



# Voice of the Mountains

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# Voice of the Mountains

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

No. 11 1988. ISSN 0816-9764

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# A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The past year has seen the retirement of Jim Commins from the office of President, a position he held for a remarkable ten years. Many thanks, Jim, from everyone concerned with the MCAV.

A successful testimonial dinner was held in September to recognise Jim's services to the Association. It was at that time that I first met Simon Cubit, secretary of the newly formed and remarkably successful Tasmanian Mountain Cattlemen's Association. I was later invited to go to Tasmania as a guest of the TMCA, during which time I was able to see some of their high country and meet the President, Judy Kilby, and a number of members who have problems similar to ours. Close co-operation between our two organisations is in the interests of us both.

Our survival will depend on strong unity within our Association and our ability to work closely with other groups and individuals who have a common interest with us. It is important that we show tolerance towards other user groups in the mountains and continue to promote the concept of multiple use without the huge national park extensions proposed by the government.

Finally, I must express my gratitude to all those people who have shown their support, whether by word or deed, and to all the Associate members, without whom we would not be where we are today.

*David L. Treasure*



Jack and Jim Treasure, riding towards The Twins from Freezeout, a short time after the 1939 fires.



In September 1987 Jim Commins retired after ten years as President of the Mountain Cattlemen. The article that follows was written by John Lahey of *The Age*, and goes a little way towards explaining, better than we ever could, the special type of person that Jim Commins is. *Voice of the Mountains* also acknowledges the kind permission of *The Age* in allowing reproduction of the article.

## THE BEST TRIBUTES COME FROM OLD FOES

It was a funny old party, the sort that city folk rarely get to attend. Members of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association came down to Melbourne the other night to say a sentimental farewell to their retiring president, Jim Commins, who is greatly loved. They are a dispersed people, so Melbourne was as easy to get to as anywhere.

Not a horse was in sight, not a stockwhip was cracked. In the formal setting of the Gardens Restaurant at Leonda, Hawthorn, which is a fairly posh place, the men were in suits, and the women in smart gowns. When you have seen cattlemen on countless musters, in their broad hats and long coats, their faces dirty and their boots caked with mud, it startles you to see them dressed any other way.

But, by heavens, we were in for a bigger shock, one that is hard to believe. Sitting all night next to Jim Commins at the top table was the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, Joan Kirner! This is like saying that sitting next to the Reverend Ian Paisley at his retirement party was the Pope (and you can take your pick about who's who.)

Joan Kirner, the implacable enemy, was laughing and chatting and waving hello, and when the speechmakers began telling us what a good bloke Jim Commins was because of the way he stood up to the State Government, this did not upset Mrs Kirner one bit.

Nor did it upset two other guests, whose presence was also a shock. Sitting within sight of Jim and Joan were Evan Walker and Rod McKenzie, two former conservation ministers. Between these three politicians and the cattlemen, a million angry words have flown. Joan Kirner, Evan

Walker and Rod McKenzie, who are dedicated to creating an alpine national park that the cattlemen say would ruin them, had come to honour the enemy's leader.

This fight between the cattlemen and the conservation forces is not ordinary. It has been long, bitter and spectacular. It has led, among other things, to the famous mass horseride down Bourke Street to the steps of Parliament House in 1984, and the the cattlemen's intervention in the Nunawading byelection in 1985.



JIM COMMINS



That led to accusations that cattlemen misled voters. At this point, the cattlemen's executive officer, Graeme Stoney, tried unsuccessfully to defend them at the bar of the upper house. Remember those stirring days? The alpine fight is not over. Both sides know it is about to break out again.

This is what made Mrs Kirner's presence at the party such a surprise. I said: "What on earth are you doing here?" and she replied that she got on well with the cattlemen and respected Jim Commins. Evan Walker and Rod McKenzie, who once had a four-day ride with the cattlemen over the alps, said something similar. They were invited to Jim's farewell, so they came.

Well look, it was a great, good natured night of stories and reminiscences, and I wish you could have seen the last act of the entertainment, when Don Kneebone, the mountain poet, sang to us. He sang 'Waltzing Matilda'. Backwards. The organisers were wise to put Don Kneebone on last. His act is hard to top.

In the earlier part of the night, we had some speeches straight from the heart, about the way hardship had welded the mountain people together and how they did not refuse anyone hospitality. Tradition, tradition! The word thundered like hoofbeats.

All good stuff. We heard about sports meetings which lasted a day but took a week's ride through the bush to reach. When visitors came for horse events, the girls were given the beds and the young men slept under the willows by the river. "Times have changed," said Clive Hodge, of Valencia Creek. "Everyone bunks in together now."

Mostly the talk was of Jim Commins, 64, and I hope you don't mind if I tell you a bit about him. He was the mountain people's president for 10 years and was associated with every big event of their struggle to halt the national park. He is from Ensay, and his ancestors were 1850s Gippsland pioneers.

This does not make him notable, but his lifetime of service to his own small town does. He seems to have been in everything: school council,

swimming pool committee, bush nursing centre, rural fire brigade, Cattle Council of Australia ...


He played football until he was 45. It is a pleasure to list these things (there are many more) because he is a distinctive type of rural Australian who rarely becomes honoured or even talked about. There are many men in the bush like Jim. Take these people away from their towns, and things begin to wither. Suddenly, you don't have a bush nursing centre or a swimming pool. Perhaps the reason Jim played football until he was 45 is that it kept the team intact.

Finally, Mrs Kirner rose to address her old adversary. She said: "I want to thank you for your willingness to talk through an issue, to stay firm on your principles, but most of all to deliver, or not to deliver what you said you would not deliver, with an utter sense of integrity. And you don't get that too often in politics, and when you do get it, it is really appreciated."

This brought applause from the audience, who had been wondering all night what the foe was thinking. There was no way, however, that Mrs Kirner was going to offer any compromise.

"The mountain cattlemen have their traditions," she said. "What is not often recognised is that the Labor Party has its traditions. Ben Chifley created a workman's base and the vision of the light on the hill. Jim Commins represents the workman's base of other people and his own particular light on the hill. There is room for the two traditions. We believe the mountain cattlemen's tradition can fit within the national park."

It sounds like an olive branch. The prelude to everyone living happily together. But Mrs Kirner's words do not change government direction one centimetre. She has said in the past that in creating the park, the Labor Party is adding only one per cent of land to the four per cent that the Liberals proposed to take from the top of the mountains. The Government view is that cattlemen can still graze their herds in summer.

Jim made a good speech, everyone had a good night and everything is exactly as it was. But isn't it nice to see warring Australians behaving to each other with such courtesy? 

# MEMBERS AND ASSOCIATES

## A REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

JUNE 1986 to DECEMBER 1987

(As seen from the Central Office.)

Over the past two years there has been no pause in the Cattlemen's stand against the proposed Alpine Parks legislation, and it appears there will be no rest in the immediate future.

### ALPINE NATIONAL PARKS BILL

At a meeting in the Minister's office, at her request (March 1986), the Minister stated that she was meeting all groups interested in the Alpine Park issue to seek some compromise to allow the legislation to proceed. The representatives of the Mountain Cattlemen, Jim Commins and Graeme Stoney, told the Minister that no compromise on the legislation was possible. The Minister stated that she had no intention of introducing the legislation if it was doomed to failure.

One month later, in April 1986, the Alpine National Parks Bill, which had been languishing in the Upper House for many months, was brought on for debate. The Bill was rejected 20 to 21 on party lines. During the debate Rosemary Varty (member for Nunawading Province) spoke at length on the events surrounding Nunawading and the implications for the fate of the Bill. Strong speakers against the Bill included David Evans and Bruce Reid. An interesting comment was made by Mark Birrell in his speech regarding the change of leadership of the Australian Conservation Foundation, where Dr Mosley no longer holds his former position. Mark Birrell's comments justify the stand the Mountain Cattlemen and Associates have made over the past three years against extreme conservation and the efforts they have made in drawing public attention to the situation.

The Hon. M. A. Birrell was reported in *Hansard* for 24 April 1986 as saying ....

*The federation's (sic) stance on this issue is flawed for the reasons that I have expressed in the debate. However it is clear that it has taken its stance because the once respected Australian Conservation Foundation has been taken over by an influx of extremist elements and can no longer claim to be a broadly based conservation group. As a former member of the ACF, who resigned because of the fact that it had been taken over by a group that did not have its better interests at heart, I certainly regret the fact that there is no longer an organization that can claim to represent Australians in talking about genuine conservation issues as against those that are clearly politically motivated. Over the past 24 months the federation (sic) has been infiltrated by a motley collection of political activists who wish to use the name of the Australian Conservation Federation (sic) for their own narrow, cynical purposes. The sacking of the federation's (sic) Director, Dr Geoff Mosley, is but one example of the fact that he was not left wing enough and, therefore, they had to get rid of him. The vote in favour of getting rid of Geoff Mosley was an indication of who now controls the Australian Conservation Federation (sic), and it is clearly not the grassroots, it is a politically-inspired group that will misuse the resources and insult the heritage of the federation....*

The Alpine National Parks Bill is still on the Notice Paper in the Legislative Council .... just waiting.



## ALPINE AREA PLANNING PROPOSALS - A BASIS FOR MANAGEMENT

In mid 1987 the Planning Proposals for the Alpine area's future management were released by the Planning team for public comment. The Mountain Cattlemen's Association has put in a lengthy and detailed submission stating its position, and many associate members also put forward submissions stating their objections to the proposals. The main area of concern relates to the clear intention of the Government to ignore the Parliament of Victoria and to seek to establish a de facto Alpine National Park, contiguous with the Parks in New South Wales, and with a National Parks style of management. In 1986 all shires adjoining the Alpine Area voted most strongly to oppose the proposed contiguous Alpine National Park, and a delegation from the shires met with the Government on the issue.

The *Basis for Management* document clearly stated in the foreword that it was Government policy to have the Alpine Area proclaimed as National Park and that the funding for the preparation of the proposals came from the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service. It was also stated that an *agreement has been reached between the State and Federal authorities to develop a co-operative and co-ordinated approach to management of the Australian Alps National Parks.*

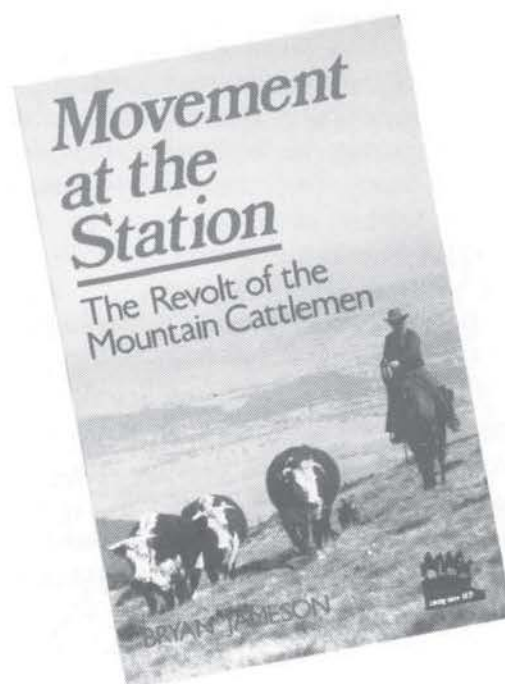
Clearly the Victorian Government is seeking to by-pass the decision of the Victorian Parliament not to establish a Victorian Alpine National Park, and is attempting to create it by regulation.

A National Park style management regime imposes severely restrictive regulations which have an impact on the recreational, social, economic and resource usage of this area. The Mountain Cattlemen's Association considers that while tight regulation may be suitable for small sections of the Alps, the use of the wider Alpine Area needs to be encouraged and developed and that it could become a major Australian tourist and diverse industry area. The Mountain Cattlemen's Association considers that these matters need careful examination in order to ensure that the local and wider communities are not too seriously inhibited in their future use of this area.

The Alpine Area is a national asset. It is not the exclusive preserve of conservationist bureaucrats. There needs to be a much greater input by other people with long experience with the sociology, economics and environment of the area, including local government, the tourist industry and other industries which have worked in and around the area for many years. It is accepted that some updating of management is necessary, but not to the extent of imposing rigid and restrictive regulations over the whole Alpine area. Is a de facto Alpine National Park to be created by default and deception?

In July 1987 the Minister announced that an Alpine Advisory Committee had been formed to consider the submissions put forward and in her opening address to the Committee stated that she required it to adopt as guidelines the recommendations of the Land Conservation Council. Members of the Committee are: Mr Bernie Evans (Convenor), Wodonga, Regional Manager, Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands for the North East Region; Dr J. Bowler, Melbourne, Assistant Director, Museum of Victoria; Mr Jim Commins, Ensay; Cr Mary Howson, Maffra; Mr Ron Moon, Chelsea; Cr Ian Roper, Tawonga; Mr Andrew Showers, Porpunkah; Mr John Siseman, Melbourne; Dr Graham Wills-Johnson, VNPA.

At the time of going to press, the Committee has met twice.





## GRAZING FEES

The ongoing negotiations between the Cattlemen and officers of the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands is continuing.

Jim Commins wrote, in Newsletter 10, May 1987.

