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Voice of the Mountains

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

No. 12 1989

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Editorial Committee: Debra Squires, Linda Barraclough, Sue Silvers and Graeme Stoney

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Special Projects Officers: Lyle McCready and Jim Commins

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COVER ILLUSTRATION: "Mustering Cattle on the Bogong High Plains - A Rough Customer". Supplement to the *Illustrated Australian News*, 1 July 1892. W.S. Calvert (engraver), J. Davis (artist), 35 x 43.6 cm. Reproduced with permission from the National Library of Australia, Canberra.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The past year has seen little for us to celebrate, the government under pressure from radical 'greenie' organisations, continues to close down or put pressure on those graziers that lease Crown Land. Wonnangatta is no longer private property, farms are being closed down in the Mallee, Greens Bush on the Mornington Peninsula is being taken over and grazing leases on the Bogong High Plains, the Snowy River and the Bluff are due to be terminated in the next two years.

It is abundantly clear that we are all under threat if this process continues, and continue it will unless positive action on the part of the M.C.A.V. can welld sufficient influence to reverse the trend.

The Mountain Cattlemen will be mounting a campaign starting in the next few weeks to publicise the problems that exist and bring them to the attention of the public. Please give us your support at this critical time.

David Treasure



PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Members and Associates for loyal support over the past twelve months. Pressure on Alpine Grazing has continued from the Government and conservation groups, but despite this our resolve has remained firm and morale high.

The proposed phase-out of grazing on the Bogong Plains and the Bluff is rapidly approaching and a campaign is under development to convince the Government to alter its decision. Action separate from this course is necessary regarding the Broadbent country on the Snowy, and Frank Ryan's lease near Whitfield.

The purchase of Wonnangatta by the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands, and the subsequent closure of the surrounding grazing leases was a great disappointment to all those who know the area, and understand the management problem involved. The greatest loss however, is the loss to our heritage by the closure of this historic grazing property.

The problems of pricing of grazing leases remain. After a meeting at the Department on Thursday, 8 September 1988 the Department agreed to accept the recommendation of the pricing panel of \$3.00/head/season for both Alpine and Bush runs for the backlog of unpaid leases over the past three years. We are still waiting confirmation by letter which was promised, and the Department will instruct its Regional offices of this decision accordingly. What the future holds is unknown.

In May I attended a two day seminar organised by the Weed Science Society of Victoria and held at Monash University. The Society is keen to promote better weed control on both private and public land throughout the State. I recommend that this Association join the Society as a member, to keep in touch with further developments in this area.

The radical Flora and Fauna Conservation Bill was passed in Parliament in a watered down form after intensive work and lobbying by this Association amongst concerned groups and individuals. We are yet to see what the ramifications of this Act will be. Likewise the Alpine Management Plan seeks to set up a huge Alpine Park by regulation rather than legislation.

The 'High Country Beef' concept is now being promoted throughout the State. After two meetings with Mr Ron O'Dwyer the Association declined his invitation to participate in this activity on the grounds that too many grey areas existed. The proposal was not clear cut, and was not clearly presented. There also seemed to be an inability to properly explain the corporate structure of such a venture.

The R.M. Williams Outback Heritage Award was presented to the Association in the form of a solid bronze statuette. This magnificent piece is something we can keep with pride.

Thanks to all those who once again helped out at the Showgrounds stall. It is an important public relations exercise as well as a source of income and therefore well worth supporting.

The 1988 Get-together at Castleburn was another successful one, many thanks to all those who contributed. Best of luck to the Omeo Branch which is the host for 1989.

The outcome of this current State Elections is, of course, of interest to us, however there seems to be little difference between the two major parties on conservation issues. We can only wait on the outcome to see if a Coalition or a Labor Government is elected.

Over the next year many things may happen, it is impossible to predict what problems we may face as an organization, we must be ready and diligent and above all continue to work as a united team.

David Treasure

PLEASE SUPPORT OUR ADVERTISERS
They are supporting us!

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

A recent article in the Brisbane Courier Mail described Graeme Stoney as the epitome of the high country cattleman. His wiry, bearded face, etched with lines, looks as though it has weathered all that the unpredictable mountains can throw it.

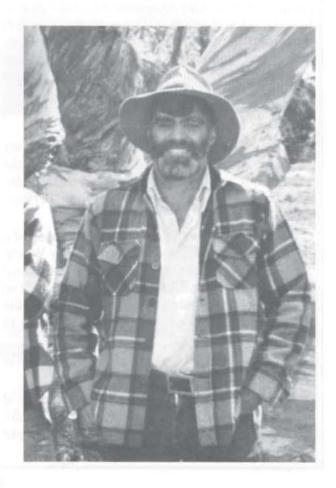
After reading Graeme's lengthy report to the Annual Meeting one could be mistaken for believing that the lines have been caused more through fighting for the cattlemen rather than by being a cattleman. Perhaps a more appropriate description would have been worry lines rather than weathered!

Some of the items dealt with in Graeme's report:

- ☆ The Flora and Fauna Guarantee Bill which has now been passed by Parliament. We can only wait and see how this will effect us in the future.
- ☆ The sale of Wonnangatta Station to the Department of Conservation, Forests and Land absorbed a large portion of time. Being very controversial many radio station interviews were conducted including 3AW and time spent with Channel 10 at Wonnangatta.
- ☆ On behalf of the cattlemen and the associates, Graeme, Helen and Sue Silvers attended the funeral of Bryan Jameson, and extended the Association's condolences to his widow, Pam. Supporters will recall that Bryan wrote Movement at the Station which was launched at Sheepyard Flat two years ago.
- An advertising campaign was held in conjunction with the premiere of Snowy II. Two 15 second slides were shown before the movie for 12 weeks at major City and Suburban theatres.
- A submission to the Committee of Inquiry into Folklife in Australia was prepared by Sue Clay. In its report the Committee of Inquiry, commissioned by the Federal Government, recognised the Mountain Cattleman as a true type of occupational folklife and as an endangered occupation. A request by the Australian Heritage Commission to provide information about the cattlemen was also dealt with during the year.

- ☆ The co-ordination of the R.M. Williams Heritage Award presentation was also undertaken. We were delighted and honoured to be the first recipients of this award.
- ☆ Numerous requests continue to come in from schools and organisations for speakers. These talks usually run for about an hour with the inclusion of the cattlemen's video.
- ☆ The printing of the full page colour photographs of the Bluff in the Sun and Age by the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands was particularly questionable. At least \$70,000 of Conservation, Forests and Lands funds were used to promote Government policy during an election.

Graeme Stoney



THE R.M. WILLIAMS HERITAGE AWARD

On 12 August 1988 a small group of Mountain Cattlemen led by David Treasure rode through Melbourne to Elizabeth Street to receive the inaugural R.M. Williams Outback Heritage Award. The R.M. Williams organisation appreciated the tradition and heritage of the Mountain Cattlemen and in contacting the Association wrote:

Our Company, which has been operating for some 53 years, set out originally to serve the bush horsemen and now, all these years later, a much larger firm, with a much higher profile throughout Australia and other parts of the world, we still continue to regard the mounted stockman as the criteria around which all of our products are marketed.

As you would know, many of the traditional items we manufacture are now used by city folk and in the main these city folk, even though they may never set foot in the outback, closely identify with the people we set out to serve.

It is in appreciation of this tradition that our company has decided to present an annual award, to be known as the R.M. Williams Heritage Award, which will be presented each year to a person, group, or organisation, who, by their day to day endeavours, our Company judges helps maintain and preserve the culture, crafts and working practices of the traditional Australian bushman, with whom we have been associated for so long.

In seeking to find such a worthy recipient for such an award, we instinctively turned to the Mountain Cattlemen, who in their day to day working lives, do so much to keep this heritage alive...

R.M. Williams commissioned the making of a bronze sculpture of a mounted stockman by Wayne Strickland, of Ulverstone, Tasmania for the award which stands approximately 14 inches high. The company also presented the riders involved in the presentation with commemorative saddle bags to mark the occasion.

In accepting the award, President David Treasure responded,

This is an important occasion because it identifies the place that our vast and wealthy heritage has in the hearts and minds of the people of Australia.

Our heritage is of great significance and is far too often undervalued. It provides us with a foundation on which to build the future and a base which we can measure our future gains.

This Award, which the R.M. Williams organisation has instituted toady, is a tangible recognition of the importance of heritage to Australia. I would like to commend the R.M. Williams organisation for creating the Award.

We should also recognise the commitment of the company to the production of clothing, harness and bushman's gear of the highest quality. That the company should open an outlet in the middle of Melbourne is a real acknowledgment that both heritage and quality have a real place in today's urban society.

The occasion has its own irony, and it is this -today, in 1988 the Mountain Cattlemen are being feted and presented with an award for our part in the traditional rural heritage of this nation. In 1990, out licences to take cattle onto the Bogong High Plains will be terminated by the Government. This means that in two years time the Mountain Cattlemen will take their cattle off the Bogong High Plains for the last time. We, and our supporters, think this would be like Melbourne without trams, like September without the Grand Final, and, Flemington without the Melbourne Cup.

In two years time, some of us here today will be Mountain Cattlemen no longer. Our old runs on the high country will become overgrown. The long brown grass will provide the fuel to turn lightning strikes into major bushfires.

Someone may call that progress. I bet they never win a heritage award.

I would like to dedicate this award to the Mountain Cattlemen who the Government considers should no longer ride the Bogong High Plains.

This Award will be our inspiration to convince the Government to change its mind.

Finally, I would like to thank the R.M. Williams organisation for this important Award and I wish you well with your new shop right here in the heart of Melbourne.



THE 1990-1991 PHASE OUTS

Growing Resistence from the Cattlemen

The Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria is totally opposed to the termination of licences and the eviction of mountain cattlemen from the Victorian High Country.

The Government is proposing to evict some cattlemen because of some very subjective, ten year old recommendations.

Over the past 20 or so years the cattlemen have been subjected to a continual barrage of allegations by strident conservationists about supposed damage.

In 1979 the Land Conservation Council (LCC) and then the Government gave in to the demands of the strident conservationists and decided to evict some of the mountain cattlemen from the high country.

It has become conventional wisdom within the conservationist community that cattle cause damage in alpine area. This is incorrect. The current terminations were, to some extent, based on alleged damage but were mainly due to the view which conservationists forced on the Government that cattle grazing conflicts with other values and users. More recently the LCC has moved away from the allegations of damage and the terminations are now based solely on the view that grazing conflicts with other values. Therefore the terminations are based on a philosophical objection consisting of subjective and personal assessments of 'conflicts' and 'values'.

We believe that the communities perception of these issues has changed and it could be argued that values are already substantially different.

The community opposes the removal of the mountain cattlemen. Survey evidence supports the claim that the public consider the mountain cattlemen should continue to graze cattle on the Victorian high country.

The mountain cattlemen are no longer prepared to be gradually phased out of existence, particularly where this is largely the result of a desire by political party's to placate the demands of strident conservationists who, in any event, represent a minority group in our community and do not reflect general public opinion.

The Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands should develop active management plans with each licence holder so that the cattlemen can provide even more positive assistance in the management of the area, the conservation of natural values and the protection of native flora and fauna.

The current extent and timing of cattle grazing does not cause any damage to the alpine environment.

The grazing of cattle has some beneficial effects, particularly in relation to reducing fuel for bushfires, providing attractions to tourists and living heritage values.

