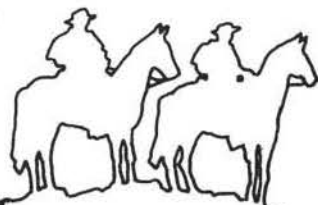
And his saying was "My father often said,
One of these days we'll find our
mountains all dead",
killed by the tourists with not
a Hereford in sight.

That is why "Nugget" kept up his fight.

He lived these modern times in the ways of old,
As a horseman fearless and bold.

A pioneer mountain man, right to the end,
Farewell "Nugget", our legend and friend.

Allan Brewer.



Farewell old Mate is Allan's tribute to the memory of **William George Frederick Pendergast**, who passed on at his home on the edge of Kosciusko National Park on the 16th December 1985, aged 62 years. More commonly known as "Nugget", he was born at Moonbah near Jindabyne and was a direct descendent of an uncle of the four Pendergast brothers who settled at Benambra.

On the 19th January 1986, members of the Lawler family and the North-Eastern Branch of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association, held a memorial service at Mount Hotham to unveil a plaque dedicated to the life of **Bernie Lawler**. Set on a stone on the Mount Loch Track, where his cattle once grazed, it reads:

Bernie Lawler

Born 1912. Died 1983.

*A respected cattleman held in high esteem
by all who knew him.*

*Erected by cattlemen and friends.
1986.*

The death also occurred on the 2nd October 1985 at Mansfield of **John Kelly** at the early age of 50 years, after a long illness. John was the son of Marion and the late Ray Kelly, and his family connections with the High Country go back several generations. John's brother, Pat, pre-deceased him some years ago, also at an early age.

The death is also noted at Heyfield of **Kevin Coleman**, at the age of 54 years. Kevin died on the 17th April 1984 after a long illness. A member of one of Glenmaggie's earliest families, at the time of his death he held grazing leases around Spring Hill and Connors Plain.

CATHERINE STATION

When I was asked if I would write a short history of Catherine Station I was rather apprehensive because I felt that the task was beyond me, and certainly that would have been the case had I not received a great deal of assistance from Alan Crameri who, along with his brothers, owned property for a period of time near Abbeyard. Also, the present owners, Ken Heywood and Glen Chalwell supplied me with photographs and factual information covering practically the entire history up to recent time. Finally, the Weston brothers from Eurobin were very helpful. I wish to acknowledge my gratitude to all for being so patient in providing the information and giving assistance at such short notice.

For my part, I make no claim to being involved in that history in any way, but as you will see when you read my story, I have a great deal of love for the bush and the cattlemen's way of life. I have also been associated with quite a number of the characters about whom I write. Some of them lived in our valley, the Buckland Valley, and as a boy and young man I thought it was great to go "up top" when the cattle went out in the summer, or across Mount Buffalo Plateau making sure that no stock roamed too near ski areas or the Chalet. With that introduction, I now present the history of Catherine Station.

Rory Lumsden, Buckland Valley.

Catherine Station is situated almost at the top end of the Buffalo River Valley, about thirty-seven miles from Myrtleford. Broadly speaking, it runs from above Abbeyard up both sides of the Buffalo River and takes in an area above the junction bounded by the Catherine River on one side and the west branch of the Buffalo on the other side. The total area covered is 2,322 acres.

To the best of my knowledge, when Bill Weston acquired the property he was the first land holder, although he may have only held it under lease. His land, a hundred acres, was south of Camp Creek on the eastern side of Buffalo River, and he used it for grazing cattle.

In the years to follow, possibly about 1925, Evans and Pickard moved onto the property, although there are no records to show that they actually owned the land. There are, however, papers to the effect that the land may have been leasehold. The land extended right up the valley to the west side of the Buffalo and Catherine Rivers and across to above the junction, with the boundary being the Buffalo River West Branch. Their home was situated where the Catherine joins the Buffalo River.

On "Black Friday", the 13th January 1939, the house, along with stock, horses, dogs and personal belongings were all lost in the fire that swept through the country that day. Those there escaped into the Catherine River, and another story goes that Evans brought his mother out a few days later in a wheelbarrow, suffering injuries from the fire.