*After some years during which several ill-considered and unsatisfactory attempts were made by Government to restructure rental rates for mountain grazing, we are now hopeful that the matter will soon be resolved on reasonable terms. An investigating panel of three men has been appointed by the minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands to examine and make recommendations for fair grazing rental for all Crown Land. There has been much dissatisfaction in the recent past with Government charges for not only mountain grazing runs, but also many unused roadways and river frontages, for which grazing licences have been held by adjoining landowners. The Pricing Panel which is comprised of one representative from each of the Victorian Farmers' Federation, the Rural Finance Commission and the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands has been charged with the task of making value guidelines for all of the above areas of Crown Land grazing. I suspect that they are finding it all quite a daunting exercise. Much time has been spent preparing notes on the unique circumstances of mountain grazing for consideration by the Pricing Panel. Last month (April 1987), the three man investigating panel made a three-day visit to the mountains and met members of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association rental committee who discussed the problems and escorted them by road vehicles up the Buckland Valley, over Mount Hothan to Omeo, and around a large section of the Omeo district. On the third day a helicopter was provided by the Department and a very extensive inspection was made from the air which took about six hours flying time. Even that amount of flying time was insufficient to cover all the Alpine area, but there would be no doubt that the Pricing Panel would*

*now have a much better appreciation of the vastness and the exceptional difficulties associated with grazing management there.*

*There has been some further communication, and I expect that recommendations upon which the future of mountain grazing in Victoria very much depends, will soon be made.*

The Pricing Panel report was presented in draft form in December 1987, to date there are still a number of issues to be agreed between the Department and the Mountain Cattlemen's Association.

## ROYAL MELBOURNE SHOW 1986 and 1987

In September 1986 the Mountain Cattlemen were asked by the Royal Agricultural Show Committee to demonstrate part of the craft of the mountain grazing industry by driving a small mob of cattle down Swanston Street as part of the Royal Show parade. After some consideration to potential pitfalls, the final decision on the drive was given to the Mansfield Branch and the Lovick family. After a practice "run" through Mansfield was successful, Mansfield Branch decided to go ahead with the drive as it was felt important to keep the Mountain Cattlemen before the public in a non-political way, and the drive offered a golden opportunity to be part of the Melbourne scene again. The Parade itself was a wonderful success for the Cattlemen, and in particular for Jack Lovick and the members of the Mansfield Branch and other Branches who lent a hand. The Mountain Cattlemen entry in the Parade won the blue ribbon for the best animal display.

Cattlemen and Associates manned a shop at the Show which sold windcheaters, t shirts, posters, stickers and the like, and Cattlemen were present, happy to answer questions from the public on the issues relating to mountain grazing and the effects of the proposed Alpine Park legislation. The shop was manned again during the 1987 Show. It is on these occasions that the worth of the Associate members can be seen, and the Cattlemen are sincere in their gratitude for the support and assistance they receive from the Associate membership.



## **SHEEPYARD FLAT GET TOGETHER 1987**

The 1987 Get Together was held in February 1987 at Sheepyard Flat, out from Mansfield, and was another tremendous success for the Association. Congratulations to the Mansfield Branch and Associate members who helped with the massive organization which made the weekend the success it was. Over 2,600 people attended the weekend. The Cattlemen's Cup was a thriller as usual and won by Ken Connley after the judge found that Chris Stoney, first over the line, did not have enough water in his billy. A highlight of the weekend was the launching of the book *Movement at the Station*, written by Bryan Jameson and launched by Professor Geoffrey Blainey. Professor Blainey was presented with a Cattlemen's hat, and a blue sash as a "first for book launching". Lazy Harry provided the music for the dancing on Saturday night, and was not permitted to stop playing until the early hours of Sunday morning.

Apart from the Mansfield Branch which had the Get Together running like a well-oiled machine, thanks must also go to Dr Richard Heath who had a first aid post operating over the weekend from the Friday afternoon until the Sunday evening. Apart from attending a serious accident on the Friday afternoon he also treated a large number of people for conditions from small miseries to large accidents. His dedication and assistance was most gratefully appreciated. Thanks go also to all those who helped man the stall. Sales made a record that weekend!

## **THE MAN FROM SNOWY RIVER STAMP**

On 24 June 1987 Australia Post launched another in its series of stamps on Australian folk lore. Designed by Connell Lee, the five stamp strip featured scenes from Banjo Patterson's epic poem "The Man from Snowy River". Considerable interest was aroused by special launchings, and in particular, at Orbost, this included a mounted procession by Cattlemen. Other post offices mounted displays, and at one staff members were sighted in Mountain Cattlemen windcheaters. Again, it was a pleasure to see the Cattlemen's heritage recognised.

## **CENTRAL HIGHLANDS BY-ELECTION MARCH 1987**

The Central Highlands by-election held on 21 March 1987 loomed as a threat just as dangerous as Nunawading in 1985. The Association took a lower profile in Central Highlands than at Nunawading, and took half page advertisements in several key newspapers throughout the electorate in the week preceding polling day. The Association entered the campaign because the issues at stake were identical to those that brought the Cattlemen into Nunawading. Shortly before the by-election the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands had told the President and Executive Officer that she would be re-introducing to Parliament the Alpine National Parks Bill which the Legislative Council had rejected in April 1986. The size of the Central Highlands Province made it impractical for the Cattlemen to stage a mounted demonstration, and their case was put through the local papers. The Liberal candidate, Mrs Marie Tehan, won the Upper House seat, thus ensuring the balance in that house.

## **CASTLEBURN**

**15th ANNUAL**

## **HEREFORD BULL SALE**

**Wednesday, June 8th, 1988**

Bairnsdale Municipal Saleyards  
(Undercover Seating)

**OFFERING 40 BULLS**

**A. J. (Jim) Treasure's herd won the Victorian  
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 BUSH DINNER DANCE - JULY 1987

One of the highlights of the year was the Bush Dinner Dance held on Saturday, 11 July 1987 at Centenary Hall, Royal Showgrounds, and organized by Anne and Keith Whittam and their band of dedicated Associate members. It was a wow of a night, after a rather shakey start with very slow ticket sales. Finally, some 700 tickets were sold and the night kicked off to become a great success. The Cobbers provided the music, and the dinner was a spit roast with all the trimmings, beautifully and professionally presented by The Spit Roast Company. A number of supporters provided prizes for a raffle, which allowed many people to win a prize. The night also co-incided with Rusty Connley's 50th birthday, and he was presented with a surprise birthday cake. The dance raised a tidy sum of money in support of the Mountain Cattlemen, and they take this opportunity to sincerely thank all those who worked so hard to make the night such a success.



Sue Clay on the steps of Parliament House with copies of the petition.

### THE CLAY FAMILY PETITION

During June 1987 Sue and Russell Clay from Moorooduc rode across the High Plains and instantly fell in love with the area. They heard of the plight of the Mountain Cattlemen and, recognising its seriousness, went home determined to do something. This finally resulted in the compilation of a massive petition that was presented to Jim Plowman, the Shadow Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, on 16 September 1987. The dedication of the Clays to the cause of the Cattlemen is a wonderful example of the ability of people to have a message that they believe in heard.

### FLORA AND FAUNA CONSERVATION GUARANTEE LEGISLATION

This proposed legislation is causing the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria, amongst other groups, serious concern. The Mountain Cattlemen's Association considers that conservationist interests have been involved in the development of the Bill, but to date it does not appear that those groups in the community who are likely to be affected have made any input. When the full consequences of the Bill are realised by groups such as developers, miners, farmers and other landholders, there will be widespread concern expressed about the proposal. One area of concern is that under the proposed legislation any individual may seek to have a species protected by an Interim Conservation Order, and there are fears that this could release a flood of nominations, and that some could be frivolous. The Association believes that the Government needs the power to protect a truly endangered species, such as the Eltham butterfly, but has also expressed concern that the same protections provided for private landholders do not extend to those who lease public land. It is also concerned that traditional and conventional land practices should be protected.

At this stage the Bill has been formally deferred and the Minister proposes to hold meetings around the state to discuss the proposals. Information regarding the proposed legislation can be obtained from the Regional Managers of the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands.



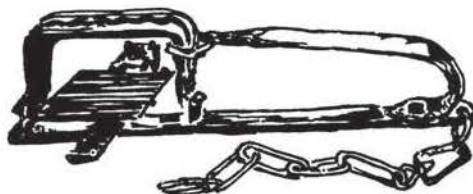
## TESTIMONIAL DINNER TO FAREWELL JIM COMMINS

On 18 September 1987, after ten years in that post, Jim Commins retired as President of the Association. On the evening of 17 September, 120 members, associate members and guests attended a dinner at Leonda in Melbourne to thank him for his dedication and service to the Association. It was a successful and happy night. Amongst the guests was the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, who spoke of Jim's willingness to talk through the issues, to stay firm on his principles, to deliver what he said he would deliver, and not deliver what he said he would not, with an utter sense of integrity. Mrs Kirner noted that she did not see

that often in politics, and when she did it was most sincerely appreciated.

There were many speeches, Clive Hodge reminisced about the "good old days", and Don Kneebone had the audience spellbound with his recitation of two of his own poems, and amazed and delighted everyone by singing *Waltzing Matilda* backwards! Jim was presented with a beautiful painting of cattle in the High Country painted by John Duncan Firth, and Graeme Stoney presented Jim with a brass plated rabbit trap in acknowledgment of Jim's lifetime battle with the bunnies.

It was a delightful evening. Jim might have retired as President of the Association but it will not lose him. He stays on as Vice President and a member of the Executive.



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## ANNUAL MEETING - SEPTEMBER 1987

The Annual Meeting of the Association was held on Friday 18 September 1987 at the Victorian Farmers' Federation Board Room, and was well attended by members and Associate members. The President, Jim Commins, presented his 10th Annual Report in which he stated that the Association had greatly improved the public understanding of mountain grazing by its higher public profile and by providing the detailed information required by school children and those in the general community who expressed the desire to learn more about Victoria's Mountain Cattle-men and what they represented both in terms of heritage and the practical use of the high country. He thanked all those who had worked with him in the past and expressed the hope that the Association would go on to prove and demonstrate that well managed cattle, far from being merely tolerable, are a very valuable asset to help preserve our natural mountain environment.

The following office bearers were elected for the year 1987 - 1988: President: David Treasure, Senior Vice President: Jim Commins, 2nd Vice President: Graham Connley, 3rd Vice President: Graeme Stoney, Executive Officer: Graeme Stoney, Marketing Officer: Ross Brown, Secretary/Treasurer: Mrs Sue Silvers, Assistant Secretary: Mrs Ann Whittam, Special Projects Officer: Lyle McCready.

## TASMANIAN MOUNTAIN CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION

When we think of Mountain Cattlemen we generally picture in our minds men of the high country of New South Wales and Victoria. Popular literature and film have tended to support this view. This position obscures the fact, however, that Tasmania, the second oldest state, has long and rich traditions of Mountain Cattlemen. The focus of the mountain cattlemen in Tasmania has generally centred on the Central Plateau, that extensive mountain plateau in central Tasmania. As early as the 1820s free ranging cattle grazed on its lower, southern slopes. From the 1840s large blocks of




land fronting onto the Ouse, Shannon and Pine Rivers were purchased or otherwise acquired as grazing runs and large areas to the north and west leased. In common with similar runs elsewhere, cattle were driven up to the high country in the spring and returned in the autumn. By the turn of the century, 6,000 cattle summered on the plateau amid the myriad lakes and tarns. The Tasmanian Mountain Cattlemen's Association was formed in 1986 from the members of two to three mountain families who drove cattle to the Mersey Valley. It was formed for two reasons, firstly there were threats to acquire Lees Paddocks, one of the freehold runs, and secondly, the Bi-centennial presented the opportunity to hold an event to attract public attention to its cause and to create an awareness of the traditions of the mountain cattlemen in that state. Since its formation it has attracted wide support from mountain men in other areas of Tasmania, from rural folk as well as those from the cities.

The Tasmanian Mountain Cattlemen's Association's strategies are based on the premise that the mountain men are the living embodiment of a uniquely Australian tradition,

and that of the many competing uses of the high country, grazing is both environmentally soft and responsible. It is seeking to ensure that existing free and leasehold runs are safe. It is also attempting to undo some of the restrictive practices which have denied it access to mountain areas. The TMCA recognises that it can never hope to recreate the past, it does however insist on having a strong role in the high country land management in the future.

The Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria has been able to assist the Tassie Cattlemen in some aspects of organization and structure, and our President, David Treasure, has been a guest of the Tassie Cattlemen, and has addressed a public meeting in Tasmania. We wish them good luck in their bicentennial cattle drive and Get Together, which will be attended by representatives of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria.

In the meantime, although the Barmah Cattlemen now have to contend with a proclaimed National Park, their grazing rights remain at this stage. 



# PENEPLAIN HEREFORDS

20th Annual Sale

Tuesday, April 29, 1986

Agents:

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DALGETY FARMERS LIMITED INCORPORATED IN VICTORIA  
Melbourne, Heyfield and Branches

OFFERING: 35 Registered Bulls, 2 years.

70 Commercial Heifers, 2 years,  
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**Manager:**

Terry Davies (051) 99 2594

*We thank purchasers, losing bidders and agents for their continued support.  
Visitors always welcome.*



# MOVEMENT AT THE STATION

In 1939, Victoria was devastated by fires, and the resultant Royal Commission placed the blame on the cattlemen, In those days there were more of them than today, but they lacked co-ordination and the modern aides to communication that the modern cattlemen have utilised to such good effect to finally rally and, almost fifty years after that shameful scapegoating, cry "unfair".

Today the Mountain Cattlemen, having fought and won several battles in the war to preserve their heritage and the high country for all future Victorians, are still fighting to clear their name and to have their right for a say in the future management of the alps recognised.

Bryan Jameson's book *Movement at the Station* (published by Collins, RRP \$16.95) is another attempt to tell the story of the cattlemen, and is a useful overview of the problems they have faced in having their message heard.