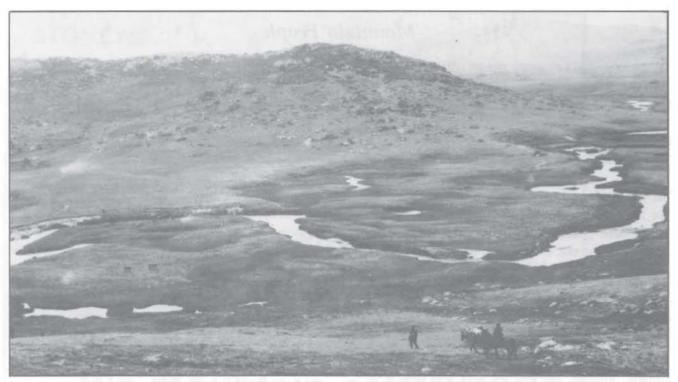
The cynical move by conservationist groups to have the Alpine Area listed for World Heritage is simply a manoeuvre to press the Federal Government into banning cattle grazing and other multiple uses of the Alps.

Although there was supposed to be a ten year phase-out period, virtually none of the cattlemen to be evicted have been officially advised that their licences are to be terminated.

The manner in which the Kosciusko National Park has degraded since the removal of grazing provides stark evidence of what can be expected if the evictions in Victoria proceed.

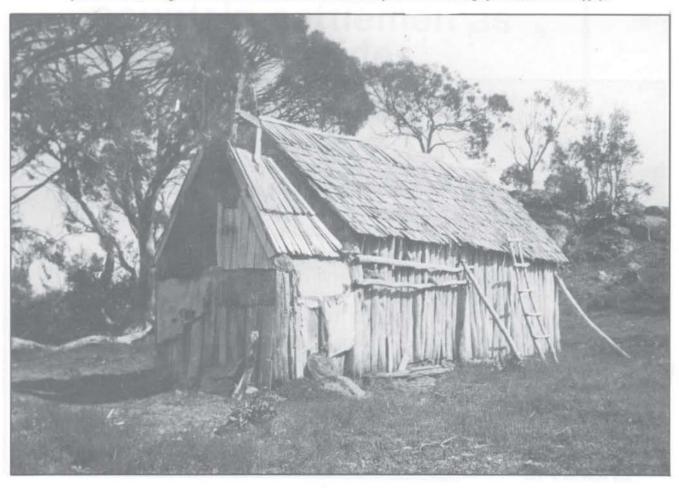
The Mountain Cattlemens Association of Victoria will do everything in its power to help the families affected, stay in the High Country.

THE TERMINATIONS SHOULD NOT PROCEED.



ABOVE: Pretty Valley on the Bogong High Plains in December 1931. Leases on the Bogongs are under threat. (Isabelle Estoppey)

BELOW: Wallace's Hut on the Bogong High Plains, December 1931. This hut, and many others similar, is symbolic of our heritage that will be lost forever if the cattlemen are phased out of the high plains. (Isabelle Estoppey)



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Mountain People

If we were black, there are few who would deny, That we belong with mountain stream and sky, For nurtured by this earth we understand The subtleties of Nature, in our mountain land.

Tis not our creed to plunder, rape or raze, We know full well the way to spend the days, To husband plains, where sweet the snow grass grows, And bring the cattle down before the snows.

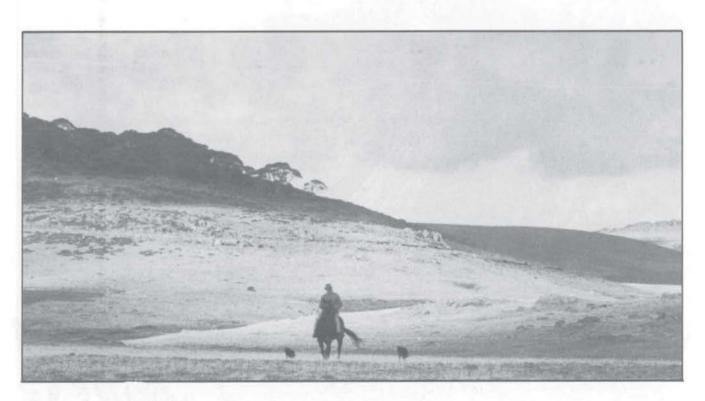
Though cities, day by day, in violence grow, The mountain ways do not contain a foe, The visitor is gathered in beside the hearth, To share with us the billy tea, a tale, a laugh.

Unpaid, unsung, the lost we seek and find, Our huts are havens for the wandering kind, Contented we pursued our lifelong quest, But still through politics they try to dispossess. Banished from a life uniquely ours, the finest in the land - the mountain cows, Would cease to graze on tops where falcons fly, While in this world, in famine, people die.

The richest of our heritage, ungrazed, will choke, On scrub, and sour tussock, and the yoke Of vermin, noxious weed, and fires roar, Should the cracking of the stockwhip be no more.

We raise the voice of Reason we who care, These mountains are a home for all to share, Let no one gird the alters of this land, Let all Australia know for what we stand.

Leona Lavell (Buchan)



Wally Ryder on the Bogongs (Harry Ryder)

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LOVICK'S Mountain Trail Safaris



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

We Ride The Great Divide

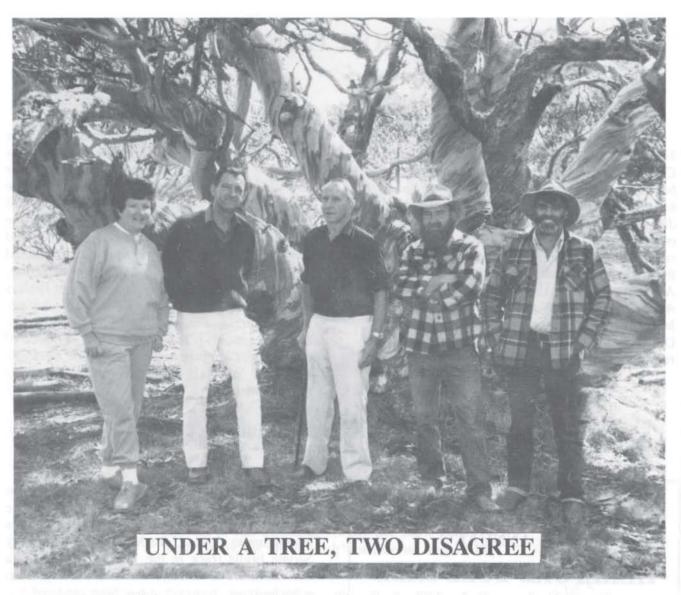
Throughout the summer months, 8-day tours leave Merrijig, travel up the Howqua River, beyond Mt. Buller to the mountains of the Great Divide and on to the High Plains of Mt. Howitt and Snowy to some of the most beautiful and inaccessible parts of Victoria's High Country — areas that cannot be visited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

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At the 'King Billy' snowgum are, from left, Mrs Joan Kirner (the then Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands), Gus Geary (Regional Manager CFL), Jack Lovick, Charlie Lovick and Graeme Stoney. (Mansfield Courier)

An old and gnarled snowgum growing on the Dividing Range east of Mansfield was chosen as the regional winner of a Conservation, Forests and Lands competition to locate significant trees in Victoria.

The tree, ironically, was nominated by Graeme Stoney, and is better known to cattlemen as the 'King Billy' snowgum.

The then Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, Joan Kirner, was flown to Bluff Hut by helicopter before being driven out to the tree by Graeme.

After the presentation, it is believed that Mrs Kirner made comment on the obvious beauty of the surrounding ranges and their inclusion in a National Park being of the utmost importance. Graeme responded with the comment that it was heartening to see that such a historic and beautiful tree could prosper and continue to give pleasure to passers-by and yet not be in a National Park.

At least they agreed to disagree!

SNIPPETS FROM THE YEAR PAST

As reported in The Weekend Australian on 14-15 May 1988, for more than a century the High Country has stood as a symbol of Australia's heritage, of courage and fierce pride - but also of love, and caring for the land. Now all that is disappearing, as a matter of policy. The article goes on to support the cattlemen and their cause. The conservation movement is currently pushing to have the Alpine area classified as World Heritage. The Association is most concerned with the release of Australian Alps - World Heritage by Dr Geoff Mosley and will be monitoring the situation closely. Obviously the Association will be opposing any such recommendation for World Heritage listing.

Spotted in the Mansfield Courier last September under Mansfield Moments. The Courier has received a communication from lawvers acting for the manufacturers of a certain garment, which we are not permitted to name. It comprises an item of outerwear which is believed to contribute to the dryness and boniness of mountain cattlemen and others. The name, we are informed, is a registered trade name, and as such is not to be used lightly, nor applied to outerwear of the generic, or Payless variety. Wearers of the latter should know that any claim, express or implied, as to the effectiveness of their garments is regarded as being in breach of the rights of the proprietor of the trade mark. So now it's official: mountain cattlemen wear unmentionables!

CASTLEBURN 16th ANNUAL HEREFORD BULL SALE

Wednesday, June 14th, 1989

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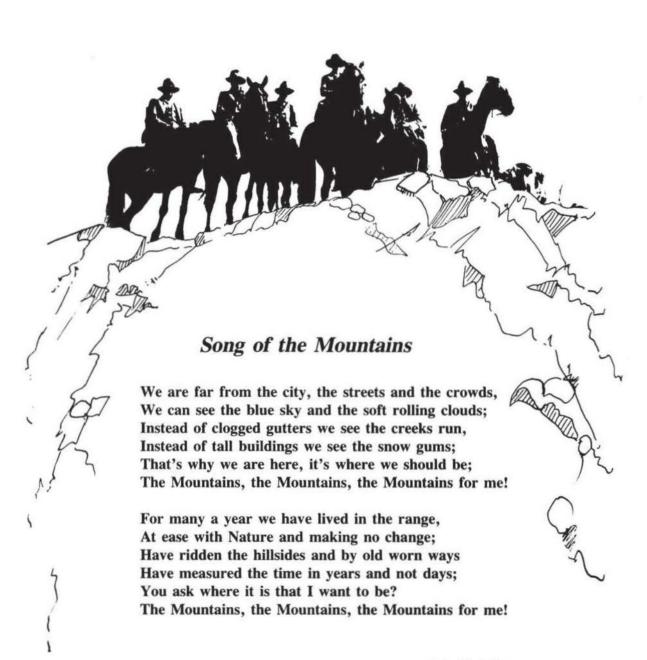
A. J. (Jim) Treasure's herd won the Victorian Commercial Beef Herd of the year for 1983 and four times a place gainer.

DARGO HIGH PLAINS BRED CATTLE

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

Further details contact (051) 57 1471 or 57 1226 Agents: DALGETY FARMERS Did you see the front page of *The Age* on Saturday 21 January? It would now appear that the Department of Conservation, Forests and Land is attempting to close off the Mt. Howitt-King Billy Saddle bridle track in the Wonnangatta-Moroka National Park to horse riders. It has always been a bridle track, however it has been renamed and appears on maps as part of the Alpine Walking Track. Is nothing sacred?

Once again Cattlemen and supporters manned our shop at the Melbourne Show. The Association would like to sincerely thank all those who gave their time and efforts assisting with the shop, and particularly to Heather Roberts who took charge throughout the period of the Show. A more visible position is being considered for a higher profile at this year's show.