During the 1920s or about 1930, Jack and Sid Beveridge took over Bill Westons's hundred acres,

plus another 400 acres to make a total of 500 acres on the east side of the Buffalo River, extending up to the junction of the Buffalo and Catherine.

I find this chapter in the history of great interest as my neighbour Norman Davidson, a retired cattleman of about eighty, along with Bill Coleman and Alec Grant who both worked on our property, went over there in 1932 to fence the hundred acres. They were promised a bed, food and shelter, and I don't think they saw much else in those tough time. Later on, Tom Bibby and Jack Burton fenced the remaining 400 acres. That would have been about 1935-1936.

At the time the Beveridge brothers owned Morgan Station at the head of the Buckland Valley in conjunction with the 500 acres on the Buffalo River. Access was via Mount Selwyn and down the east branch of the Buffalo River and right out across the Annie River. Usually they went in that way from the Buckland and went out near Camp Creek through to the west branch of the Buckland River.

From all accounts, they were colourful years, and many are the yarns that have been told of the events at that time. Their re-telling would brighten any cattleman's camp while waiting for the billy to boil.

For a short period, possibly from 1940 to 1946, George Marks either rented or made an agreement with Evans and Pickard, resulting in his having grazing rights to Catherine Station.

For a short period after that, about three years I believe, until 1949, the Crameri family leased the property. In those days they had quite a large hereford herd that they ran in conjunction

with other land that they owned down near Abbeyard on the east side of the Buffalo River.

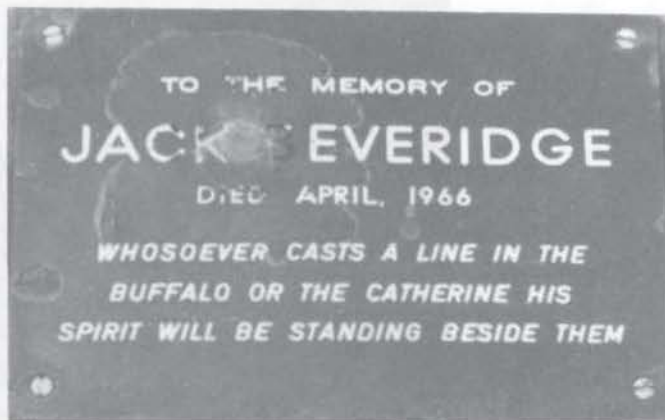
I do not have any reliable records, but it does appear that a nephew of Arthur Evans was on the property after the Crameri lease expired and, of all things, he tried to milk cows. He took the cream out twice a week, down to Dandongadale to the cream truck. That did not last very long at all.

In 1953 "Young Jack" Beveridge, a nephew of the two brothers, acquired all the area west of the Buffalo River and Catherine River. Until 1966, he and his wife Maud lived there in the home that is still at the Buffalo River junction.

In 1954, the Beveridge brothers, Sid and Jack, took up 1161 acres running from the junction of the Buffalo River right up to Catherine on the west side and the West Buffalo on the east side. I made reference earlier to that parcel of land as that for which the Evans and Pickard names were given when they were first associated with Catherine Station in 1925. I have studied a legal document that shows the land was taken up from the Crown on the 18th May 1954, for the sum of two hundred and nine pounds and ten shillings.

There was no mention therein of Evans and Pickard.

"Young Jack" ran his part of Catherine Station until his untimely death in April 1966, after which his widow put the place on the market. It was auctioned in Myrtleford in 1967, and bought by "Young Jack's" uncles, the Beveridge brothers. They bought the 661 acres under their own names and that of their great-nephew, Glen Chalwell. Jack Beveridge died in 1968, aged 81 years, so the property then belonged to Sid Beveridge and Glen Chalwell.



The plaque from the cairn to the memory of Jack Beveridge, Catherine Station.



Catherine Station, looking north towards Myrtleford and showing Glen Chalwell's portion.

The jig-saw did not end there. In 1970, Ken Heywood bought all of the top end of Catherine Station, 116 acres. He is the present owner, and runs it with his other land at Bowman's Forest.