The book was launched at the 1987 Gathering at Sheepyard Flat, near Mansfield, by Prof. Geoffrey Blainey. Comments that he made in speaking to those gathered there fully endorsed the stand by the cattlemen. "A few years ago TAA, trying to launch a new flight, erected hoardings "Breakfast in Melbourne, Lunch in Darwin". Someone wrote on the bottom "luggage in Perth".



You couldn't say that of this organisation. Last night was one of the greatest spectacles of my lifetime. This wonderful natural amphitheatre, equivalent of 4 to 5 MCGs and many times more beautiful, filled with people, and Lazy Harry, with the horses in the background and the light on the Manna Gums and White Gums was inspiring. Occasionally over the high ridges the clouds cleared and you could see the stars shining.

I was moved at the skill of the Mountain Cattlemen in organising and conducting their campaign. My mother was born at Buchan South and her sister was born at Corryong, so my family come from the perimeter of the High Country. You couldn't possibly realise until you came here how difficult the country in which the Mountain Cattlemen live is to settle. ... Here they are, only 150 families, so few and so far apart. It was no surprise that it was not until the 1960s they conquered distance to organise a fighting force ... I am proud to launch this book. It celebrates a victory of the cattlemen's tradition of bushmanship and proud horsemen, an age old tradition, as old as Victoria itself, of driving cattle from the low country to the high country in summer, and on the eve of summer, for winter, bringing them down again. ... The case for the cattlemen continuing to use the High Plains is powerful, and justice has not been done by what has been put before the public. ... This is a very influential book, recording the achievement of an important victory. It tells of a way of life and a tradition that we all hope will be preserved."

Professor Blainey then spoke on the lack of recognition by city dwellers of the importance of the rural income to the economy of Australia, indicating that he believed Australia would not be in its economic mess today if the rural sector was supported.

The debate on the future of the High Country is far from over. *Movement at the Station*, although an important contribution, is but one of many steps cattlemen and their supporters will have to take to ensure that the high country is preserved for all. For those, and I hope they be many, I ask them to read the book, and consider it's contents, so that a sensible and informed stand can be taken as the case for the alps and the cattlemen continues to be advanced.  Linda Barraclough

## *The Quiet Bush Man*

Herefords sleek, fat and shining,  
Instantly transport me back,  
To the days of my youth and childhood,  
And a house at the end of a track.

The old wicker chair, on the back porch,  
The sweat stained felt hat by the door,  
An old dog dreaming in shadow,  
By his loved master's feet, on the floor.

A ride in the ute, over paddocks,  
In the dust and the heat of the day,  
The long drawn out S-A-L-T by the salt log,  
Brought the cattle from far and away.

A crude hut in a far paddock,  
Was home while the wild bush was cleared,  
The rabbits and trees, were trapped and cut down,  
To complete it took sixty long years.

In a matter of weeks, now that same land,  
Could be bulldozed and sown down to grass,  
The long years of this man's hard labour,  
Have become a thing of the past.

With his cattle he once rode the mountains,  
His stock whip rang clear as a bell,  
As the cattle came down for the winter,  
To home pastures, before the snow fell.

The old way of life is now fading,  
The heritage built over time,  
The greenies and land conservationists,  
Have made this tradition a crime.

Under the shade of the sallies,  
On the brow of a grass covered hill,  
Stands a quiet bush man, with faded blue eyes,  
My mind's eye remembers him still.

This old man has gone to his Maker,  
His life work is over and done,  
But his spirit still bides with the cattle,  
"God's own country" remembers her son.

When the wind whispers low, in the gum trees,  
And the mountains are softened by haze,  
The spirits of all the old bush men,  
Mourn the passing of all the old ways.

This life was never my life,  
Except, for a few weeks each year,  
But memories of sleek beasts and snow gums,  
Return and return, crystal clear.

So all you city born people,  
Whose memories burn ever bright,  
Stand up by your mountain bred brothers,  
And support in their heritage fight.

Think of the next generations,  
So they can experience, like you,  
The droving of high country cattle,  
It's part of their heritage too!

*Suzanne Howard*



Suzanne wrote this poem in memory of her uncle Claude Pendergast, who died in 1980. He was the owner of Omeo Homestead at Benambra, and his ancestors were the original settlers in the area.

The yards at Holms Plain



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

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# THE GUYS OF CROOKED RIVER

*Cath Noble*

For many years the Guy family have been associated with high country grazing around Dargo and Crooked River. The family are descended from Edward Remmington "Yorkey" Guy who was seventeen years old when he arrived in Melbourne aboard the Marco Polo in 1853. He married Elizabeth Jane Wilson, a Scottish lass, at Port Albert in 1860, and their first child was born at Waterford a short time later.

Yorkey and his wife had eleven children, although not all survived to adulthood. Their first child was George Atack, then Sarah Ann (Mrs Tom Daniels), twins Elizabeth (who died at birth) and William (who married Martha Rogers), Edward Remmington (who died aged 12), Mary (who died as an infant), Elizabeth Jane (Mrs Alex Farquhar), Alexander (married Catherine Armstrong nee Connolly), Isabella (Mrs William Charles Balmer), Walter (married Dorothy Gardiner) and Patrick.



Alexander Guy

Yorkey and his family were settled in Talbotville by 1868, where he was mining and Elizabeth was running a boarding house cum sly grog shop and acting as the local midwife. He died in 1910 at Talbotville, and is buried in the cemetery there with his sons Patrick and Edward jr. Elizabeth

moved to Bairnsdale about the time of the First World War, and was buried in the Bairnsdale cemetery in 1919.

Yorkey's son Alex became the local mail contractor, taking the mail from Talbotville to Dargo, going down the Crooked River, then along the bridge track, parts of which can still be seen today, into Dargo. The run was twice a week, down one day and back the next. He also had the contract to the Dargo High Plains, up Jungle Creek to Grant and then along the route of the present road to the Treasure family home and to the four or five miners at the Golden Ridge mine and at Shepherd's Plain.

The postmistress at Dargo was Catherine Armstrong, the daughter of Dennis and Margaret Connolly. Margaret was a Scott of Delvine, near Bairnsdale, and Catherine's sister, Ellen, was the first white child born at Dargo. Dennis ran cattle in the Dargo area, where he also had a hotel on part of the original McMillan station. The smokehouse from that hotel still stands today at Cowra. Catherine married Albert Armstrong, and they had a son, Frederick, who was born in 1889. Albert drowned crossing the Murray River with horses, and Alex Guy later married his widow.

Alex and Catherine had eight children, Ned, Margaret (Mrs Randall), Alice (Mrs Traill), Nellie (Mrs Gibbs), Arthur, John (Jack), Alexander (Ginty) and Ernie. The family settled on Glen Lee in Crooked River, a property that remains in the family today. The Guy children rode their horses to school, although it was sometimes quicker to walk the one and a half miles than to chase and catch their mounts. The school was also attended by the Conway, Spaul, Kingwell and Higgins children from Monday to Thursday. The teacher then moved on to Talbotville, where he taught the Culhanes, Costellos and William Guy's children on the Friday and Saturday. Despite this, Arthur and Jack missed school on occasion, being employed instead in running the mail for their father. Arthur, in particular, also remembers that they would pick up small quantities of gold one miner, Chambers, would be sending to Albert Stout at the Talbotville Post Office. Stout was married to Martha, William Guy's widow.



In the early 1900s Alex selected a flat known as Duffy's, downstream from Glen Lee. The flat was cleared, mainly by Ned, Arthur and Jack. Horse teams were used to prepare the ground for crops of peas and maize for the pigs, and heaven help the boys if the "old man" caught them riding instead of walking behind the harrows. Alex, with the help of his family, raised two to three hundred pigs a year at Glen Lee, breeding many, but also buying from the Culhane and Conway families. The pigs were walked to Fernbank and sent by train to be sold by Logans in Melbourne, where Norman Chester worked. The Culhane, Conway, Spaul and Kingwell families all sent pigs in the same mob, up to a hundred at a time. Ned Conway often went with one of the Guy boys behind the mob.



Arthur Guy

Alex also fattened bullocks that were walked to Fernbank to be trucked to Melbourne. He ran cattle in the bush, up the Crooked River and in other areas including the Moroka, Basalt and Ti Tree, where he had a lease for nearly three years before he purchased Wonnangatta Station. The Coleman family then took over the of Ti Tree for a number of years, but Jack Guy reobtained it after Wonnangatta was sold, and still held it at the time of his death. Alex also ran cattle at Mount Euan and Gows Plain. In 1923 he became an Avon

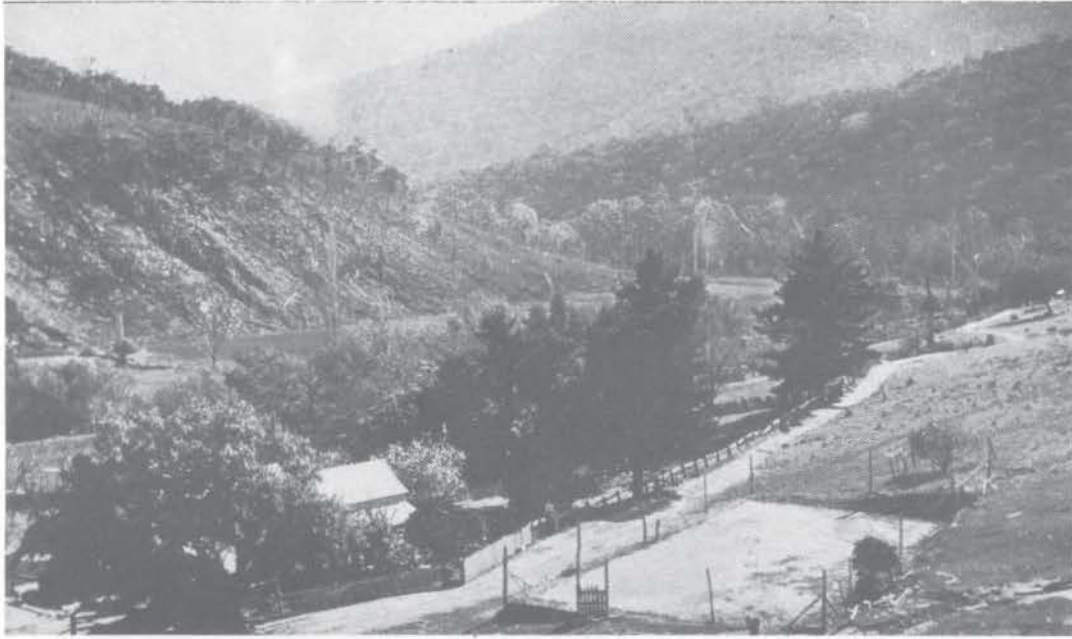


Jack Guy

Shire Councillor, a position he held until 1948, occupying the office of president on two occasions.

In 1934 Alex and his sons, Ned, Arthur and Jack purchased the Wonnangatta Station block of 1,100 acres and the 320 acres freehold on the Snowy Plains at Bryces Gorge, from John Rennie and John Hoban from Alexandra. They also took over the grazing leases that ranged from Mount Clear, King Billy, Mount Howitt and the Snowy Plains to the airstrip, about 100,000 acres. The station was stocked with 900 head, mainly fresian cross and herefords, and about 40 horses. Overall they ran about 1,800 head on the station and accompanying leases, and three to four hundred calves were branded yearly in the early days. These calves were weaned on the Howitt Plains, and then walked to the station flats, from where some were taken out to the Crooked River. The first mob of cattle that were sold from the station were walked, via Waterford and Stockdale, to Maffra. They were sold there by A. McLean & Co for seven pounds (fourteen dollars) a head. In later years the cattle were walked via Licola to be sold at the Heyfield autumn sales. Two or three weeks later, depending on the weather, the men would return to the High Country to collect the cows. Some of the breeders were taken down to the station where feed had been saved for the winter, and others were taken to family properties at Maffra and Heyfield.





Glen Lee, Alexander Guy's home at Crooked River.

Harry Price appeared at Wonnangatta Station one evening and stayed, working for Alex, rarely leaving the place in a fifteen year period. When he did he rode on his Malvern Star bicycle. Arthur and Jack had to pack in wet acid radio batteries for him, and every copy of the Age newspaper when they went in to check cattle. Later, to their relief, Harry developed his own Conglomerate Creek Hydro Electric Scheme. Harry spent his time replacing fences, extending the yards, trapping rabbits and grubbing briars. Many of the fences on the Howitt and Snowy Plains are a silent tribute to his work. Lennie Campbell, Denny Connolly, Jack Guy and Harry built the hut that bears the Guy name in 1940. A couple of months after Alex's death in 1949, Harry left Wonnangatta. He went to the Gibbs family at Crooked River, where he stayed until the time of his death in July 1984.

In their early days of the station ownership there were few bushwalkers who ventured into the area. The easiest route was from Myrtleford, but a few came across the Bennison, often with a guide. Arthur and Jack started carrying the heavier gear, such as the food and tents, by packhorse for the walkers. Sometimes they were asked to leave boxes of food at pre-arranged dumps, usually a hut, but more often the walkers, in groups of up to twenty, accompanied the packhorses. These trips opened up a lot of country new to the then-young brothers. They took parties over the Moroka, Mount Wellington, and to Tarli Karng, from St Bernard across the Barry Range to Wonnangatta,

and over Howitt to Merrijig. The Barry Mountains were a long and hard trip for the bushwalkers, and Arthur was made a Barry Mountaineer, a high honour amongst the walkers. Jack also helped Bill Gillio, another bushman, with these trips, known then as the Skyline Tours.

