



*caring since 1835*

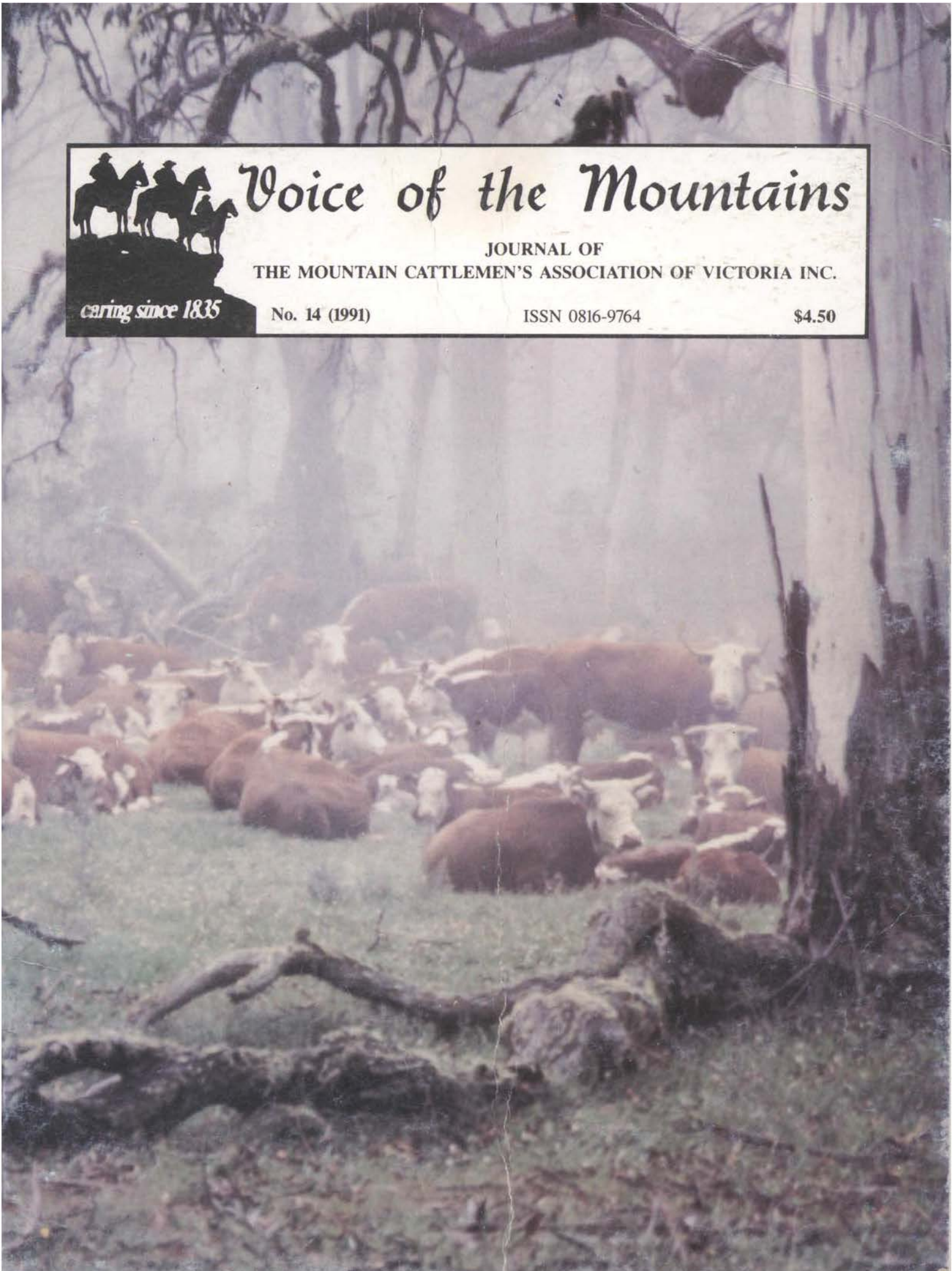
# Voice of the Mountains

JOURNAL OF  
THE MOUNTAIN CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA INC.

No. 14 (1991)

ISSN 0816-9764

\$4.50



# Voice of the Mountains

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

No. 14 (1991)

ISSN 0816-9764

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

---

## CONTENTS

Office Bearers .....	2
President's Message .....	3
On and On We Go—Into the Wilderness .....	5
A Burning Issue, or a Burning Experience? .....	7
The Phantom Cattlemen <i>Dorothy Watt</i> .....	9
Practical Aspects of Grazing and Fire in Eastern Victoria <i>James A. Commins</i> ..	11
The Mountain Cattleman <i>Kath Wright</i> .....	21
Alf Waugh's Alpine Photographs .....	22
The Cross <i>Jennings Carmichael</i> .....	27
In Memorium .....	28
Mr C.J. (Jim) Gough	
Mr Keith Robert Elliott	
Mr Norman George Purcell	
Mrs Ina Faithfull	
Mrs Ellen Violet Gibbs	
Grazing on Mount Buffalo <i>Percy G. Weston</i> .....	30
The Snowy Mountains Stockmen <i>Boyd Mould</i> .....	33
1990 Bowman's Forest Get Together .....	34
A Mountain Muster <i>Allan Brewer</i> .....	38
Around the Traps ... ..	40
Horsemen to the Rescue .....	42
Cattle in the Bush around Tambo Crossing <i>Jim Conn</i> .....	44
Mountain Cattlemen lead Bairnsdale Rally .....	45
High Country Bookmarks .....	46
Cattle on the High Plains <i>Neil Hulm</i> .....	47
Memories of the High Plains <i>Vera Fitzgerald</i> .....	48
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting .....	49