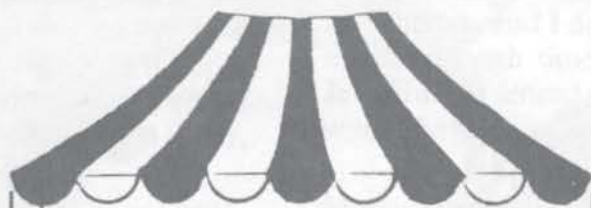
Then, about 1976 to 1978, Glen Chalwell became the owner of the portion originally taken up by Bill Weston, plus the other 400 acres. In winter of 1981, on the 25th August, Sid Beveridge died at the Bright Bush Nursing Hospital, aged 89 years. As a result, Glen Chalwell became the

owner of all that area of land west of the Buffalo and Catherine Rivers, making his total 1161 acres also.

These two resourceful young men are the present owners of Catherine Station, each with separate titles and stock. They are close friends and work together to the advantage of both. I feel sure that with their energy and attitudes Catherine Station will not only survive into the future, but will also continue to hold a place amongst the great cattle stations of North East Victoria.



*Mustering team,
Catherine Station.*



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These men who blazed our trails,
Gone forever is our mountain heritage,
With it's folklore and it's tales.
Now we have a new breed of mountain folk,
Greenies is their brand,
How they fooled those politicians,
To close these grazing lands.
Sadly, nought but National Parks
Is what they crave, and that's enough
To make the Man from Snowy River
Turn right over in his grave.
Take a man like Wally Ryder,
Who lives near Mongans Bridge,
Wally knows and understands the mountains,
Every gully, every ridge,
But they drove him from the Bogong,
And now they'll drive him from the plains.
In caring for the mountains,
Once men like Wally leave
Just who will hold the reins.
Down by Glen Wills' side nestles Shannonvale.
For three generations Fitzgerald cattle
Have grazed their mountain lease,
Every hill and every dale.
But from his father's lease,
Brenny couldn't part,
And as the closing date drew near,
It broke poor Brenny's heart.
Yes, their mountain huts are all deserted
And the breeding herds have all
but disappeared.
There's a shortage now of good baldy cattle,
'Tis just as we all feared.
The closing of these mountain leases
Is plain selfishness and greed,
There's tourists camping on the creek flats,
Where the cattle used to feed.
But our mountain cattlemen,
We know someday they'll be back,
And the mountain tops once more will echo,
To the bellowing of cattle,
And the greenhide stockwhip's crack.
Yes, these mountain pioneers,
In their saddles they ride tall,
So I beg you fellow countrymen,
Stand up and salute them all.

Allan Brewer,

SONG OF THE CATTLE HUNTERS

While the morning lights streaks,
upon fast moving creeks
That flow from the land of the snow,
Down the ridges we ride, with a long swinging
stride,
Down the ridges and gullies we go.
And the cattle we hunt,
they are moving in front,
With a sound like the wind on the waves,
As the beat and the beat of so many feet
Start the echoes away from their caves.
As we look down the tracks,
past the cattlemen's shacks,
The dogs sniffed around for scent on the ground,
Some stragglers they got, after barking a lot,
And the echoes they joined in the fray.
And from the mountains around, those echoes
rebound,
The sound of the mob on it's way,
As we ride down the track,
we sometimes look back
To the land of the echoes around.
The mountain sides steep and the ranges so high
With a welcoming song, as the herd moves along
And from rockface and cavern the echoes reply
As they did in the times of the day gone by.
And down the dim gorges I hear the
stream falling
High up from the rivers that roam
Way down the blue valleys,
the rivers are crawling,
Over rocks and rapids, you see it's white foam.
From Nature's clear fountains,
the voice of the mountains
Calls us again to the mountain domain
There is natural song, and the
herd moves along
Voice of the mountains,
that age old refrain.
Voice of the mountains, in memory nigh,
Voice of the mountains,
the sounds of the fountains,
It welcomes the stockmen,
as the drovers ride by,
From the highlands around come the
sounds of the mountains.

Don Treasure.