THE SALE OF WONNANGATTA STATION

Most Australians will remember 1988 as the year of our Bicentennary, when many of us reached a closer understanding of our beginings and strove to preserve the touchstones of our past. For the Mountain Cattlemen then, it must be a cruel joke that this was also the year that Wonnangatta Station, a property that has been a viable agricultural unit for over 127 years, was taken away from private ownership under the guise of preserving a culture. The culture of Wonnangatta is based on the notion of the ownership, by individuals, no matter how hard the struggles, no matter how remote the location, of that land.

Wonnangatta was first taken up in 1861 by Oliver Smith, an American who stumbled on the valley when he was searching for gold. He built a log cabin on the bank of Conglomerate Creek, a little upstream from where it flowed into the Wonnangatta River. He was joined there by his sons Oliver, Jack and Tom, and Ellen Hayes and her son Harry. Ellen and Harry later took the surname Smith.

The next family to be associated with Wonnangatta was the Bryce family. John William Pender Bryce, known as William Bryce, arrived in Australia from Scotland in the 1850s. He married Hannah Quye at Beechworth in 1857, and they later moved to Grant, near Wonnangatta. William Bryce was running a pack train when Oliver Smith, with whom he had become friendly, offered him a share in Wonnangatta. Mr and Mrs Bryce and their seven children then moved on to the station in 1872.

In 1873 Ellen Smith died giving birth to stillborn daughters. They were buried near the homestead. Oliver Smith sold his share of the station to the Bryces, and the remainder of the Smith family left the area a short time later, although Harry Smith was later to return to Eaglevale.

Further Bryce children were born at Wonnangatta, and the homestead was enlarged. Cattle were grazed on the high plains nearby, and over the years the family prospered. William Bryce died in 1902, and Annie Bryce in 1914. After her death the station was sold to Phillips and Ritchie of Mansfield.

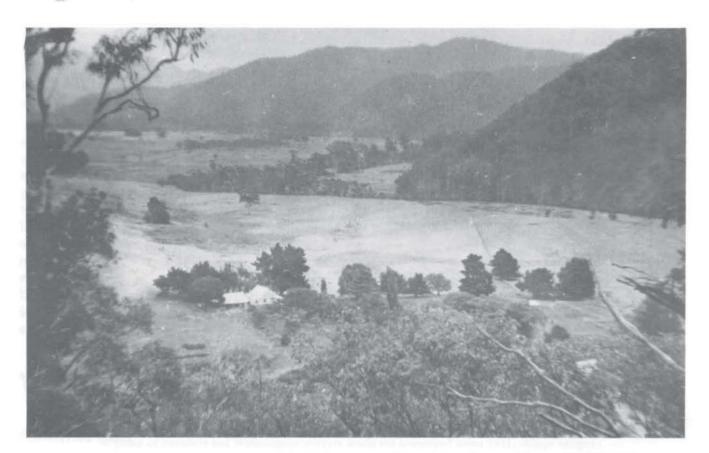
Geoff Ritchie and Arthur Phillips employed James Barclay as manager. Barclay was a widower, his wife, formerly Elizabeth Cantieri, had died in 1911, and their only son, James Barclay jr was living elsewhere with relatives. Barclay's murder at the end of 1917 or the start of 1918, along with that of the cook there, John Bamford, remains unsolved. Following that tragedy the station was sold to the Allan brothers, who employed Bob Elliott and his two sons to manage the property. It was then purchased by a syndicate who ran it until it was sold to the Guy family in 1934.

Under the control of the Guy family, consisting of Alexander Guy and his sons Jack and Arthur, Wonnangatta again became a stable and viable property. They ran up to 1,300 cattle on three leases, with associated freehold around Guys' hut. Cattle from Wonnangatta often topped the market at Heyfield.

In December 1972 the era of the Guys came to an end, when they sold Wonnangatta to the Gilder family of 'Glenfalloch', and the associated runs were transferred to them also.

Over the years the property has become of great interest to the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands due to its proximity to the vast Wonnangatta-Moroka National Park. In April 1988, despite an offer from a purchaser who wanted to acquire the property to use it for commercial beef production. it was purchased by the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands for addition to the park. One could argue that, since it was prime grazing land its main interest for the people of Victoria is in its historic value. That history is the history of the mountain cattlemen who had run it for years, and therefore surely it would have been a more valuable reminder of those people as a working cattle property.

At the time of the purchase the move was strongly criticised by David Treasure, the President of the Mountain Cattlemen. He stated that the Mountain Cattlemen were totally opposed to the Government's proposal to purchase the station. 'It was obvious', he said, 'That the Department of



Wonnangatta, now under the management of the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands. (Nellie Gibbs)

Conservation, Forests and Lands will close down the 100,000 acre lease that adjoins the Staion and allow the freehold and leases to become overgrown and neglected'. He drew further attention to the staggering decision of a government purchase of private property for almost half a million dollars, when 36 per cent of Victoria is already private land of the Department was unable to adequately maintain the enormous Victorian land mass that it was already responsible for.

It is also interesting to note that one reason given for the purchase was that the Government had to acquire the property to stop potential owners demanding an expensive road for access. Questions were asked in Parliament on the issue. On 12 April 1988, in the Legislative Council, Mrs Maree Tehan, Member for Central Highlands Province, asked:

Is the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands aware that during February and March this year Mr John Andrews, the prospective purchaser of Wonangatta station, at the request of the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands, informed the department of details of the purchasing arrangements he had negotiated with the vendor? Is it a fact that after signature of a contract by Mr Andrews, the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands entered into an agreement with the vendor to buy Wonangatta at a price higher than that agreed with the prospective purchaser? In the circumstances, will the Minister explain why her department misused information given to it by Mr Andrews to gazump him when the department entered into negotiations to purchase Wonangatta station.

It could be said that the reply from Mrs Kirner, as Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, did not throw much in the way of light on this matter. In full, it was:

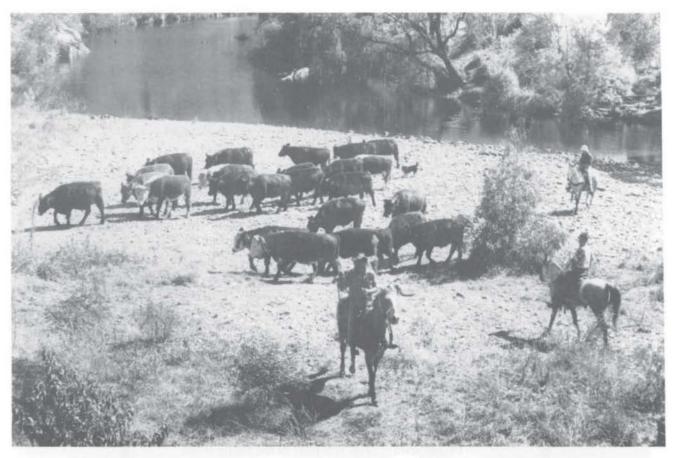
It is the Opposition that has been 'gazumped' on this issue. There are not many decisions I make where I am convinced that either I or the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands is absolutely right. However, this one is right. This decision is absolutely crucial to the people of Victoria. It is interesting that the shadow Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands asked about details of a sale rather than making a statement about how important it is for that piece of Victoria's cultural heritage to be preserved forever. (Hansard)



Guy's cattle near Mount Howitt (Isabelle Estoppey)



Jack Guy (Nellie Gibbs)



Some of the last cattle to Wonnangatta, pictured here at Licola. (Gippsland Times Photographic Service)

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Freda Ryder

The Maid of the Mountains

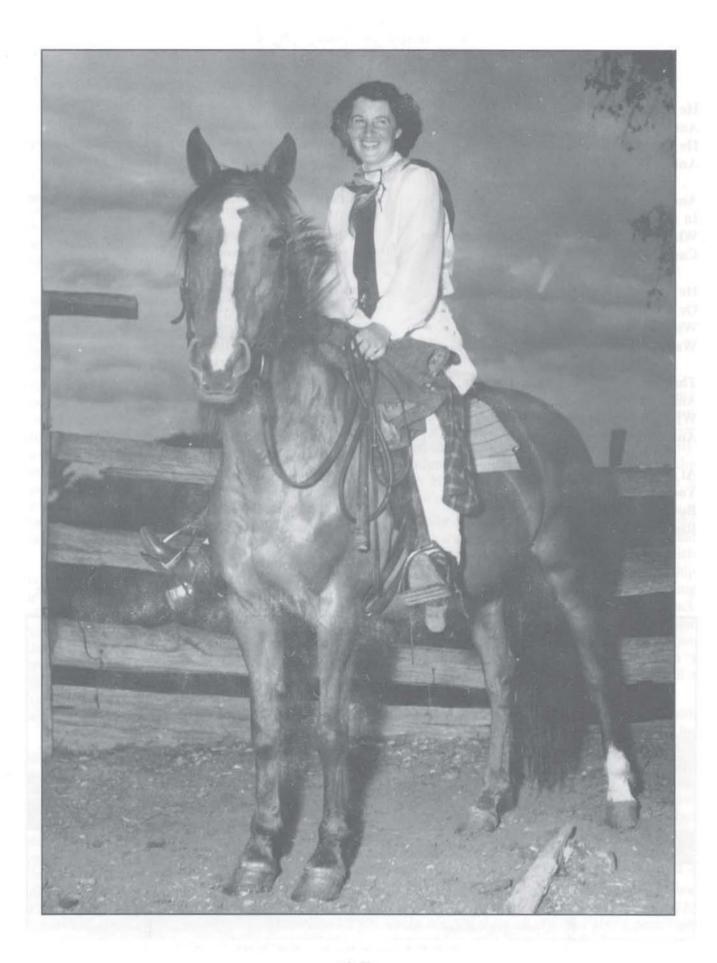
All those who have any association with the high country were deeply saddened to learn of the death of Freda Ryder on 25 April 1988.

Freda was born in Bairnsdale in 1922, and as the daughter of Harry Treasure, the youngest of his five children, and the only girl, she became known as the Maid of the Mountains. She had an extremely happy childhood and in later years was to relive precious memories of those times on the High Plains, when the family lived alternately in their home on the plains in summer and at Castleburn in winter. She was initially educated by correspondence, with assistance from her mother, and then for a time at Melbourne Methodist Ladies College, where she boarded for a time before coming home to her beloved Gippsland. Her home was one where people were always dropping in, and Freda was always there ready with a cuppa for them.

Freda always took full part in the cattle work with her brothers, and often drove stock over to the Tawonga saleyards, but actually met her husband, Wally Ryder, on Mount Bogong. They married in 1957 and their son, Harry, was born in 1959. He was always a source of great pride and joy to her. After her marriage Freda maintained interests in Dargo as well as Tawonga, staying at Tawonga while Harry was at school, and heading for Castleburn with him in the holidays. For many years she went herself to the high plains with cattle, and last year was actually the first year that she missed.

Freda had a great love for nature, for the alpine scenery and a deeply ingrained feel for the high plains. Many people who live and grow up in an area come to take it for granted, but it was not so with Freda, who never lost her sense of wonder and delight. She was a gentle and generous person, and many people found her to be a source of comfort and help in times of difficulty. She had a serenity that doubtless came from the environment in which she grew up. She was deeply involved with her church, her faith was very real to her and her Bible very well read.

She took a special delight in her grandson, the fifth generation of her family to go on to the high plains.



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A Tribute to Wally Ryder

He loved to get up in the morning And give the horses a call, He was a true mountain cattleman And a friend to us all.