Alex and Catherine later made Waterford their permanent home. Catherine died in July 1946 at the age of 83, and was buried in the Dargo cemetery. Alex died three years later at the age of 79, and was buried with his wife. In 1970 Arthur and Jack sold Wonnangatta, Bryces paddock and some land at Glenmaggie to Bob Gilder of Glenfalloch. Ned Guy sold his Dargo interests when he married Gladys Saunders, and they moved to the Thorpedale area in the 1930s. He became a councillor and president of the Shire of Narracan, and died there in 1963. Maggie married Les Sprague and lived in Melbourne for a time. She later married Tom Randall and returned to Glen Lee. Alice, who married Bill Traill, died in 1981. Nellie, who married the local mailman, Walter Gibbs, still lives at Crooked River, where she ran the family farm after her husband's death. Arthur married Agnes Millar, and although he no longer has any cattle there, he still enjoys his trips into the bush. Jack married Betty Taylor, and lived at Waterford until his death in 1984. Alexander, or "Ginty" as he was more affectionately known, lived with his family at Crooked River until his death in 1985.



Cath Noble is the daughter of Arthur Guy.



## *Three Cobbers*

We are just three old stagers whose innings' near closed,  
My trusty horse and my old dog and I,  
'Twas anyone's guess which one would leave first  
And wait for the others up there in the sky.

'Tis chill and it's lonely out there on the hill,  
Where I laid my old horse to his well-earned last rest.  
I had found him that morn' at the end of life's trail,  
Where the clover blooms white on the place he loved best.

We'll not find it easy the old dog and I  
Without our old friend there, but we'll understand  
That somewhere he's watching to see how we go  
And wishing he's there just to give us a hand.

My old dog is deaf and he's stiff and near blind  
And slowly he moves when I send him about  
And though I am weary and stiff just like he  
I think I might just see the old fellow out.

There'll be not much to live for with both of them gone  
For friends don't come easy not true like they are  
Somewhere far away a faint barking calls me  
To join my two cobbers up there 'midst the stars.

Then together we'll ride God's high country above  
Where the ghostly herds graze on those fields evergreen  
And we'll cut out God's herd from the devil's crook mob  
Then bring them home safe from where e're they have been.

And my old horse will gallop then turn in his tracks  
As he brings back a straggler for all he is worth  
And my old dog will bark and he'll caper about  
As he did in his young days back down there on earth.

And we'll never get weary or lathered with sweat,  
As we muster the herds in that limitless sky  
And happy we'll be there with peace evermore  
For my trusty old horse, my old dog and I.

*Wilbur Olsen*





### *Norman Fullerton Chester*

The late Norman Fullerton Chester was born at Glenmaggie on 23 September 1903. He was educated at Glenmaggie and Melbourne High School and went on to obtain his auctioneer's licence at the age of nineteen in July 1922. He held this licence for over sixty years.

Norman married his wife Alma in 1932 and returned to Heyfield, where he opened the Heyfield fat cattle market. He was a gifted man where cattle were concerned, and could recognise a beast years after having first seen it.

As well as auctioneering, Norman carried on farming at Glenmaggie on the family property 'Chesterfield', and later extended his interests to the high plains. He joined Jimmy Kelly with his run on Holms Plain, acquiring the whole run on Jimmy's death.

His knowledge of stock and rural affairs was extensive, and his opinions were sought and respected far and wide. Always happy to share his experiences with everyone, he told stories of the past with great humour and wit.

Norman was buried in the Heyfield cemetery with Alma, who predeceased him in 1965. At the Mountain Cattlemen's get-together at Catherine Station, a week after his death, a minute's silence was observed to remember this remarkable man.

### *Clarence Norman Gell*

The late Clarrie Gell was born at Glenmaggie on 22 November 1897 on the very spot where he was to live for the next 87 years. Throughout his life he farmed the property selected by his father in 1884, dairying at first, and later running cattle and sheep. He held a run on the high plains in partnership with the late Eric Cumming, and had a strong interest and love of beekeeping, which was always a sideline.

He married Hazel Pilgrim in 1929 and they raised a family of three sons and two daughters. Clarrie was actively involved with the Glenmaggie school, Church of England and a life member of the Heyfield Bush Nursing Hospital.

Clarrie will be remembered as a kind and friendly man who never failed to help anyone in need. His funeral to the Sale cemetery was attended by many friends, together with his family of 24 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren.

*Minnie Higgins*

### *Neville Clarence Sheather*

Neville Sheather of Mitta Mitta died on 26 September 1987 after a long illness. He was born in 1914 and always held a strong love for the high country. When Neville was 27 he married Jessie McRae and they had two daughters, Judy (Mrs Brewer) and Jan (Mrs Cornish). In the July prior to his death Neville, knowing he was dying, held his own wake. Many were able to say their goodbyes, and the tributes of that day were only confirmed in September.



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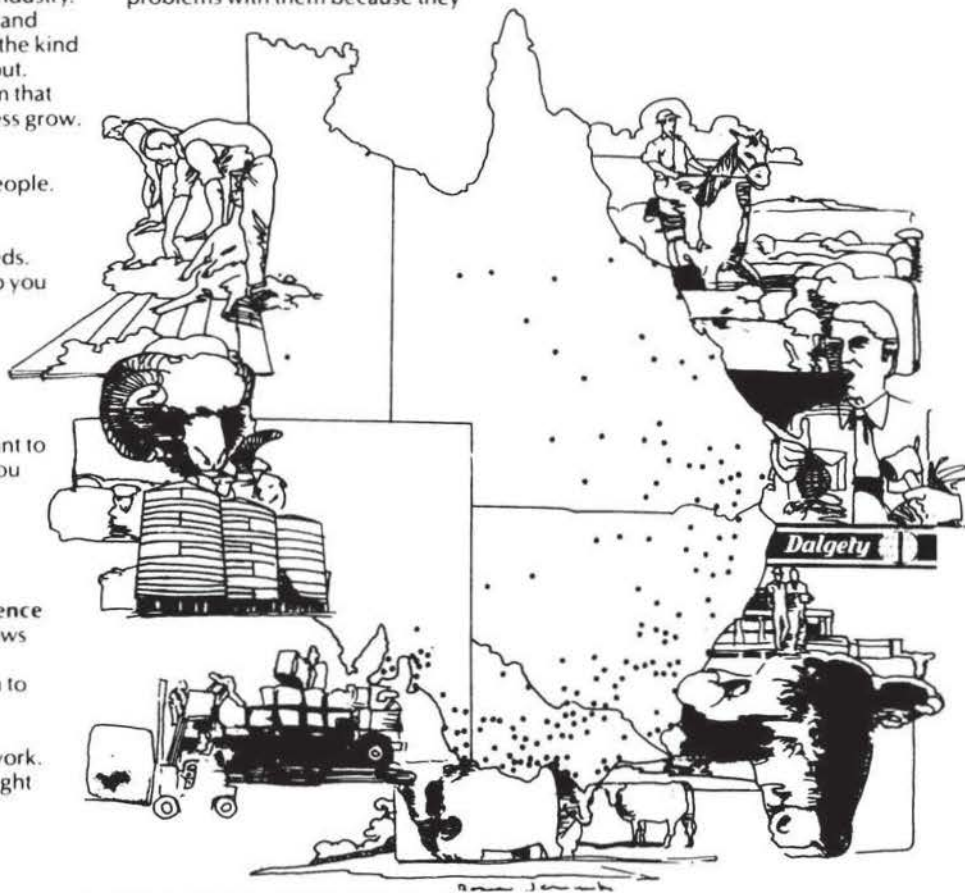
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# SOME BURNING QUESTIONS

Neil Barraclough

I have often been asked how, as a conservationist, I can justify the "Mountain Cattlemen care for the High Country" sticker on my car. This question is usually from other conservationists.

Possibly the most obvious benefit of the work of the mountain cattlemen visible today is the result of their protective burning prior to the 1939 fires in the areas they leased. The devastating fires of January 1939 were attributed in part to the cattlemen and resulted in the end of the regular, predominately autumnal burning of the leases.

However, opposition to cattlemen burning went back much further than 1939, as shown in these extracts from annual reports from the State Forest Department of Victoria on the subject of fires and grazing.

*The act passed by Parliament last session for restriction of illegal grazing in forests has so far been thoroughly effective. Prosecutions were instituted only where stock owners were flagrant offenders in the matter of overstocking, and where it was known that during their occupation destructive fires in the dry season had frequently broken out in the reserves.*

(State Forests Department of Vic., Annual Report 1910-1911)

*It may be stated that so long as it is greatly to the advantage of the pockets of people to have forest fires, and so long as they may be lit with little or no chance of detection, so long will incendiary fires occur. ... The evil is so grave, and the loss of the country so enormous in money and other values, that possibly there should be a public inquest, or magisterial inquiry, into every serious forest fire. In a great number of cases now, the Department is now renewing grazing licences for large forest areas, but, as it is necessary to have the grass eaten down, and advisable to obtain grazing revenue, takes in stock at agistment.*

(State Forests Department of Vic., Annual report 1911-1912).

*Offenders do not choose a frequented place, or time of day when foresters or patrol men are abroad, to fire a forest, and if two men are together on cattle runs 'in good burning weather' they generally separate before using the match. In East Gippsland and in the North-Eastern Ranges no man trusts his neighbours when he is engaged on such a delicate business as fire raising. Hence prosecutions are few, and convictions still fewer.*

(State Forests Department of Vic., Annual Report 1913-1914)

There are many references blaming graziers for the predominance of fires in the *Annual Reports* of the State Forests Department until its replacement by the Forests Commission of Victoria in 1919. Similar opinions were then expressed by the Forests Commission. Perhaps the heads of the department whose job it was to prevent fire needed someone to blame when fire could not be prevented. Also, public land was subject to divided management, part was administered by the Forests Commission and part by the Crown Lands Department. If the Forests Commission could increase the area of land under its control, at the expense of Crown Lands, that would have meant an expanded department, with greater job security and possibly increased power and salary entitlements for the heads. Reading *Annual Reports* from about 1910 to 1939 suggests that criticism of the burning by the cattlemen may have been made to gain support for the argument for Forests Commission control of Crown Lands.

For nearly all of the twenty years preceding the 1939 fires the Commissioner of Forests was a Mr A.V. Gailbraith. His views on burning by graziers, expressed in *The Gum Tree*, 1926 on the subject of the 1926 fires, makes interesting reading.

*The noted fire raiser by selfish design is the grazier, especially the licensee of Crown Lands. In fairness to the great number of graziers who realise their interests and obligations in the preservation of our*



forests, this term will be confined to those who, either holding authority from the Crown, or illegally grazing on afforested lands without authority, have no conception of such interests and responsibilities.

*Such a man is the scourge of the forest. His only concern is the fattening of his beasts of profit, and certainly not of the economic welfare of his country. Therefore he fires the forest regularly for his own purpose, for grass and muster, destroying whole tracts of country bearing untold wealth of valuable timber trees, in every stage of growth. His methods of firing are many and subtle, and although the men are known to the authorities, it is well nigh impossible with present legislation and sparsity of settlement over great areas, to successfully press home a prosecution. Even when the culprit is known, his neighbours will not inform on him, for he is invariably of the type that would at once revenge by the destruction of the informants property any punishment that might ensue through their performance of a public duty.*

The Forests Commission forced most graziers out of the State Forest in the early twenties, when they were not prepared to give an undertaking not to burn their leases and thought the leases worthless unburnt. However there were apparently less restrictions on Crown Land, with many graziers protectively burning their leases up until the fires of 1939. Details of this are found in the minutes of the Royal Commission into the 1939 fires, such as in the cross-examination of John Alexander Cameron, who had previously held both Crown Lands and Forest Leases around Mansfield.

Question: *Do you have grazing licences in Crown Lands as well as in forest areas?*

Cameron: *I have them only in Crown Lands at present. I did have grazing interests in the forest area but let them go on account of the Fire Commission's fire restriction policy.*

Question: *When did you do that?*

Cameron: *Some years ago - as soon as it became apparent that the forest was dangerous to put stock into.*

(Royal Commission into the 1939 fires, minutes pages 702 -703.)

For twenty years previous to the 1939 fires the forests along the Great Dividing Range from east of Melbourne through to the New South Wales border were subject to two different fire regimes. The areas of State Forest had fire excluded as much as possible. The mountainous, isolated areas of Crown Land to the east of the state were burnt regularly in places by the mountain cattlemen of the era.

A submission to the Timber Industry Inquiry by the Department of Conservation, Forest and Lands, on 4 December 1984 (on page 47), stated that the 1939 forest fire, which devastated a large proportion of the mountain ash (*Eucalyptus regnans*) forest type in Victoria, caused a major disruption of wood flows in the state. The fires set in train an initial concentration of sawmill activity on the salvage of fire-killed mature resource, followed by a relocation in the post war years of sawmilling activity from the central forests to the eastern and alpine forest areas of the state.

The 1939 fires caused, to a degree, a relocation of sawmilling from the forests from which the Forests Commission had removed the cattlemen, to areas protectively burnt by the cattlemen before 1939. These are the areas predominantly used for timber harvesting in Gippsland since the Second World War. Their regular burning also greatly reduced the effects of the 1939 fire on fauna and flora. There are also stories of cattlemen surviving the fire in the mountains by sheltering in an area burnt the previous year. They told of birds and native animals seeking refuge in those areas, a sanctuary that would not be available to them today in a similar fire.

The minutes of the Royal Commission into the 1939 fire continue to make interesting reading. John Findlay was another cattleman who gave evidence.

