



# Voice of the Mountains

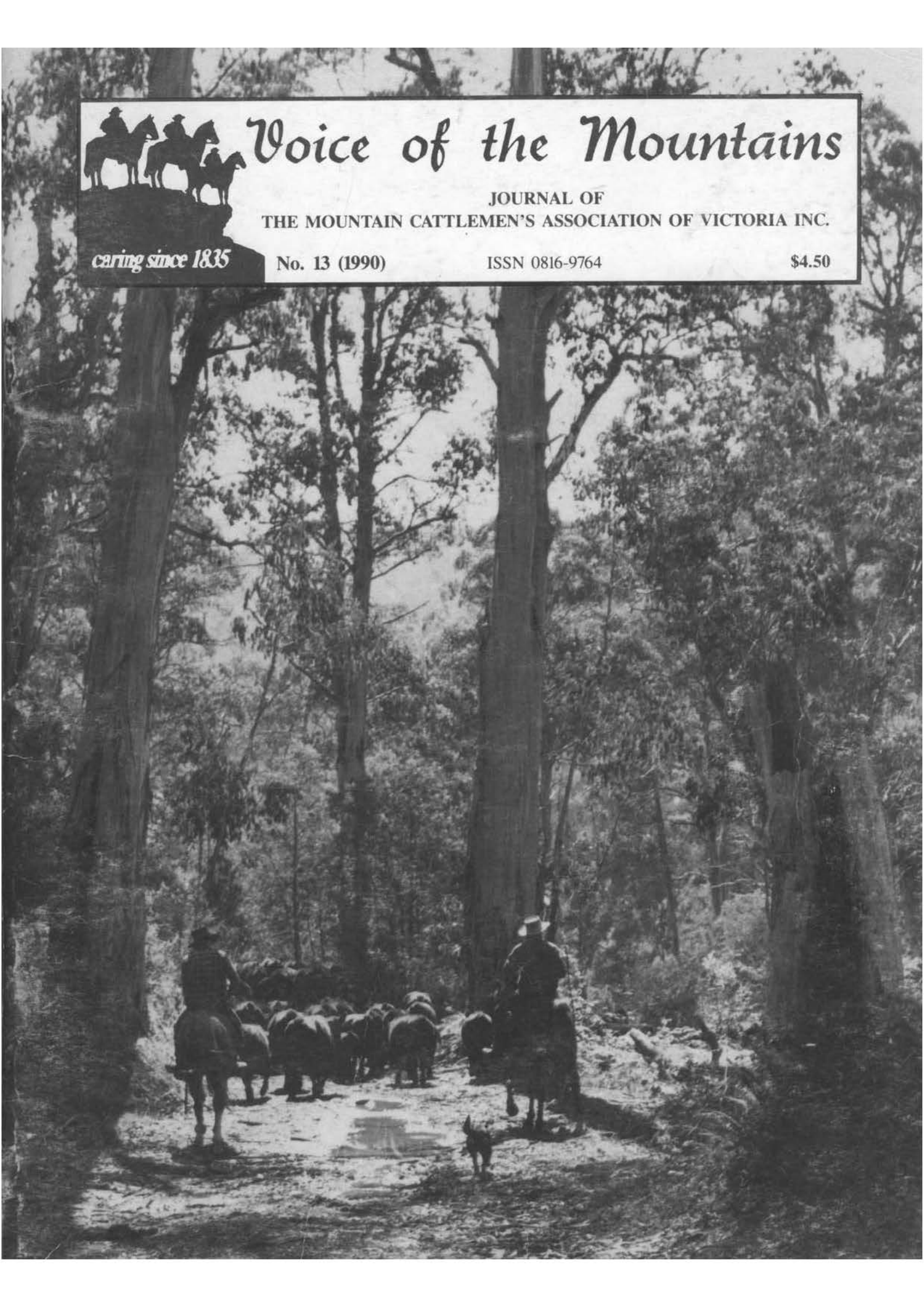
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# Voice of the Mountains

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

No. 13 1990

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

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COVER ILLUSTRATION: (Front) Moving Blairs' stock down from the plains.  
(Rear) Blairs' Hut, 1980s.

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As I reflect on the few weeks I have been President of the MCAV, I come to realise what a unique organisation we have.

The support I feel from members and associates is the driving force of the Association. It is the fact that the individual feels that they are an integral part, and that they have an aim that makes our Association the vibrant one that it is. At the administration level, we have a dedicated few officers, who put in a lot of effort, and achieve amazing results. On the corporate level, I have been heartened by the support of many firms and organisations, and especially the National Farmers Federation for their generous grant of \$25,000 towards scientific research and Elders Pastoral, for the magnificent donation of \$2,000 towards the production of this issue of *Voice of the Mountains*.

As I look at the world scene, I see like minded people moving with one accord, with results that could be called miraculous. The political changes we have seen in recent months throughout the world would have been thought impossible only a year or so ago. These changes have not come easily, and in some places are still in progress.

I believe the world is in a time of re-arrangement. People do not change a lot really. As many communities are shaking off much of the bureaucratic control which had got to the stage of choking their countries, Australia is still going down the road of a greater control by bureaucracy. This is being done because of the laid-back approach to life of the average Australian individual, and the belief that the individual cannot do anything.

Winston Churchill said of democracy, '*It is not a perfect system, but it is the best one devised yet*'. Add to this 'that communities get the government they deserve', and I think we should be encouraged to take an active part in the running of our country.

Unless a government is given direction by the people, it cannot function successfully. This is where consensus fails. The people consulted in the current consensus fad, often do not have the knowledge on the issue to make a good decision. It is a bit like putting your cattle out of the gate when it is time to take them to the high plains, and saying 'OK girls, take yourselves there.' A few old ones would head up the hill and get all the clover, but

most of the mob would hang around the gate looking back thinking how good it was in the paddock, and then looking up the road and seeing the track too steep and rocky for them.

Everything worthwhile needs to be worked at!

Where are we now at as an Association? The proclamation of the Alpine National Park has occurred. Whilst this is a political move by the government to try to keep the green vote on side, and it could give small time bureaucrats a greater sense of power. We can but hope for a sensible management plan that we can live with.

Australians are now much more aware of their heritage, which includes our environment and we are recognising that we must use and manage our resources in a responsible manner. We are coming to realise that we must produce goods in Australia with ecologically sound controls or shut our country up and buy our goods from overseas, with a resultant increase in our national debt, greater unemployment, and greater damage to our world. 'Is it better', I ask, 'To use and manage our timber production in Australia, or to buy timber from the Amazon basin and bury our heads in the sand about what we are paying to have done to that part of the globe?'

I point out to political leaders, that there needs to be hard decisions made.

A former Minister of Agriculture (Vic) recently said, 'Government today doesn't make decisions when they come across a hard one, they refer it to a committee!' It seems this is part of the consensus, non-decision-making process.

The Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria is committed to the retention of grazing in the Alpine region of Victoria.

To achieve this aim, we shall continue to look for the facts regarding Alpine grazing. Much so-called scientific research has been done with a particular result in mind at the outset. We shall be giving leadership in formulating management strategy.

All of this can only be achieved by the collective effort of individuals. Life is largely what you make it!

Best wishes to all for the nineties.

God bless you,



# THE EIGHTIES

The Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria entered the 1980s as a small and dedicated group of cattlemen with a low public profile and a relatively small group of Associate members who had supported them over a number of years. The LCC report on the Alpine Study area had been released the previous year, along with preliminary recommendations that threatened alpine grazing and, in the Cattlemen's view, the future well-being of the alps.

## 1980

In January the Liberal government accepted, with minor modifications, the final recommendations of the LCC report on the Alpine Area. This heralded a decision to revoke 11 grazing licences by 1990, and was roundly condemned by the Cattlemen.

In February the Annual Get Together was held at Holme's Plain, north of Licola. Veteran cattleman, Norm Chester of Heyfield spoke, and it was obvious that extremist conservationists would not rest until cattlemen had been completely driven from the mountains.

This was also the year that the two hallmark books on the Cattlemen, *Cattlemen and Huts of the High Plains* by Harry Stephenson and *Cattlemen of the High Country* by Tor Holth were published. Both were immensely successful.

## 1981

The Annual Get Together was held at Shannonvale, and filming of 'The Man from Snowy River' commenced.

## 1982

Pretty Valley was the site of the Annual Get Together, and in New South Wales drought-stricken farmers drove their stock into the Kosciusko National Park, overgrown since grazing had been ended there.

In May the newly-elected Labor government directed the Lands Conservation Council to again examine their recommendations for the Alpine Area, given the party's policy of creating a large Alpine National Park.

## 1983

The Annual Get Together at Sheeppark Flat, hosted by the Mansfield Branch, saw the beginning of new, high profile campaign by the Cattlemen, aware that the recommendations of the LCC Special Enquiry were hardly likely to be favorable. The MCAV logo, of three riders

on a precipice, was launched, along with the slogan 'Mountain Cattlemen care for the High Country'. This was also the occasion of the first Cattlemen's Cup, sponsored by the Burrowes film group.

In April Harm van Rees of the University of Melbourne announced the results of his three-year study of the behavior and diet of free-ranging cattle on the Bogong High Plains. This contained a number of positive findings for the cattlemen.

In June the proposed recommendations of the Alpine Area Special Investigation were released. They included phasing-out of alpine grazing in a number of areas, and the incorporation of large areas in a massive Alpine National Park. This was vigorously criticized by Cattlemen, concerned for the future of the alps, and they invited the Minister then responsible, Rod McKenzie, to tour the alps with them.

In August the government signalled its intentions of enquiring into lease rentals. In September a report recommended the removal of many huts on Crown Lands, a number of them built by Cattlemen.

In November the final recommendations of the LCC Special Investigation were made available and, despite 70.3 per cent of the submissions being against the further extension of National Parks, a large Alpine Park was recommended. In December the MCAV conducted a large party of parliamentarians and officials on a tour of the alps.

## 1984

This was the year that our Olympians represented Australia wearing the oilskins and Akubras symbolic of the Cattlemen, and Premier John Cain watched them wearing the same garb. The Annual Get Together was held at Holmes Plain.

In July the Liberal and National parties announced they would support a group of sixteen Shires that covered the alpine area that was lobbying for no further extension to Alpine National Parks. Despite this it was announced that the legislation would be introduced to Parliament in the autumn session. Cattlemen then announced they would ride on Parliament.

In September the MCAV and its supporters rode on Parliament in the largest mounted display on the streets of Melbourne since the Light Horse had left in World War I. It may have been a huge demonstration yet Premier Cain was 'too busy' to speak to any representatives of the MCAV. The number of supporters along the route expressed support for the Cattlemen and in the following month a large meeting of Associates voted to expand their role as a lobbying group in support of the MCAV.

## 1985

The Annual Get Together was held at Cobungra, and the following month Cattlemen rode through Melbourne again as part of the Moomba Parade. The Victorian State elections resulted in the possibility of a tie in the Upper House, with potential of a Liberal majority should the re-run of the Nunawading election result in a Liberal win.

In July the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, Mrs Joan Kirner, travelled to Bennison Lookout, north of Licola, to announce that the Legislation for the new National Park would be introduced to Parliament that day, and that she expected to return there on 1 December to proclaim it. A small but effective protest by Cattlemen put the opposing point of view.

The MCAV then made the decision to fight the proposed park, which became the main issue of the re-run election at Nunawading. This took the form of letter drops, a mounted ride through the suburb reminiscent of the ride on Parliament, and the handing out of 'How to Vote' cards on election day. The election resulted in a win for the Liberal candidate, Rosemary Varty, and the balance of power in the upper house going to the Liberal party. Allegations of impropriety against the Labour party and their 'How to Vote' card led to a determined campaign against the cattlemen in an attempt to throw up a smoke screen to hide the actions of the Labor party. Graeme Stoney, the Executive Officer of the MCAV, was summoned to the Bar of the Upper House to explain the activities of the Cattlemen, but on the day a motion to have him speak failed when the necessary numbers could not be found as Division bells rang. The Parks Bill was not brought on for debate, and remained on the Notice Paper, waiting.

## 1986

February saw two Australian greats, Slim Dusty and R.M. Williams, together on stage in support of the Cattlemen at the Get Together at Catherine Station. In Tasmania a Tassie version of the MCAV was formed to fight evictions proposed there.

In April the Alpine National Parks Bill was debated in the Upper House, and defeated along party lines. It remained on the Notice Paper, waiting for re-submission.

In September the Cattlemen were asked to take part in the Royal Show Parade through the Melbourne City Centre. A number of cattlemen drove a well-behaved mob of cattle, earning the blue ribbon for the best animal exhibit and providing a delightful sight for the thousands who will long remember the sight of a mob of Hereford cattle in front of Flinders Street Station.

## 1987

At the Get Together, at Sheeppyard Flat, *Movement at the Station: The Revolt of the Mountain Cattlemen* by Bryan Jameson, the story of the enduring fight to keep grazing in the alps, and protect this special area from bureaucratic bungling, was launched by Professor Geoffrey Blainey.

In the middle of the year planning proposals for the Alpine Area were launched, as the government began to further regulate the area in an attempt to establish a de facto National Park by regulation. An Alpine Area Advisory Committee was formed in July, and in September one of its foundation members, Jim Commins, retired after ten years as President of the MCAV. Jim handed over the reins to David Treasure, but remained vitally involved with the work of the Association.

## 1988

The new President's property at Castleburn was the venue of the 1988 Get Together. Three months later, following some rather rapid work by the government in purchasing Wonnangatta Station to turn it from an asset to the economy to a further drain on the resources of CF&L, the last cattle from this historic property were sold at Heyfield.

In August the Cattlemen received the inaugural R.M. Williams Outback Heritage Award in recognition of their contribution to the maintenance of the heritage of Australia.