### **OFFICE BEARERS FOR 1990-1991**

President: Doug Treasure  
Chairman: Alan Brewer  
Snr Vice President: Harry Ryder  
Second Vice President: David Treasure

Executive Officer: Graeme Stoney  
Special Projects Officer: Jim Commins

Secretary/Treasurer: Sue Silvers  
P.O. Box 294, Mansfield, 3722 Ph: (057) 75 1600

Marketing Officer/Assistant Secretary: Anne Whittam,  
357 Springvale Road, Forest Hill, 3131

### **BRANCH OFFICE BEARERS 1990-91**

#### **MANSFIELD**

President: Terry Murphy  
Vice President: Charlie Lovick  
Secretary: John Gough

#### **GIPPSLAND**

President: John Rogers  
Vice President: Clive Hodge  
Secretary: Magda Brown

#### **OMEEO**

President: Jim Commins  
Secretary: Betty Fitzgerald  
Assistant Secretary: Coral Aston

#### **NORTH EASTERN**

President: Harry Ryder  
Vice President: Jack Hicks  
Secretary: Mrs B. Rourke

**COPYRIGHT © 1991**

All material in *Voice of the Mountains* is copyright, and may not be copied or further reproduced in any way whatsoever without the written permission of the individual contributor, or where no contributor is stated, the written permission of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria Inc.

The views expressed by the individual authors are not necessarily those of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria Inc.

**COVER ILLUSTRATION:** Commins' stock in the mist on Nunniong.

Printed by E-Gee Printers Pty Ltd 45 Macleod Street, Bairnsdale, 3875  
Phone (051) 52 5055 Fax (051) 52 1387



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

What a lot has happened since the last issue of *Voice of the Mountains*. Yet it seems no time since last year's Get Together. We have seen a lot of changes around us—particularly in our economy.

Our nation's economic situation is bad, and will get worse. Victoria is leading the way along this disastrous path. Why? Small business, already buckling under high interest rates and government imposts, is now faced with trying to hold on with government management a disaster. So many are asking 'Why bother?'. When the will gives way, there is little left.

But don't give up yet! This is a great country with a good system, and a lot of good people—we just need to jab the spurs in and get a good blast of useless wind out of the system, and get on with it.

The Association this past year has been involved in continued negotiations with the Department of Conservation and Environment regarding the 1991 phase-outs. Since we all attend these meetings at the request of the bureaucrats in a spirit of co-operation to try to find a real solution to a real problem, we can only hope that we are not caught in more of the 'consensus non-decision making' process. The eviction issue remains one of our top priority concerns.

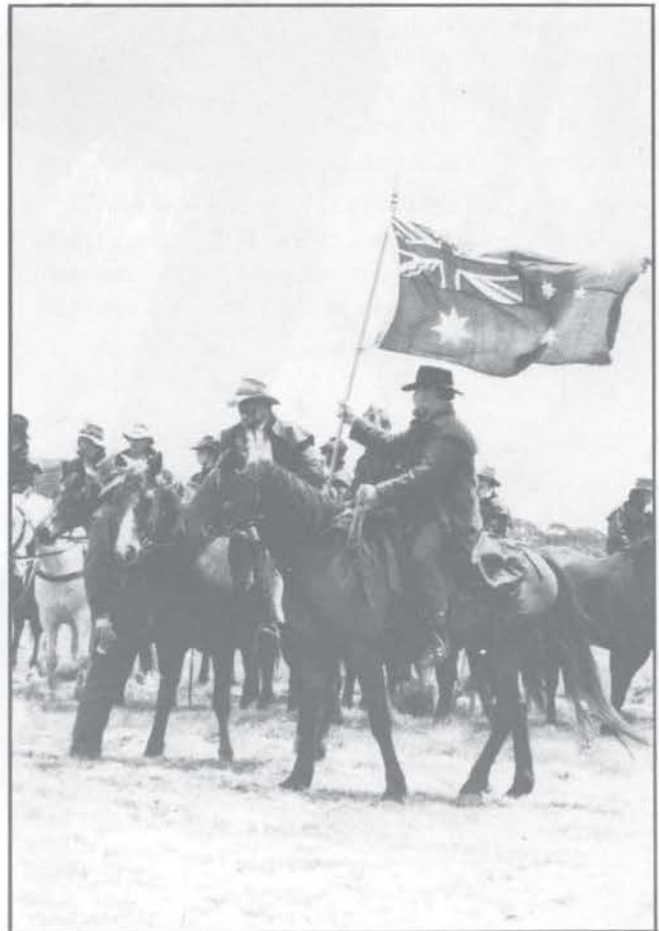
The other issue confronting us is that of wilderness areas. This appears to be the way to gain what the National Park proclamation did not do for the extremist green lobby. The multi-use concept of the park is not good enough for the radicals—not enough closures!

During the first week of 1991, I attended an Alpine Ecology course on the Bogong High Plains. At one evening forum on alpine management, one departmental officer suggested we talk about the Alps without ski-resorts as a possible future situation! Discussion was short—but it displayed the train of thought of some members of our community, and in influential positions.