THE MEN FROM THE MURRAY RIVER

Debra Squires

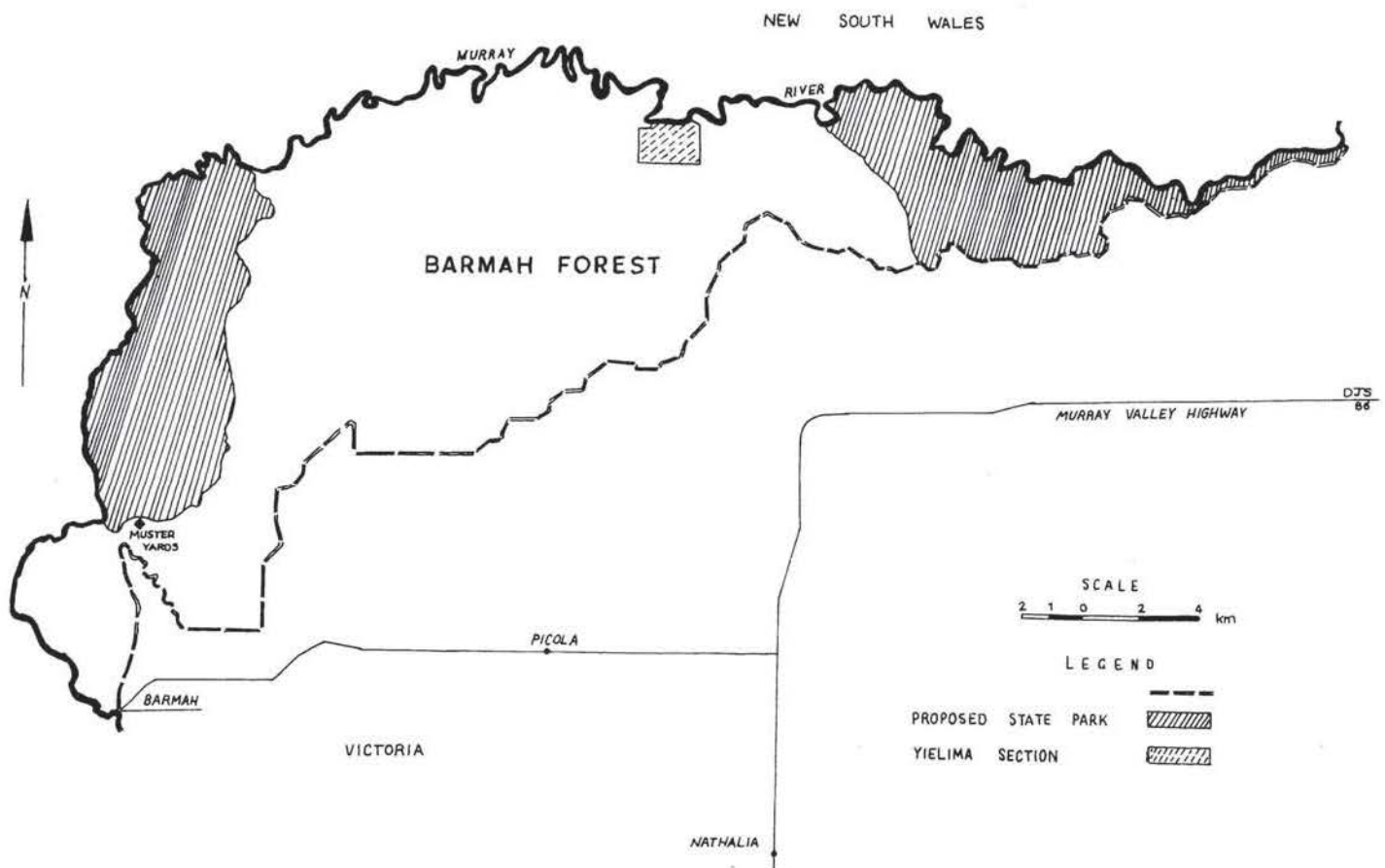
Graziers in Northern Victoria fear that plans by State Parliament to turn sections of their grazing leases into State Park could place the forest's future at risk.

Although this sounds all too familiar to the Mountain Cattleman, in this instance it is not him that is under threat of extinction. Rather, it is his counterpart in the Barmah State Forest who is threatened with expulsion from his grazing lease. Many of these graziers are fourth and fifth generation cattlemen, and their plight is just as real as that of the Mountain Cattleman.

The Barmah Forest, covering 28,900 hectares, is small when compared to the area involved in the high country, yet it is the largest red gum forest in the world. It is bordered on the north by the Murray River and located 15 kilometres north-west of Nathalia.