Findlay: *When I left up there I took up the Blue Range run which is between the Rubicon and the Little River. There is a beautiful forest at the head of it. I called on Mr McKay who was then Chairman of the Forests Commission and said "If you do not burn that forest, you will lose the lot." He said "We will see to it." Several years went past and the fires came from Narbethong and burned the lot of it.*



Question: *Taking into account the kind of season we have had, assuming that a fire had been started by lightning or some other cause, do you think there would have been anything left of the Rubicon forest even if you had set fire to it during the previous year?*

Findlay: *None of it would have been burnt.*

Question: *Is that your definite opinion?*

Findlay: *Yes. When all the stockmen were in the bush we burnt those forests and none of them were killed. Since the Forestry officers have taken charge of it they have had it for practically twenty years, we have had two bad fires and this one has burned from one end of Victoria to the other.*

(Royal Commission into the 1939 fires, minutes pages 499 -500.)

The government policy of stopping protective burning had been shown to be disastrously wrong. However this was never admitted, and possibly not even generally understood, outside of the people in the bush. There is little to suggest that much was ever learnt, and the government has virtually done no controlled burning in the alpine country ever since, except for the regeneration of timber. Areas where stockmen once rode to muster cattle are now so overgrown that it is difficult to walk through them.


In their evidence to the Royal Commission the cattlemen claimed that their burning caused little harm to the saplings of the mountain ash, and spoke of forests of mixed age trees. Forests of the ash type now tend to be even-aged, resulting from either past fires or clearfelling, and we are told these even-aged stands are the natural order.

*All tress in a typical area of alpine ash forest are usually the one age. They have their origins as seedlings germinating from the very seeds of the previous crop scattered on the ground after a fire. (Forests of Victoria published by the Forests Commission of Victoria, page 3.)*

This is despite stumps from previous stands showing quite clearly that the previous stand was one of mixed age, such as those at Connors Plains on the Licola to Jamieson Road. Single-aged stands do occur naturally, but are not natural for many of the areas where clearfelling and wildfire have now produced them. Despite this, statements continue to be made by the Forests Commission, such as that in the *Bairnsdale Advertiser* on 30 November 1981, that *the effects due to logging are similar to those caused by any natural, large scale disturbance of the environment such as forest fire.*

The position of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria Inc. on the subject is interesting. While they advocate regular, controlled fire as a necessary and natural way of preventing destruction of the alpine environment, they support the present timber harvesting system of clearfelling. The Forests Commission (now Conservation, Forests and Lands) have justified clearfelling with the belief that it represents the destruction of natural fire. The cattlemen appear to have accepted this.

In 1985 there were serious wildfires in the alpine area. Jim Commins, then the president of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association Inc. was quoted in the *Bairnsdale Advertiser* on 1 February 1985 as stating *for some years there has been undue conservation influence on the State Government's forest management authorities not to protective burn alpine forest areas and national parks.* Well over fifty years before conservation groups had any real influence, government policy was headed very firmly towards stopping protective burning in timber producing areas. However, if one followed the debate lately it would appear that the "greenies" were somehow to blame. While putting forward the argument that the modern conservation movement has had little bearing on the present situation, I must, as a conservationist, admit that the great abundance of literature on the subject put forward by the conservationist movement is clearly wrong.

Finally, let us all work towards finding common ground. We all love the mountains, their forests and their rivers, both conservationist and cattleman alike. 





JIM TREASURE



TOBY MITCHELL



ALAN TR



LYLE MCCREADY



GEOFF BURROWS



RUMPFES HUT



JACK MOLPHY



JACK BRYCE



JACK GUY



DON KNEEBONE



NUGGET PENDERGAST



GRAEME STONEY



WALLY RYDER



BRENNY FITZGERALD



JACK LOVICK



MILLERS HUT

Handwritten signature or scribble in the bottom left corner.



# CHANGES IN MOUNTAIN AREAS

*Keith Rogers*

Having, as a cattleman, had a close acquaintance with the tableland and valleys surrounding the Black Mountain settlement over the past 70 years, it is interesting to note what changes may have occurred to the environment over that period and before.

Black Mountain was first permanently settled by the O'Rourke family about 1838, and it was John O'Rourke, of the next generation, whom we knew as children in the early 1900s. From him, we heard accounts of earlier days; of their usually quiet friendly contacts with the aborigines; and we also gained a slight idea of the condition of the bush before white people had made much impact with their introduced plants and animals.

From the O'Rourke story and that of various other "old hands" it is evident that a large part of both tableland and valley was quite open forest, with much less undergrowth than one sees today, and that condition persisted until well on into last century.

The area under consideration is roughly the territory that lies between the Snowy River on the east, and Dividing Range on the west and extending from the State border on the north-east to the vicinity of Gelantipy in the south. Naturally, similar conditions also applied to other areas outside these limits.

Most of the tableland in this region lies at an altitude ranging from under 3000 feet in the settled country, to over 4500 feet on the higher parts to the west, while some peaks reach from over 5000 feet elevation, to 6000 feet on the Cobberas mountains.

The deep valleys of the Snowy and Suggan Buggan Rivers, on the other hand, are as low as 600 feet at McKillop's Bridge, and 1200 feet at Suggan Buggan. The Buchan River, to the west is also in a deep valley, with very steep sides.

With this sort of terrain, there is naturally a considerable variation in rainfall. At Black Mountain, the yearly average is 28 inches, and around Gelantipy 32 inches, while along the Divide it would be more. By contrast, the precipitation in Suggan Buggan is in the low 20s and usually the

drier appearance of the ground is accentuated by the granitic soil, and the much hotter summers.

Undoubtedly, man's greatest impact on the flora of the whole region under discussion has been the introduction of the rabbit. The rabbit plague alone did more damage to the country than the total of all activities of the white man, and the other animals for which he is responsible. This applied not only to the fenced areas, but to the surrounding bush as well.

The near total destruction of the sweeter herbage in many parts of the Snowy and Suggan Buggan valleys was entirely due to the depredations of this pest. There, the open forest of White Box (*Eucalyptus albens*) on the richer soils of the wide gullies and gentler slopes once sheltered a good sward of excellent grasses, which the rabbits eventually killed out. Such places became nothing but beds of leaves and twigs under the trees, and remained in that condition for many years. Also, lack of grass cover started erosion in some of the steeper gullies in the loose granitic soils.

On the tableland, the effect of the rabbit plague was much less spectacular outside the paddocks, but there damage was widespread. As the rabbit tends to eat out the sweetest and most nutritious species, leaving the coarser grasses, the quality of the pasture deteriorated. This was particularly noticeable after bushfires, as rabbits often prevented the natural regrowth.

Only for the introduction of myxomatosis, which has now largely decimated the rabbit population in most areas, the bush would have continued to deteriorate. It is over the past few years that one has been able to notice a general improvement in the grass throughout the region, and more particularly in the lower areas. Today, the grass cover in the Snowy and Suggan Buggan valleys has completely recovered, even where it had been killed out for so long. Indeed, the story of the large herd of cattle that the O'Rourkes ran in Suggan Buggan a hundred years ago was hard for us to picture, until this transformation set in on that low rainfall country. Now it is easily understandable.



Unfortunately, the rabbit did further damage besides eating out the grass. Many bare places became a good seed bed for scrub of various species, such as Dogwood (*Cassinia longifolia*) and (*C. aculeata*) and Burgan (*Leptospermum phyllicoides*) and other species that rabbits do not touch. Still, we have a great deal to thank Dame McNamara and her co-workers for in making possible a reduction of a pest that was fast ruining our mountain country. The situation must still be watched, however.

Incidentally, while referring to the rabbit, when my father came to Black Mountain in 1902 that pest had only then become serious. As well as rabbits, there were also many hares, but they soon became sick, or starved out, and as children we would try to run and catch them as they could barely get out of our way. Apparently they could not live with the rabbits.

It is generally realised that a serious upset to the native fauna has been caused by the introduction of the fox and feral cat. Not only has bird population been affected, partly through their depredations, but so have some of the smaller marsupials, such as Rat Kangaroos and Bandicoots. Around the turn of the century there was a huge mortality amongst some of the marsupials, including the koala, the possum, and probably rock wallaby, apparently from disease brought by man, as well as by ruthless hunting. However, of late years the possum has entirely replenished its numbers. We even have a possum family that lives in a space that once housed a hot water tank behind our kitchen stove. The koala has long been extinct in the district, and likewise the native cat, although a tiger cat is seen from time to time.

It is a different story with the kangaroos, which have always been plentiful throughout the region, whether on the high tablelands or down in the valleys. Also plentiful are both the red necked wallaby and the black wallaby, but unfortunately the attractive brush tailed rock wallaby appears to be barely holding its own, and then only in very inaccessible places. As children we used to see them on almost any rock outcrop, and they must have been in great numbers. Another member of the wallaby tribe, the paddy-melon, has entirely disappeared. Wombats are of course, as numerous as ever they were.

As already mentioned, bird life does appear to have suffered to some extent over the years, particularly the smaller birds around the settled areas. One feels that the fox, and to a lesser extent

the cat, must be a major cause of this. Foxes hunt everywhere, even in the roughest country, as evidenced by their tracks. Indeed, they are more numerous in the bush than many people realise. Of course, the destruction of habitat through land clearing is another important factor that upsets bird life, but that may not apply so much in a district such as this, where the proportion of land is small in comparison with the vast extent of the surrounding bush.

A bird that was once common here, but disappeared many years ago, is the Stone Curlew. One used to hear their mournful call frequently on moonlight nights, often in conjunction with the startled cries of the Spurwing Plovers. An entirely different bird which left the district many years ago, is that often common honeyeater, the Noisy Miner. On the other hand, there has been a gain of one very noticeable bird, and that is the Galah. Two or three of these came to stay only a few years ago, and then there were seven for another couple of years. Now, they live and breed here, and a flock of thirty or forty is usually around each house in the vicinity, although they are never, as yet, seen in the large numbers that frequent the inland plains. As a matter of interest, I did record one lone Galah here on October 12, 1929, and a few odd strays in later years, but they never stayed long.

With plant life, the greatest change over the years is probably the extent to which some of the bush has gone to scrub, particularly the rougher parts. However, quite an extent of open forest still remains in most areas. There is a reason for the scrubby areas, and probably an important cause has been the practice in former years of burning the bush in the heat of summer. Usually, the rougher and steeper the locality, the fiercer the fire. Then, the rabbit was there to eat out the young grass as it came up and so the normal balance was upset and scrub sprang up instead of grass.

The practice of summer burning has long ceased, and rightly so, but there is still a place for spring or autumn fuel reduction firing, which tends to reduce the scrub, and is a necessary safety precaution.

Weeds are in many parts a further upset to the balance of the native flora and particularly along the streams. By far the most serious in this region is the blackberry, that has completely taken over much of the river system, and many streams at lower elevations are now almost inaccessible for



most of their course. Unless some biological control can be found, it is certain all the beautiful mountain streams will be entirely unapproachable in a few years.

The two larger animals that graze the bush today are, of course, cattle and the brumby, and both fortunately fit happily into the environment without being destructive. The brumby will often make use of the shallow water pans, which are so common on the high country flats, to use as rolling places when they dry out, but when the rains come these depressions are soon filled, and they have never really altered in extent over the years. The brumby never causes erosion and is an animal that adds interest to the mountain areas.

Having worked cattle in the bush for a lifetime, one knows their habits and the country they graze over, and it is abundantly clear that they are in complete harmony with their surroundings. In the whole of this area I have never known cattle to be in any way detrimental to the bush, either on the summer pastures of the high country, or wintering down in the valleys. In fact, under proper management, cattle are an advantage, as they help to keep the grass from growing too rank without reducing the ground cover. In his own interest, the cattleman does not overstock his lease, and they are used for a portion of the year only.

To my knowledge, cattle have been wrongly blamed in the past for interfering with moss beds and puddling up creeks and eating out some areas. The fact of the matter is that it was the rabbit, coupled with severe summer burning of bygone years, that caused the damage.


Today the whole area, both high country and low, has completely recovered, and never have we seen it with a better grass cover. As to the native plant species, there has been no noticeable change in distribution through the years, apart from areas gone to scrub, as already mentioned. One has only to visit the snow plains in summer to appreciate the wealth of flowers and the perfect conditions in which they thrive, with the cattle keeping the rough grass in check.

An illustration of how plants are recovering after the rabbit damage can be seen in the pine country in Suggan Buggan, where young pine seedlings are in abundance, whereas before the rabbit numbers were reduced, the seedlings were eaten as they came up. No doubt the same must have been the case with countless other species

of plants everywhere, so that should be a good indication for further improvement in the future.

In conclusion, it would be fair to say that the bush, in this mountainous part of the State is, except for the blackberry disaster, in better shape than it was 20 years ago. This is notwithstanding the mistakes made in previous years, and the various changes that resulted.

May the whole of this area of bush continue to be wisely used, and cared for, by those who know it and love it, and may the charm and beauty of our mountains never be spoilt.

Keith Churchill Rogers (1896-1978) was a mountain cattleman and naturalist from Wulgulmerang. This article appeared first in *The Clematis* Vol 15 (1976), the Journal of the Bairnsdale Field Naturalists Club. It is reproduced here with the kind permission of Mrs Beryl Rogers. 