As an Association we have another interesting year ahead. One which will involve a lot of time and expense for many in the quest for public education and input into a long term plan for the alps. Alps which we all love, and which belong to us all.

Best wishes to all for 91.

*Doug Treasure*



President Doug Treasure and Executive Officer Graeme Stoney at the Alpine National Park declaration.





Lyric Mitchell, aged 10, at the Bairnsdale Rally.

# ON AND ON WE GO—INTO THE WILDERNESS

Remember the campaign about the Alpine National Park?

Remember how the Liberal Party changed its position which ensured the passing of the Park legislation?

Remember the all-Party agreement on cattle grazing that was negotiated as the Alpine National Park Bill went through both Houses?

Do you remember thinking, 'Oh well, the remaining cattlemen have seven year licences, the user groups have better representation through the Alpine Advisory Committee and no more restrictions will be placed on the land'?

We all thought, 'That's it. The debate's over, the Park's in place. We know what we've lost and we know what we've still got—so let's get on with our lives.'

## WRONG, WRONG, WRONG

The Land Conservation Council now has orders from the Government to find massive areas of Wilderness in Victoria. These Wilderness areas will have much tighter controls than those in National Parks.

So the results of years of consultation about Victoria's system of National Parks is about to be dropped in the rubbish bin! Wilderness is coming! After all those battles about National Parks and how they are to be managed—we now have to face up to a completely new review of the same areas, new land classifications and new and tighter restrictions.

The Land Conservation Council has reviewed over 2.9 million hectares which is 33% of Victoria's public land and 13% of the total land area of Victoria. These 2.9 million hectares are split into 23 blocks.

The LCC has still not decided which blocks should be recommended to be proclaimed as Wilderness but will be making its final recommendations early this year.

We do know that about 20 of our members have been asked to fill out questionnaires on details of their grazing operations. We also understand that tour operators and other bodies have had the same request from the LCC. It doesn't look good. It makes a mockery of the then Minister's assurances that no more cattlemen will be threatened after the 1991 phase outs.

### Why is the review of Wilderness so important?

During the recent reviews of National Parks, we all had the opportunity to consider the management plans. We all remember the lengthy discussions about the plans—some, such as the Alpine National Park management plans, are still under discussion.

With Wilderness it is different. The main points of the management plans are set by legislation and they are much more restrictive than any of the National Park plans. For example,

The legislation states that in a Wilderness Park there will be

- (a) no roads, structures or installations,
- (b) no commercial activity or development is to be carried out,
- (c) no use of any form of motorised or mechanical transport,
- (d) no use of any indigenous animal, and,
- (e) no hunting.

If a Wilderness Park is proclaimed,—**bang**—these restrictions are imposed without consultation and without any further consideration.

So the difference is that with National Parks the boundaries were defined and then draft management plans were circulated for public discussion. With Wilderness, the most restrictive aspects have been established by legislation—and because when the legislation was being passed, there were no



proposals for wilderness areas, and therefore local people did not think they would be affected, the Bill was passed with relatively little comment. Now the boundaries are being considered and this management regime will be imposed without any chance of public involvement.

### **There are no valid reasons for Wilderness**

People who argue for wilderness have not advanced anything that can not already be achieved in National Parks. They talk about species diversity, scenic grandeur, spiritual experiences, solitude, protection of landscape values, stream water quality—but all these can be found in National Parks.

The proponents of wilderness areas argue that some people **feel BETTER** if they know wilderness areas exist—even if they never visit the area.

We think participants in any activity (such as private four-wheel-drive touring, cattle grazing or commercial tours) that is banned from wilderness areas will feel **distinctly WORSE**. In fact, large numbers of people will feel acutely annoyed, and frustrated on a continuing basis.

### **Public land is the public's land**

At the launch of the Alpine National Park the then Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, Mrs Kay Setches said that it would be a park for all people, for all seasons, for all time. Any restrictively managed wilderness area that effectively excludes a large proportion of the population would directly contradict the Minister's commitment.

### **The divisive debate**

The definition of wilderness in that National Parks Act Victoria (1975) specifically mentions that the areas should be 'for use and enjoyment ... by the public ... for ... appropriate self-reliant recreation.'

This arouses the suspicions of the many supporters of the multiple use of public land that these wilderness areas are not being promoted for the good of the land or the conservation of natural values but that they are being promoted as 'specialist bushwalking areas'.

### **Legitimate activities would be banned automatically**

#### **(a) Recreational deer hunting**

Recreational deer hunting would be banned even though it is regarded as an activity compatible with the concept of wilderness in overseas countries. Given that deer are an introduced species, there should be no objection to the hunting of deer.

#### **(b) Cattle grazing**

The grazing of cattle has been traditionally associated with many of the areas under consideration for Wilderness and is a valuable management tool.

#### **(c) Exploration for minerals**

The exploration for minerals, some of which may be done by satellite, aircraft and zero or low impact physical activities would be banned. Whether mining should follow exploration is a separate matter and should be considered on the individual merits of each case. In its wilderness investigation, the Land Conservation Council indicated that:

'Certain species ... may prove to be valuable ... for medical, pharmaceutical or industrial purposes.'