And now he's gone before us In search of greener fields, Where no national parks or conservation Can interfere with the yields.

He was at home among the snow gums, Or down the woolly-butt side, With his old black dog and raincoat Walter was born to ride.

They speak of snowy river country, And where the brumbies run. Why - he's seen all of that, And chased them just for fun.

At night around the campfire, You could hear him joke and laugh, But he certainly knew his cattle, Right down to the very last calf. And now when we hang up the bridles,
At the closing of the day,
Hobble down the horses and put the saddles away,
Far in the distance it seems we hear a voice say
'Dick - put the billy on'.
It's then we realised fond memories are never gone.

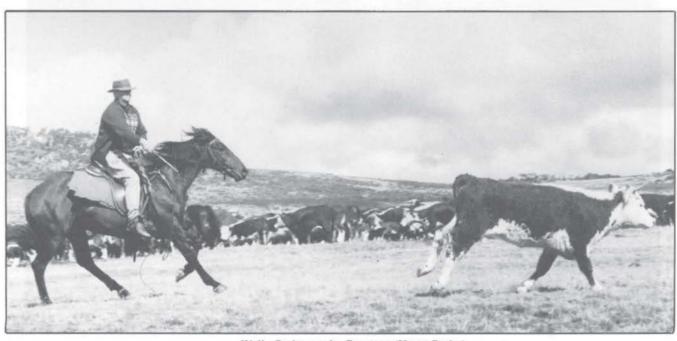
For he was part of the mountain ranges He respected his fellow man, He loved his dogs and the white faced cattle And the country where they ran.

And now he's gone before us, In search of greener fields. Where no national parks or conservation, Can interfere with the yields.

As we stand in silence
For a man so good and kind,
Remember that we're sure to follow
So keep this in the back of your mind.

Good cattlemen never die, They just cross over the divide, In search of better pastures Where cattlemen are forever free to ride.

Don Kneebone



Wally Ryder on the Bogongs (Harry Ryder)

Wally Ryder Patriarch of the High Plains

Just seven days after the death of Freda Ryder, the association was again saddened by the death of Wally Ryder.

Walter Ryder was born at Bright in 1914, the third in a family of six and the oldest son of Walter and Ada Ryder and lived all his life in the vicinity of Tawonga. He attended Tawonga Primary School and left school at the age of 13, presumably spending most of his time helping his father, but he would proudly tell of earning his keep, at least for some time by working on roadmaking with a horse and road plough.

When Wally was 18, tenders were called to carry in the materials to construct Wilkinson Lodge, (now the Rover Chalet), which was put there for people collecting hydrology information for the Hydro Electric Scheme before there was a road to Rocky Valley. Wally was successful, and with George Hobbs, won the contract for seventy pounds. The materials, and they would have been considerable, had to come in by packhorse from Hotham which was no mean walk. He had planned to use the money to buy some top grade heifers to improve his herd but at the time his mother feel ill and needed an operation in Melbourne in the days before Medicare, and Wally did not hesitate to give his long hard summers earnings to pay for the medical costs.

For many years Wally packed gear up the mountain for parties of skiers and carrying supplies up Mount Bogong. His local knowledge and willingness to help involved him in many search and rescue operations over the years, including the Gadsden tragedy on Bogong. He was actively involved in the sports days were he would be found participating in the horse riding events especially. It is as a horseman and stockman that Wally was best known.

Wally first went up to the High Plains at the age of nine and was to continue that pilgrimage for the sixty-four subsequent years. For Wally Ryder the Bogong High Plains were his Mecca. It was where he felt most free and most fulfilled in the ever changing granduer of the Alpine environment. This season past was the first time he had missed going up with the cattle. While many people may say 'a cow, is a cow, is a cow', Wally knew all his cattle individually and could relate various points about it's breeding line. The cattle business was in his blood - he had been born into such a family although he built up his own holdings by his hard work.



His marriage to Freda in 1957 was an unusual but very strong partnership of two independent people who understood each other very well. For weeks, sometimes months at a time, Freda's work commitments took her to her own business on the Dargo High Plains. Their love was built on a foundation of deep mutual respect.

Wally was active in the community on the cemetery trust for many years. He was a foundation member of the Tawonga Bushfire Brigade which formed in 1942; serving in different leadership capacities over 25 years. He was active in adapting water tanks so that they could be carried in pack saddles to the fire fronts on 'four legged water tankers'. In 1947 he was a member of a deputation to the then Fire Authority to try to obtain a motorized vehicle for the Brigade. He was still a member at the time of his death.

Wally was a very strong but gentle man, with a great sense of humour and fun; a great love for his family, for Freda, for his brother and sisters, for Harry of whom he was so proud and Sue. His special delight was his grandson, Adam Walter Ryder, and his proudest moment may well have been at the annual muster on Bogong in 1987 when Wally was able to seat Adam before him on the saddle, thus fulfilling the tradition of having him there before he could walk.

As John Lahey wrote in The Age: in his time he gathered with the cracks at many a fray, and he could out ride them all. He was also a gentle and courtly man.

Alan Taylor

Well known former drover from Bairnsdale, Alan Taylor, died on 2 September 1988, aged 68. Alan was well known by the cattlemen of East Gippsland as for many years he was responsible for driving the mobs to the railhead after the sales.

Alan was born in 1920, the son of Charlie and May Taylor. His father, also a drover, obviously instilled a great love of horses in his son. When Alan was 13 he won the boy's high jump competition at the Royal Melbourne Show with a record leap that still stands today. He spent some of his early years at Bindi Station before enlisting in the A.I.F. in 1939 with the Lighthorse.

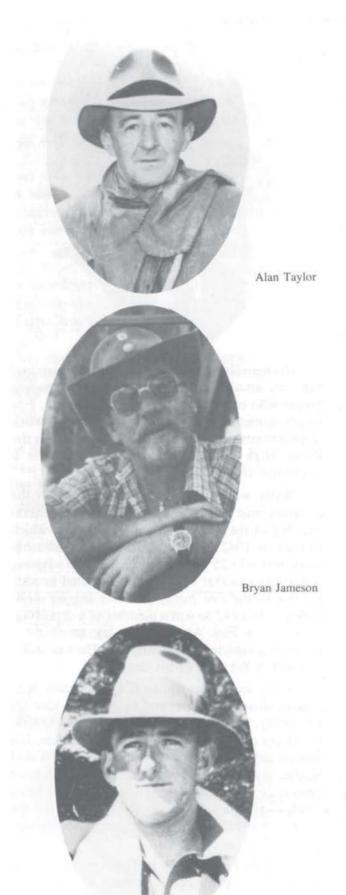
On returning from the war Alan worked for A. McLean and Co. (later A.M.L.& F.). He continued to work both around the saleyards and as a drover, droving stock from the mountain areas to the railhead at Bairnsdale. It was not an uncommon sight to see a mob of one thousand head being expertly moved by his team.

Alan was also well known for his ability to draft stock and both vendors and agents would make it a special request for him to draft their stock. His funeral was attended by a large number of family and friends from the livestock industry.

Bryan Jameson

Mountain cattlemen were saddened to learn of the death of a great friend, Bryan Jameson, on 3 April 1988. Bryan was the author of *Movement at the Station*, and had a love for the High Country. He was intrigued and fascinated by the Mountain Cattlemen - their traditions and heritage. His bitter fight with cancer was finally lost, by Bryan maintained his humour, dignity and great courage to the end.

Bryan's friend, John Hepworth, read the eulogy at the funeral, which in part was (he was) a man of admirable eccentricity, volatile emotions and generous passions. Rich in the joy of living and well acquainted with grief. He loved this land, and was as proudly Australian as he was irredeemably Irish. Injustice of any kind - but particularly injustice done to those not well able to defend themselves - offended him deeply. And with him, to be exasperated was to take action. During his long life as a journalist he fought many lost causes, and often won improbable victory. His support of the Mountain Cattlemen will be long remembered through his work Movement at the Station.



Leonard Campbell



Leonard (Kelly) Campbell

The death is also noted of Leonard (Kelly) Campbell of Bairnsdale on the 21 August 1988. He was born in 1908 at Bairnsdale, the son of Thomas and Mary Campbell.

Kelly Campbell spent a considerable amount of time at Wonnangatta Station with the Guy family as a stockman and helped to build Guy's Hut at Bryces Gorge. In his later years, there was nothing he enjoyed more than to return to Wonnangatta.

To The Bogong Cattlemen

We've seen your land, we've seen your life,
And the mountain streams that shine,
We've rode the cattle trail with you,
When it was wet or fine,
Now the City is calling
Us to its pleasures and sights,
We to a life of comfort,
You back to your Bogong Heights.

We'd just begun to know you,
To understand your way,
You did not seem to give a dam
If it was night or day,
You'd bring along a pack train,
On a dark and stormy night,
Raining like the devil,
Without a blinking light.

You always were so cheerful,
And did not seem to care,
If the packs were kicked or bucked off,
By that bloody McCoy mare,
With Mick and Pat and George and Jack,
And Bill and Ranji gay,
The Fitzes always in the front,
To lead us on the way.

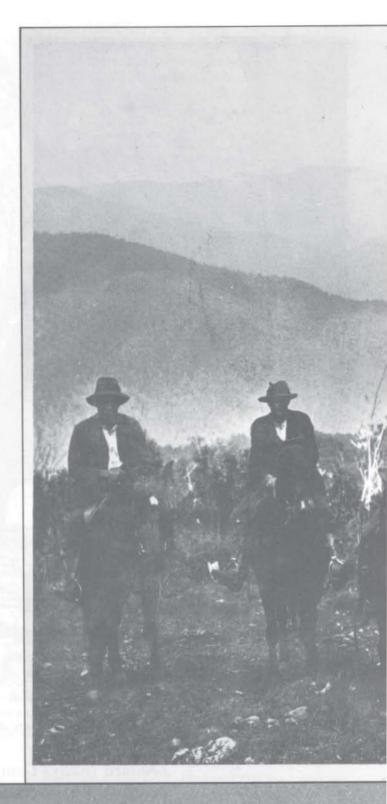
We hope sometimes you'll think of us, Don't think it very strange, If we meet again at Shannon Vale, And ride again the range Across that blasted razorback, With its stony dizzy track, And the poor old nags that stumbled, And humped a mighty pack.

So farewell Omeo horsemen, You've taught us something new, We need not tell we liked you well, Good bye! Good luck to you.

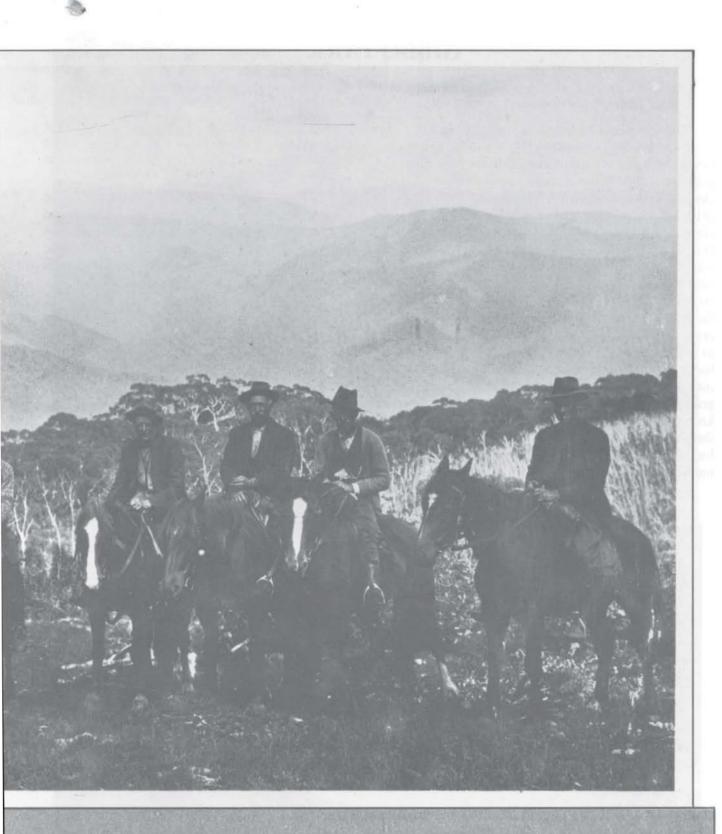
Geo. Ellsworth

This group was photographed on the Bogongs in 1929.