## 1989

The year began with a successful Get Together held at Gibbo Park, past Omeo, at which the MCAV launched its fighting fund. This was followed by a spectacular and emotional rally on the Bogongs later in February, focussing on the plight of eleven families due for eviction from their leases, in an issue separate from that of the National Park.

The low point in the year was the proclamation of the Alpine National Park when, after certain concessions such as seven year licences were gained, the Liberal party supported the legislation. A mass rally, in conjunction with the Public Lands Council, prior to the ceremony urged sensible, not over zealous, regulations within the park. Those who then attended the proclamation were bewildered to see a locked gate used to initially bar Cattlemen from a park that was supposed to be 'for all people, for all times'.

During the eighties the Cattlemen became a household name in Victoria, and around Australia. They have been genuinely grateful for the massive support they have received from the silent majority. Already the matter of lease rentals, first raised in 1983, still has not been resolved, as attempts continue to have Mountain Cattlemen driven out of the alps by financial means.

## THE BLAIR FAMILY



Frank Blair

'Heyfield', site of the 1990 Get Together, has been held by the Blair family since 1945. This was during the drought of that year, and the Blairs sought additional feed for their Angus cattle, expanding their holdings to Whorouly. Prior to that it was owned by the Bryce and Ferguson families and known as 'Fairfield'.

Thomas and Annie Blair had a family of eight: Tom, Aleck, Bob, Effie, Isabel, George, Jack and William (known as Frank). Thomas died in 1889, when Frank was 10, and after a short time in Melbourne the boys (except for Bob and Aleck) returned to the Tawonga area.

Tom, George, Jack and Frank Blair were the first 'cattlemen' of the Blair family with George, Jack and Frank purchasing their original property at Tawonga in 1913. They then took over 'The Homestead' at German Creek in 1917. Initially dairy farmers, the Blair brothers later began grazing and took up a lease on the Bogong plains.

Though the brothers worked together on the properties, they all ran their own stock. The advancing march of St John's Wort in the early 1920s resulted in Frank introducing, in 1921, the first mob of Angus cattle, over Lockhart's Gap, to Kiewa. The Herefords and black baldies were prone to scalding around the nose and mouth but, because of the dark pigmentation of the black Angus, they

did not blister the same as the stock with white pigmentation. This involvement with Angus continues today, with the Blairs being the only family to run black stock on the Bogong plains.

When Frank returned to Tawonga, he brought with him his bride, Ethel Wright. Their children were Marjory, Ethel, Frank, Ross and Bryce. Ross and Bryce continued in the family tradition of grazing. Ross married Ettie Gormley and their son Max, now runs the Whorouly property. Ettie was from a family which had a strong tradition in the craft of whipcracking. One of her uncles was well known as being 'able to make a whip sing'.

In 1922 the Mines Department refused to re-open Dungeys Track, which had been not been cleared for 13 years. Frank had the track re-cut in an attempt to encourage tourist traffic to the plains. As an aside, Dungeys Track is reputedly named after a local policeman who was involved in the tracking 'Bogong Jack' across the ranges.

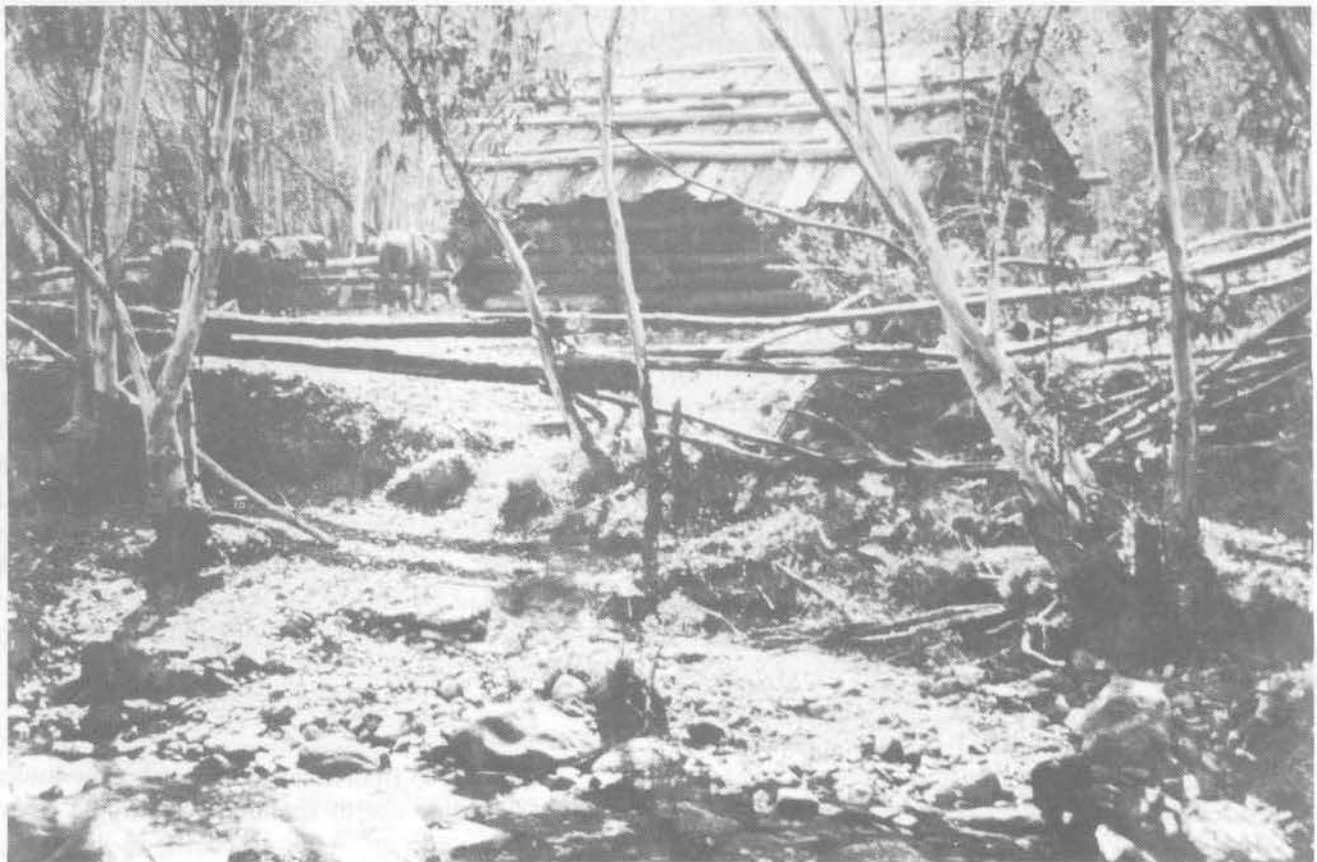
The brothers were amongst the first cattlemen to act as guides for visitors to the alps. Ross Blair has clear recollections of his visit to Mount Hotham, for the New Year's celebrations of a touring party in 1925/26 when he was 11 years old. It was so cold he was put to bed in a wheat bag, that was firmly fixed around his neck.

In 1925, Frank and Tom, guided what was probably the first winter skiing party to go to the Bogong Plains for more than an overnight trip. After leaving Freeburgh on 21 August they rode to Blairs' Hut at the foot of Lake Spur, which was to be their base camp for the trip. This hut, built in 1923/24, was later destroyed by fire about 1931, and the present hut was rebuilt as a replacement.

The party consisted of Dave Yoffa, Clyde Fenton, Gerald Rush, Jack Docherty, W. Wilson and Dave Roe. The weather was not pleasant for ski touring, however Gerald Rush recorded (in part) the trip thus:

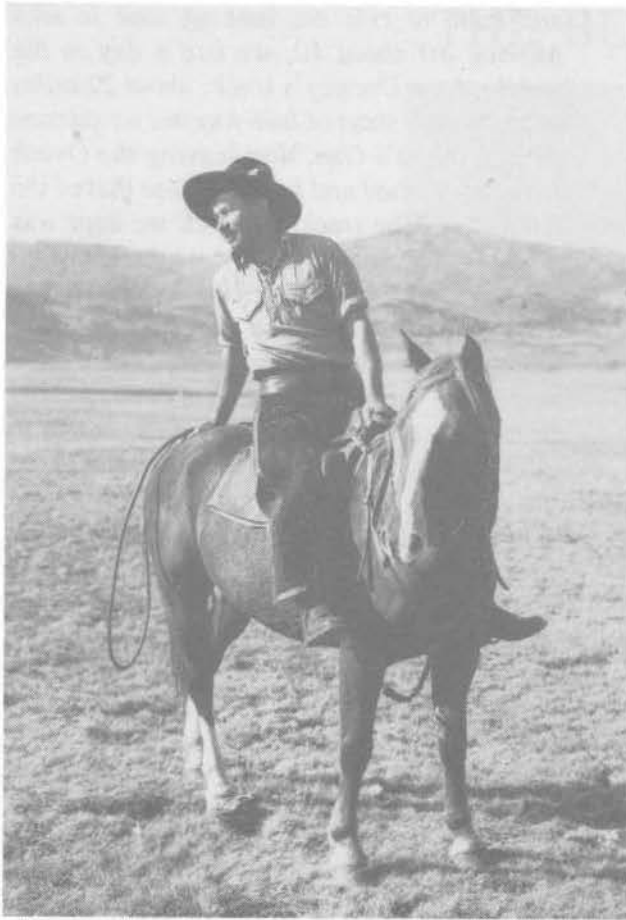
*...Next morning we motored out four miles along the Harrietville Road to Mr Frank Blair's residence at Freeburgh. Here Frank Blair himself and his brother Tom, who were to take us up to the Plains, met us with horses (two to carry the packs and one each for us*

*and them to ride on, making nine in all.) Moving off about 10, we had a day in the saddle along Dungey's track, about 22 miles in all. A little short of half-way out we crossed over Symond's Gap, thus leaving the Ovens River watershed and breaking into that of the Kiewa. ... The track to which we kept was a narrow one, going mostly at a height of 40 to 50 feet above the river bed. Blair's Hut in Snake Valley was reached just as the light was failing, which I suppose was somewhere close to 6 pm. Next morning (as had been planned from the start) we set off for a day's trip to the Plains, of which we were now right at the foot. For the first half-mile the track from the Hut to the Plains (cut by the Blairs) goes straight at right angles to the valley. It then zig-zags up a spur for two miles or more. The edge of the Plains (about 1400 feet above Blair's Hut) was reached after about 2½ hours' journey. Just a hundred yards or so from the Hut we had struck the snow, and it had deepened all the way up. ... After we had boiled our billy in the shelter of the friendly*



Blairs' hut in December 1931.





Ross Blair on 'Goldie' at Pretty Valley in 1947.



Ettie Blair with her favourite horse 'Buddy' looking over her shoulder.

*timber, the fog showed an inclination to lift, and Wilson, with Docherty and Yoffa, set off along the snow poles. Fenton, Frank Blair and I meanwhile amused ourselves on the slopes at hand, on which the snow was fairly good. ... Going down (all of us) back to Blair's Hut, we found Dave (Hastings) Roe waiting there. ... Next morning we made a good start, ... The worst was, however, to come. The weather, although dull, did not seem too bad, but after going a quarter of a mile in to the open along the level, a good imitation of a blizzard struck us. It consisted of hail travelling horizontally in exactly the opposite direction to that in which we were going. In the circumstances, it was rather a problem to follow the snow poles. While one kept one's head down nothing much happened, but to attempt to take a hurried squint for the next pole was to risk having one's face crashed to pulp—at least, it felt like that. Eventually the seven of us (Frank Blair had come on while Tom had gone back after accompanying us*

*to the timber line) reached the Tawonga Hut still alive, though there was an hour between the arrival of the first and last. The first to arrive had the pleasure of digging out the door, which was all but buried by the snow. ... Wednesday dawned a perfect day, scarcely a cloud in the sky. Quite clearly from the door of the hut we could see the cairn of Mt Bogong, Victoria's highest mountain (6,508 feet). ... Next morning we packed up and said good-bye to Tawonga Hut, ... Out in the open, the weather proved to have come back as bad as ever. ... it was a relief to get into the shelter for the track leading down to Blair's Hut. ...*

About 1943 Blairs later built another hut lower down that they use to spend the first night when taking the cattle up. After extending to Whorouly in 1945, the family company purchased an adjoining acreage next to 'The Homestead' in 1980 known as 'Whispering Gums'.

Frank Blair, died in 1960. He was not only a mountain cattleman but also a long standing councillor of the Shire of Bright and served as Shire President.

In 1984, Max and Leanne's daughter, Tanith, made history as the youngest girl to assist at the annual muster. Tanith started riding as a young three year old. After much pleading from the young seven year old she was allowed to accompany her father, Max, grandfather Ross, and three cousins to the muster at Pretty Valley. In that year they mustered 370 head and rode nearly 100 miles in four days.