This statement indicates that the LCC can foresee the day when some discovery will be made that warrants the introduction of resource utilisation into a wilderness area. If the area is off-limits to exploration, we would never have the knowledge to make the choice about utilising these resources.

### **The nomination of Wilderness areas**

We all accept that we do need to preserve the wild and remote nature of some areas of Victoria.

However, the proclamation of any land as 'wilderness' should not result in an automatic ban on any recreational or commercial activities unless it is demonstrated that it causes long term and irreparable damage.

We think ample machinery exists under the Alpine National Park legislation to ensure preservation of all true wilderness in the Alpine National Park. Any nomination under Wilderness legislation should be subjected to the full process of public consultation and an economic impact statement.

It is particularly important that management plans be prepared prior to the proclamation decision because, in the past, groups have accepted proclamations of State or National Parks on the advice that continued access will be permitted, only to find that proposed management plans are much more restrictive than was envisaged. This is the present position with the Alpine National Park management proposals.

### **The bottom line**

Creation of large areas of wilderness is not in the best interests of the land, or the majority of Victorians.

## A BURNING ISSUE, OR A BURNING EXPERIENCE?

On 12 January 1988 four separate bush fires were ignited by dry lightning at locations within the Kosciusko National Park, an area administered by the National Parks and Wildlife Service of New South Wales.

The outcome of these fires was that eight private properties outside the Kosciusko National Park, and the Byadbo Wilderness inside the boundaries of the park, were destroyed and damaged by the fire.

In May and September 1989, and February and March 1990 and concluding in December 1990, an Inquiry was held at the Coroner's Court at Bombala to investigate and make recommendations in regard to the fire.

Parties represented at the Inquiry were the affected landowners and Bombala Shire Council; the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, the Bushfire Council of NSW and the Forestry Commission of NSW

Evidence was given by the Fire Control Officer of the Bombala Shire that he requested permission of the National Parks Service to use the fire retardant Phos-Check on all fires reported to him on 12 January 1988, but this request was refused, and he was instructed that water only could be used to suppress the fires. At the same time one of the four fires was close enough to the Victorian/New South Wales border for the Victorian Department of Conservation Forests and Lands (as it was then called) to drop Phos-Check on the fire which effectively retarded it, and allowed a local fire brigade to contain it.

The Inquiry was told by the Chief Ranger for Kosciusko National Park that the reason for refusing the use of Phos-Check was because of concern about negative effects on the native vegetation and the nature of the terrain, and that on peripheral areas to the Park its use was permitted. These statements, the Coroner pointed out, were misleading as the retardant had been used without approval by the DCF&L pursuant to a Border Fire Agreement between the two states, and was refused for a fire a mere one kilometre north which would also have come under the ambit of the Border Fire Agreement.

The true position relating to refusal of permission for the use of Phos-Check was reluctantly revealed by the Chief Ranger for the Kosciusko National Park, that irrespective of the availability of aircraft; the terrain or possible effects on vegetation; permission would not be given under any circumstances, unless the fire came within the ambit of the Border Fire Agreement. In other words, approval for the use of fire retardants within the Kosciusko National Park would not be given as this was the Policy of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, based on the premise that it may have an effect on native vegetation.

The Coroner said that if this policy still existed (at the time of the Inquiry) it should be urgently reviewed, as it not only removed an effective fire fighting tool, but people could be forgiven for thinking that the National Parks and Wildlife Service were more concerned about plants than about life and property. He also noted that the National Parks and Wildlife Service had a statutory duty to do everything within their power to prevent a fire escaping from their area of management, and causing loss of life and/or property.

For various reasons no direct action was taken within the Park to fight the fire, and the Chief Ranger gave evidence that the fire was 'contained', meaning that it was burning within established fire trails, and not that any direct action had been taken to stop the spread of the fire.

The Coroner found this concept difficult to come to grips with, and said that using this logic, one could say that a fire was contained by the coastal boundaries of mainland Australia.

He found the lack of direct control action inexcusable for the following reason:

*Fire behaviour, as stated by almost all witnesses is unpredictable, and to allow a wildfire to remain uncontained and uncontrolled during the middle of an Australian summer and in the middle of a bush fire danger period has the potential to become a disaster of major proportions in a short space of time. He went on to say, One wonders what would be the reaction of the National Parks and Wildlife*



Service if a fire was ignited on private property with a potential to escape into the National Park and no action to contain and extinguish the fire was taken for a period of five days by the Brigades or the occupier of the private land.

The potential for the fire to escape from the Park onto private land was recognised and communicated to the National Park officers by landholders and an employee of the NSW Forestry Commission, but these people were told that the fires were small, under control and that no assistance was required.

Another disturbing fact emerged during the Inquiry, that when the fire destroyed the Bombala Shire radio transmission tower and a request was made for access to the frequency used by the National Parks and Wildlife Service, that access was refused. The reason given was that the Service wished to maintain the integrity of its radio network. This is not common practice amongst agencies involved in the co-operative spirit of fighting fires.

Whilst the Coroner found that on the evidence presented to him, no indictable offence had been committed by any person, he made the following recommendations which he said may assist in preventing a repeat of the problems and concerns which had been raised during the course of the Inquiry:

1. That the Fire Control Officer for the Bombala Shire and all other Fire Control Officers for the Shires surrounding the Kosciusko National Park in New South Wales be issued with a radio accessing the frequency used by the National Parks and Wildlife Service on a full time basis.