(Betty Fitzgerald)



— and our genial cattlemen. Re the horses), his brother Jack Shiels, all jolly good entertainers, and



from right—Bill Fitzmayer, George Fitzgerald (in charge of ldy McNamara, Rangi Gilmore, Mick McNamara, George ows who had acted as guides, riding instructors, ands to us all, right throughout the Trail Ride

GIBBO PARK

Site of the 1989 Get Together

The area has had a long and interesting history. It was originally owned by John and Florence Leyshan who had twelve children. There was some gold to be found in the area and the large flats were ideal for vegetable growing. They later went to live in Richmond, a Melbourne suburb where the family grew up and all did well in their chosen occupations. One daughter Lilian remained behind and married John Toland who had an adjoining run. Some years later Lilian married Ross Stevens and bought the Gibbo Park from her parents. At one stage they left the property when Ross worked on the Hume Weir project but with the depression years they returned to farming. Cattle, horses and poultry and, being badly infested with blackberries, the goats were introduced. The blackberries have gone but some goats still survive in the area. At this stage it became known as 'The Goat Farm' but on the original title the property was always 'Gibbo Park'. Doris, who had some schooling, taught the younger children until the school at Uplands opened part time. The

youngest of the family, Tom and Vi rode their ponies the eight miles to the school. Lilian was a great worker, as can be seen in the photo of the property taken some 50 years ago.

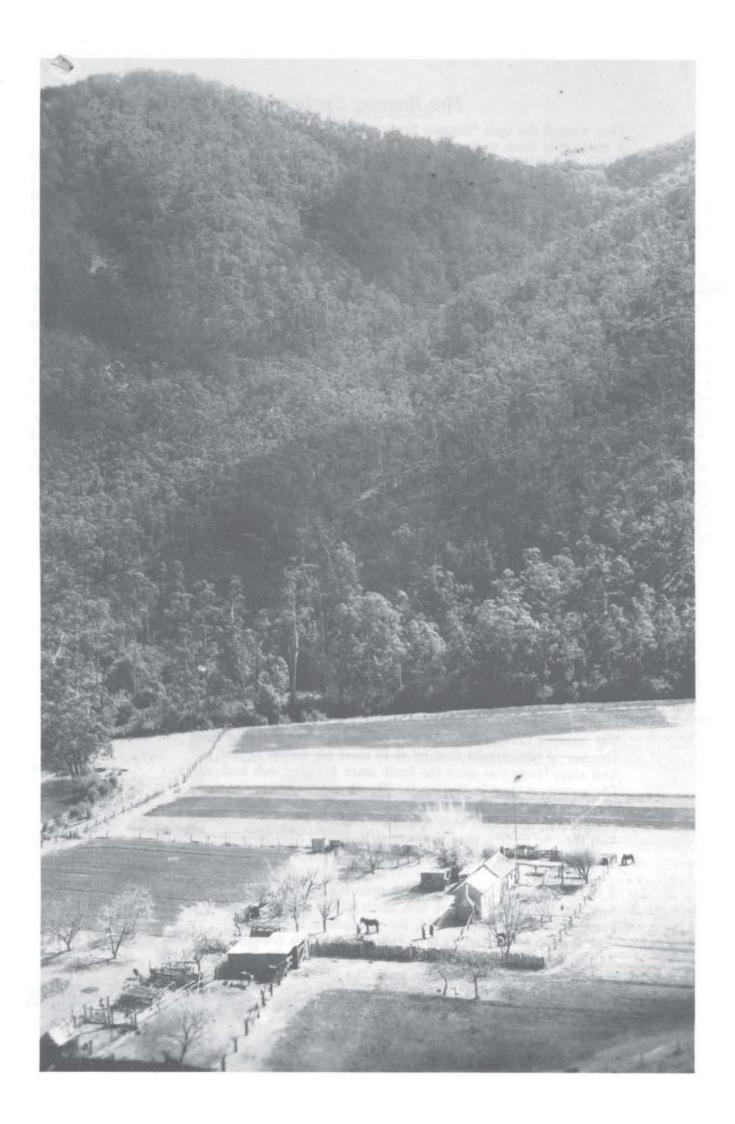
In latter years Mr and Mrs Stevens moved to Glen Valley where Ross worked at the Maude and Yellow Girl mine and then to Omeo where they retired. Lilian died at the age of 83 and Ross some years later at the age of 91 after being a patient in the Omeo hospital for several years.

In 1949 Cliff and Marie Brammell bought the property from Mrs Stevens. In 1980 with construction of the Dartmouth Dam and the possibility of flooding when the dam was full, the State Rivers and Waters supply (now the Rural Waters Commission of Victoria) compulsorily acquired the homestead area. This area, site of the 'Get Together', is now leased by Mr and Mrs Brammell.

Betty Fitzgerald



Gibbo Park (also known as the Goat Farm) c1940 (Betty Fitzgerald)



The Bogong Springs

They named the spot 'Bogong Springs' - the bushman's crown of praise, A name that back to memory brings the cattle duffing days; The same recalls a welcome stage along the bridle track, Where fate was written on the page the name of 'Bogong Jack'. They nestle in the Fainter Range beneath the Great Divide Amidst a silence lone and strange down on the Kiewa side, And trickling from the mountain's heart, in limpid silver streams, Leap through the ti-trees with a dart into a vale of dreams.

Where Nature, prodigal of mood, bestowed her favours there,
For native beauty, wild and rude, runs riot everywhere,
A lonely land where tracks but lead to end in converts wide,
A spot wherein the Fates decreed a hunted thing must hide.
'Twas there the cattle stealers met away back in the past
'Ere law and order wove the net that landed them at last.
The social outcast of the land - the harassed, human hare
Fled to these haunts when shunned and banned and found a refuge there.

The leader of the lawless gang, the arch knave of the pack,
Whose misdeeds through the ranges rang, was hailed as 'Bogong Jack'.
To none was told his history, none knew his rightful name,
While shrouded, too, in mystery from where and whence he came.
Yet well 'twas known about their Chief, as though 'twas carved in stone,
His prowess as a daring chief was to the bush winds thrown.
Was there some deed devoid of clue some theft of special brand
The troopers as by instinct knew and recognised the hand.

They followed him by day and night from down at Twofold Bay, And vowed to shoot him down on sight up Kosciusko way, While often from Monaro side he rode with bated breath In many a reckless midnight ride while hand and hand with death. The troopers oft times called a halt and groaned in their defeat; The trackers found themselves at fault and owned to being beat, For, when they hoped the prize to claim and victory seemed so near, From out the far-off ranges came a wild, derisive cheer.

But cunning though the wild dog be and light of foot and fast, The law of life ordains that he shall meet his match at last, And since 'twas war unto the knife since fate her web had spun, There came a time in 'Bogong's' life when law and order won. 'Tis told of how he fought and ran upon that fateful day, Then stood, outwitted man to man - a dingo bought to bay And thus he bade a long farewell to Bogong's purling streams, That maybe in his prison cell ran rippling through his dreams.

A hunted man will rove the earth unto it's furthest plane
And flee the land that gave him birth but to return again
Then pity such, however wild, for sad indeed his lot
When, from his country's laws exiled and by his friends forgot.
And so it was with 'Bogong Jack', when freed from prison bars,
He sought again the mountain track the silver streams and stars,
Where there at least with saving grace to face the worst alone,
He found at last a resting place unhonoured and unknown.

Bogong Jack

On the mighty wall of the Great Divide, I crept down a spur in Fainter's side; By the kooka's chorus and fading light, It was past the time to camp for the night, When I stumbled, beside the darkening track, On the ruined shingle of Bogong Jack. Now surely you've heard of Bogong Jack, A colourful card in the rascal pack! They'll show you his grave in Omeo But that's no matter, it isn't so: The hut in the ranges knows the tale, The empty horse yard - the rotting rail. For this place where he came one night, With a stolen mob on a northern flight, And he disappeared by a deed untold, In a silence deep as the mountain mould, And the night wind whimpers around his shac 'I wonder what happened to Bogong Jack?' 'Jack, Jack, Bogong Jack ... I wonder what happened to Bogong Jack?'

The tucker was good, the pipe drew well,
So I spread the bluey to take a spell
And slept till midnight. Slept and then ...
Woke to a scream from the devil's den,
Then the stamp and stir and the breaking flood
Of horses, maddened with scent of blood.
And under the beat of the fear crazed tide,
As they threshed their way down the mountain side,
Another sound, that told of the need
To hide the signs of a deadly deed
Went round the cabin and into the black,
Till the echoing horse beats brought it back
with 'Jack, Jack, Bogong Jack,

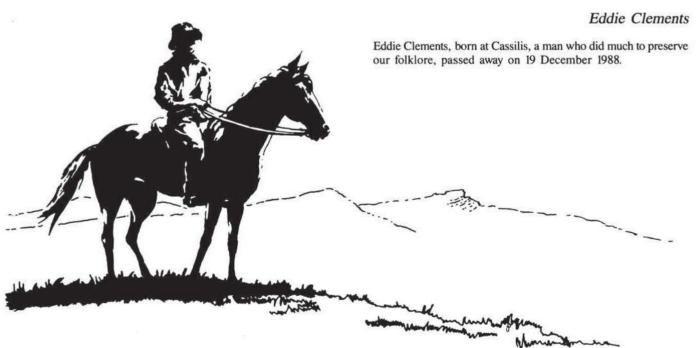
Jack, Jack ...

The hills are lonely; And men get queer
When they camp too long with the bunyip fear,
So I stoked the fire and watched it fight
The crouching shadows throughout the night,
And as soon as the dawn I made my tracks,
And never looked back to Bogong Jack's.

'Jack, Jack, Bogong Jack', (My boots still echoed it down the track) 'Jack, Jack, Bogong Jack' (I must have carried it in my pack ...)

> 'Jack, Jack,

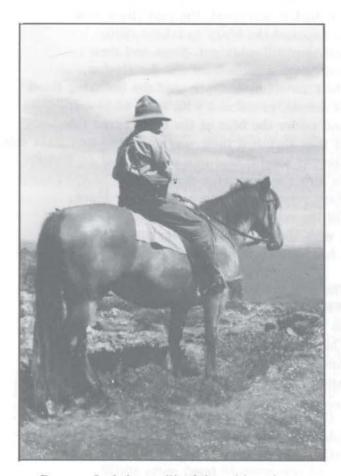
> > Bogong Jack ...



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1

WHO WAS BOGONG JACK?