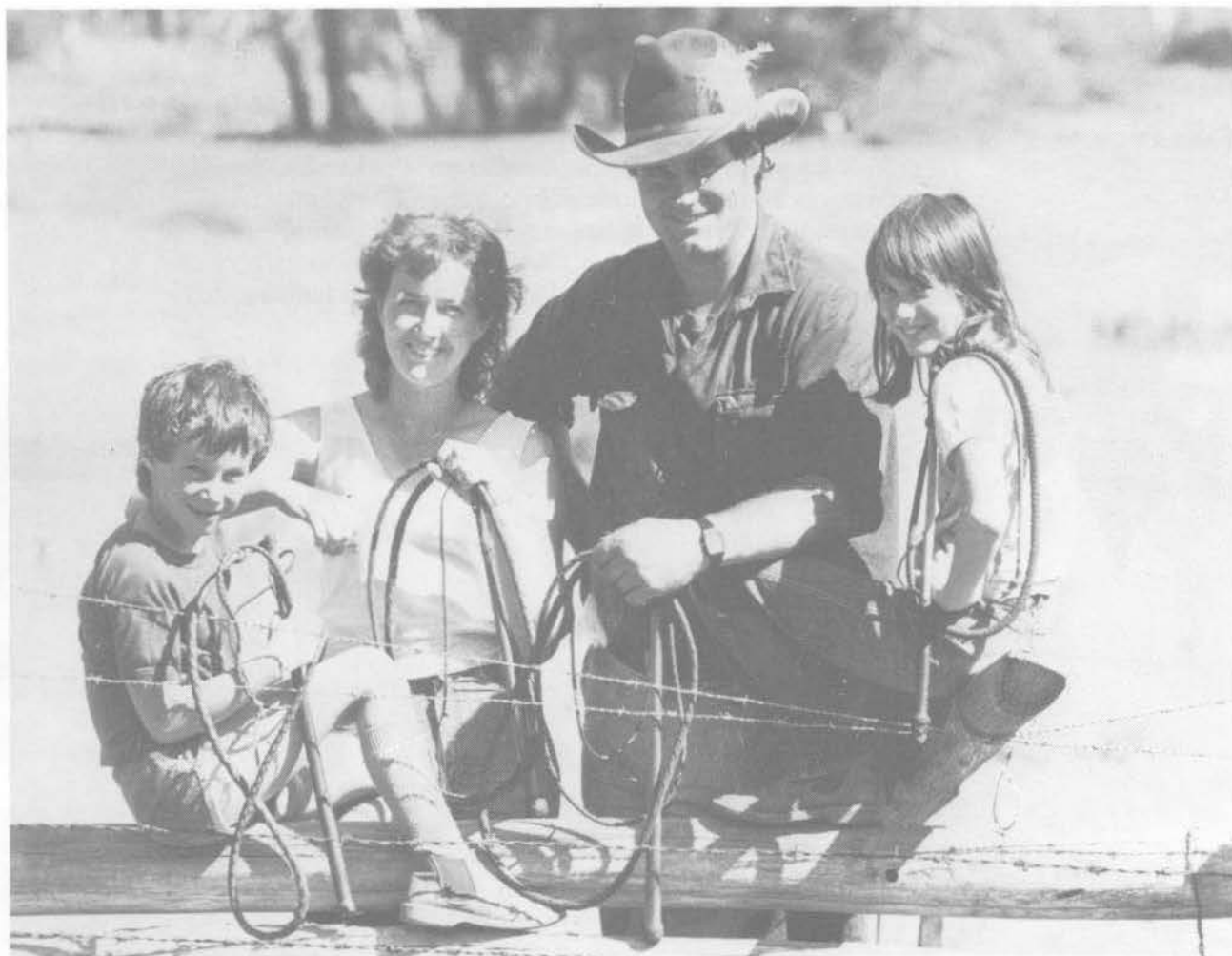
The skills of Max and Leanne Blair with stockwhips is well known amongst members of the MCAV and this tradition is assured of continuing

within the family with all their children, Tanith, Justin, Krystal and Lachlin also being able to 'hold their own' with a whip. They also have another tradition of which they are proud: that they breed their own horses, all descended from wild filly given to Jack Blair by the Farrington brothers. Friendly arguments about 'the best dog on the Bogongs' are also frequent.

The Association would like to place on record its appreciation to the Blair family for providing such a marvellous venue for the 1990 Get Together.

*Debra Squires*

*This brief history of the Blairs was compiled with the assistance of Ross, Ettie, Max and Leanne Blair.*

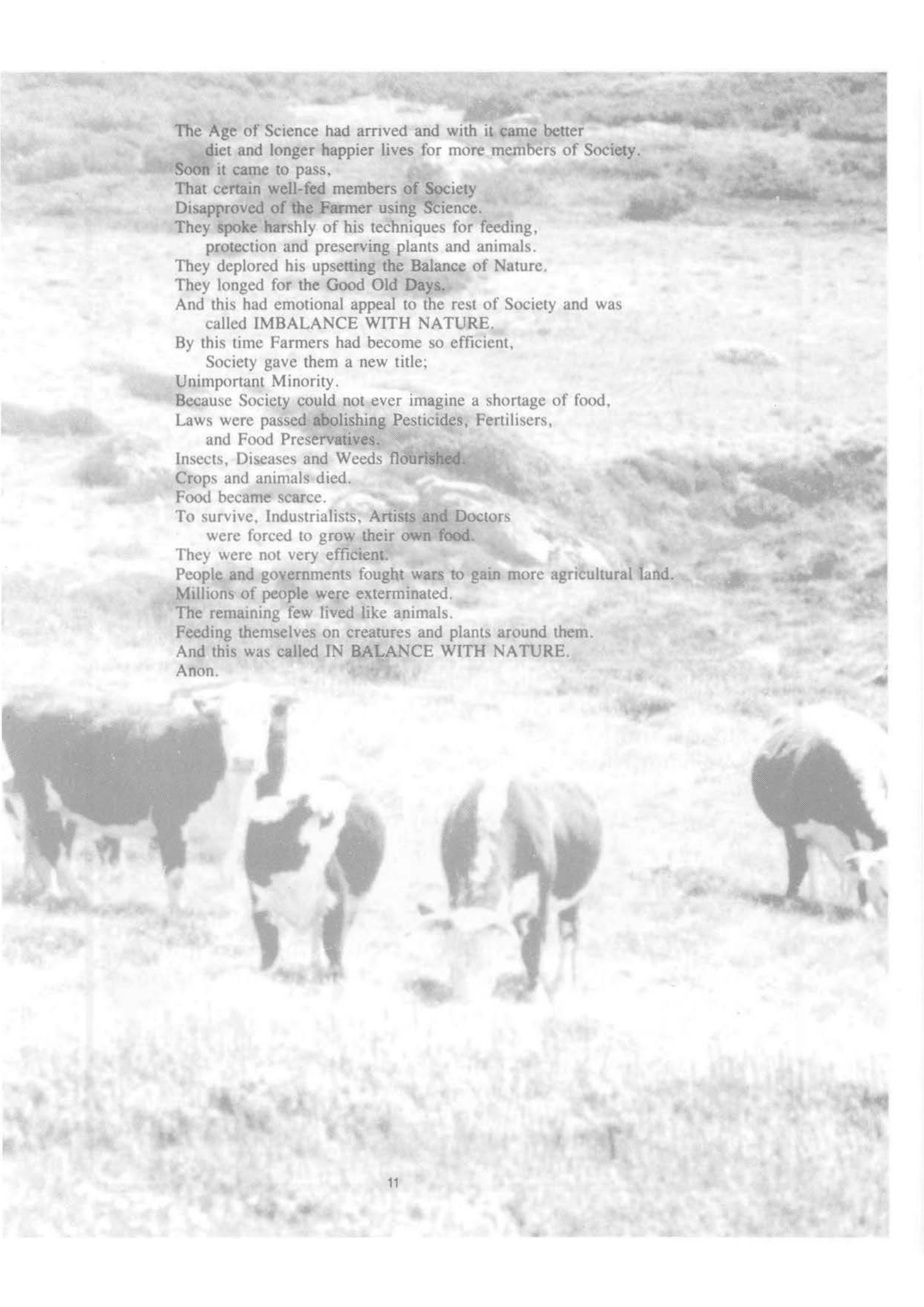


Leanne and Max Blair with their children Justin and Tanith. Since this photo was taken Krystal and Lachlin have been added to the family.



## ***IN BALANCE WITH NATURE***

In the beginning,  
There was Earth, beautiful and wild;  
And then man came to dwell.  
At first, he lived like other animals,  
Feeding himself on creatures and plants around him.  
And this was called **IN BALANCE WITH NATURE**.  
Soon man multiplied.  
He grew tired of ceaseless hunting for food;  
He built homes and villages.  
Wild plants and animals were domesticated.  
Some men became Farmers so that others might become  
Industrialists, Artists or Doctors,  
And this was called Society.  
Man and Society progressed.  
With his God-given ingenuity, man learned to feed, clothe,  
protect and transport himself more efficiently  
so he might enjoy Life.  
He built cars, houses on top of each other, and nylon.  
And life was more enjoyable.  
the men called Farmers became efficient.  
A single farmer grew food for 28 Industrialists, Artists and Doctors,  
And Writers, Engineers, and Teachers as well.  
To protect his crops and animals, the Farmer produced  
substances to repel or destroy Insects,  
Diseases and Weeds.  
These were called Pesticides.  
Similar substances were made by Doctors to protect humans.  
These were called Medicine.



The Age of Science had arrived and with it came better  
diet and longer happier lives for more members of Society.  
Soon it came to pass,  
That certain well-fed members of Society  
Disapproved of the Farmer using Science.  
They spoke harshly of his techniques for feeding,  
protection and preserving plants and animals.  
They deplored his upsetting the Balance of Nature.  
They longed for the Good Old Days.  
And this had emotional appeal to the rest of Society and was  
called **IMBALANCE WITH NATURE**,  
By this time Farmers had become so efficient,  
Society gave them a new title;  
Unimportant Minority.  
Because Society could not ever imagine a shortage of food,  
Laws were passed abolishing Pesticides, Fertilisers,  
and Food Preservatives.  
Insects, Diseases and Weeds flourished.  
Crops and animals died.  
Food became scarce.  
To survive, Industrialists, Artists and Doctors  
were forced to grow their own food.  
They were not very efficient.  
People and governments fought wars to gain more agricultural land.  
Millions of people were exterminated.  
The remaining few lived like animals.  
Feeding themselves on creatures and plants around them.  
And this was called **IN BALANCE WITH NATURE**.  
Anon.

Stoney's

## **BLUFF & BEYOND**



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## GIBBO PARK 1989

Another successful Get Together was held at the Gibbo River on 4/5 February 1989. With warm summer weather forecast more than 4,000 people showed up to enjoy themselves over the two days and to catch up with old friends.

The Omeo Branch excelled with the organisation of the weekend and the weeks of work that had been put in was evident as the organised events of the weekend took place. New events introduced at Gibbo included the horse shoeing demonstration and competition which attracted large crowds of spectators.

The final battle lines were drawn on Sunday morning with stirring addresses from those within the Association regarding the then proposed, (now proclaimed), Alpine National Park, and the Cattlemen's fighting fund was successfully launched. An invitation was extended to all to attend the mass protest rally to be held on the Bogongs on 26 February, but the highlight of the weekend, had to be the Cup.

After many years of the Cup being won by Ken Connley, Chris Stoney thrilled the crowd with a convincing win with Ken coming in second and Peter Faithfull again placed third.

We take this opportunity to congratulate all participants and winners in other events. They were:

**Whipcracking (Under 10)** Justin Blair (1st), Danny Young (2nd) and Lyric Mitchell (3rd)

**Whipcracking (10 years to 15 years)** Rick Gilmore (1st), Tanith Blair (2nd) and Charles Connley (3rd)

**Whipcracking (Ladies)** Tanith Blair (1st), Leanne Blair (2nd) and Sharon Smith (3rd)

**Whipcracking (Open)** Tom Smith (1st), Tanith Blair (2nd) and Martin Neilson (3rd)

**Whipcracking (M.C.A.V.)** Tom Smith (by invitation) (1st), Tanith Blair (2nd) and Ron Connley (3rd)

**Whipcracking (on horseback)** Tom Smith (1st), Mick Tschirpig (2nd) and Michael Smith (3rd)

**Horse Shoeing Competition** Gary Smith (1st), Chips Boucher (2nd) and David Ohlsson (3rd)

**Packhorse Race** Frank Ryan (1st), Ron Connley (2nd) and Noel Graham (3rd)

**Best Pack** Frank Ryan

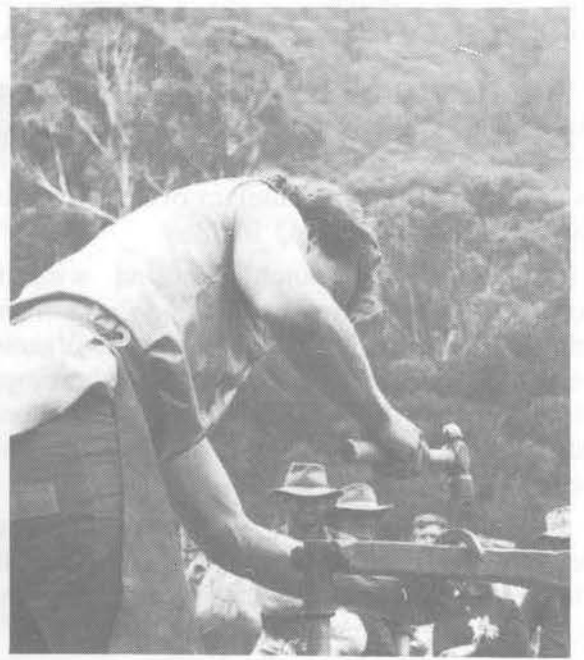
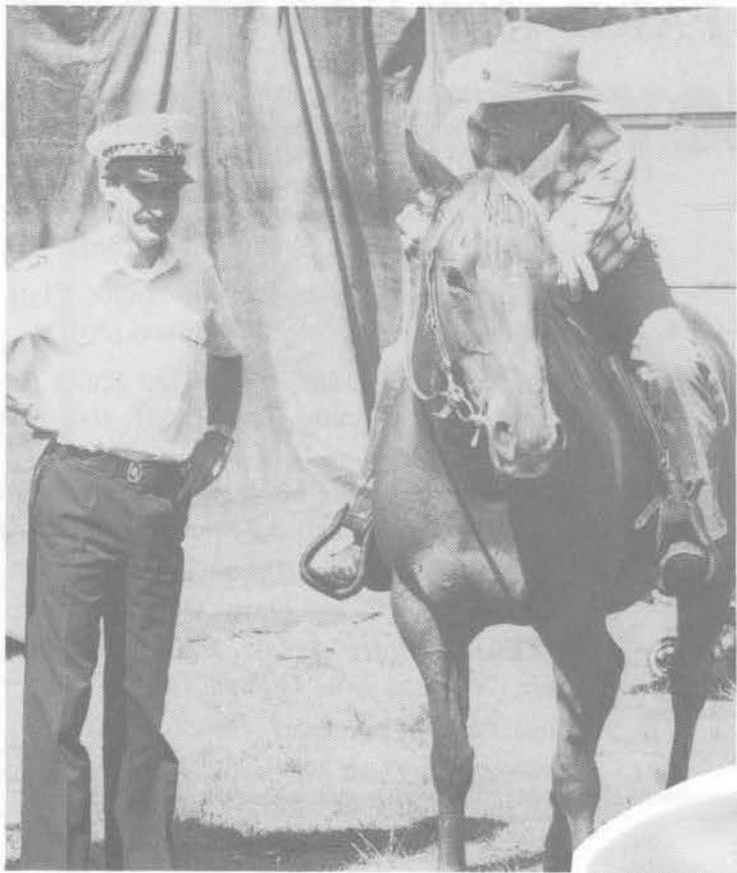
**Stockman's Dash** Michael Kelly (1st), Frank Bolton (2nd) and Noel Morris (3rd)