2. That the National Parks and Wildlife Service review their policy on the use of fire retardants such as Phos-Check within the Kosciusko National Park, and that approval to use it be more readily available and quicker to obtain.

3. That the National Parks and Wildlife Service in consultation with Mr Clive Cotterill, evaluate the possibility of constructing additional fire trails within the Park, thereby enabling early back-burning operations to be undertaken and also providing more fall-back positions for personnel undertaking those operations, and

4. That the National Parks and Wildlife Service re-create the position of Ranger station in Bombala which was recently abolished. This would allow for a quicker and more effective on-ground liaison between the National Parks and Wildlife Service and other fire fighting agencies.

The Coroner made an order permitting publication of the whole of the evidence presented to the Inquiry in the interests of the public.

We must insist that the attitude of the national parks and Wildlife Service never becomes the attitude of our Department of Conservation and Environment. The Wilderness Special Investigation Descriptive Report of the Land Conservation Council is already considering the possibility of closing tracks and trails and revegetating them, thus ignoring the recommendation made above to create more fire trails in remote areas. The Land Conservation Council states that in respect of fire, the current attitude is that *Wildfires, however caused, must be prevented from threatening life, property, and natural resources in the State, and the measures necessary to control them must be taken in a wilderness area as in any other. Some pre-suppression measures such as maintenance of fire access tracks and protective burning will be required, at least in areas of strategic importance for fire control. Prevention and suppression of fires remains the responsibility of the Department of Conservation and Environment.*

This does not go far enough. Grazing should **never** be withdrawn from the Victorian Alpine area, and in fact, should be extended and encouraged.

*Article compiled from Coronial Inquiry—Byadbo Wilderness Bush Fires, Coroner's Court, Bombala, 17/12/90. See also the article by Jim Commins in this issue of Voice.*

## THE PHANTOM CATTLEMEN

*When they've knocked down all the huts and let the brambles take their place,  
And have banished Mountain Cattlemen ... left no apparent trace,  
Then the ghosts of horsemen past will ride again across the plains  
Upon their phantom horses with their flying hooves and manes;  
And they'll drive a mob of cattle up before them as they go  
And the lowing of their charges will resound so all will know.*

*And the hiker on the mountain and the tourist in the glen  
Will know the Phantom Cattlemen are on the trail again.*

*They will follow tracks they knew of old to land once lush and green,  
But now criss-crossed by deep-cut scars where 'four wheel drives' have been,  
With bottles, tins and plastic bags to mark their wasteful way,  
And uncropped grass, now tinder dry ... erosion here to stay.  
The ghostly band will crack their whips and curse bureaucracy  
That dictates from a city chair how alpine laws should be.*

*And the hiker on the mountain and the tourist in the glen  
Will know the Phantom Cattlemen are on the trail again.*

*The roar of motors rends the peace, exhaust fumes foul the air  
Where once a pristine wilderness was there for all to share.  
Now rabbits graze and brambles spread and trash builds up apace,  
And one by one endangered species vanish from this place.  
The spectral cattlemen will laugh as nature wields her might,  
Sends fire to purge men's thoughtlessness and set the balance right.*

*And the hiker on the mountain and the tourist in the glen  
Will know the Phantom Cattlemen are on the trail again.*

*Dorothy Watt*





# LOVICK'S Mountain Trail Safaris



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

## We Ride The Great Divide

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

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

All fresh food carried under refrigeration.

**The Lovicks will make sure you have the holiday of your life in the mountains.**

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



# PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF GRAZING AND FIRE IN EASTERN VICTORIA

*James A. Commins*

My experience is not supported by any personal academic qualifications, but is related to 55 years of active involvement in mountain grazing, and also to the association with cattlemen whose observations and knowledge extended up to 50 years before that.

The early years for me were a rich experience of mountain cattle husbandry as well as fire management in the remote and primitive conditions which existed before access roads were developed.

Profound changes in a number of ways have taken place since those years and the most serious of these is the accumulation of fire hazard that has continued to increase for many years, and now has the potential to cause much greater devastation than occurred with the conflagration of January 1939.

The introduction and effect of myxomatosis led to changes in the grazing habits of cattle (and the habits of cattlemen) and a direct result of that was an increase in build-up of undergrowth and fire risk, particularly in the more heavily timbered areas.

Following the adoption of fire reduction management by Departmental authorities, it was generally found then that many large areas received almost no protection burning, while other places sometimes suffered from excessive fire.

Official representatives have outlined plans for fuel reduction burning to meetings of farmer groups (CFA, VFF etc.) for many years, but the expressed plans have rarely gone close to being realised. Doubtless there are many experienced foresters who could have achieved more satisfactory results but in a very large department where there are so many diverse and influential forces at work, it is easy to imagine their good intentions being frequently frustrated.

There is scant expression of enthusiasm for mountain grazing in Government circles, and this is understandable when at Parliamentary level there is uncertainty generated by very persistent but ill-

informed anti-grazing lobbyists while at regional level the activity does not come within the framework of departmental works programming or budgeting and incurs little or no involvement for its workforce. Since management policy is strongly dictated from the central controlling authority, regional managers appear reluctant to plan or seek co-operative plans with parties outside the Department system.

For these and a number of other reasons, there are probably less than one-fifth of the cattle to spend part of their lives each year in the bushlands of Eastern Victoria now—compared to what there were 50 years ago.