Bogong Jack is a will-of-the-whisp character who rode through the early history of the alps near Omeo around 1860. Sometimes called a gentleman bushranger, and at other times a common accessory to one of the worst murders in the state, little is known about him. Legends abound of his prowress as a bushman and of his knowledge of alpine byways that allowed him to elude the law as he spirited the best horses from one side of the range to the other. Like Ned Kelly, he has become larger than life, and speculation has been allowed to fill in the spaces where knowledge of the facts have been lacking.

Bogong Jack first makes his appearance in *The Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn*, a novel by Henry Kingsley that was first published in 1859. There, as John Sampson from 'The Bougongs', a man wanted for horse theft, he escapes arrest by the police by a daring feat of horsemanship when, in a change from the man from Snowy River, he rides up a steep cliff and disappears for four years, living in a hidden valley in the ranges. Hamlyn was not able to identify him any further as, at the time of his writing Bogong Jack was still quite happily operating around Omeo.

Other legends of Bogong Jack appear to date back to this time, and are mostly about his prowress in avoiding police as he flitted from one side of the ranges to the other, taking horses from Gippsland to sell around Beechworth, and those from there to sell in Gippsland on his return. One policeman who was named in connection with Jack was a Constable Dungey, who is remembered by Dungey's track out of Crooked River, a route he was supposed to have followed while trying to apprehend his quarry.

In January 1859 Cornelius Green, a gold-buyer from Omeo, was murdered near Swifts Creek by William Armstrong and George Chamberlain. A man sighted briefly near the scene, holding the horses, was later identified as John Paynter, a butcher from Omeo. Armstrong and Chamberlain fled the scene, and took refuge in the hut of one Thomas Toke on the Gibbo River. They enjoined Toke to take a letter to Paynter from them, detailing the alibi that all parties were to give when questioned. Toke, a rather unsavoury character in his own right, who had been tried but acquitted already for the murder of Ballarat Harry near Omeo, chose instead to take the letter to the police at Omeo. A party immediately set out from Omeo after Armstrong and Chamberlain, and tracked them about forty miles through the ranges to near Wheeler's station, probably on Wheelers Creek near Shady Creek. There they were arrested, and conveyed back to Omeo. John Paynter and another accessory, Sidney Penny, were also arrested.

The four men were committed for trial in Melbourne. There, in one of Victoria's more spectacular miscarriages of justice, Armstrong and Chamberlain were acquitted. This meant that, as is was considered they did not murder Green there was no case against Paynter and Penny for assisting them. These two were released from custody and disappeared. Armstrong and Chamberlain were not so lucky. Still in custody serving sentences for horse theft arising from their means of transport when arrested after the murder, a public outcry resulted in them being put on trial for the attempted murder of the police escort accompanying Green. This time they were convicted, and they were executed in July 1859.

In November 1859 a warrant was issued for the arrest of John Paynter on charges of horse theft. He was described as about 30 years of age, six feet tall with a fresh complexion, dark hair rather thin on the top of the head, a large acquiline nose, stoops slightly but is otherwise a well made man and a butcher by trade. He was arrested and tried at Beechworth in December 1859, where he was acquitted. One factor in this may well have been that the horse in question had disappeared, and Paynter speedily did the same, never again to be seen in official records.

Rolf Boldrewood, who despite another local legend, was never a Magistrate at Omeo, wrote of the story of Cornelius Green, and the murder of 'Ballarat Harry' in Nevermore, published in 1892 and its sequel The Ghost Camp. Bogong Jack again makes his appearance in The Ghost Camp as John Sampson, a bushman who knew his way around the mountains to a great degree, with knowledge of places where, by miraculous riding, escapes from police had been made.

Bogong Jack was not formally identified as John Paynter until 1968, on the oral evidence of James Medden and Michael McNamara, both aged around 100 years. Their claims, based on what their fathers, who had been around at the time, had told them, were published in *Pioneers of the Omeo District* by Jane Vince Pendergast.

The year before Mrs Pendergast's book was published, and based on the same evidence, Eric Harding produced his small novel Bogong Jack: The Gentleman Bushranger, a fictionalised account of the career of John Paynter. In that he describes Bogong Jack as the scion of a well-to-do English family, sent out to make a life for himself in the colony after a youthful misdemeanour. He advances a theory that Bogong Jack, or John Paynter, retired to his hut on a spur of Mount Fainter. There he believes he was quietly murdered by a traveller for his gold.

Harding's theory has long had acceptance, but a careful check of official records on John Paynter raises questions that require an answer. According to the records of his marriage at Omeo in 1858 to Ann Dewey Cook, he was the son of Elizabeth Jenkins and William Paynter, a squatter from Tasmania, where John had been born. They had one child, Edward John William Paynter, born at Omeo in August 1859. Paynter was also equipped with a most unusual appendage for any good bushranger and cattle thief, a mother-in-law, named Ann Cook. So not only did Bogong Jack, as John Paynter, disappear, but so too did his wife, son and mother-in-law.

The question is: was Bogong Jack, alias John Paynter, quietly murdered in his hut on a spur of Fainter? If he was, what happened to the rest of his family? Or, is it more a case that the family moved elsewhere, changed their names and became industrious butchers or selectors? These are questions to which no-one as yet has an answer.



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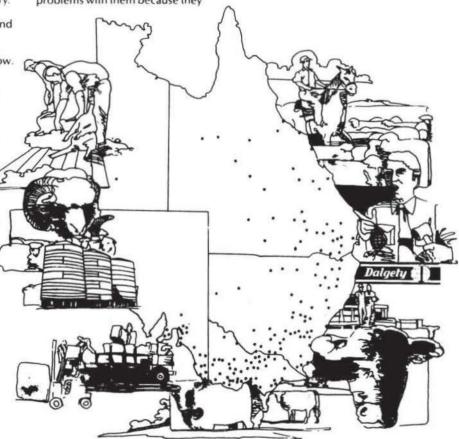
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A GRAND LADY

Mrs Ina Faithfull



Mrs Ina Faithfull, nee Greenwood, was born in Omeo in 1890. She has lived in the district all her life. Ina attended Omeo State School until the age of fourteen. After leaving school she took up a traineeship with Shannon's Drapery shop in Omeo to be a dressmaker.

Ina had five brothers Walter, Arch, Son, Viv and Keith and two sisters Ethel and Violet.

In 1913 Ina had her first ride to the Bogong High Plains with Fred Faithfull and his four sisters. During this trip it snowed night and day. The family camped at Wallace's Hut, which was in close proximity to the brumbies in Rocky Valley. At this time brumbies were mustered instead of cattle. It was not until 1920 that the Faithfull family, namely Ina's brother Walter, first ran cattle on the High Plains. Walter ran cattle on the Bogong High Plains until the mid 1950s.

In 1920 Ina married George Leslie Faithfull at Christ Church, Omeo. After they married the couple moved on to a Soldier Settlement block in Omeo Valley. The property is still in the family today.

George and Ina had four children: Shirley, Roma, Ken and Colin who were all born in Omeo. The children all went to school in the little Omeo Valley school. Ina was secretary of the school committee for many years. The four children all had their first ride to the High Plains with Walter Greenwood, better known as 'Bunt'.

Ken and Colin both worked for their uncle, droving his cattle to the 'tops' and bringing them off again. In 1952 George Faithfull (junior) took over the Greenwood run. Today his sons Peter and Richard still drive the cattle to the High Plains each year in December bringing them home in April.

Ina and Shirley have been Associate members of the Mountain Cattleman's Association since it was first started in 1972. Ken has been a full member since the Association was first formed in 1969.

At the age of 98, Ina still attends the Annual Mountain Cattleman's Get Together in the summer.

Terri-Anne Faithfull
(grand daughter of Ina Faithfull)

2

CASTLEBURN 1988

The 1988 Get Together which was held at Castleburn on 30 and 31 January was yet another roaring success. In the beautiful setting on our President's property hot summer weather was enjoyed by all (even the summer rain early Sunday morning did little to dampen the spirits). The Gippsland Branch are to be congratulated on their tremendous effort. The enormous amount of work they had put in was obvious and the Get Together ran like clock-work. Over 3,000 visitors had a great weekend because nothing had been forgotten.

After dancing into the small hours the night before, the crowd was welcomed on Sunday morning by Mrs Heather Mitchell, President of the Victorian Farmers Federation. Mrs Mitchell

Other events (and results) from the weekend were:

Packhorse Championship 1st Ron Connley 2nd Jim Campbell 3rd Noel Graham

Whipcracking (10 years and under) 1st Justin Blair 2nd Julie Stevens 3rd Lyric Mitchell

Whipcracking (11 years and under 16) 1st Tanith Blair 2nd Carl Neilson 3rd Brent Burley

Whiperacking (Ladies) 1st Sharon Smith 2nd Tanith Blair 3rd Leanne Blair

Whiperacking (Cattlemens) 1st Tom Smith 2nd Max Blair 3rd Michael Smith

Whipcracking (Open) 1st Max Blair 2nd Ron Connley 3rd Mich. Tschirpig commented on the tremendous and daunting task the early pioneers undertook when they opened up much of the mountain country, and congratulated the Association on its large and dedicated membership.

Full media coverage gave Melbourne an exciting view of the Cattlemens Cup which was won yet again by Ken Connley on Rainbow, Peter Faithfull and Chris Stoney were second and third respectively. Mrs Mitchell presented Ken with his Cup, sash, horse rug and oilskin coat, Peter was presented with a sash and rug, and Chris with a sash and handling rope. The Association sincerely thanks the Burrowes Film Group for it's continued interest and generous sponsorship for this event.

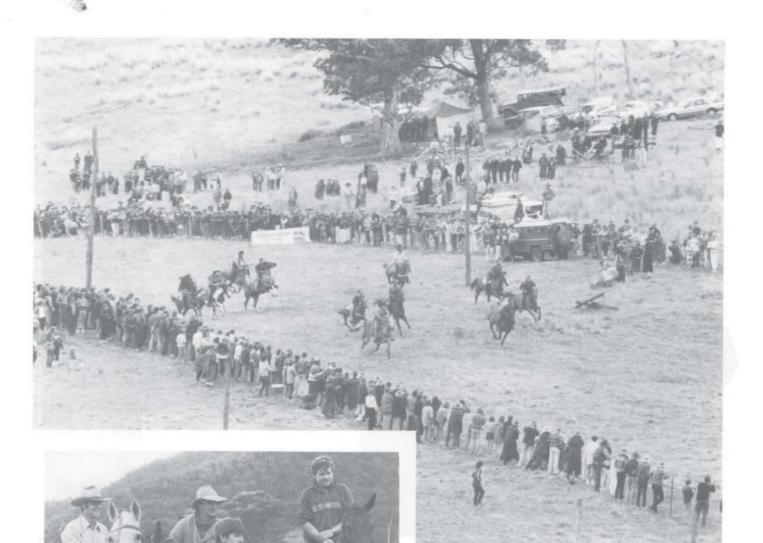
Relay 1st Mick Kernahgen's Upper Sandy Creek team 2nd Boltons team from Sale 3rd Kate Stoney's team from Mansfield 4th Sara Connley's team

Packhorse Race 1st Gordon Moon 2nd Jim Campbell

Stockman's Dash 1st John McMahon 2nd John Cook 3rd Kevin Higgins

Congratulations to all and best of luck for this year's competition.