**Relay Race (Associates)** Frank Bolton, Michael Kelly, David Kelly and Steven Bolton (1st); Robert Dodwell, Dev Carman, John Carman and David Ohlsson (2nd)

**Open Dash** Frank Bolton (1st), Noel Harris (2nd) and Steven Bolton (3rd)

**Cattleman's Cup** Chris Stoney (1st), Ken Connley (2nd) and Peter Faithfull (3rd)











# 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

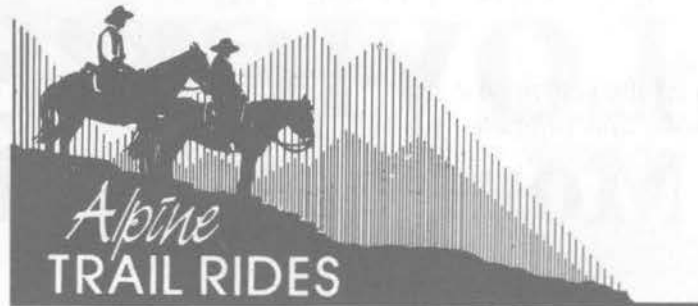
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## CATTLEMEN OF THE AVON

Writing the history of the cattlemen can be an interesting occupation. By and large they have been men who have not courted attention, nor has it, until recent years, come to them in a form that has meant there have been exhaustive records of their activities. They have gone about their business, taking the cattle bush in the spring, and bringing them down again in the autumn, and spent little time themselves documenting their own history. That which has been written has been mainly the work of those from outside, who have written extensively about a few, but the vast majority of the cattlemen have been quietly slipping into history as the years pass.

This year, I lightly set out to make a brief record of the men who have run cattle 'up the Avon', having long heard of the likes of Henry Miller, Bill Gillo and Andy Estoppey. That was the beginning. I have ended with a list of men associated with the area that I know is far from complete, and too much information to do more than



Denny Connolly and his sister Mrs. Catherine Guy.

briefly list those I do know about. Also, not long after I began, I soon discovered that my 'up the Avon' really meant 'up the Avon, on Wellington and in the Moroka, with a bit of the Valencia thrown in too'. As in all the other areas where cattlemen have had leases, there is much more work to be done, before the historical record is anywhere near complete.

### RICHARD BENNISON

Richard Bennison from Sale was possibly the first to run stock in the area, taking out the Mount Wellington run during the 1860-1861 drought. He most certainly was running sheep there when he advertised it for sale in 1869, although whether he also ran cattle there remains a matter for conjecture. Another in the area around that time was **J.C. Telford**, who had a run east of Tarli Karng, although the whereabouts of his home base remains unknown. **Malcolm Macfarlane** of Glenmaggie, who held Glenfalloch from about 1847 to 1868 would also have possibly grazed stock in the area. In 1874 the **Riggall** family took over Glenfalloch, and held the Wellington run until 1900.

### HENRY MILLER

Henry Miller, whose home base was at Upper Maffra West took his first mob of cattle through the Avon Gorge and up the Left Hand Branch, across the Little River, up Purgatory Spur and onto the Razorback, and thus onto Wellington. He was assisted by his neighbours **Dave Geoghegan** and **Andy Grogan**. He was then joined by **Horstmans**, who had been early selectors at Upper Maffra West. In time he held leases over vast areas, which stretched across to **McMichael's** (later **Gell's**) hut. He initially used the old Riggall hut, but in 1916 built Millers hut with assistance from his brother-in-law **Frank Scott** and other friends. The original slab walls remain today, but the early bark roof soon became iron, and the third or fourth chimney is doing sterling duty.

Henry Miller was the first of only two to be known as the 'King of Mount Wellington', and a number of other cattlemen, ran stock on his runs 'by arrangement'. In time he obtained freehold land lower down, built a first, and then a second hut at Golden Point, and bought the block including the 'Joanba' hut from Mrs Huggett. He then selected

a block of land between the two huts, and built what became known as the Middle hut. The route between them and onto Wellington became known as Miller's Track. He became associated with a number of parties of tourists who visited the area, the most significant was his leadership of the scout party that included Lord Somers in 1927. On that expedition, as on others, H.B. Hammond, a Maffra photographer, was one of the party.

In later years one of the best-known men to work for him was **Denny Conolly**.

Henry Miller died in 1939 aged 75 years, universally mourned. He was known and respected by all, and even today is spoken of as an outstanding man, known for his care of his stock, horses and dogs. He was succeeded by his son **Rex Miller**, who ran stock in the area until about 1960, when he retired.

### **BILL GILLEO**

Bill Gilleo was born and, apart from service during the war, spent all his life near Briagolong. His mother died when he was young, and he was associated with the Estoppey family from a very

early age. He enlisted in the 1st A.I.F. in the First World War, and served overseas, probably in France. He is credited with saving the life of another local, Billy Reeves, there. Suffering from shrapnel wounds to the neck, he recovered despite being at first passed over for medical treatment as he was not expected to survive. He was then invalided home.

Bill eventually obtained land up Georges Creek, and a run around the Wellington/Moroka area, but it was his leadership of the Victorian Government Tourist Bureau 'Skyline Tours' for which he was best-known. These organised tours, initially over the December/January period, were personally escorted walking trips where cattlemen such as Bill, and later Andy Estoppey provided the pack horses that carried all luggage and equipment. Unofficial stories of the times also infer that as late as eleven and twelve at night the pack horse men would be also going back to carry the hikers who, more often than their cattle, would 'go down and refuse to walk'. These tours, which began in the late 1920s, ran until at least 1940, with Bill, Andy and a team



The staff of the 1931-1932 Skyline Tour, (L—R) George Maxwell, Andy Estoppey, Bill Gilleo, Albie Conway and D. Eunston (the cook).

that often included **Albie Conway** and **George Maxwell** taking horses at least as far as Bright to meet groups. In time he succeeded to Henry Miller's title, and became the next King of Mount Wellington.

Bill Gilleo was known as a bushman. He cut the original Gilleo's Track down Riggall's Spur into Tarli Karng as a result of a tourist grant obtained by Jim Kelly and Rex Miller. After Bill's death another route was cut in to the lake and named Gilleo's Track in memory of him. In 1946 he and Andy Estoppey, assisted by **Arch Timbs** and **Eric Bateson** built the Moroka log hut, replacing an earlier one which had burnt down. He was also associated with the construction of the Briagolong RSL log cabin, and both are monuments to his well-known skill with an axe. Bill did not marry, and spent the last years of his life living at the Briagolong Hotel. He died in 1967 aged 75 years.

#### ANDY ESTOPPEY

Henry Miller and Bill Gilleo have both, in turn, been called the King of Mount Wellington, and so Andy deserves the title of King of the Moroka. He was born in 1906 near Briagolong, the son of Ferdinand Estoppey and Isabella nee Wishart, both of Swiss extraction. The family was then living at what many now know as Peter Black's place. His father later built at Culloden and the family moved there. Andy initially ran a few cattle in the bush there, but first went up top with the Treasure 'boys'

in 1927. He bought the Meek farm on the Freestone at Briagolong, and named it 'Bonnie Doon', and ran cattle from there in the Moroka. Along with several other cattlemen, he also became a beekeeper. He made his last trip into Moroka in 1982, several months before his death in 1983, spanning a period of 55 years.

Many names were associated with Andy Estoppey over this time, apart from that of Bill Gilleo. Among others that have been in there with him were **Vince Cummins** and **Arch Timbs**. In later years there was **Johnny Pritchard**, who died around the early 1970s, aged about 38, after a car accident. He had run in the Moroka that is now held by **David Freeman** of Dargo. '**Cooge**' **Short**, who first went into the Moroka with Andy and Bill Gilleo in 1946, when he was 14, held a run in the Valencia himself from 1965 to 1968. He clearly remembers that first trip in, to the just completed Moroka Hut. Today he is saddened by the state in which he has found it, a hut built and maintained with pride in the best traditions of bushmanship, now despoiled by careless visitors.

Following the death of Andy Estoppey his country in Moroka was transferred to **Bob and Stan Dunsmuir** of Briagolong and Munro respectively. They still hold runs there today.



Vince Cummins on Trapyard Hill.



John Pritchard.

**Jim Kelly** first went onto Wellington in 1937 with Henry Miller, and joined him on his final visits to the area. Apart from his service during the war he ran cattle on the Miller runs until 1950. Those he remembers around that time included **Bob Goldie** and **Wattie Killeen**, who had worked on Glenfalloch in the early years. They ran a small number of cattle 'by arrangement' with Henry Miller, and left around the same time that Jim did. Others were **Paddy Smythe** from Valencia Creek, **Gillespie Clyne** from Boisdale and **Jack and Donny Scott** from Dargo.

*This account could not have been completed without the assistance of Jim Kelly, Isabel Estoppey and 'Cooge' Short.*

Jack Treasure and Clive Hodge at the Moroka hut. Winter came early that year and in deference to Andy Estoppey's advanced age they were there to help him muster.



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Bairnsdale Municipal Saleyards  
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OFFERING 40 BULLS

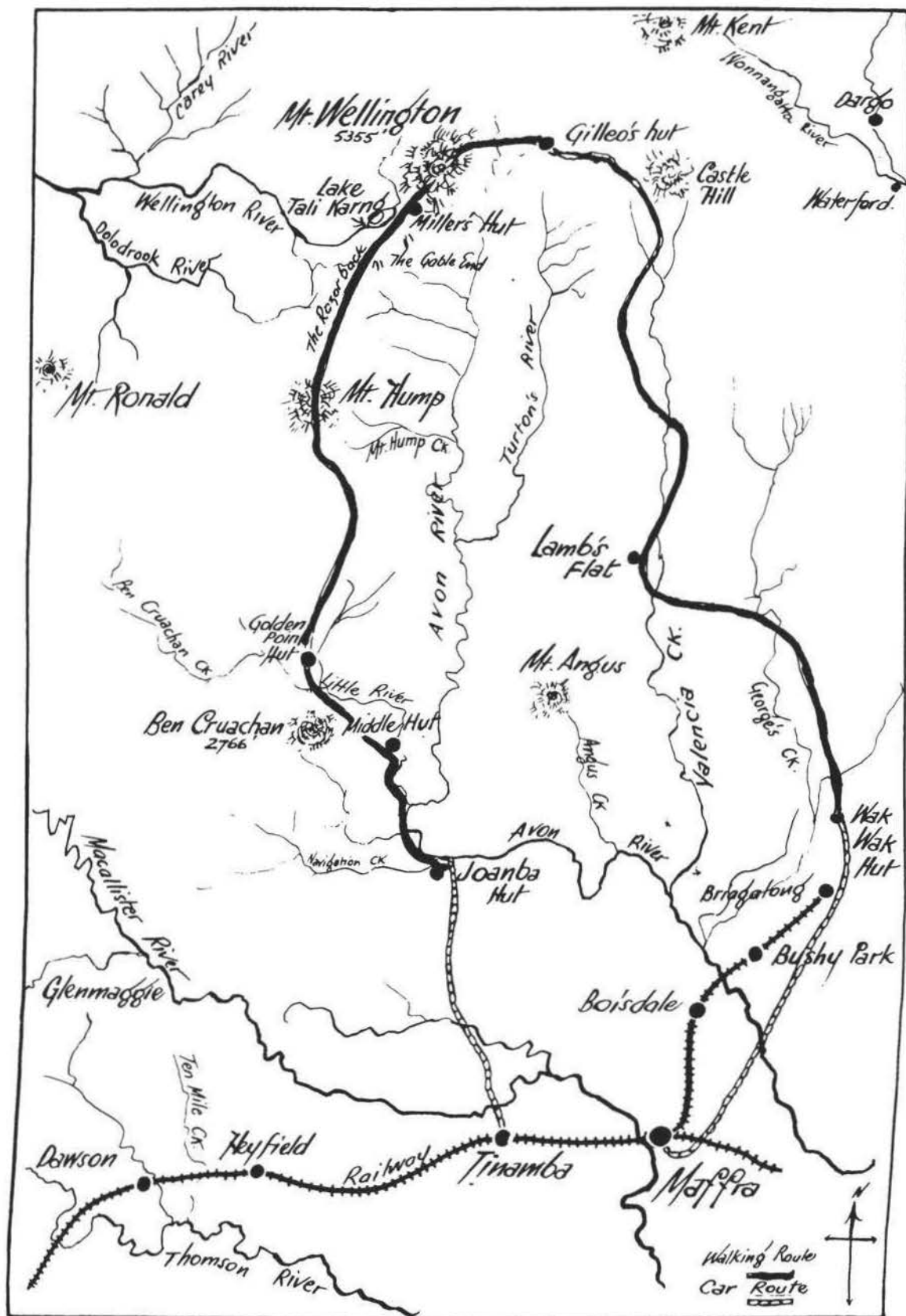
**A. J. (Jim) Treasure's** herd won the Victorian Commercial Beef Herd of the year for 1983 and four times a place gainer.