Also during that time a major percentage of the extensive priceless alpine ash timber resource has been subjected to first time logging. On most of that logged area perhaps half the total volume of original tree resource remains unused. It lies as culled butts and tree heads in the coups of dense forest regrowth, with understory scrub growing through it, while supporting and preserving much of the natural thinning of regrowth above ground level. Many millions of saplings must fail, as they die and fall are becoming part of an almost impenetrable thicket that probably presents a greater fire hazard in these forests, than ever before.

For millions of years all other major land masses except Australia were inhabited by huge assemblies of ungulates that were unconfined, and had their herding instincts developed by large animal predators including man, as they moved across the land and reduced the potential for damaging wild-fire.

During all that time this land of flood and famine was governed only by fire and erosion that has reduced it from what may well have included extensive high mountain ranges with a heavy annual yield of snowmelt to comparatively low mountains and vast plains with less surface water than any other comparable land on earth.





Horses on the Bogong High Plains after the 1939 fires. The devastation caused by the fire can be seen in the foreground

Since man learned to farm various animals human intervention throughout the world during the past thousand years or so, due to either or both ignorance and inadequate land tenure systems, has not always served the best interests of land protection; the long term natural history indicators reveal that where vast grazing herds have roamed the earth as part of the ecological development the soil erosion is not so great as it is in Australia where no large itinerant herds existed.

This paper is intended to canvass discussion and help clarify the wide ranging and strongly promoted misconceptions and misinformation about the values of grazing and fire in the alpine and surrounding bushland environment.

## **FIRE**

**It is almost certainly true that much of the mountain bushlands are more vulnerable to devastation by wild fire than they have been in many hundreds of years.**

All around the world fire has been judged as necessary for maintaining pristine environment, as preservation enthusiasts have acknowledged following studies under such varied conditions as apply to the very elevated prairie lands of North America, and Moorlands under the generally grey skies of England, and elsewhere.

Claims that wild fire in the more elevated regions of Australia is an unlikely event and that aborigines probably did not have much use for fire there prior to European settlement must become impossible to sustain against evidence to the contrary.

From the journals of Government surveyor Townsend, A.W. Howitt and others, it is clear that aborigines visited the high country and it would be logical commonsense and vitally important for them to keep fires alight wherever they went regardless of how hot and windy the weather might have been.

In a climate where the weather changes every few days (or less) what scantily dressed person would want to be caught trying to light a fire by rubbing two wet sticks together?

The very fact of periodical visits by aborigines with their fires to those more elevated and generally less fire prone localities may have well caused extremely hot fires to be a rare event, and thus account for the difficulty in finding forensic evidence of fire damage at those levels before European settlement.

Certainly the comparatively small, more elevated, and almost treeless alpine region in Victoria is much less frequently at risk from damaging wild fire than is the adjacent sub-alpine and other lower land, but nevertheless in times of summer drought fire could and has, rapidly extended across the High Plains.

The less grazing treatment the greater the likelihood of extensive fire, and under present total fire ban circumstances there, the heathlands and snowgum woodlands are periodically at risk of providing corridors of very damaging fire from one side to the Great Dividing Range to the heavily overgrown other side.

For far too long managing authorities have denied the use of low intensity fire as a management tool, above the 1200 metre level, and as a result a heavy growth of tall woody shrubs now dominate much of the ground cover on the Bogong High Plains and elsewhere.

There is little or no evidence of the shrubs senescence after fifty years, as was predicted to happen by the late Stella Carr, so it is unfortunate that patch burning was not re-introduced years ago when it would have been accomplished successfully with minimum impact and risk.

Photographs taken on the Bogong High Plains in January 1939 illustrate firstly that severe burning is a definite possibility, and secondly that 'hot' fire made much of the land extremely vulnerable to soil erosion while at the same time the limited area of unburnt land is shown to be well protected by the remaining vegetation at a time when every unburnt acre there had more grazing pressure upon it than ever before—or since.

## GRAZING

**Grazing in the alpine areas of Victoria is the only agency that regularly reduces the danger of large scale soil erosion that could occur after extreme wild fire.**

**Grazing also provides the only protection that mossbeds ever get.**

Spagnum moss beds will only develop where there is spring fed ground water and are seen most often along well defined drainage lines. In time of drought the water supplying some mossbeds can almost totally dry up and if the grass surrounding these places remains in an ungrazed and dry condition, a fire could lead in with sufficient intensity to ignite and destroy a mossbed. This has happened on a number of occasions. Mossbeds that caught fire on the Bogong High Plains in 1939 were reported to be still burning underground for some weeks afterwards. I can remember a mossbed being similarly burnt in a fire which swept through the Reedy Creek catchment north of Nunniong in 1965, and in that case, heavy rain followed which completely ruined it as a natural silt trap and mossbed by creating a wide washed out drain through the soft sand and ash which remained after the fire.

Many stories have been written of early days pastoral development of the semi-arid zones of Australia where huge flocks and herds were built up to stock that vast areas upon which much of the surface water periodically dried up and caused very severe overstocking around the remaining water. In recent years efforts have been made to relate this experience to cattle grazing in the forested and alpine region of Victoria and incorrectly blame cattle for causing bare ground similar to the effects of fire.