The proposed State Parks within the Barmah Forest cover an area of 7,900 hectares — just over 25%, but due to the annual spring floods that area would be impossible to fence off from the rest of the forest. One Government stockman is to be charged with the impossible task of keeping the agisted stock away from the declared parks. It is inevitable that once this proves ineffective, the whole forest will be closed to grazing.

The Barmah Forest has been grazed by cattle for over 140 years, yet when the Yielima subsection was closed to grazing for 17 years from 1959, what it is feared will happen in the high country actually happened in Barmah. A fuel buildup of grass and reeds formed a mat two metres high, so that when a wildfire started in that section in 1967, it destroyed 160 hectares of red gum. Unfortunately, the red gums were heat sensitive, so this area has still not recovered. It was the Forests Commission that summed up the need for grazing in Barmah in its first submission to the Land Conservation Council. When the investigation was held into the Murray Valley area, the Department submitted that *"It is essential to reduce the fire hazard on public land to an acceptable level. There is no practical alternative to the continuance of grazing, if the forests and adjoining lands are to be protected."*



The Barmah Forest Protection League was formed in 1982, when the Land Conservation Council first set up the investigation into the Murray Valley. The League supports the long standing Conservation, Forests and Lands Department policy of multiple-use.

Stocking rates in the forest are determined by an Advisory Committee consisting of three graziers, three Conservation, Forests and Lands officers and a chairman. The stocking rates are revised at the start of both summer and winter. Typical of the restrictions which the Barmah cattlemen must meet are: for winter 1985 seven hundred head of hornless cattle aged between six and fifteen months will be allowed; for the following summer the stocking rate will be two thousand head.

The only stockowners who are permitted to run cattle there are members of the Nathalia and District Stockowners Association, from the Shires of Nathalia, Numurka and part of Deakin. In 1985, there were twenty-two graziers actually running stock in the forest.

Like the Mountain Cattlemen, these people are also a minority group fighting radical conservationists to continue what is not only a tradition, but also a service to the environment and they accept that they are the custodians of the forest to care for it for future generations.



Barmah Forest mustering group

WHERE TO NOW?

The following two articles reflect the Cattlemen's position on the future management of the Victorian Alps. They are a viable alternative to the restrictive contiguous National Park concept proposed at this time by the Government. Both were prepared by Jim Commins, Graeme Stoney and Bryan Jameson on behalf of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria Inc.

A TIME TO RETHINK

Rejection by the Parliament of the Alpine National Park Bill following the expression of public opinion at the election for Nunawading Province has provided Victoria with a timely opportunity to re-think the whole issue of management and use of public land.

It is vital that this opportunity should not be passed over. If the 1983 recommendations of the Land Conservation council were acted upon, 30 per cent of Victoria's public land and 10 per cent of the total land area of the state would be alienated from productive use.

It is clear that the concept of massive national parks, regulated and administered by Government agencies, and closed to all productive use, is no longer acceptable to the bulk of the community in the middle eighties.

The removal on such a grand scale of public land from multiple use, and the locking up of resources:—

- ☆ reduces or eliminates job opportunities (new or continuing) that have been part of the life of rural communities for as long as they can remember;
- ☆ involves an area and quantity of resources far in excess of community needs in the medium to long term, as determined by levels of use (population, disposable income, social patterns etc.);
- ☆ involves excessive on-cost to the community for the management, protection and development of the reserved land that is way out of proportion to the benefit provided;
- ☆ involves unacceptable downgrading in quality of management, protection and development of the reserved land;
- ☆ impacts the way of life of people, whereby they cannot enjoy on-going recreation/employment in areas traditionally available because of denial of access or highly regulated permitted use;
- ☆ impacts the availability to the community of the products of public land in adequate quantity, quality and at acceptable cost (meat, timber, leisure etc.).

It has been established also per medium of the vote at Nunawading that the people of Victoria, with minority exceptions, are prepared to accept that conservation of the alpine environment can be achieved by controlled management of multiple uses. These include the continuation of the traditional uses, which have helped protect and care for the alpine environment for one hundred and fifty years, and which have helped make its freedom, its solitude and beauty accessible to all Victorians.

It is now up to Government to seize the opportunity offering and re-evaluate the use of public land for conservation purposes; and evolve a community-based system of management, which recognises and protects traditional, beneficial commercial use, and at the same time reserves required examples of important plant communities and habitats of native animals.