**DARGO HIGH PLAINS BRED CATTLE**

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The route of the 1929-1930 Skyline Tour.





Bill Gilleo outside the Golden Point hut, 1930.



The Middle hut, 1930.

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## CATTELEMEN STEAL ARTIST'S HEART

When British artist Ros Goody visited friends in Adelaide last Easter she made initial enquiries about 'the Australian mountain cattlemen'. This enquiry to Victour's office in Melbourne led Ros to establishing a rapport with the Mansfield cattlemen. She was invited to join them on the Autumn muster and instantly fell in love with the Great Divide.

Ros made a return visit to Mansfield last October to continue making sketches, taking photographs and collecting material for her work.

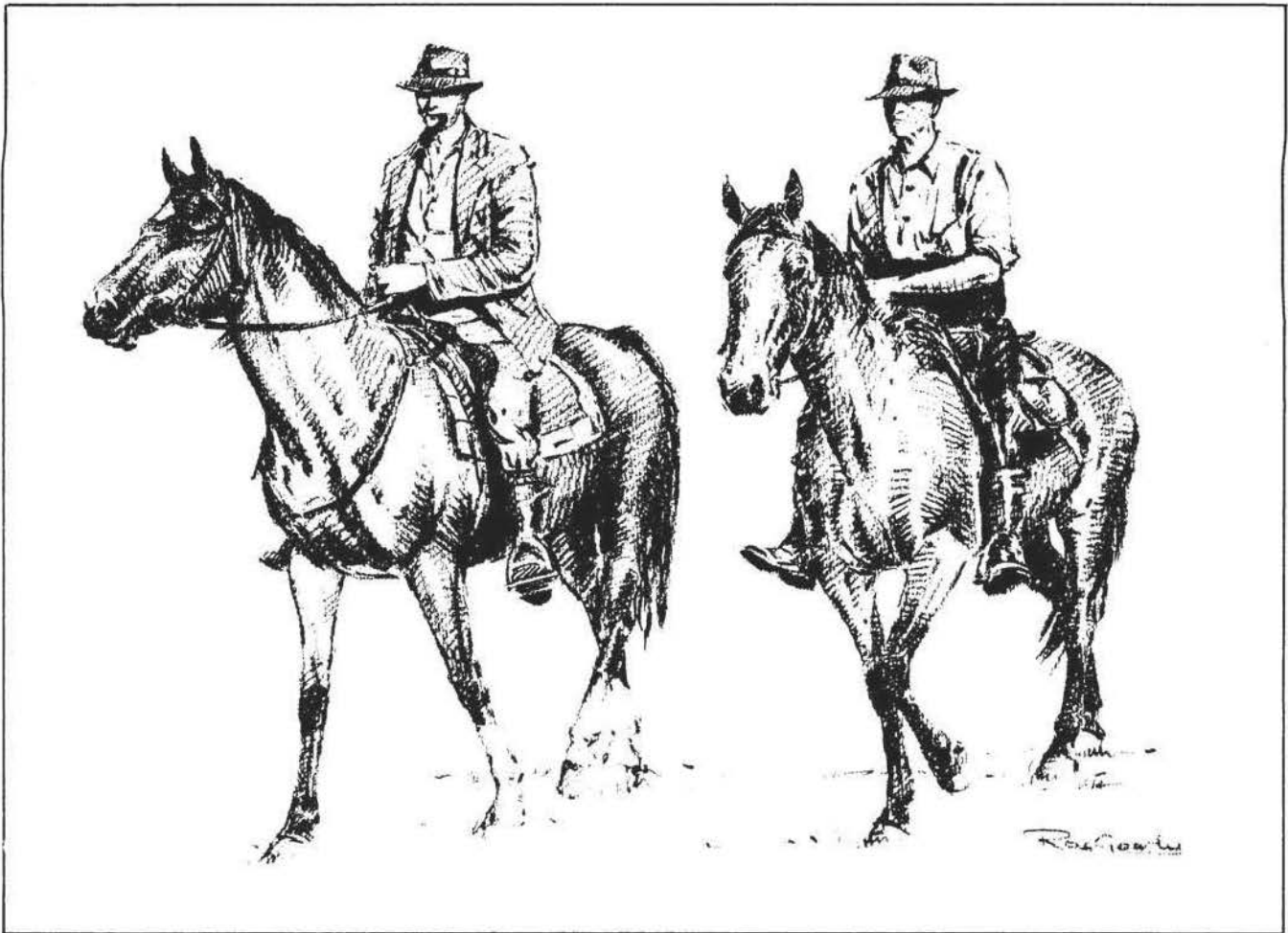
On her return to Mansfield Ros told the *Courier* that, 'I just adore the mountains and the countryside

around here. It's not as if I'm painting something I'm not interested in. I sit back quietly and watch the people's characters. It's so much easier to paint someone if you actually know them'.

Having sold her work internationally she is now working on several Australian themes, including the Mansfield Great Mountain Race and the cattlemen. Her hope is that one day her works will be exhibited at Mansfield.

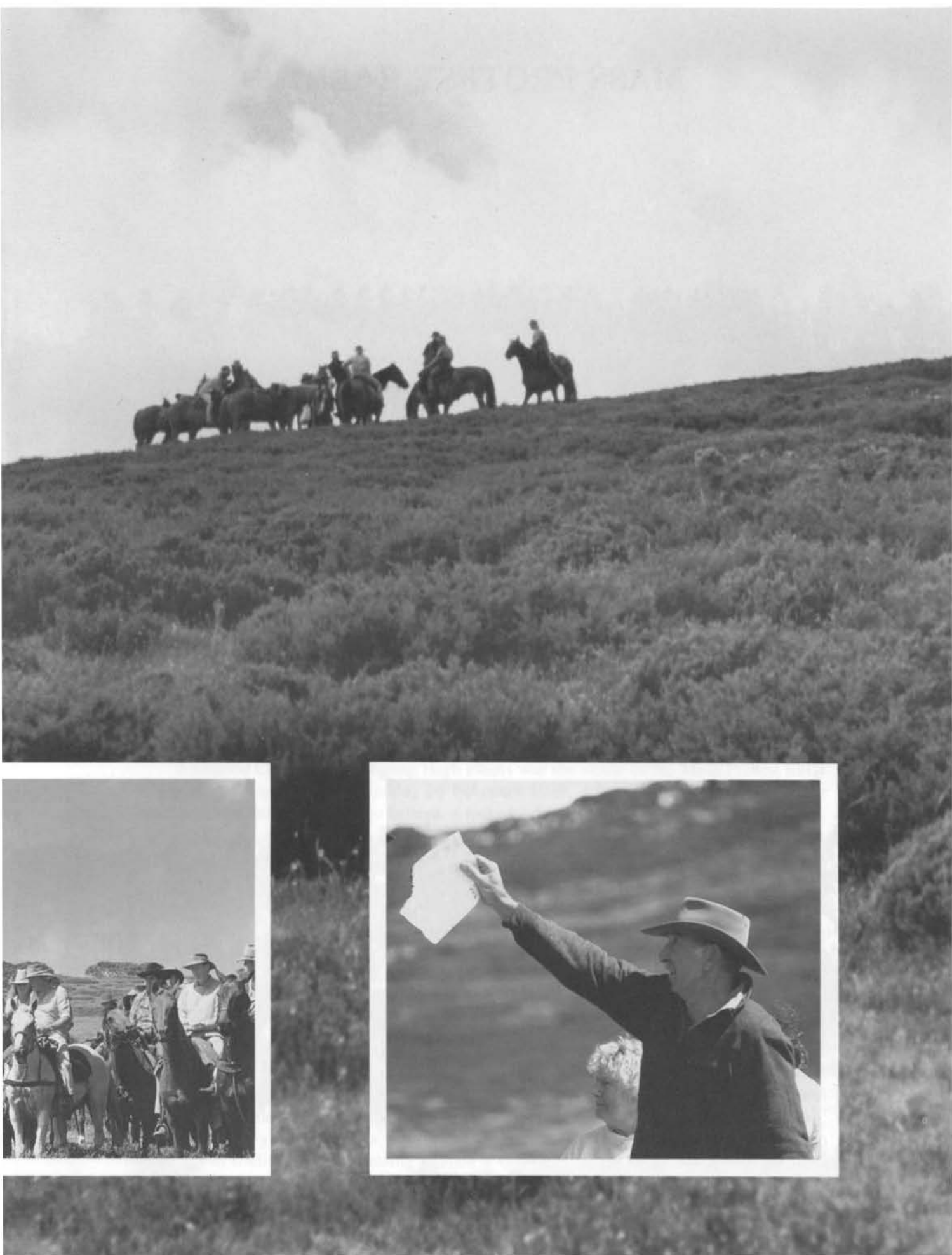
Ros also supports the cause of the cattlemen by writing letters to Parliamentarians expressing her concern at the lose of an Australian tradition and our cultural heritage.





CATTLESTEN SPAL





**MASS PROTEST RALLY**





Watchbed Creek on the Bogong High Plains was the venue of the Mass Protest Rally organised by the MCAV on Sunday 26 February 1989. After strolling up the Mt Nelse track and negotiating, would you believe, a locked gate, supporters gathered at the rally site.

Those gathered expected the speeches and enjoyed the views. They knew that some riders had gathered elsewhere but were not prepared for the spectacular that the MCAV had organised. No one was at all annoyed when the speeches were interrupted when a group of about 40 riders appeared on the horizon.

There to be introduced to the crowd were the families directly effected by the threatened eviction. No longer were they just a list of names, a nonentity that the Government could discard. They were families: husbands, wives and children fighting for their right to survive and continue in a traditional lifestyle. To the cheers of the crowd and the strains of 'We're the Mountain Cattlemen' this first group made their way down the hill to the crowd.

With the atmosphere highly charged the second group appeared. Emotions were heightened as wave after wave of riders appeared on the horizon. Hundreds of horsemen and women filled the skyline, representing some of the other cattlemen who face potential eviction and some of the supporters of the Association. It was not your green 'rent a crowd' supporters. They were families, young and old, farm and office workers, and people who believed in tradition, all protesting against a Government decision.







## ALPINE NATIONAL PARK PROCLAMATION

Despite the efforts of many concerned 'ordinary' people the proclamation of the Alpine National Park went ahead. However, all did not go as planned!

Many supporters of the Public Land Council (PLC) arrived on the Friday evening and camped in a sheltered area at Holmes Plain. This proved to be a prudent move. Much of the discussion that evening was 'What's the weather going to do, Bill?', 'Could get a bit rough'. Unfortunately for Ms Setches, it did get a bit rough.

Weeks before the proclamation, the CF&L, (who, after all, know this region better than anyone

else), had selected one of the most spectacular, and one of the windiest places in the alps to be the site where the Park would be proclaimed. The day before, despite a forecast of strong winds and warnings from the people who use the area, they went ahead and erected marquees and display tents.

That night, one could say that 'rough' conditions prevailed, with gale force winds and drenching rain. The next morning at Snowy Plain, very little remained of the marquees, displays and promotional material that had been there the day before. The one tent that survived the onslaught of the previous night was anchored down with 4WD vehicles and shifted well away from the original site.



The PLC held its own rally at Holmes Plain before the scheduled proclamation. Continued support was pledged to seek multiple use of the alpine region for all user groups and not just select recreational groups.

A group of about thirty riders made their way from Holmes Plain to Snowy Plain were, despite previous assurances that the park was for all the people all the time and that there would be no locked gates, they were barred from entering the area. Within minutes of them being denied access, an angry crowd had gathered and was demanding that the cattlemen be allowed into the area. Eventually CF&L opened the gate allowing the cattlemen to enter.

While all this was happening, Ms Kay Setches, Minister for Conservation, Forest and Lands had arrived in her 4WD, (it was too rough for her helicopter), and barely anyone noticed.

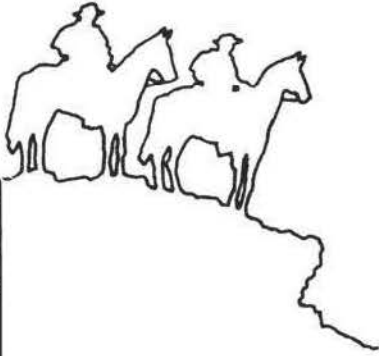
The proclamation had become a farce.

Ms Setches was heckled throughout her speech by different groups and the disapproval drowned out the few favourable responses that were received. The majority of the crowd did not support the proclamation of the park and many who had planned to be there did not arrive. Perhaps they were apprehensive about the state of the road after the rain and concerned that they too would end up against a tree like the CF&L vehicle below Holmes Plain.









### **Hec Stagg**

Hector James 'Hec' Stagg, who died on 16 August 1989 at the age of 84 years was originally from East Gippsland, and spent his childhood at Combienbar. After his marriage he and his wife, Evelyn, took over the Combienbar Post Office in 1939, but left that area towards the end of the war to move to Tinamba. Hec began running cattle on Erica in 1958 and was 'phased out' when the final leases were withdrawn in 1978. He took considerable interest in the history of the mountains, and those who enjoyed hearing the early tales from him will miss him sorely.

### **Nancy Treasure**

Ann Archbold 'Nancy' Treasure nee Morison of Wuk Wuk, died on 22 July 1989. Nancy was descended from a strong pioneering family, the Lathams, who settled in Gippsland around 1850. Prior to her marriage of almost 50 years to Jim, she worked and managed her parents' property at Stratford. Nancy was an active worker for the CWA, Church Guild, Red Cross and the Intellectually Disabled. Her gentle and caring nature and wry sense of humour will be missed by all who knew her, particularly Jim, Allan, Doug, Bruce, Christa and Rhonda.