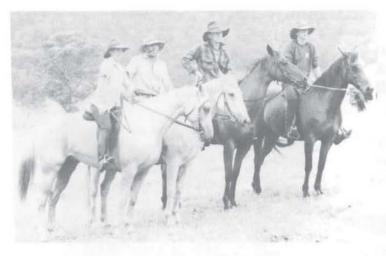


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Gathering photographs by Mansfield Courier and Debra Squires



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What Would The Banjo Say?

He fell from his horse on the Bogong Plain, Mustering stock in the sleet and the rain So they brought him in with a damaged brain Was the best that they could do!

Then we flew him on to Sydney town
Where the surgeons waited, gloved and gowned,
If a suitable donor could be found
They'd make one out of two!

Well, fate was kind to the team that night For pretty soon came the gruesome sight Of a body smashed in a gang-land fight His brain was good as new!

So all night long they worked with care, They swapped the brain, replaced the hair, Then charged it all to Medicare And billed the patient too!

Rejection signs were nil, they said,
But the strangest thoughts now filled his head,
A city brain in a bushman bred,
But they turned him loose at last!

Confusion reigned in that country lad, For he knew not what was good or bad, But his mind knew well what could be had, Like drugs and smoking grass! His body fought his mind - and lost, And he roamed the streets around Kings Cross. He mixed with crooks, for his brain was boss, And the girls he met were tarts!

'They've changed my mind, and I ask you please To take me back to the hills and trees, For I'd rather a horse between my knees And a saddle under my arse!'

So, now on the Snowy Mountains range The Old Man snorts at the winds of change To see this stockman dressed so strange, With spiked hair, Green and pink!

Yet the body born for that epic ride Could gain more ground with every stride And Clancy watched him, horrified, As he brought them back from the brink!

So he missed the grins and excited cheers, For mountain men don't mix with queers, And his sense of pride then turned to tears, For he's blown his final link!

For there never was so fast a steed On this range before, and they all agreed That motorbikes are a different breed! And what would Banjo think?

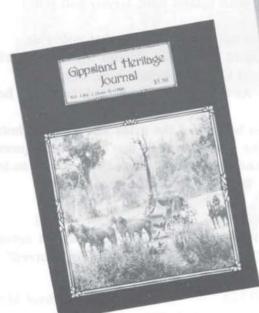


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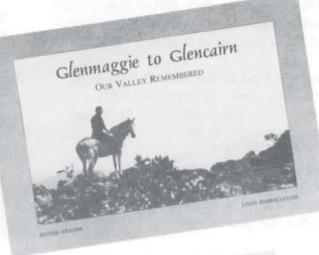


Edition No. 5 of . . .

Gippsland Heritage Journal

features photographs of the Tambo Valley and full accounts of the 1844 crossing from Mansfield by the Hunter party, and of an 1894 trip into Tarli Karng.

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Sunnyside

Sunnyside, now a deserted area near Omeo, is recreated from the memories of Jim Ross, with research by Debra Squires.

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Alpine Colours

The blue of the mist on the mountains, The green of the trees in the rain, The white of the snowfalls in winter, Are the colours that mantle the plains.

The purple of violets cool hidden,
The silver of stars and the dew,
The hot white, the cold white of lightning,
Have been the colours of all ages through.

The sun and the mist make a rainbow, Pink triggers cover the ground, The slow red of fire belongs there, In the colours you find all around.

Nature chose colours that blend well, Her fires do not attack, We need lightning along with the rainbows, Before ignorance turns the alps black.

G.A. Knights

LETTERS

From Neil Barraclough, Briagolong

Everyone has heard of the greenhouse effect, with predictions of global warming, sea levels rising and with unpredictable changes in rainfall patterns. What has it to do with the mountain cattlemen and their future?

While scientists are being cautious with their predictions, it could be expected that:

1. the winter snowline will be at a higher elevation. 2. the season that cattle can graze in the high country may be of a longer duration. 3. some change may be noted in the alpine environment. Any change, such as the reduction in the area of an alpine bog, may be attributed to the effects of cattle grazing.

I am not, however, concerned here with the future, but wish to point out how climatic change in the recent past could be producing environmental change in the alps today. We occasionally hear how the alpine environment has changed, with cattle grazing at times being suggested as the cause, but what of the climate?

Cattle are being blamed for the destruction and disappearence of alpine bogs and other changes. How many of these changes would be occurring even without the presence of cattle, being caused either by climatic change or other factors, such as changed fire patterns?

First, let us go back a couple of hundred years to the comments made by an officer aboard Governor Phillip's fleet sailing to Botany Bay. "The fleet sailed the 12th of November, and upon the 7th of January, 1788, at two o'clock P.M. we made the South Cape of New Holland. The land is very high and mountainous, and upon the tops of some of the highest we could discover snow."

Long gone are the days when snow could be seen from the sea in early January. Other early observations also suggest that the amount of snow on the alps is diminishing.

When Strzelecki discovered Mt Kosciusko the record in his diary is: "On 15th February, 1840 about noon I found myself on an elevation of 6510 feet above the level of the sea, seated on perpetual snow".

Henry Meyrick describes his station on the Macalister, perhaps at Glencairn, in the following terms in a letter to his family, dated 11th April 1846. "I have been there myself and like it very much, though it would not suit anyone who could not make himself happy anywhere, in as much as it is very like a large jail - 25 miles from the nearest squatter, and surrounded by snow for eight months of the year."

James Stirling in a paper read 11th December 1884 gives the following total snow depths for Omeo for the years 1879-1884 inclusive: 1879 - 1ft 6ins, 1880 - 2ft 3ins, 1881 - 2ft 3ins, 1882 - 3ft, 1883 - 3ft, 1884 - 1ft.

He also states in the same paper that: "So far as results seem to confirm the suggestions made in the above mentioned report; for an appeal to the records of the past five years would certainly indicate that the imperial representations as to the extreme severity of the climate are not altogether to be relied on, unless we assume as some of the older residents still assert, that the climate has undergone considerable modification during the period herein discussed. I have elsewhere drawn attention to the excellent yields of cereals on the Omeo Plains during the past seven years, as disproving the notions of the early pastoral settlers, that it would be an exceptional season in which wheat could be grown at these sub-Alpine elevations, viz., between 2500 and 3000 feet, owing, it was said, to late frosts, snow, and other unsuitable climatic conditions."

It is hard to a believe that just over 200 years ago snow was seen from the sea in early January. Strzelecki would not have made his diary entry under today's conditions and Omeo no longer receives the snow falls once recorded by James Stirling. Stirling's notes of 1884 saying that the old residents assert "the climate has undergone considerable modification' are also significant.

There may have been changes in rainfall in the mountains as well, but it is much harder to find conclusive evidence of this as records are few. In 1864 Angus McMillan was engaged by the Government to cut a mining track from Omeo to Woods Point. In his diary, on Saturday 26th March,

he records: "3p.m. heavy rain, the road cutters had to stop work, 20 past 5. Mr Jones returned like a drowned rat, encountered fearful scrub, even his forehead is bleeding with the bites of leeches which are always numerous in this altitude in thick damp underwood." Mr Jones had been working between the Crooked River and upper Dargo River. McMillan's statement would not be made today, as it is now too dry in the area for leeches to cause this much concern.

We do not know what is causing any change to the climate in the mountains and we do not even know if the climate has ever been stable for any great length of time. The earth has in the past been through many changes, with an ice age starting perhaps about twenty thousand years ago and receding about eleven thousand years ago. During this period glaciers formed in high valleys in the Kosciusko area and in some of the higher mountains of Tasmania. Sea levels dropped world wide to about 100 metres below present level. It has been estimated that temperatures in the Snowy Mountains may have been from six to nine degrees below present temperatures

Many older people with a lifetime in the alps believe these changes are still going on today. Roy Hutchison of Warragul, a skier with a forty year association with the alps, tells me he believes there have been changes in his time, with a trend towards less snow, an elevated snowline and shorter snow seasons.

We are not in a position to say what effect climatic change is having on the alpine environment, but it would be in the interests of the Mountain Cattlemen to have as much information on the subject available to them as they can. There is also an urgent need to record as many of the observations of the older cattlemen and others, particularly those whose experience goes back beyond the fires of 1939. Any observations of such things as water races from old gold mines that lead to creeks that no longer run, or have insufficient water to serve the purpose originally intended, would be extremely valuable. Old records and diaries with observations must not be lost.

If the future of the alpine area is decided by the findings of academics who have neither a depth of practical experience nor a true understanding of the area's history, then the fault may be ours for what we have not done.

Neil Barraclough

P.S. I am very keen to hear from anyone with early records, observations or similar. My postal address is 50 Rosstrevor Ave, Briagolong, 3860.



From Sally Weston, Secretary, Snowy Mountains Horse Riders Association, Jindabyne

Congratulations to the MCAV on their being awarded the inaugural R.M. Williams Outback Heritage Award. It is heartening to know that there are some people who appreciate the lifestyle and associated hardships endured by our pioneering forebears. R.M. Williams must be congratulated also, for his acknowledgment of the hardly souls who carry these traditions into modern times 'keeping our heritage alive'.

However, it is with great sadness that I read of the termination of the Bogong High Plains leases in 1990. The real tragedy of this Government decision will be borne by future generations denied the right to play their part in keeping our heritage alive.

Victorians beware! This is only the beginning. Take heed of what is happening north of the border. Our own Snowy Mountains stockmen lost their leases many years ago. At that time, no-one really realised what was going on, or what the consequences would be. The 'greenie' plot thickens from here on - very subtlely and underhandedly, you too may find yourselves banished from your beloved mountains, for ever.

There exists in our country, an 'elitist minority' who would have large areas of land locked up for their own personal use. Their desire is to wipe out all evidence of previous land usage - all things of historical importance. 'They' want to create vast wilderness areas. How does one 'create' wilderness? Their idea seems to be that just locking up these areas will do the trick - let it look after itself - no problem.

However, the problems are obvious to anyone who really knows the mountains and really cares, as the Mountain Cattlemen do. Just locking up an area can be a very foolish thing to do. It is, of course, the 'easiest' and 'most natural' solution, as seen by the academic urban element in our society, who have never really 'been there' and have no appreciation of the realities of looking after the mountains.

One only has to look at the total devastation caused by the recent fires in Kosciusko National Park to appreciate the potential for environmental damage due to very hot fires caused by mis-guided management, or total lack of management.

The conservationist element only see the socalled damage, or potential damage caused by horses and cattle. These ideas stem from personal opinion and people's assumptions, with very little basis in real fact or hard evidence. We are banned from riding in Kosciusko National Park now, but no matter who you ask, no-one can give a satisfactory reason why. Apparently, someone suggested that horses **might** damage the environment, and that was enough. Is park management going to eradicate the brumbies as well? Imagine the outcry from the general public.

Up till now, the various governments have shown an obvious bias towards the conservationist 'do-gooder' types. There has to be room in our society for compromise. What is needed now is a sensible and REALISTIC approach to these very emotional issues.

I have great faith in the fighting spirit of the Mountain Cattlemen of Victoria - they have shown all along that they are willing to go into battle for their rights and beliefs. There is still a group of us up here too, who are not willing to lie down and die when it comes to these issues. If the cattlemen and horsemen go from the mountains, then the traditions die, and our heritage dies. You can already see this happening in New South Wales. So into battle we go - for our right and beliefs and for KEEPING OUR HERITAGE ALIVE!