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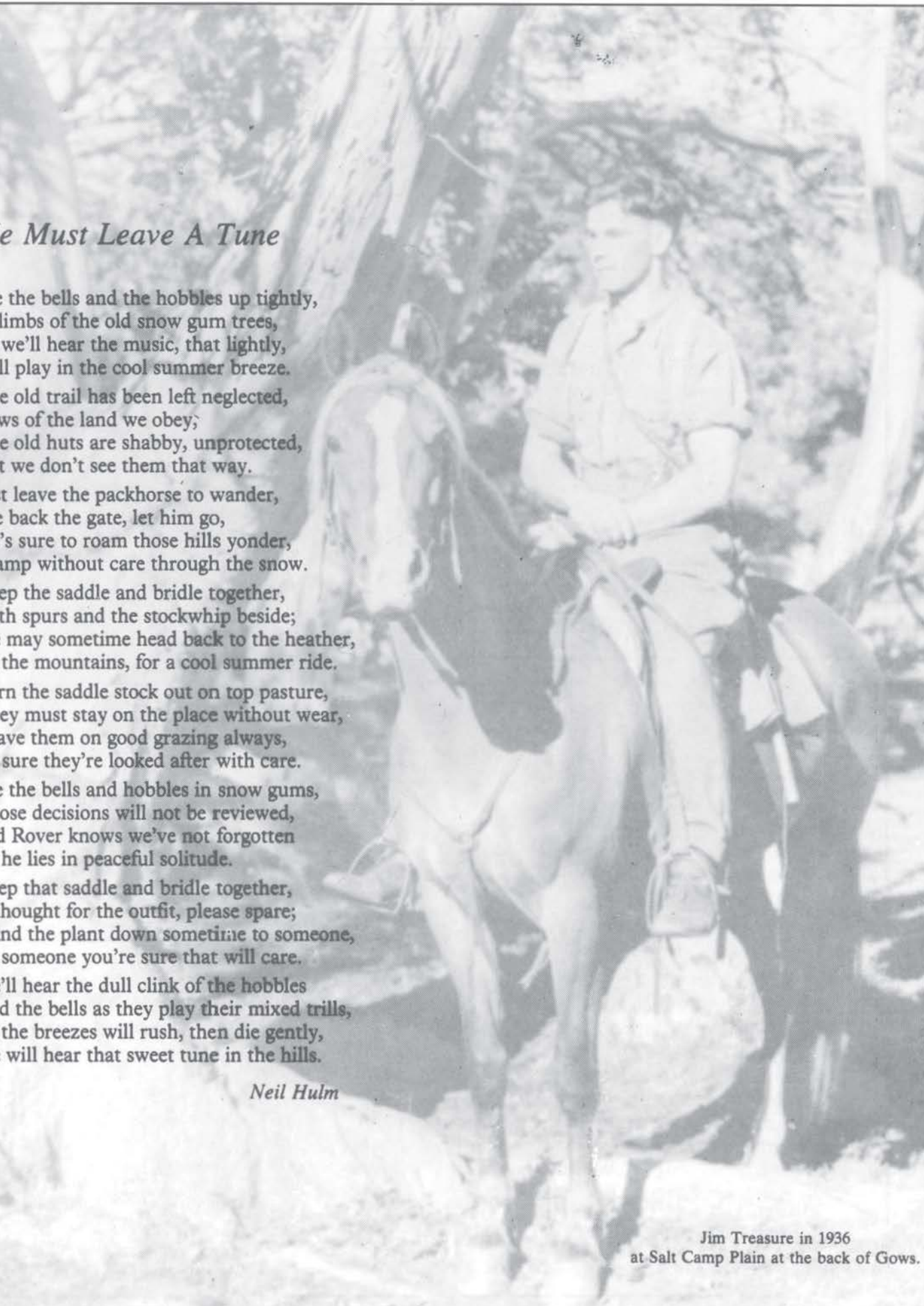
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## *We Must Leave A Tune*

Tie the bells and the hobbles up tightly,  
In limbs of the old snow gum trees,  
So we'll hear the music, that lightly,  
Will play in the cool summer breeze.

The old trail has been left neglected,  
Laws of the land we obey;  
The old huts are shabby, unprotected,  
But we don't see them that way.

Just leave the packhorse to wander,  
Tie back the gate, let him go,  
He's sure to roam those hills yonder,  
Tramp without care through the snow.

Keep the saddle and bridle together,  
With spurs and the stockwhip beside;  
We may sometime head back to the heather,  
To the mountains, for a cool summer ride.

Turn the saddle stock out on top pasture,  
They must stay on the place without wear,  
Leave them on good grazing always,  
Be sure they're looked after with care.

Tie the bells and hobbles in snow gums,  
Those decisions will not be reviewed,  
Old Rover knows we've not forgotten  
As he lies in peaceful solitude.

Keep that saddle and bridle together,  
A thought for the outfit, please spare;  
Hand the plant down sometime to someone,  
To someone you're sure that will care.

We'll hear the dull clink of the hobbles  
And the bells as they play their mixed trills,  
As the breezes will rush, then die gently,  
We will hear that sweet tune in the hills.

*Neil Hulm*

Jim Treasure in 1936  
at Salt Camp Plain at the back of Gows.





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## Clive Hodge

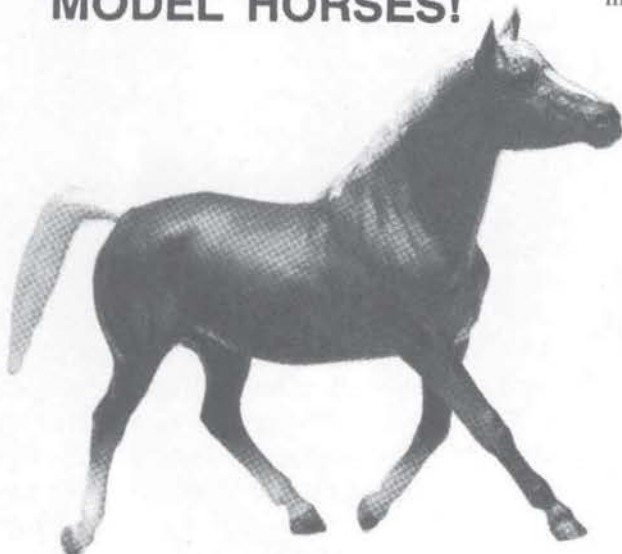
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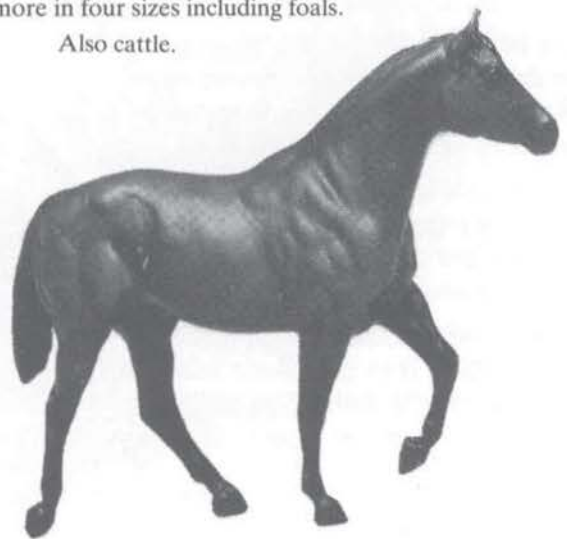
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# CATTLE ON THE PROM

(1850 - 1992)

*Carole Williams*



Mustersers at Yanakie in the 1950s. Back Row (left to right) Tom Stanfield, next unknown, Jack Symmons, Tim Symmons, Fred Branson. Front Row (left to right) Cliff McCartney, next unknown, Albie Loader, Don Hoskin, (possibly) Ken Crowley, Charlie Nicoll.

Cattle grazing on Wilson's Promontory had its origins as far back as 1850, long before the area was proclaimed a National Park. Since then there have always been cattle on the Prom. However, the hoofbeats ringing around the mustering yards sound a sharp note of change. After 1992 cattle will no longer graze the once lush flats and gullies of Wilson's Promontory National Park.

In preserving one heritage, that of the unspoilt environment of beautiful Wilson's Promontory, let us not forget another heritage - the wealth of history attached to the cattle grazing ventures that took place on the Prom for one hundred and fifty years.

The Prom is situated in the Shire of South Gippsland, and it is here that names such as Benison, Paterson, Millar, Albert and Rex Hellisen, Jack and Don Lester, Meme Farrell, Bill Gale, Perce Gilbert, Jim Whelan and host of others will always be remembered in association with the grazing and agistment. Many of these names have been given to roads on the Prom and nearby Yanakie, in memory of the contribution made by their owners.

Places such as The Tin Pot, Varney's Waterhole, Kangaroo Valley, The Aerodrome, Five Mile, Silver Swamp and The Swansnest will always conjure up memories of the cattle musters

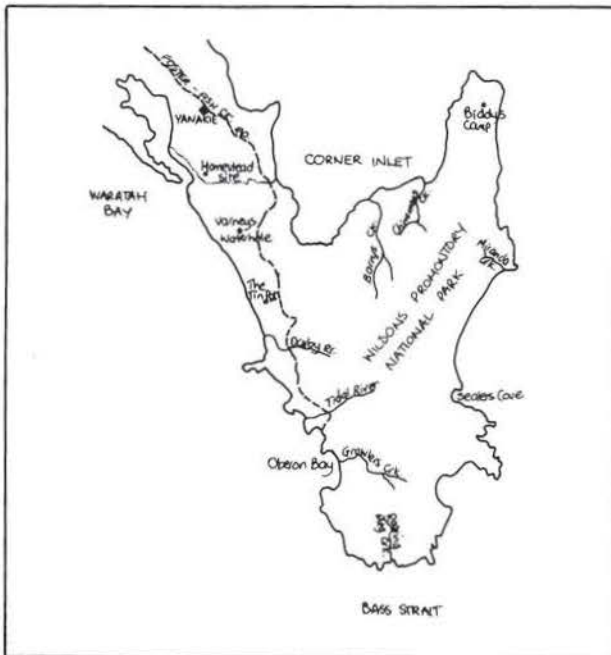


that took place annually. The excitement of the muster was eagerly anticipated by many a cattleman and stockman. Many firm friendships began in the saddle during the mustering week, as horsemen scoured the flats and gullies, the scrubland and the mountains, intent on finding as many of the cattle as possible. Bonds were forged here that would last a lifetime.

Stories of adverse weather, bushfires, lost cattle, injured horsemen, mercy dashes that ended in vain - these are only part of the heritage that comes to us from this era. In the telling of those stories three things clearly emerge: the ability and determination of the cattlemen; the endurance of the horse and the loyalty of the dog.

The story begins with Richard Bennison being granted the lease of 35,000 acres of land on the north western end of the Prom. Later, this area was divided into two and became known as the Yanakie Runs. It was here that cattle first came to Wilson's Promontory in 1850.

The area offered a varied terrain ranging from open grasslands and heathlands to heavily treed mountain slopes. Water was provided by permanent creeks, spring-fed lagoons and natural water holes. Regular burning ensured the continuity of feed. The Prom provided a sheltered haven for the cattle in the winter, although it also provided a challenge for musters when searching for hiding cows and calves.



No records have been uncovered as positive proof, but it is thought that the Yanakie Runs were extended in 1859 to include the remainder of the Prom. The Oberon Bay Run was opened that same year. In 1861 the area was running six head of cattle per one hundred acres.

At Sealers Cove, on the windswept eastern section of the Prom, the Baragwanath Pastoral Run was established. This run consisted of 15,000 acres, taken up by John Baragwanath and family in 1865. The steep, forested slopes proved unsuitable for cattle and in 1870 Baragwanath's relinquished the run. It appears that this land was never grazed again.

Meanwhile, the Yanakie Runs had been enlarged and amalgamated to form the Yanakie Station. This land changed hands several times, although not because of failure. In fact, the Yanakie Station became renowned for its fat cattle and well bed horses.

In 1905 Wilson's Promontory was declared a National Park, with cattle grazing still permitted. Much of the land of Yanakie Station reverted to the Crown.

Where beef cattle had predominated on the Prom, dairy cattle now arrived, under the scheme of seasonal agistment. This was the beginning of a whole new era on the Prom - of farmers, cattlemen, horsemen and their association with the most southern part of mainland Australia.

The first ranger appointed to the Agistment Run was William Clemson from the township of Foster, eighteen miles away. Farmers from all parts of the Shire would drive their cattle down to Yanakie in late autumn, where they would winter them, prior to the weekly musters near the end of the season.

Many of the agisters, particularly those from the hill areas of the Strzelecki Ranges had barely viable farms and depended greatly on the Yanakie agistment, which was relatively inexpensive. When agistment ranger Albert Hellisen took over the Yanakie Run in 1927, the grazing fee was ninepence per beast. Three to four thousand head of cattle could be grazed on Yanakie and the Prom at this time. Lester Bros of Black Swamp had grazing rights on the northern sector of the Prom; their cattle were often taken off as prime beef, going straight to the saleyards.



What Albert Hellisen didn't know was that he would be the last Crown Bailiff to be appointed to the cattle agistment, a position he held for over forty years.

In 1969 part of the Yanakie isthmus, where cattle were seasonally agisted, was added to the National Park, bringing the area of the Park to 49,000 hectares. Cattle grazing has continued in this part of the Park but is to cease in 1992.

In recent years the whole operation has scaled down to only 700-800 head of cattle agisted annually, compared with 3000 head of dairy cattle as recently as thirty years ago.

Within the protected environs of a National Park native animals tend to thrive and breed, with the result that their increased numbers place heavy demands on the land for food. Agisters claim that wombat and kangaroo populations have increased fourfold in the last four years. With very little controlled burning taking place there are times when feed is quite scarce.

The number of agisters nowadays is quite small as most of the farmers have increased their holdings and no longer rely on seasonal agistment. Where will the agisters place their cattle after 1992? President of the Agisters Association, Ian Park, lists the options: reduce the number of cows being milked, lease or buy land, or give up dairying.

Local identity, Rex Hellisen, who passed away earlier this year, spent his boyhood and many later years droving and mustering cattle on the Prom. In 1986 he revisited many of the old familiar haunts, nostalgically recalling people and places from the past. One such place was The Tin Pot, which Rex remembered fondly " ... always something happening at The Tin Pot. Always someone coming or going. A great meeting place."