All investigations in this area of land use to date have been designed to justify pre-conceived ideas; ideas that have often been put forward by a strident conservation movement, whose aim is preservation for its own sake, rather than balanced provision of what the State really needs, including sensible conservation with a mixture of low-impact uses.

There has been considerable injustice in the ability of fanatical elements in the conservation movement to use public funding to promote ideas that are not only erroneous, but detrimental to the alpine environment if they were allowed to be implemented. In February 1985, the Government announced grants totalling \$250,000 to conservation groups.

The fact is that Governments have been misled by advice based on discredited or superseded data and inflexible dogma, which declares that the mistakes of one hundred years ago continue to prevail in the more knowledgeable concerned and enlightened environment of today.

It is undoubtedly true that the pioneers probably made some mistakes, but by and large, the mountains have forgiven and made good any errors, and it is specious to suggest that their descendents continue to follow practices that experience has taught them to be wrong. The successful farmer is the farmer who cares for the land, and practical conservation is a day-to-day tool of good farm management.

The confrontation that activists of the professional conservation organisations have promoted between themselves and the Mountain Cattlemen is divisive and destructive. It is a confrontation between theorists with misguided ideals, who are often motivated by personal or political benefit, and practical conservationists who have been getting on with the job of looking after the high country day in and day out for generations.

There can be no consensus while the conservation movement adheres to an adversary attitude and a bigoted refusal to recognise the self-evident benefits of mountain grazing as a management tool, especially against erosion and wildfire.

It needs to be recognised that the community at large does trust farmers as sensible, practical people, and has frequently drawn its political leaders from the farming fraternity.

It is specious to argue, as the more strident elements of the conservation movement do, that these sensible, practical people, who are trusted by the community, would mis-use or despoil the high country, which is not only an integral part of their livelihood, but for which they care as a traditional hereditary duty.

TOWARDS ACHIEVABLE CONSERVATION

1. Public perception of conservation issues have changed and are continuing to change, and policies based on perceived community attitudes and needs prior to 1979 are no longer relevant.

2. The community is aware of, and is not prepared to meet the cost of conservation for its own sake, which really amounts to preservation instead of wisely balanced use of resources, which is what conservation should be all about. Wisely balanced use of resources is consistent with the National Conservation Strategy, which has been endorsed by the Liberal Party.

3. Just as Port Phillip Bay is an aquatic playground as well as a commercial resource, most of the alpine country should be open to exploration and camping in the bush, as well as to productive activities such as grazing, timber-getting and mineral exploration and development. This does not preclude establishment of national parks of reasonable, manageable size around areas of specific scenic, historical or scientific interest.

4. A balanced mixture of uses is not possible where vast areas are proclaimed and regulated as traditional national parks, regardless of their productive potential and resources that might be required for future community needs.

5. Victoria's alpine area already fulfils the functions for which national parks are created without the expensive regulation, administration and loss of individual freedom involved in a statutory national park.

6. The Alps abound in wilderness and features of scenic grandeur which should be protected and cannot be compromised by existing commercial uses or further sensible, low-impact uses where these are appropriate. It should be borne in mind that wilderness ceases to be wilderness once man has intruded.

7. The champions of wholesale preservation display the mentality of the miser in seeking to hoard environmental resources under a blanket of red tape because "they are too good to be used".

8. Planning for its own sake is anathema. Planning should aim to benefit people, and should be carried out on a cost/benefit basis to achieve and protect a balance of sensible use with practical and achievable conservation aims. It should have due regard to maximising community benefit from integrated use of all resources available (physical, financial, human etc.)

9. In the past, governments have often been the victims of their advisers, who in turn, are sometimes victims of outdated or erroneous information, and the lobbying muscle of strident, professional preservationists.

10. Any policy for wholesale proclamation of national parks with no commercial use whatsoever, apart from limited recreation and tourism, precludes the wise utilisation of possible future discoveries of mineral resources, the future development of water resources for power or consumer uses, the harvesting of timber as a renewable resource, and mountain grazing, both for the protection of the bush and as a hedge against drought.