### **Lorna Lovick**

On 6 July 1989, Mrs Lorna Mary Lovick, died at home at Merrijig after a long illness. Mrs Lovick was the daughter of John and Emily McCaskill who were one of the pioneering families of Mansfield. She was a member of a large and respected family of 12 children and grew up in the district. Her marriage to Jack Lovick, of Merrijig, united two strong pioneering families. Lorna Lovick was quietly devoted to her family, endearing her to all who knew her.

### **William Toland**

Widely known, Bill Toland of Cobungra, died on 25 November 1989 after being ill for some time. Bill was the son of John and Lillian Toland and lived his 76 years in the mountain region of Omeo. He was a true artisan in the craft of whipmaking, with many whipcracking champions and stockmen alike, eager to own a Toland whip. One of the death notices in *The Bairnsdale Advertiser* says it all:

*The whips may rise,  
The whips may fall,  
One thing's for certain,  
You will be missed by all.*

### **Vince Cummins**

On 22 May 1989 Vince Cummins, Heyfield's 'senior citizen', died at the age of 89 years. Vince, from a pioneering Glenmaggie family, supported the Association from the outset as an Associate member, and enjoyed meeting his many friends from over the years at Get Togethers. Vince was a man who would go out of his way to do a good turn for anyone, and loved a joke. He will be sadly missed.

## FOREBEARS

The pioneers of Australia's High Country bore a spirit forged on dedication and from this struggle with the fickle elements evolved the folklore of our nation thus from amongst the lofty alpine pastures come stories about the exploits of cattlemen bold: from within the lowland winter huts and cabins tales of the women also which must be told.

Every cattle drove brought new adventures so 'round the campfire at the very end of day, yarns were swapped between these men of substance inspired by drama, tragedy and horseplay so around the campfires which warmed them and from cabin hearths hither and yon, the legacy of their endurance was passed from Father and Mother to Daughter and Son

Every day created unusual situations as they toiled upon the rooftop of Australia tho' beset by trial and tribulation their purpose would not allow them to bend to failure for, regardless of our individual lot in life we are all in some way indebted to them whether we are a direct descendant or just simply free their guts and determination forged this land for you and me.

*Ian R. Thomas*



## THE MAN FROM SNOWY RIVER

This year marks the one hundredth anniversary of the publication of 'Banjo' Patterson's 'The Man from Snowy River' in the *Bulletin*. When he wrote it he would have little dreamed that there would be countless arguments for years after his death as to the identity of 'The Man', as he had settled that himself by saying that there was no one man, and that he was a compilation of many that he had known. Nor did he dream that exactly fifty years after his poem was written that a process of vilification of the cattlemen would begin with a Royal Commission into massive bushfires. Since that time they have been waging a steady war in which the enemy is red tape and misinformation, not the terrain over which his 'Man' rode.

Despite the embattled position in which the cattlemen find themselves a hundred years later, much thought has been given to the possible identities of those who may have inspired Patterson's poem. This has been encouraged in no small part by two successful films. The main contender has always been promoted as being Jack Riley, from Corryong, but occasionally the name of Owen Cummins crops up in conversation.

Owen Cummins was born at Dargo Flat on 13 September 1874, the third of nine children. His parents were Michael Cummins and the former Johanna Nolan, both Irish immigrants to Victoria. Owen grew up there, and became known as an outstanding athlete who excelled in foot running, hurdling and pole-vaulting, but was above all else known as a fearless rough rider. One of his special feats was to leap from the top rail of a fence on to the backs of young horses galloping around a yard without saddle or bridle, and leave them, landing on his feet, when the going got too rough.

Owen would have been about sixteen when Patterson wrote his poem. By that time he appears to have started his droving career, that took him as far afield as the Snowy Mountains and the Riverina. He always had a handy galloper in his plant when travelling, usually ungroomed and carrying a light pack or dilapidated rug. It inevitably started at long odds at country race meetings, and equally invariably led the field home with young Owen on his back.

Owen apparently left the area around the age of 20, around about 1894, after a broken romance with a young Irish girl. He then moved to Queensland and the Northern Territory, where he spent the rest of his life, working first as a blacksmith, and then breeding the horses which were his life. He did not marry, and transferred his Queensland property to his sister, Mrs Mary Gee, in 1947.

In the Territory he avoided the subject of the poem, except when his tongue was loosened by lubrication, and he laid claim to the title of being THE Man from Snowy River. In his final years he was caretaker of the old 'Ghan store at Wave Hill, and died there on 25 August 1953. He was buried in an unmarked grave in the old Wave Hill homestead cemetery.

The full story of Owen Cummins appears to have been overlooked of recent years. Owen's sister Eleanor married William Kingwill. Her grandson, Kevin Coleman of Heyfield, a Mountain Cattleman who died in 1984, contended to the end that his great-uncle was the true Man.

In the far away Northern Territory a memorial to Owen Cummins has been unveiled at the spot where he died, and a brief biography written by Ted Evans.

The plaque on the memorial reads:

**In memory of**

**Owen Stephen Cummins**

**Born Dargo, Bogong High Plains, Victoria,  
13 September 1874.**

**Died Wave Hill, Northern Territory,  
25 August 1953.**

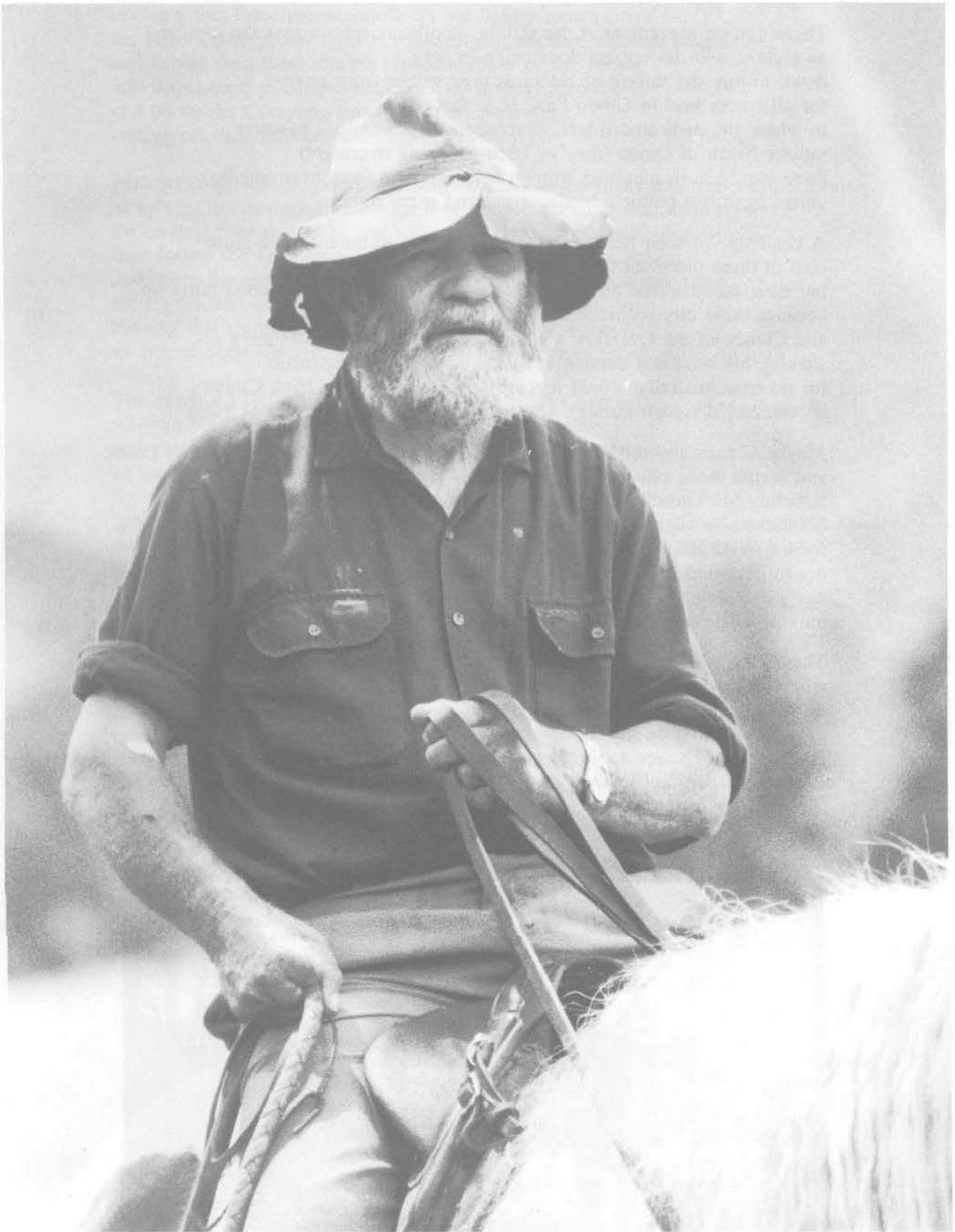
The Territory's Own Man From Snowy River.

Respected as a horseman down Kosciusko way  
and admired as a stockman, drover and horse  
breeder during more than 50 years in the saddle in  
the Territory.

ETQ was his brand  
Horses were his life

R.I.P.

Geographical errors aside, 'Banjo' would probably have approved.



Ross Blair, 1989.

## CLANCY'S LAMENT

(with apologies to 'The Banjo')

There's more movement at the station, hoofbeats echo across the ground  
as a ghost with no regrets does make its way  
down to join the throng of riders as they gather from around  
for all tracks lead to Gibbo Park H.S. this day  
to where the dedicated riders, descendent of Australia's pioneers  
muster North of Omeo (they've been gath'ring overnight)  
these sturdy bush men and women have come in from near and far  
united against a political battle, a sad and sorry plight.

A challenge of their heritage emerges, it lurks in bureaucratic guise  
clad in three piece suits and soft soled shoes do they go  
but their fancy words do nought but get the mountain folks blood fairly up  
because these city politicians mostly just do not know  
and Clancy of the Overflow's spectral form joins the riders there  
shaking his head and cursing at mistakes that might be made  
for no true Australian could jeopardise the spirit of the High Country  
if 'ere they'd ridden through alpine misty cloud-framed plain or glade

Maybe Clancy's ghost will ride on up the steps of Victoria's Parliament House  
and across those plushly carpeted floors, glaring from on high  
tethering his Timor pony's bridle to the arm of the Speaker's chair  
his horse also regarding the Honourable Members with a bright and fiery eye  
for the Wild Hop scrub and Mimosa clumps host a special kind of magic  
not to be found in Albert Park, nor down along Collins Street  
nay . . . tis only found whilst riding through tall stringybark strands  
moving cattle or chasing mountain brumbies, in serious pursuit

These mountain people understand the delicate nature of the High Country  
wherein they've tended the environment with an experienc'd eye  
as with stockwhip cracks ringing throughout the ranges  
they move cattle or wild horses, way up there on high  
evidence can be seen today that the cattle's movements have been effective  
at reducing fire fuel loading in the bush  
so, were the cattlemen evicted, the high plains majestic splendour  
might well be lost to a raging bushfire's relentless push



I therefore hope that the Honourable Members will get up off their behinds  
if only at the vision of Clancy's ethereal frame  
realising that these mountainfolk do not lightly treat  
the High Country, nor their heritage as just another vote-catching game  
and maybe then these elected representatives of the people  
will direct their pampered backsides up through Omeo  
and on up the Corryong Road, out past Benambra  
casting off their hobbles and blinkers as they go

Perhaps only then the politicians will understand the many true and valid reasons  
as to why the mountain cattlemen love the High Plains with dedication  
for as they rode the peaks and valleys up on the very roof of Australia  
they forged the very 'guts' we are renowned for in this nation  
and, right through to Kosciusko, ghosts of pioneers do surely raise  
their worn and weatherbeaten faces towards the sky  
trusting that commonsense will surely prevail throughout  
as crucial decisions are made regarding the future of those plains on high

The mountain cattlemen really care for the High Country  
wherein both their heritage and livelihood do depend  
and voices past and present unite, asking nought but practicality  
as the future of the high plains they do defend  
So, if 'The Man from Snowy River' movie brought even one tear to your eye  
perhaps due to the mountains beauty and romance (which I believe go hand in hand)  
that very country which I love so much, with it's rocky battlements on high  
then you, my friend, must surely understand

*So envisage dodging through tall timber, around treacherous wombat holes  
with your mountain pony's sides well flecked with foam  
senses keening with exertion, astride a surefooted mount so brave  
appreciating, it you will, why to many folk this place is truly 'home'  
Now cast your eye up yonder where, atop a craggy ridge  
a spectral figure, clad in Dri-za-Bone and moleskins watches on  
trusting in the judgement of all thinking Australian people  
and that spirit of mountain heritage can live on today and far beyond.*

*Ian R. Thomas*



# THE MISSING LINK

## Hard-hooved animals and the Australian environment

Many people have strained credibility by claiming that so-called soft-footed animals have less adverse effects upon soil and water conservation values than do 'hard' hooved animals.

It is difficult to support this theory after observing the extensive areas of bare and disturbed ground scarified by lyre birds beneath the scrubby understory of forests in the Eastern ranges and the burrowing and soil subsidence following countless years of wombat excavation.

Half a century ago there was vast devastation by soft-footed rabbits that completely denuded the land, destabilized river banks, and ring-barked millions of tree seedlings.

The inconclusive rhetoric that has been circulated and has gained some currency with people who do not understand grazing animals, has led them to believe that the so-called hard-hooved animals are detrimental to the Australian environment.

Australia appears to have had by far the greatest soil erosion rate of any of the major land masses on the planet Earth and yet it is the only country that has not had vast herds of grazing ungulates. History indicates that in other countries, great herds of these hooved animals generally moved in a migratory fashion as they followed seasonal pasture growth and had their herding instincts developed by predators.