Cattle are in most cases removed from alpine and forest grazing after being there for up to four months, but during this time they reduce the annual growth of ground cover and prevent it becoming an overgrown and excessive fire hazard.

Reducing vegetation in this way handicaps many of the more dominant plants and allows moisture and sunlight better access to the ground where an overall increase in plant population is promoted and more root systems are developed to protect the soil.



The cloven hooves of cattle have a scissor action, similar to that of the hard toe-claws of kangaroos, which effectively crumble and pulverize dried vegetation to the first stage of producing valuable humus and rendering it less liable to be destroyed by fire.

The population of native and feral grazing animals is governed only by predators and the nutritional value available to sustain them each winter.

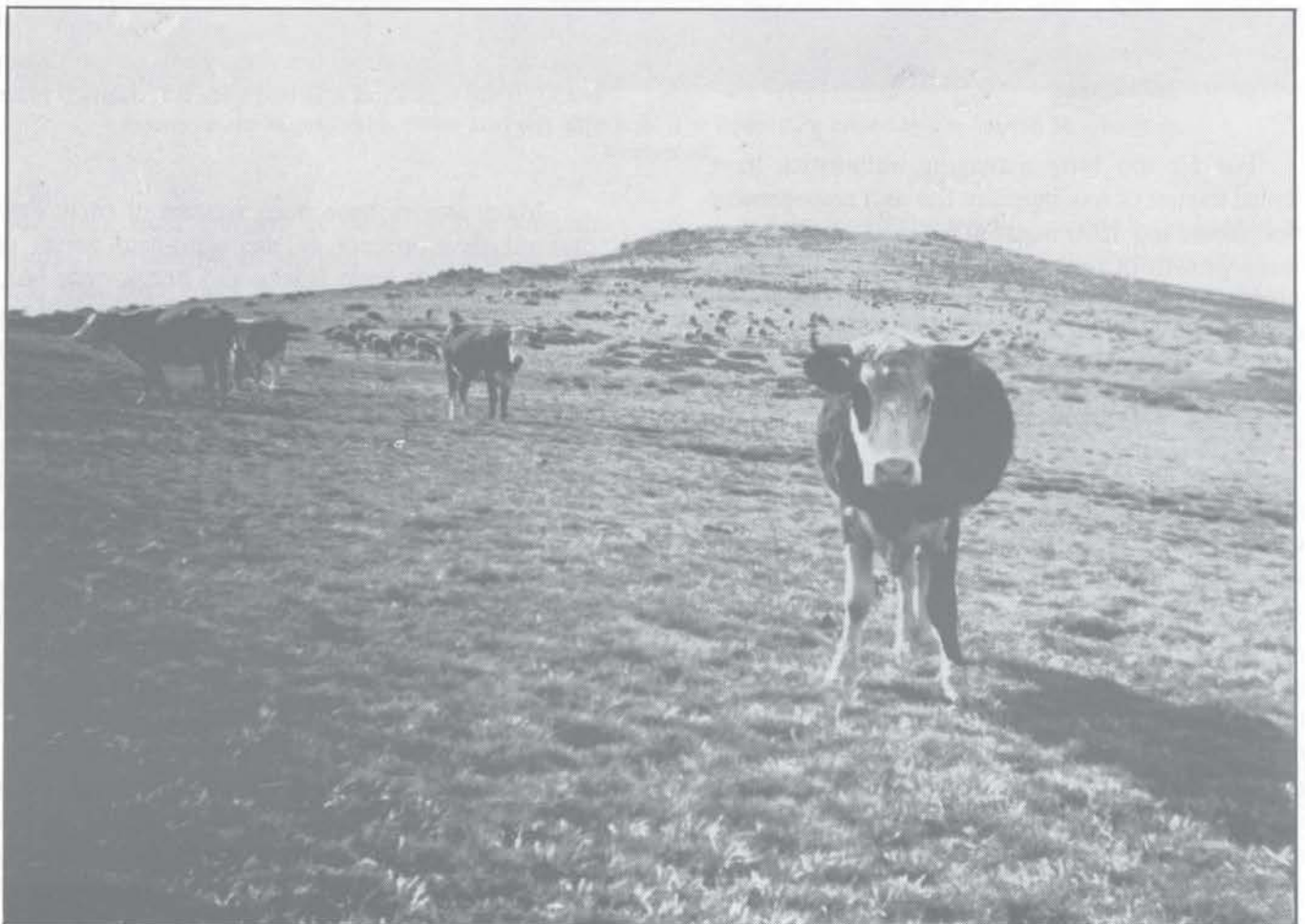
In the mountains and foothills of Eastern Victoria all wild herbivores not having access to improved pastures, are limited in this way, and consequently they survive the rigours of cold and freezing winters in insufficient numbers to control and annual regrowth that comes following rain in the late Spring and Summer months.