With the cessation of cattle grazing, The Tin Pot will no longer be "a great meeting place". Few visitors to Wilson's Promontory National Park will even know of its existence. However, in recalling the colourful cattle era of the Prom, perhaps in some measure a meeting place can be formed. A place within history's page where the reader can meet with and recognise a small part of our heritage.



*Carole Williams is the daughter of a "Prom" Cattleman.*

## *Mustering at Yanakie*

From every corner of the Shire,  
From Boyes to Fish Creek West,  
From Bennison to Hedley,  
From Foster to Mt Best.

By noon they start arriving,  
By evening there's a cluster,  
In wagons and on horseback,  
They've come to join the muster.

With them come their dogs  
Of every colour, breed and cross,  
Their fighting lasts for half the night,  
Establishing the boss.

The chops are cooked, the billies boiled,  
The men prepare to rest,  
There is laughing, joking, ragging,  
Stories told in jest.

At break of day next morning,  
They saddle up the horses,  
Then off to search the plains and hills  
And all the water courses.

Some ride off to Barry Creek,  
Some head for Buckley's Rock,  
The flats and gullies must be scoured  
For every head of stock.

An air of great excitement  
Is shared by man and beast,  
A keen anticipation,  
To say the very least.

When cattle are located  
The stockmen form a team,  
To round them up, to head them out,  
The dogs work like a dream.

Back to camp they wend their way,  
Horses, men and stock,  
Along the beach, across the drift,  
Into the homestead block.

As barking dogs and shouting men,  
As cracking whips berate,  
A bit of fancy riding  
Puts the cattle through the gate.

The camp is filled with action,  
These stockmen are the best;  
Then darkness falls upon the scene,  
It's time for well earned rest.

Stories of the muster  
Are related one by one.  
'Til finally the stockmen sleep,  
Their long day's work is done.

*Carole  
Williams*



# CASTLEBURN AND BULGABACK

The Treasure children who live at Castleburn are the sixth generation of their family to be associated with the Dargo High Plains.

The first members of the family to come to the high country were George Emanuel Treasure, his wife Emily and their children, from Harrietville. They took up a selection at Kings Spur on the Dargo High Plains in 1878. Two of the children, Nell and George, were carried in on two legless armchairs strapped to either side of a horse, while Harry, who was nine months old, was carried by his mother in front of her on the saddle. They began life there in a two-roomed hut that was later expanded to include a store and licenced hotel. The family finally grew to nine boys and two girls.

The area around the homestead was covered by snow during the winter, so the family used land on the Dargo River to run their stock during that time. When rabbits came

across the Divide at the turn of the century the winter pasture was eaten out and became useless. The Treasure brothers of the next generation selected land at Castleburn by 1905, and at Tabberaberra. The Tabberaberra land was rung and fenced, and then abandoned when rabbits ate that out as well, leaving yearlings living on stinging nettles.

Five of the Treasure brothers formed a family company, and apart from taking up the first two Castleburn selections, the hut paddock and Angusdale, they began to buy blocks from other selectors. Local families from whom the family later purchased land included the Longs, Hardys, Bryces and Sutherlands. Around 1907, when they chose to move to Queensland, Harry Treasure bought his brothers out of the company one by one. The Castleburn homestead was commenced, and was partially complete by 1916.



Emily Treasure



George Emanuel Treasure



The Bulgaback Hotel

The name Castleburn possibly dates back to Angus McMillan's time in the area around 1863 to 1864, although there is evidence the area was used well before that time. The creek running from Castle Hill became the Castle Burn, taking its name from the Scottish word for a stream. The origin of Bulgaback, sometimes called Bulgoback, is less easier to establish. It is sometimes said to refer to a pigin Aboriginal name for Angus McMillan's possum skin sleeping bag that he used there, and appears as Bulgabag on his 1864 map of the area.

Castle Burn run was first gazetted as being available for tender in 1851, and was taken up by Henry Duncan Church. It was transferred to James Carr in 1855, and then to the Foster family. In 1869 it was taken over by John McDonald and Peter Long, two early Castleburn selectors. Other early selectors included Murdoch Macintosh, who used McMillan's old Dargo run to produce horses for the Indian trade.

The Bulgaback Hotel block was taken up about 1863. It was run by three generations of the Hardy family for around fifty years until the hotel was delicensed. They left there to run the Cobbanah Hotel around the time of the

First World War. A grave in the hotel orchard is believed to be the original Mr Hardy.

In time Bulgaback grew to include a post office next to the hotel, and a school that was opened in 1874 with George Aytoun as the first teacher. It ran for a number of years, but was possibly long closed by the time the Castleburn school was opened in 1898. The first teacher at that school was Henry W. Gay, and it remained open until 1908, although it worked week about with Glenaladale in later years. Bulgaback became a stage for the Dargo mail coach, and an overnight stop for the drovers who took the cattle from Cobungra to Maffra. Riggalls of Cobungra also had land at Castleburn for a time.

Harry Treasure's children, Fred, Don, Jim, Jack and Freda then carried the family name on into the next generation. In 1983 Jim Treasure's herd won the Victorian Commercial Beef Herd of the Year Award. Today the Castleburn property, that was originally evenly divided between Don, Jim, Jack and Freda, consists of almost 3,000 acres. Half is run by Don's son David, who has taken over the section once held by Jack, and the rest by other family members.



Compiled by Linda Barraclough, with assistance from Jim, Rhonda and David Treasure.



The Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria Inc. was officially formed, under a slightly different name, in November 1969. Since then Gatherings, or "Get Togethers", as they have become known, have been held at:

<b>Dargo</b>	<b>1975</b>
<b>Nuniong Plateau</b>	<b>1976</b>
<b>Rose River</b>	<b>1977</b>
<b>Merimbah</b>	<b>1978</b>
<b>Native Dog Plain</b>	<b>1979</b>
<b>Holms Plain</b>	<b>1980</b>
<b>Shannonvale</b>	<b>1981</b>
<b>Pretty Valley</b>	<b>1982</b>
<b>Sheepyard Flat</b>	<b>1983</b>
<b>Holms Plain</b>	<b>1984</b>
<b>Junction Plain, Cobungra</b>	<b>1985</b>
<b>Catherine Station</b>	<b>1986</b>
<b>Sheepyard Flat</b>	<b>1987</b>
<b>Castleburn</b>	<b>1988</b>



Sheepyard Flat, 1987.



Photographs by D. Porter



## *The Unwritten History of the Bush*

While sitting on the top rail fence,  
These tales were told to me,  
But about them, truth or otherwise,  
Among yourselves agree.  
If they're not all Gospel  
It's not the writer's fault,  
For he requests his friends  
To take them with a grain of salt.

Now, you all know Jimmy Jacobs  
And his gallant old bay mare,  
And though the years are telling  
And the grey has touched his hair.  
Yet at jumping and deer hunting  
Jim and his old, sheet-anchored mare  
You may range all over Gippsland  
And not find a gamer pair.

Last year, while he was yarning,  
Where the squatters dipped their sheep  
When a strange and hairy beast appeared  
Which knocked them in a heap.  
Says George, "A bally tiger?";  
Says Jim, "No, it's deer!"  
And mounting on the old grey mare,  
Jim after him did spear.

He chased him around Old Fawaz's block,  
Where a thousand stumps are seen,  
And over five and twenty-two rails,  
With a barb or two between.  
And those who saw them jumping,  
Say it was a splendid go,  
For he rushed at those fences  
As only a Gippsland bushman knows.

Now, if you test your riding,  
And about your prad would brag,  
Go and do as Jim has done,  
Run down and kill your stag.  
Then, the day we rode the dingo down,  
Was it eight or nine years ago?  
When first we saw "His Dingoship"  
We raised a wild "Ho, Ho!"

Pat Garvey on old "Glenmore"  
Who now was riding near  
Raced him through the dogwood  
And brought him to the clear.  
Father Nolan and Tom Cumming  
Took up the running now,  
For they made the pace a cracker  
Along that hillside brow.

There's pleasure in a dingo hunt,  
That town men never know,  
When each horse is straining every nerve,  
It is a willing go.  
How we made those hillsides rattle,  
How we made those ranges ring,  
As we chased him back through Coleman's,  
And killed him at the spring.

Now, oh for a week of mustering,  
Where the stunted redgums grow,  
With "Wattle" and Joe Garvey,  
When each summer time they go.  
Away across the Barkly,  
And o'er the mountain side,  
With neither road nor fence,  
Nor bridle track to guide.

There is no work of human hands,  
Save the hut and the mustering yards,  
And there are no nightly pleasures,  
Except a greasy pack of cards.  
And, on those endless, lonely watches,  
You realise the words "out back",  
For your only chance of tucker,  
Is what you carry in your pack.

And, though unlike Glenmaggie,  
It has no place upon the map,  
And no Progress Association,  
Yet we don't care a rap.  
And here there are no racing cars,  
Nor shanty on the rise,  
And you never hear the paper boy,  
Oh, how loud, the Herald cries.

And the townie says it is lonely,  
That the sun is round about,  
Yet still we love those silent hills  
In the land of "do without".  
And, when on ear marking and branding,  
On the stockwhip they rely,  
For when they start a yearling up,  
You hear our Joe reply.

Now what's the use of branding irons,  
To bushmen such as we,  
When two or three cuts of the old stockwhip,  
Will carve a J or G.  
And the day we found the brumby mob,  
T'was Jim Kelly led the way,  
Till Joe Garvey wheeled them on the ridge,  
On Father Buckley's grey.

We ran them round that rocky rise,  
And through the snowgum clump,  
And lucky was the rider  
Who escaped without a bump.  
And when we lassoed Bluey,  
Jim gave a wild, up country yell,  
That would make our Seaton writer  
Bite his pen and take a spell.

Though at jawbreakers Jack is splendid,  
And they proclaim his glory well,  
Yet ere he split young Jim's whoop,  
He would wish it down in Hell.  
Then there is Jimmy Lucas,  
Known as Dargo Jim's right hand,  
Who tamed the wildest Garland,  
That ever wore station brand.

And now they probably tell us,  
That they only fear they know,  
Is that they can't produce them,  
That James Lucas cannot throw.  
And last there's Geoghegan's Peter,  
Sure, no one is fitter,  
To be classified with Clancy,  
Among riders that you know.

Who, when cutting out a yearling bull,  
Upon Ben Cruchan's side,  
Would teach the mountain men the game,  
And show them how to ride.  
And wheeling on those rocky slides,  
Where no beast can safely travel,  
You can see our Peter racing down,  
At least, you can see his dust and gravel.

While racing round those dizzy heights,  
He'd make old Clancy shiver,  
And I'd like to see them follow him,  
Those men from Snowy River.

As recited by Norm Chester.  
The author is unknown.

*The proud tradition of bush ballads is one that is dear to many a Mountain Cattleman's heart. For many years, until his death in 1986, one of those who enlivened this side of our heritage was Norm Chester. A short time before he died, Norm was at the also traditional Saturday morning gathering at Dalgety's in Heyfield, and recited this poem, describing it as his favourite. We have never found it written anywhere else, and are fortunate that when Norm, the nephew of a well-known Australian poetess, spoke these words, that John Harvey was there and had the foresight to write them down. They would otherwise have been lost.*



NORM CHESTER



# A FIERY RIDE

*Vince Phelan*

In 1938, my sister, Joyce, then eighteen years of age, organised with four other Gippsland girls, Nancy Smith, Bonnie McCarthy, Sheila and Joan McCarthy to ride to Mt Buffalo. The girls from Newry and Valencia Creek set off on their horses early in January 1939, and rode up through the Freestone Creek road to Dargo. Joyce joined the party after a day's spell at Dargo and rode on to Treasure's station on the Dargo High Plains, thirty miles north of Dargo, on the 9th January.

Next day I was taking a mob of cattle with Jim Treasure and Matt Phelan to "Freeze Out", about three miles south of the St Bernard Hospice. The girls travelled with us. After delivering the cattle we rode on to the hospice with the girls.

Barney Rush, the proprietor of the Hospice, went to great pains to persuade the girls to turn back, as there were some serious fires burning out of control in various parts of the alps. The girls accepted an invitation to stay with the Treasures on the plains and my uncle and I returned home on the 11th January.

The next day there were several calls to the Dargo Post Office, there being no other phones in

Dargo at that stage, from the girls' parents. They expressed grave concern for their safety, as the fires seemed to be out of hand throughout the mountains.

Next morning I set out very early to bring the girls home. I remember it was, to my surprise, a very cold morning, and remained so until I reached Mt. Ewan, fifteen miles out. From there on the situation changed, hot winds from the west and dense smoke predominated from the Jeff Davis spur on to the beginning of the basalt, a distance of about nine miles. I galloped through patches where the fire had reached the road, although at that stage it was no great problem.

For the last four miles of the gallop to Treasures homestead I had quite a job to keep my old horse's head up off the ground, he was so exhausted.

The girls were quite relaxed at the homestead when I arrived and showed surprise that they should have to leave in such a hurry. Joan McCarthy ran their horses in from a nearby paddock, while I had some lunch and collected a fresh horse.



Vince Phelan

After leaving a hurried note for the men, who were away firefighting, we got away about two o'clock. As we galloped along we could plainly hear the fire roaring a few miles to the west, like an angry sea. At the Patti turnoff we came into the first real threat of fire, and had to go back about a mile to a clearing where Gow's pub had been.

It was my aim to get to the patches that were burning when I came through in the morning. I kept riding through and testing the fire until I could reach where it had been burnt earlier. Then I would bring the party through. The girls became so accustomed to the large limbs falling off trees that they would only move their horses to avoid a direct hit.