As they moved across the land, their hoof and tooth action reduced most of the remaining previous season's brittle and combustible dead grass to composting litter and converted new growth to fertilizer. Unfortunately human intervention with animal management has not always been accompanied by good husbandry practices in various parts of the world and this has created the misplaced belief that hooved animals are all bad for conservation values.

In Australia, where geologists have informed us that in past ages mountain ranges were as high as 25,000 feet above sea level, the large land creatures other than birds were marsupials and reptiles. Most grazing marsupials avoid the more elevated and snowy regions but it appears that as the mountains eroded and the plains became more arid and the annual snow melt reduced, these animals developed a unique reproductive system that better equipped them to survive droughts.

Until the aboriginal race of humans, and dogs came (a short space of time in ecological terms) their survival instincts were directed rather to withstanding drought than to the depredations of large and effective land based predators.

For millions of years the high country of Australia which is derived from the same basic foundations as are to be found throughout the rest of the world, was affected by successive routines of fire, flood erosion and regrowth which continued with relentless and devastating effect.

The average elevation of land in Australia is probably less than 200 metres while all other major land masses would have an average elevation of perhaps 1,000 metres or more.

There is a very great difference in the erosion levels while the only real significant difference is that Australia has not had the same beneficial hoof and tooth action of vast herds as they followed the seasons and made the annual regrowth of ground cover less fire-prone.

There is ample evidence today that well-managed grazing activity uses, and at the same time, strengthens plant communities of pastoral value.

In conclusion, is it not a fair question to ask, has the lack of hooved animals been responsible for accelerated land degradation in Australia?

*Jim Commins*



## *High Country-Spring*

*Dappled trunks of spotted gums reach in vain  
for the elusive clouds above  
the rocky bastions of the slopes  
on Kosciusko's flank  
whilst melting snow sends drops of silver  
into thaw creeks rising streams*

*Alpine flowers yawn as they awaken  
to the springtime sunshine stark  
and a new beauty comes to spread  
o'er the white-clad slopes  
Breathless, I can scan the vista  
spring is my favourite time of year*

*As across the slopes I gaze in wonder  
at nature's kaleidoscope of colours  
I am awed at the sense of re-birth  
in the High Country  
as, from Jindabyne to Omeo  
new life leaps to kiss the sky.*

*Ian R. Thomas*

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## Up on the Bogong Plains

They're confiscating grazing runs  
Up on the Bogong Plains  
A land of mountain grandeur  
In the Great Dividing Range  
The livelihood of cattlemen  
This country's economy  
Depend upon these leases  
For the likes of you and me.

Cattle graze so peacefully  
Thru summer months so warm  
But other types of bureaucrats  
Are brewing up a storm  
The cattlemen know their work  
Around that high terrain  
Why take the leases from them  
Up on the Bogong Plains.

Their cattle huts are open wide  
To every walk of life  
Trailriders and bushwalkers  
Are welcomed without strife  
This breed of man from years ago  
Still loves his own domain  
Why take the leases from them  
Up in the Bogong Plains.

Back since Eighteen Thirty Five  
They come year after year  
Rounding up their grazing herds  
Not forgetting any steer  
The bush has regrowth and grass  
It's all fertilised again  
Nature takes its course once more  
Up on the Bogong Plains.

Winter months arrive on time  
The Bogong's fill with snow  
Then comes the Aussie skiers life  
Where mountain blizzards blow  
But waiting down below the line  
That lust returns again  
Why take the leases from them  
Up on the Bogong Plains.

Spring has come the snow has melt  
The creeks all run again  
Magpies warble in the morning sun  
The dingoes howls refrain  
Can I ride the bush today  
Will I see it once again  
Let them keep their leases  
Up on the Bogong Plains.

*Johnny Faithfull*







## OVERSEAS NEWS

Associates may wonder, at times, is 'the word' getting out, is it spreading? Are others in the world aware of the plight of the mountain cattlemen? The answer is — YES!

Bill Hicks' niece, Janet Mackintosh, recently took the word to Egypt and communication is frequently heard from America, particularly Texas, Canada and England. Our main supporter in England would have to be Michael Parker from Bury-St. Edmonds in Suffolk. Michael is a strong supporter of the cause and delights in wearing his oilskin, Akubra and windcheater in the English streets, causing comments as he goes. Even in Western Samoa you're not safe. Sue Silvers' sister, Catherine Robinson and family, were congratulated on supporting the cattlemen when at the beach as their small child was wearing a cattlemen windcheater. They were even encouraged (!) to continue their support from this stranger.

Left: Janet Mackintosh at Cheops, Egypt.



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## MOUNTAIN POLO MATCH

To celebrate the 100th anniversary of the publication of *The Man from Snowy River*, several events have been arranged by cattlemen and friends in the Omeo district.

The first of these events was the Omeo High Country Round-Up successfully held on 6/7 January at Junction Plain.

This is to be followed by a polo match at Dinner Plain. The Geebung Polo Club vs The Cuff and Collar Team. The Geebungs are made up of prominent local cattlemen and will be captained by Ken Connley, while the Cuff and Collar Team is to be made up of polo payers from Melbourne. It is certain to be a 'no holds barred' event!

Later in the year 'The Snowy River Centenary Invitaion' bush race is to be held at Dinner Plain. It is sure to feature some of the best riders around. More details are available from Secretary John Dyer, (051) 59 1255.

## HIGH COUNTRY BOOKMARKS

All who are interested in the Mountain Cattlemen will be interested to learn of some new books that are available in most good bookshops.

Simon Cubitt, from the Tasmanian Association, has produced two books on the Cattlemen in Tasmania. The first, *Snarers and Cattlemen of the Mersey High Country* documents the association of the Lee family with The Paddocks. This is done by the use of diaries and oral history. There are 108 pages of text, maps and good illustrations with extensive footnotes and index. His second book, *A High Country Heritage*, marries Simon's words with the artwork of Des Murray. It is a most pleasant combination. This 'coffee table' book of 46 pages features detailed sketches of each hut, or what remains of the hut, together with a brief outline of the known history of the hut.

*If that Man comes here, I'll shoot Him*, is a small booklet of reminiscences from Gladys Weston and Emily McGufficke, both the daughters of George Wallace of Jindabyne. It deals in part with their recollections of the high country and also includes some of their original poetry. The booklet is edited by Rosemary Curry.

The new book from Neil Hulm *Tales of the Bush*, is another combination of story and poetry. Interestingly, for mountain cattlemen, is a letter describing the ecology of the Bogong High Plains from Mr. J. Edmondson written from his own observations in the first half of this century. Neil's poetry continues to amuse with lines like:

*Connley threw a challenge,  
Stoney grabbed it in a flash,  
Burrows said, 'We've now produced  
The Hobbled Sheepyard Clash!'*

which resulted after seeing them both on crutches at Sheepyard flat.

Finally, *'Banjo' Paterson's High Country*, by Tim Hall and Trisha Dixon is truly another of the 'coffee table' books like Nankin's *Range Upon Range*. The book, of 136 pages, features the cattlemen from the Monaro and Victoria and is full of familiar names, faces and landmarks. A highlight of the book is its pleasant design and extensive and detailed colour photographs.

## NATIONAL FARMERS FEDERATION GRANT

The National Farmers Federation has provided a significant grant from the Australian Farmers Fighting Fund to assist in financing the Association's campaign. The project has national implications for the wider issue of grazing domestic livestock on public land.

One of the objectives of the project is to promote the grazing of cattle as an appropriate use of public land with particular reference to the conservation and protection of the land especially through a reduction in the fire fuel hazard.

The NFF grant will finance a scientific review of the whole question of cattle grazing in the high country and will also be used to document the current condition of the Kosciusko National Park. Importantly, the grant will be used to document the observations of cattlemen in a more scientific manner than has been the case in the past.

# THE NINETIES

## A Personal View

The eighties have been a decade of change for the Cattlemen and the nineties are shaping up to be an even bigger challenge.

An ongoing commitment from Associates and Members alike will be necessary in the years ahead if we are to have any hope of making any impression on the Government. It is only through dogged and continued support that the Association will have any hope of gaining any changes to the proposed management of the alpine region.

One area that will require a concerted effort by many is the current debate on the maintenance, use and values of the huts within the alpine region. If some were to have their way they would have been burnt to the ground some time ago. It is interesting to note that in the Kosciusko National Park it has been seen to be necessary for a separate organisation of volunteers, known as the Kosciusko Huts Association (KHA) to maintain, restore and care for the huts **within** the park.

Kosciusko National Park is, of course, cared for by the Victorian equivalent of the Conservation, Forests and Lands. Some may say that this is obvious by the number of blackberry plants allowed to proliferate within the park, that are spreading to the neighbouring farm land. With all this care it was found necessary for the formation of the KHA. It is unfortunate to see that the Victorian huts may be doomed unless a similar organisation is established here.

At the start of this year, the Minister for Tourism, Steve Crabb, launched the Gippsland Hinterland Tourism Strategy. This report, with major input from the Tourism Unit of CF&L, encourages cattlemen to virtually hang out 'to rent' signs on their huts and be responsible for taking bookings for the use of the huts, and encourages further recognition of the tourism potential of the Cattlemen. Why then do other sections in CF&L only see the huts as a blight on the landscape and support the removal of the huts as the extremist conservation movement demands?

Another report recommends the removal of the beds and bunks within the huts, and their replacement with sleeping platforms. The alteration

of huts is a totally unacceptable proposal. Imagine the uproar from visitors to the Fitzroy Gardens if country Victoria proposed the modifying of the interior of Captain Cook's Cottage. The interior architecture of the huts is historically important and deliberate modifications would only be detrimental.

There appears to be a conflict of interest between the Departments as to the rights of usage of the huts. Has it been forgotten who built and maintained many of the huts for many years? Is it forgotten how important they are as a safety factor for all those who are encouraged to use the alps but do not have the experience to save their own lives when the weather turns foul?

Some huts have already been deemed ugly and replaced by modern equivalents. Currently some members of the MCAV are threatened with the actual loss of their huts or access to them. These buildings are an integral part of their livelihood. Associates and the public in general **must** be aware of these happenings and **must** be prepared to do something about it!

Another question we should be asking is why the further development of ski resorts is promoted? Most of the Victorian resorts are 'blotted' on highly visible ridges and allowed to spread with what would appear little control or concern to visual pollution. Why are some huts an eyesore yet ski lodges are not? Reportedly millions of dollars are to be spent updating facilities at some of the resorts yet we are also asked to believe that our lifestyle has led to the greenhouse effect which in turn will dramatically reduce expected snowfalls in the future.

I wholeheartedly agree with a comment heard in connection with the Dinner Plain development. It was said that the individual would rather drink water from the creek with cattle than from below the lodges and associated buildings. Where does the effluent go? Surely cattle do not saturate one area to the same degree that humans do.

It is encouraging to see that the NFF has provided the Association with a substantial grant towards further scientific research. This will hopefully help the Cattlemen better defend

themselves. It has long been a problem that the cattlemen do not have a list of credentials after their names and it is therefore assumed that without a tertiary education their observations are next to worthless.

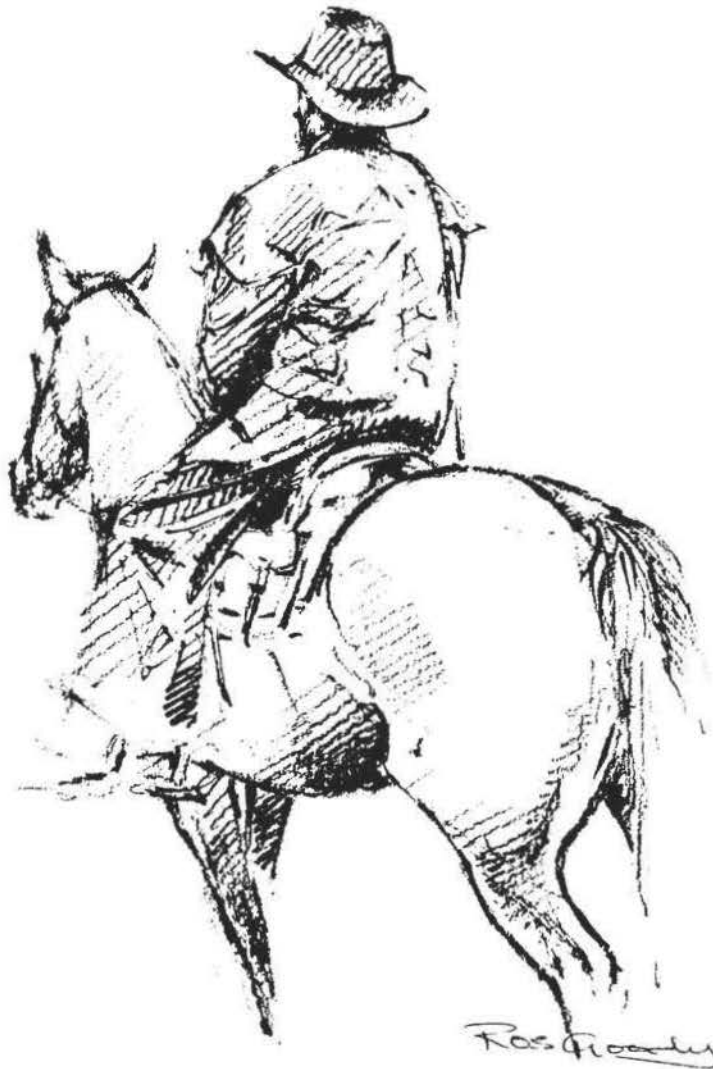
Support may also be needed to have the issue of the fees resolved. It appears that members will be forced off their runs because they will simply be priced out and their runs therefore forfeited. Perhaps this is how the Department is going to acquire more runs for the 'displaced' 11 families from Bogong?

Members of the MCAV must continue to support those facing eviction from their runs and pursue the aim of the Public Lands Council rally

of 2 December 1989: to encourage the continued multiple use of the alpine region of Victoria.