Sally Weston, Secretary, SMHRA

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From W.B. Hartley, Croydon

I am writing in regards to a meeting held on October 14th, 1988 in Melbourne by the Land Conservation Council, which I attended on behalf of the organisation I was representing at the time, The Council of Victorian Fly Fishing Clubs. This initial meeting (there are more to follow) was to discuss areas in Victoria suitable as Wilderness Areas.

While a conservationist myself, I do not consider myself as a radical conservationist, that is, emotion does not overrule facts, no matter how much the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands (C.F. and L.) try to twist those facts. As the Alpine Area was discussed at length by C.F. and L.'s Alpine Planner, Mr John Harris, several things became obvious:

- 1. That your organisation was not present.
- 2. Among the invited were approximately 23 people from C.F. and L. or Government or Semi Government Departments, and 18 representatives from Victorian colleges and universities.
- 3. As you can see by the numbers of Government employees and academics present all pushing one particular line or view makes it very difficult to defend one's case, in our particular case

it was access to so called wilderness areas by concerned, sensible anglers. Misleading statements (views) made by invited speakers (academics) regarding the effects of introduced trout upon native species again using emotion as against their own biological and historical facts.

4. Mr John Harris, supported by C.F. and L. and academics present, made it quite clear that the ultimate aim is to remove the mountain cattlemen (and thus their way of life) from the Alpine region, using emotion to influence people ignorant of the facts.

I have fished the waters in some of the high country and believe the cattle do very little damage, and in fact have several beneficial effects.

Might I suggest that your organisation write immediately to the Land Conservation Council and have yourselves included in the future meetings, as without representation you have no voice. You may also like to ask them why your organisation was left off the list in the first place!

W.B. Hartley

(It is interesting to note that the MCAV, one of the largest groups using the alpine area were not invited to attend this meeting. An explanation is being sought from the LCC - Ed.)

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The Fire from Mudgeegonga

'Twas on February the first in sixty eight, the wind, ten knots and growing stronger, the mercury soared to one hundred and eight - then a fire at Mudgeegonga!

Fanned up by a westerly, smoke blanketed out the sun, Flames spread like a sheet up there on Hick's run.

It burnt into the forest land where firemen made a rally to hold it there 'til nightfall or could wipe out Happy Valley.

Then a change of wind at Running Creek - and out of the mountains it sprang.

It lit the hills from peak to peak and roared down on Dederang.

It raced across the farm land like a torrent down it' bed. Burned out life-long savings and the hay in every shed. And the farmers fought their battle 'til they could stand no longer,
It burnt their fence and sheep and cattle - the fire from Mudgeegonga.

The courageous women faced it, amid that crimson glow they watched their homes scorch around them, their shrubs and gardens go.

It jumped the Keiwa River, went raging on its way - a sight to make you shiver, or frighten the C.F.A.

They burnt it back across Mount Jack, they dozed a trail below Eskdale, from the Mitta to Mount Tawonga firemen fought with tooth and nail to arrest the fire from Mudgeegonga.

So when you're joking with your mate down by the farm yard gate, or smoking in the shade the good Lord has made, just see a match don't linger longer,

- Think of the day the fire got away from Hick's at Mudgeegonga.

Don Kneebone

Bushfire

Heat haze, shimmering sun's rays Making a vast vagueness of the earth The gentle breeze that comes to play With brittle leaves, long grasses.

Tall timbers reaching for the sky Lazily leaning, while far below Small bushes wilt and die As the sun beats down.

The slow, sure movement of orange and red Creeping softly, silently at first A tiny patch, but quickly fed Gathers frightening momentum.

So suddenly everything is alight As torturing flames turn and twist The graceful gums burning bright In speechless agony.

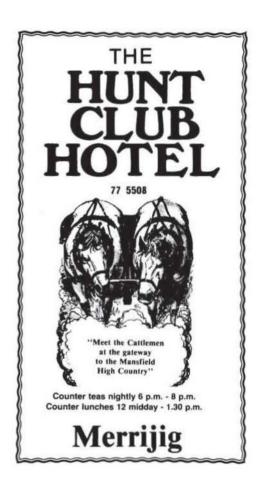
Dead grasses and leaves feed the fire As it roars and rages it's mastery Flames fanning out, reaching higher In sure victory. Then thundering crash of fallen tree Golden glowing in its dying moment The fire declares it's supremacy With destructive delight.

The air is filled with smoke and ashes Caught by the wind and rising heat While the fiendish flame dashes Further afield.

The flames continue their drunken dance Till all within reach is destroyed The neglected forest had no chance Of survival.

What's left is skeletons, stark black on blue Weeping silently their sorrow The life once here is now reduced to Ashes.

Sally Weston (Jindabyne)





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Contributions are sought for the next edition of *Voice of the Mountains*. Good photographs, either colour or black and white, and historical or topical articles are especially sought. New advertisers are always welcome. We would appreciate all contributions by 1 October 1989. Please send contributions to *Voice of the Mountains*, P.O. Box 86, Bairnsdale, 3875.

Voice of the Mountains acknowledges the assistance of the Coleman team from Heyfield in the collation of last year's edition of Voice.

We are also grateful to the following people for their assistance this year: Isabelle Estoppey, Jean Annand, Betty Fitzgerald, Rev. Alistair Macrae and Brian Bennett. *Voice* could not have been produced without the usual exceptional assistance and patience from Neil and Dennis at E-Gee Printers.

In Defence of the Cattlemen

We are talking here of legends,
Of men who came this way
In search of summer pasture
Where their lineage is this day.
We are talking of the mountains
With their blues and whites and greys
And the men who graze their cattle,
Following their fathers' ways.

But now we have some people
Who say they have some fears
'Let's rid the hills of leases
Cos they've had one hundred years.'
And they make the claim that pleases
As they seek the masses' cheers,
But they cite no valid reasons
Just reach the Bureaucrats' ears.

They make their plans for no man's land
With dinner party prattle
And there is much talk of the splendid walk
Being spoilt by mess of cattle,
'It's only a matter of time of course
And our problem we shall rout
Then the cattleman and his horses
Will be seen no more about.'

But when in peak of summer
With the mountains dry as thatch,
God sends His mighty drummer
With lightning for his match,
And the flames are fanned by fiery winds
Ever deadly with their feint
Who stands the line to stem it?
They can tell you who it ain't.

And the Ministers responsible
Are very quick to note,
'Don't heed too much the issue,
Is it a popular vote?'
And in the hills their quarry,
Too far away to fight,
Daily gather round their fires
Ever mindful of their plight.

So Government's officials
And others of such ilk,
Sit down to their decision
In shirts of Thailand silk.
'Let's rid the hills of cloven hooves
And the Cattlemen's derision,
For up there, there's too few booths
Let's have no indecision.'

So who is there among us
That envies on the task,
To tell our Banjo Patterson
That Clancy's rode his last.
He would point to those before you
And the shadows that they cast;
Face all that is before you
And fight them to your last.

Max Cruickshank

THE DESERT STOCKMEN - OUR ARID EQUIVALENTS

In September 1988, the Land Conservation Council handed down its recommendations on the Sunset Country in the Mallee area of Victoria. When it is all boiled down the livelihood and traditions of a small number of graziers and their families are at stake.

The Land Conservation Council has recommended that a new 610,000 hectare national park be established in the north-west of the Sunset Country, to extend existing parks from 210,000 hectares to 956,000 hectares of park. This will make a total of 22/of the Mallee area being locked up in National Parks. Again the questions of how the area will be managed and who will foot the bill arises.

The report also recommends the phasing out of grazing on public land in the Mallee by 1999. It sounds all too familiar as families in this region who have been there for several generations find themselves being told that the LCC knows better and that they have to go.

The graziers of this region are small in number, about twenty in all, but of these, six are totally dependent on public land grazing and would have to find another source of income.

A meeting in Mildura on 28 September, just a week after the release of the report, was attended by over 600 people who have banded together to form the Desert Stockmen. The meeting, chaired by the Victorian Farmers Federation, rejected the LCC's plans on the grounds they were unjust, unbalanced and did not take enough notice of local needs or opinions.

As one of the graziers, Harold McArthur, said, he has farmed Glencoe carefully, not removed a tree, refusing to use chemicals, rotating grazed lands and spreading the load. He feels it would be a cruel end to 60 years of careful and loving stewardship.

TASMANIAN NEWS

The Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Tasmania held their annual muster on 22 January. This year Jim Commins, Chris Stoney and Ken Connley were fortunate enough to visit the event and, from all reports received, a good time was had by all.

The Tasmanian Association have just had a victory over Lee's Paddock which, being freehold land, had been included in an area for National Heritage listing. The Association mounted a fight against the proposed listing and, to their credit, won.

They are currently trying to secure rights to ride in the mountains which is being denied to them in large areas of state. The muster, which attracted a crowd of 500 this year, is run similarly to our own Get Together. One of the main differences is that the Cattleman's Championship is run over a number of events were competitors accumulate points. The race component is run as a time trial and Chris managed to win this part of the event with the fastest time, (on a borrowed horse) and was placed fourth in the overall event.

Rumour has it that our representative team allowed themselves to be beaten by a composite team of Tasmanian opposition and government politicians in the billy boiling! How on earth are they going to live this one down?

Ode to the Packhorse

Farewell, farewell my bewildered friend; How could we know that this was the end? You wonder why you're left so neglected, Now so old and so hurt and dejected.

You shared your grass with the kangaroos, A wild boar pig and a few emus. You'd watch them depart as snow fell thick, They'd scatter like winds over gully and stick.

To vanish away through boundary fence, They left you lonely, worried and tense Then the loneliness fled and the thoughts to roam, Were forgotten thoughts, for you were at home.

You'd dash through the scrub as a frightening rate And skid to a halt at the boundary gate, Then race to the stockyard, prop and wheel, With the ghost of a wild dog at your heel.

The merino sheep and the white faced steers Would race and split in their sudden fears, As you raced so close in your frolicking fun, Then you quietly turned, just to watch them run.

And the slightest sound you could hear so well, A light crack of a whip or a faraway bell; Then you'd turn and graze in the early dew; We'd hazard a guess, how you always knew.

Now your young pals, perhaps think you're slack, As you slowly plod, along the river flat, But your friends don't know of the mountain tracks And the many long years that you carried the packs.

Oh, it's all gone now the hills are dead, On steep stock trails you'll never more tread, It's tough, Old Mate, but we can't change ways; For the gates are closed on your droving days.

Neil Hulm

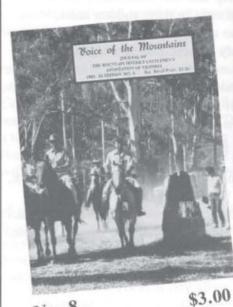


George Fitzgerald, Paddy McNamara and Jack O'Connell with packhorses on the Bogongs in December 1928.

(Betty Fitzgerald)







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Regular readers of Voice of the Mountains will be familiar with the works of Neil Hulm. We have previously advised readers of his publications Where the Snow Grass Grows, Aussie Bush Yarns and The Pub and The Scrub. Neil has just released his fourth book AUSSIE STYLE, Mate!, which deals with the bicentenary and contains some mountain orientated thoughts. All of his books are available from him at 361 Cheyenne Drive, Lavington, N.S.W., 2641

In this issue, Boyd Mould, has also contributed verse. His book of prose and verse, Recollections of the Snowy River Stockmen, is available from the Cooma Visitors Centre, Cooma for those of you who would like to read some more from his pen.



Supplement to "THE ILLUSTRATED AUSTRALIAN NEWS," Ist JULY, 1892.

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