We followed the same pattern right through, waiting in a spot that we could keep alive in until

we could gallop through to the next burnt-out area, sometimes a few hundred yards, other times half a mile.

At each stop the girls would write messages with lipstick on paper, covering it with earth and making a small cairn with stones over them. There were about four of these messages along the road.

During the last gallop Sheila McCarthy broke her stirrup leather. This ride was from the top of the Red Rose cutting to the first hollow north of the Grant turnoff. Sheila had to ride twelve miles with one stirrup iron, there was no way we would have dared to stop to pick it up.

The stockmen who followed through a few days after the fires were amazed that we got through without a casualty.



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## High Country

I will lift up mine eyes to the hills,  
Where the cattlemen have their home,  
Where there's peace and quiet and lack of stress,  
And the baldy faced cattle roam.

We've camped among those mountains high,  
Fished those mountain streams,  
The peace of the high country  
Will always haunt our dreams.

We've met the friendly cattlemen,  
Who hold the leases so high,  
If they should lose those leases,  
The mountains would surely die.

Mountain freedom is part of our heritage,  
Its loss would be something we'd rue,  
Guard it well, you cattlemen,  
We city folk will try and help you.

*Peg Furneaux*

## My Old Black Dog

I've never had a better friend,  
He was always near to me,  
Except when answering nature's call  
Against some handy tree.  
Our friendship's lasted many years,  
We've been through thick and thin,  
He always seemed in a happy mood  
Whatever mood I'm in.  
He's always there when needed most,  
To help round up the herd,  
He never asked for much reward,  
Just a pat or kindly word.  
And when I stop to think I'm sure,  
He had a happy life,  
Mostly did the things he'd want,  
And sometimes got in strife.  
Rheumatics getting bad of late,  
His joints were getting stiff,  
'Twas really quite an effort now,  
Those old hind legs to lift.  
I wonder if they've heaven there,  
I hope no place of woe,  
There surely must be some nice place  
For these old chaps to go.  
Where he can scratch and scoot about,  
I know he's earned this right,  
I'm sure that he'd be happy if  
There's just one pole in sight.  
I find it hard to speak today,  
My heart feels like a log,  
I've raised a little mound of earth  
O'er my faithful old black dog.

*Wilbur D.*



Driving cattle at Castleburn.



# HIGH COUNTRY BOOKMARKS

## *Kings of the Cattle Country*

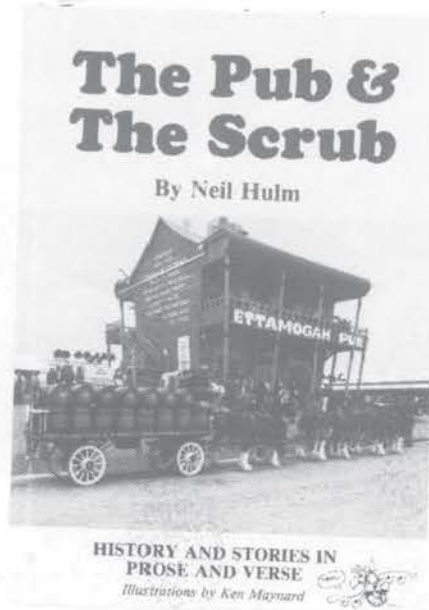
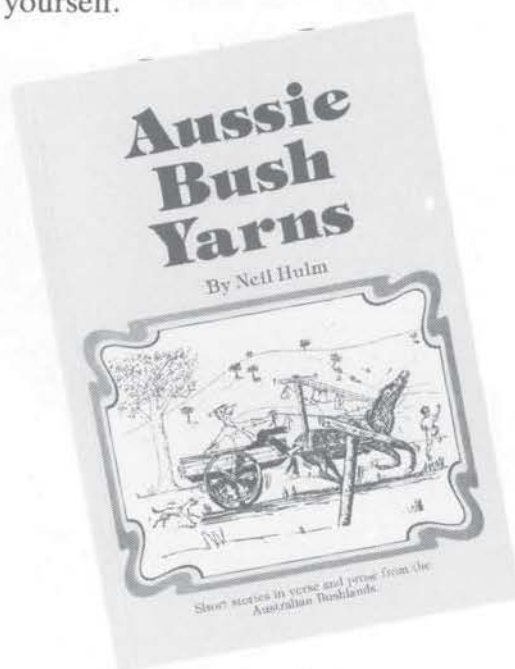
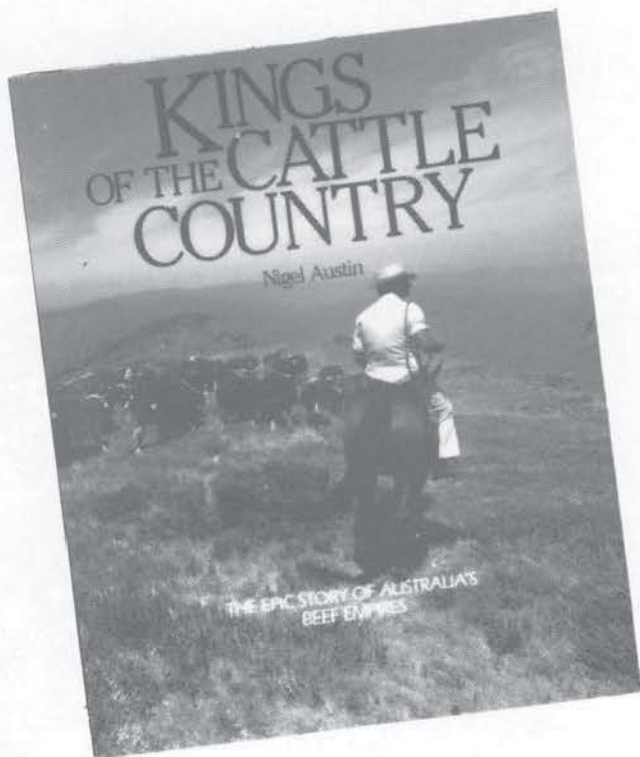
Written by Nigel Austin  
(Bay Books, 1986), R.R.P. \$39.95.

Readers will remember that at the Get Together held at Sheeppark Flat in 1982 media saturation was at a premium, with film crews and photographers alike being flown to the Stoney family run on The Bluff. A recently published book, *Kings of the Cattle Country*, has used a superb illustration taken by Greg Noakes at that time for its dustjacket. The photograph features the Stoney herefords with cattlemen Terry Weston, Steve Ware, Terry Murphy and John Gough. Des Burley from Mansfield, who was previously employed on Cobungra Station, is also in the photograph.

With such a brilliant photograph on the cover one must pick it up and look at it. The book itself covers many aspects of the cattle industry, with over a third of it looking at the cattle empires of Kidman, Stanbroke, the Australian Agricultural Company and others of that ilk. Another third looks at twelve of the actual pioneers of today's cattle industry, including Pendarvis, Gubbins, Munro and

McCamley. The balance of the book deals with station life, cattle country, breeds and early life. The Mountain Cattlemen are covered in the cattle country section. The majority of that section is devoted to the "who was the Man from Snowy River" question, but it still makes interesting reading.

The book itself is well presented and very easy on the eye, but perhaps isn't one all supporters will have on their bookshelves. Go along to your bookshop and have a look for yourself.



## *Aussie Bush Yarns*

### *The Pub and the Scrub*

Written and published by Neil Hulm.

For almost twenty years Neil Hulm was engaged in attending to his father's sheep and cattle in the area now covered by the Kosciusko National Park. His father took up a lease in 1943, and continued there until grazing was stopped. He is a keen follower of rodeos, and in the past was a very successful saddle bronc rider.

It is with this background that some years ago Neil published his first book, *Where the Snow Grass Grows*, which met with immediate success. Some of the verse in the last edition of *Voice of the Mountains* was from that collection. Since that time Neil has published another two books of poems and bush yarns. The first of these books, *Aussie Bush Yarns*, was published in 1986 and has now been reprinted three times.

*The Pub and the Scrub* was released last year and is also being well received. Possibly the Ettamogah Pub has something to do with that!

*Aussie Bush Yarns* is crammed full of verse and yarns, the sort of stories that most of us have heard from time to time, but have never written down. Its 112 pages make entertaining reading, ranging from verse dedicated to the packhorse to yarns about the Chinaman's snake. *The Pub and the Scrub* takes a slightly different angle, as Neil gives a history of the construction of the Ettamogah Pub just north of Albury, and then concludes with his easy-to-read verse and yarns. Ken Maynard, of *Australasian Post* fame, has lent a hand with the illustrations. In just over 70 pages they have welded together an interesting combination, and it looks like this book will be as popular as the others. Some of the poems that Neil has included are "The Doubtful Issues of 1984", dealing with the Errinundra confrontation, and "We Must Leave a Tune", which is included in this edition of *Voice of the Mountains*.

The books are funny and sad, witty and lively, and always entertaining. Both *The Pub and the Scrub* and *Aussie Bush Yarns* are available direct from Neil Hulm, at 361 Cheyenne Dve, Lavington, NSW, 2641, at \$9.00 each posted.

## *Uphill After Lunch*

Written by Amy and Isabel Eastwood and Hazel Merlo (Melbourne Women's Walking Club, 1987) RRP \$6.

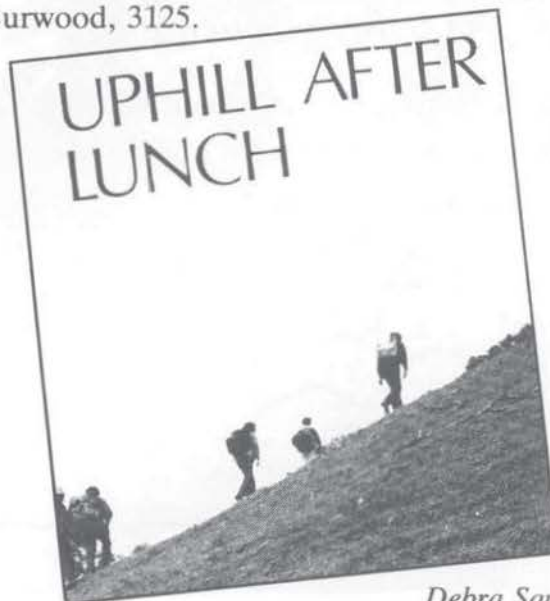
This history of the Melbourne Women's Walking Club spans from 1922 to 1985, and as the Club did the majority of its walking in the ranges, the majority of the reports are about the high country and the people the walkers met along the way.

*During many holiday periods from 1923 until well into the 1950s a party walked with packhorses in the alpine country. It was several days' walk from habitation to the areas where the packhorses went - the Snowy Plains, Mt Howitt, Wonnangatta Valley, Bogong High Plains, the Cobberas and Mt Kosciusko.*

The trips that were made through these areas are well documented and for anyone who knows the creeks and mountains well it reads like a travel guide. The text is well supplemented with previously unpublished photographs from the walkers' collections.

The packhorse trips were extremely popular, with local cattlemen acting as guides to the groups, and on at least two of these trips the local guide ended up married to one of the members of the hike party.

This book makes very interesting reading, and for anyone seriously interested in the high country, is a must. At the price of six dollars for the 160 pages it is a bargain. It is available from the MWWC, 12/11 Maverston St, Burwood, 3125.

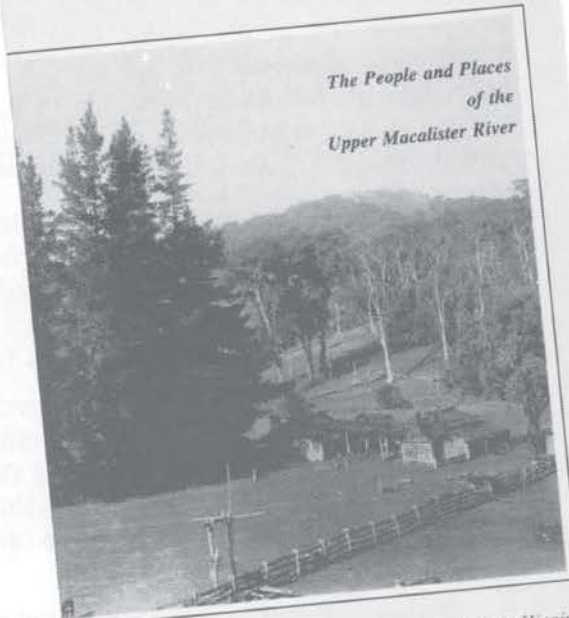


Debra Squires



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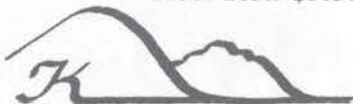
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## *Hands of the Bushmen*

*Neil Hulm*

“Stay close to that mare in the lead, Joe,  
Turn the bay colt fast, if he wheels  
We won't hold the pace, the mob will race  
As if the Devil were at their heels.”

That's where we find our best horsemen,  
They race where the scrub is green,  
Astride the back of a fiery hack  
And their deeds are rarely seen.

Hands in the bush; forget it,  
They'll be where they ought to be,  
For if misplaced, you'll be disgraced,  
Wrapped around the butt of a tree.

No reins, no horse; that's big trouble,  
You'll be upside down in the bogs,  
Or beneath your horse in a wombat hole,  
Perhaps caught in a criss-cross of logs.

Don't get ideas you're a horseman  
If you train a few horses to race,  
You don't become a stud master  
If you run a few mares on the place.

An odd bushy rides somewhat slackly  
And relaxes if no flying manes,  
He may appear to be off in a dream world,  
But he knows how to handle those reins.

They've raced, caught and handled wild horses,  
Scrub bulls, through the hills and the drains;  
We take off our hats to those horsemen;  
The bushies, the masters of reins.



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