11. Such a policy would encourage a population explosion of pest or potential pest species such as dingoes, rabbits, wild horses, deer, feral pigs and others; and would provide vast nurseries for the propagation of plant pests, such as blackberry. Blackberry is already spreading in disastrous scale along gullies and water courses of much public land in Victoria's mountains. Wild pigs have penetrated the Victorian high country adjacent to the Mt Kosciusko National Park, are established in the Mansfield area, and have penetrated the Kinglake National Park virtually on the outskirts of Melbourne.

12. Such a policy has the potential of turning vast areas of living bushland into a huge magazine of explosively flammable material, compounding the danger, in a drought year, of wildfire and consequent destruction of vegetation, animals and animal habitat and disastrous erosion.

13. Such a policy poses a continual threat of wildfire, not only to neighbouring settlements and farmland, but to the whole of Victoria. The first recorded wildfire since European settlement was on "Black Thursday", 6th February 1851. More than 25% of the state was burnt. Wide areas of Gippsland and areas north-east of Melbourne were similarly devastated in February 1898. On "Black Friday", 13th January 1939, more than one million hectares were burnt with extensive property damage and the loss of 71 lives. The "Ash Wednesday" fires of 1983 burnt 486,000 hectares of forest and there was widespread loss of life and property. From the 14th to the 21st of January 1985, 153,000 hectares were burnt.

14. Reduced access because of closure of many existing roads and tracks would seriously impede the ability to control forest fires. Changed status of the land would bring heavy limitations on the method and extent of fire protection measures, such as fuel reduction burning, track construction and improvement.

15. Change in uses will eliminate the availability of skilled fire fighters and people with detailed knowledge of the geography, physical conditions and characteristics of the mountain terrain, vegetation, climatic peculiarities and access. This reserve of skilled fire fighters are those employed in the timber industry, mountain grazing and general forest work.

16. Where cattle were grazed each summer in areas that are now national park, the bush was kept comparatively free of any buildup of fuel. It was possible to walk or ride a horse anywhere and to see for miles across the mountain plains and down into the gullies. Once park-like grazing land has become a tangle of litter and scrub and fallen logs waiting for a couple of dry winters followed by drought summer to become a disaster.

17. Present and previous policies have failed because they have given effect to the heavily biased, narrow sectional philosophies of those who pursue radical conservation as a career, and have ignored the evidence on the ground and the practical experience of those who live much of their lives in the high country.

18. These policies have been overtaken by community enlightenment and community needs and preferences. Sensible conservation forms a common bond through the community in the 1980s, and the militancy of the career conservationist is no longer relevant. The State cannot afford the loss of access to resources involved in these policy objectives any more than it can afford to properly manage the public land involved.

19. The time is right to re-think our whole attitude to national parks, including existing ones, and to find a better way of providing for the management of public lands before it is too late. It is not an exaggeration to say that in seeking to preserve for posterity, we may well have endangered the very resources that we sought to protect.

20. If we can put aside bigotry and pre-conceived ideas, new options for effective management of public land resources are opened up. For instance, in some cases, it might be appropriate to institute a system of flexible boundaries so that today's stand of millable timber, or today's workable mineral deposit is taken into tomorrow's park and vice versa.

21. Machinery already exists for the management of public land outside the statutory parks for effective conservation and sensible, balanced use. The present regional system of administration can be easily mobilised for cost-effective management relevant to the community's needs; relevant to existing and potential commercial uses and to optimise effective conservation without needless regulation and restriction.

22. Community-based management would be able to draw on the experience, expertise and bushmanship of traditional users and conservationists, such as the Mountain Cattlemen, and of the timber industry, whose roads and tracks have created access for the community at large.

23. The aim of management should be to enable all Victorians, who so desire, the freedom to enjoy the mountains in their own way with optimum and sensible regulation, keeping bureaucratic intrusion to a minimum.

24. The high country environment needs to be protected against human thoughtlessness, and this should be achieved through education rather than regulation.

The current spate of expensive Government advertising to promote existing national parks will add to the pressures on the bush unless people are taught how to behave. The thrust of this advertising should be towards education, rather than aiming to boost tourist figures for annual report purposes. More and more people are going bush for recreation, and they need to be taught how to minimise the impact of their presence. With our population being largely urban based, people enter an unfamiliar environment when they go to the bush. They need to be educated to respect the bush and to treat it with the same reverence as those to whom it is both home and heritage.

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Opinions, poems, bush stories and photographs are all suitable.

Advertisements are also valuable!

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