While we may recognise the heritage value of the Cattlemen, as does the Stockmans Hall of Fame in Queensland and the Folklore Council of Australia, we must drive home this value to others not as committed as ourselves. All of us who support the Mountain Cattlemen, and their cause, must be able to answer questions from those who want them removed. It is not enough to answer, 'Why, should they be kicked out, they're not hurting anyone.' We must all stand up and be counted if we are to count for anything at all.

*Debra Squires*



Riding into the challenges of the 1990s.

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE MOUNTAIN CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA INCORPORATED HELD AT THE VICTORIAN FARMERS' FEDERATION, 24 COLLINS STREET MELBOURNE ON WEDNESDAY 11TH OCTOBER 1989 AT 11:35 A.M.**

**PRESENT** A. Whittam, K. Whittam, W.G. Crump, J.L. Cook, Douglas Treasure, M. Jordan, L. Barraclough, D. Squires, F. Crooke, C.J. Davey, G. Coleman, L. Lieberman, I. McMichael, P. Arnouts, B. McGregor, J. Kilpatrick, Diane Guy, J. Treasure, B. Evans, J. Grenville, R. Hollis, K. Higgins, J. Dyer, J. Rogers, C. Hodge, M. Brown, R. Brown, J. Commins, T. Barker, David Treasure, S. Silvers, G. Stoney, A. Brewer, L. McCready, F. Ryan, R. Andrews, J. Andrews, David Guy, R. Varty, M. Blair, H. Ryder, G. Connley, B. Hicks.

**APOLOGIES** Were received from B. Macgregor, David Evans, Heather Mitchell, C. & G. Lovick, T. Murphy, K. Kelly.

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT** The President, Mr David Treasure, said that the past year had been a difficult one for the Mountain Cattlemen. With the constant publicity concerning the greenhouse effect and the hole in the ozone layer, radicals within the conservation movement had become increasingly strident in their demands, as they sense a growing public concern. Lazy politicians unimpressed with the issues of right and wrong willingly throw countless millions away in the hope of winning votes, and as smoke screen to divert public attention away from the disastrous monetary vortex which rapidly approaches our nation. Because of the State Government's desperate need for extra funds, the Department of Conservation Forests and Lands is attempting to raise as much revenue as possible from Crown Land rentals. This was to be achieved via the pricing panel chaired by Malcolm Lee (CF&L Ballarat), whose major priority seemed to be to complete matters before departing for a holiday in the south seas. The panel turned out to be a 'kangaroo court' and doubt must be cast on the professionalism of those who favoured its decision to charge \$18.00 a head for alpine grazing. However, at the time of writing negotiations are continuing with little regard for the panel's recommendations. The Alpine National

Parks Extension Bill has passed through the Legislative Council after capitulation by the Liberal Party. However some useful amendments were achieved on behalf of the Cattlemen. Graeme Stoney worked very hard on this matter. The President congratulated Omeo Branch for one of the most successful Get Togethers ever. The President thanked all those who contributed to that great weekend. The President reported that the Bogong rally focussed people's attention on the plight of the 11 families to be evicted from their Alpine grazing leases. The attention of the anti-eviction committee should now concentrate on keeping the issue alive, remembering that the next State election would be around 1991, and that there was a good chance of a change in Government. The Public Land Council is now up and running, the Chairman is Heather Mitchell, and it is hoped that some of the load presently carried by the M.C.A.V. will be shared by this new organisation. The President wished Heather and the Council all the best in their endeavors.

The President reported that the last few months have been unusually busy creating extra loadings on our finances. We will need to budget carefully during the next year. The President believed that we should, before starting any new project, cost out all components relating to that project, including our own operating costs, e.g. secretarial, communications, President's and Executive Officer's expenses, so that more definite planning of our costs can occur. We will also need to look carefully at the percentage or proportion of our income that we allocate to various areas, retaining as our priority the basic running of our Association. The matter of honorariums and expenses needs to be addressed, as the organisation has outgrown the point where most of its functions can be performed voluntarily. The President took the opportunity to thank all those who had worked so hard during the previous year. He ended by saying that the next 12 months will not be short of challenge or difficulty. We have not shirked in the past, he said, in fact adversity has tended to bind us together, and so it shall in the future.

**MINUTES OF THE LAST ANNUAL MEETING** The Secretary read the Minutes of the last Annual Meeting. Moved Clive Hodge, seconded K. Whittam that the minutes be confirmed. Carried.

**EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT** Mr Graeme Stoney reported on his role within the Association. He reported on a very busy year. On the subject of the phase outs he reported that the Association considered holding a public campaign and rally in the Kosciusko Park to highlight the stupidity of removing grazing from alpine areas in Victoria. After a careful look at the Kosciusko we decided that the Victorian public would have trouble understanding the message if we went to New South Wales. A rally on Bogong was organised and this was announced at the Gibbo Park Get Together. The Executive Officer acknowledged and thanked all those who offered help and advice, and in particular the valuable assistance of Geoff Burrowes. He reported that the media coverage of the rally was very good, however some of the print media were now looking for more than a display of horses. The need for hard scientific backup for the benefit of alpine grazing was more than apparent, and work was currently being done, which hopefully would end in a seminar later in the year. There was also a possibility of a study being undertaken by the Department of Agriculture and Forestry at Melbourne University. The Executive Officer reported on activities over the period immediately preceding the introduction of the Alpine National Park legislation, and thanked David Evans, Lou Lieberman, Geoff Coleman and Rosemary Varty for all their help, advice and assistance over that period. Mr Stoney particularly mentioned the proposed changes to the Alpine Advisory Committee. Unfortunately the wording of the legislation could mean an early phase out of the Committee. Mr Stoney reported on the increasing workload and financial strain placed on members of the Council, and felt that this matter would have to be resolved in the future.

**MARKETING OFFICER'S REPORT** Anne Whittam presented the marketing report for the years 1988/89. She said the year had been successful though lacklustre. Mrs Whittam explained why the Association had not taken space at the Melbourne Show this year, and spoke of the disadvantages experienced at the Show last year. She reported on a new hat badge which was expected to be a good selling item. She reported that each Branch should

support their local shows etc. to raise extra revenue. Mrs Whittam stated that the year was satisfactory with sales increasing slightly, while expenses had been contained.

**SECRETARY / TREASURER'S REPORT** Mrs Silvers reported that membership of the Association continued to grow slowly. There are 82 full members and 1,800 associate members, though numbers of associates were imprecise as many joined as families, and there was no way to make an actual head count. Mrs Silvers reported on a very busy year. The need for improved communication had meant purchasing an extra facsimile machine, and the benefits of this were felt both at Bogong and during the period leading to the introduction of the Alpine Parks legislation. She noted that the Bogong rally was an emotional experience for everyone there and demonstrated that the Cattlemen still had the ability to catch the hearts of their supporters and the public alike. She noted the success of the Omeo Branch Get Together and especially the work put in by the family of John Cook.

Secretary noted the enormous expenses incurred both by the Association and by its officers in attending meetings called in Melbourne by the Department of CF&L, and felt that the Minister's attention should be drawn to this fact.

Mrs Silvers reported on increasing requests from students for information regarding the Mountain Cattlemen. She had personally attended to 109 requests during the year, and many other requests had been dealt with by Jim Commins and others. She reported on the study design the Association had been asked to comment upon by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board and said that she expected that these student requests would increase. Mrs Silvers reported on the establishment of an office in Mansfield and the reason why this had become a necessity.

As Treasurer Mrs Silvers commented on the increase in expenses and said that was directly attributable to the busy year, to the Bogong Rally, the Alpine Park legislation, the Crown Lands rentals pricing panel, to the purchase of 2 facsimile machines and the caravan.

Moved that the reports from the Executive Officer, the Marketing Officer and the Secretary/Treasurer be received. Jim Commins. Seconded Ross Brown. Carried.

**SETTING OF FEES** Doug Treasure in putting forward his motion remarked on the need to increase members' subscriptions to make a more equitable contribution. Moved Doug Treasure, seconded John Rogers that the member's subscription for the year 1989/1990 be \$1 per head. Carried. Moved Graeme Stoney, seconded Keith Whittam that the subscription rate for Associate members remain the same. Carried.

**SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS** Moved Clive Hodge, seconded Ross Brown that standing orders be suspended. Carried.

The meeting adjourned at 11.35 a.m.

**RESUMPTION** Moved Doug Treasure, seconded Ross Brown that standing orders be resumed. The meeting resumed at 2.45 p.m.

The President stated that since he was not standing for election again this year he would remain in the Chair for the fixing of Honorariums and election of office bearers. The President discussed the increasing workload for that position in the Association, and stated that after lengthy consideration senior members of the Council had suggested that a position be created of Chairman. This would halve the work.

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**APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN** Moved John Rogers, seconded G. Connley that the Association appoint an additional position of Chairman, the post to be for one year. Discussion centered around the duties of both and it was noted that the President would be the higher profile position. The Chairman would work under instruction from the President. The position and duties of Vice President were also discussed. Mr Stoney reported to the meeting that Mr C. Lovick was unable to undertake any position within the Association at present. Mr Stoney reported to the meeting that it was suggested that an Associate member be brought in to act as Chairman, and Mr Alan Brewer had been approached and had agreed to undertake the position. Members strongly supported Mr Brewer. It was not considered a difficulty that the position of Chairman would not necessarily be filled by a full member.

**FIXING OF HONORARIUMS** President and Chairman: moved Clive Hodge, seconded J. Rogers that the honorarium for the President and the Chairman be \$4,000 (divided between them) plus expenses. Carried.

Executive Officer: Mr Whittam noted that at the previous Annual Meeting a resolution was passed that honorariums be adjusted by the CPI. Moved G. Stoney, seconded Doug Treasure that the resolution now be rescinded. Carried. Moved Doug Treasure, seconded Clive Hodge that the honorarium for the Executive Officer be \$3,750 plus expenses. Carried.

Secretary/Treasurer: Moved Doug Treasure, seconded Alan Brewer that the honorarium for the Secretary/Treasurer be \$8,400 paid at the rate of \$700 per month. Carried.

Assistant Secretary: Moved Doug Treasure, seconded J. Rogers that the honorarium be \$1,070 plus expenses. Carried.

**FUTURE HONORARIUMS** Moved G. Stoney, seconded L. McCready that to assist in setting honorariums at the next annual meeting the past year's workload of MCAV officers be assessed and used to gauge next year's honorarium levels, and that any special projects undertaken in that period be assessed and an extra honorarium be paid to the appropriate officer if necessary. Carried.

**ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS** The following office bearers were elected for the year 1989/1990:

President: Mr Douglas Treasure, nominated by Mr G. Stoney. Elected.

Chairman: Mr Alan Brewer, nominated by Mr J. Commins. Elected.

Senior Vice President: Mr Harry Ryder, nominated by Mr J. Rogers. Elected.

2nd Vice President: Mr Graham Connley, nominated by Clive Hodge. Declined. Mr David Treasure, nominated by Mr Graham Connley. Elected.

3rd Vice President: Mr Graham Connley, nominated by Alan Brewer. Elected.

Executive Officer: Mr Graeme Stoney, nominated by Ross Brown. Elected.

Marketing Officer: Mrs Anne Whittam, nominated by Doug Treasure. Elected.

Special Projects Officer: Mr Stoney informed the meeting that Mr Lyle McCready would not be standing for election this year. He thanked Mr McCready for all his devoted years of service to the Association.

David Treasure also thanked Mr McCready and nominated Mr Jim Commins. Elected.

Ian Roper moved a motion of thanks to Mr McCready for the wonderful contribution over so many years. Seconded Frank Ryan. Carried.

Secretary/Treasurer: Mrs S. Silvers, nominated by Clive Hodge. Elected.

Assistant Secretary: Mrs Anne Whittam, nominated by John Cook. Elected.

Auditor: Moved Ross Brown, seconded Clive Hodge that the Association appoint Mr W.G. Crump auditor for the year 1989/1990. Carried.

**FURTHER BUSINESS** Mr Jim Commins raised the matter of zoning being used for the State of Victoria and proposed the following zone be added—the Eastern Forest Zone. He asked that the Association seek the assistance of the Victorian Farmers Federation to achieve this further zone.

After discussion introduced by Mr Harry Ryder it was agreed that the financial statements of the Association be forwarded to the Secretaries of each Branch with the Notice of Meeting for future Annual General Meetings.

It was noted that the letter from the Minister for Primary Industries and Energy, the Hon. John Kerin M.P., regarding research funding be forwarded to the Scientific Committee for their attention.

Mr Ross Brown expressed the thanks of the Association to Mr David Treasure and the Central Council.

Mr Alan Brewer thanked the members for their kind words and the confidence shown in him.

Mr Doug Treasure also thanked the members.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 4.10 p.m.

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**Application No:** MCAV 34572

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**Reason for Application:** The extended growth of blackberries on the High Plains, due to the phasing out and eventual eviction of the Cattle and Cattlemen of the High Plains, will be enough to support our proposed factory. In fact, the growth of the blackberries is expected to increase more than enough to enable future expansion of production facilities.

The benefits to the Kiewa Valley will flow directly from the building and operation of our plant, (proposed only, of course) in the form of employment opportunities and possibilities for the building industry, for Plant Operators and also for Pickers, both at the inception and during expansion, as well as during operation.

The realisation of this project, time-wise, depends on the prompt eviction of the Cattle and Cattlemen from the High Plains.

Johnie Ellyot  
Directed Manager  
Oldies I.EX.CELL

## SUBJECT TO PUBLIC APPROVAL

Objections in writing to

"This Week in Falls Creek", C/- Ken Bell, P.O. Box 125, Falls Creek, Vic. 3699

—from *This Week in Falls Creek*.

G & H Stoney  
Minto Park  
MANSFIELD VC 3722