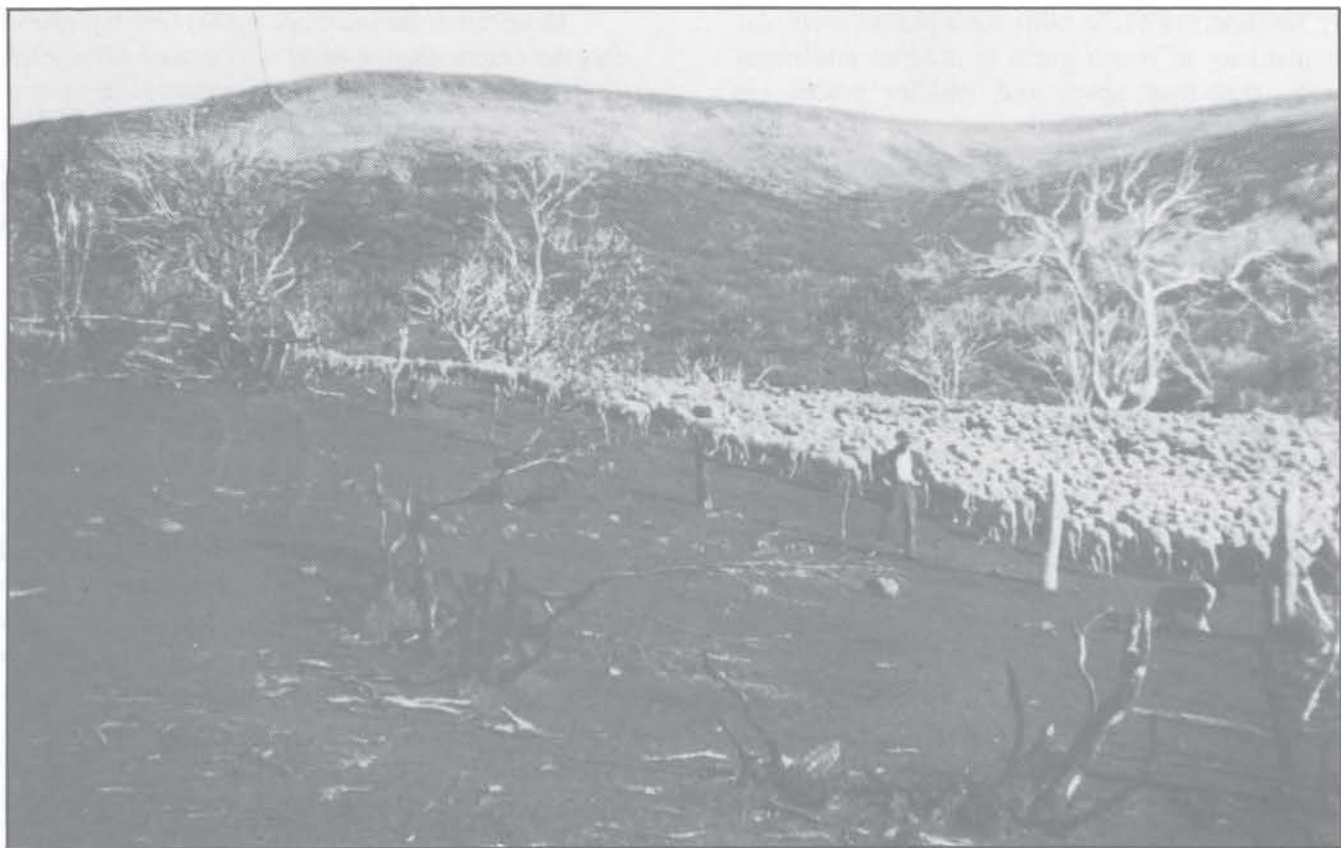
The survival opportunities for wild life is greatly enhanced by the seasonal grazing of cattle because much of the grass does not go to early maturity as it is kept in a trimmed and growing mode until the autumn months, and subsequent new Spring growth is not delayed by the shade and density of old dead grass.

Many more birds are to be seen on well grazed locations than where cattle are excluded because much more of the annual growth is transformed into animal excrement which in turn builds up the food chain by creating increased soil fertility as well as providing a food source for many of the lower forms of life.

Supposedly rare botanical specimens have been found in a number of locations where there has been concentrated seasonal grazing for more than one hundred years and this serves to indicate that cattle are unlikely to destroy native flora in the mountains. There is in fact plenty of evidence to prove that the display of wild flowers can be very much improved following heavy grazing after the flowering season in the previous year.

The nutritive value of all grass greatly diminishes as it becomes overgrown and mature following the initial growth period, than after it is frost affected with the onset of winter, it becomes practically worthless as fodder. Consequently the carrying capacity for native (and feral) animals becomes very limited if there is no fire or additional summer grazing which promotes earlier and fresh growth in the following spring.





These three photographs illustrate the heavy stocking after the 1939 fires. Even though the unburnt areas were heavily stocked with cattle and sheep there is no apparent erosion. The burnt areas were subject to erosion following the heavy rains.



By superimposing cattle for a period each year the maturity of much grass is delayed and many shrubs that may shade out smaller plants are trimmed with the result that all wild life derives considerable benefit.

A similar delay of plant maturity can be seen along road sides where grass is cut mechanically for fire protection, and the cut grass remains green and growing while the uncut soon becomes old, dry and dangerous.

Both cattle grazing and controlled fire have important roles in maintaining safety and species welfare, but where cattle can be induced to graze, they will provide the benefits in a more safe and less drastic (and smoke free) way than by repeated burning.

Many critics of mountain grazing do not differentiate between the eating habits and effects of various animals nor do they compare the results of managed and unmanaged grazing. It is therefore important to understand that cattle are less able to graze as closely and consequently less severely than do any other of the introduced animals (horses, rabbits, goats, sheep etc.), and by being managed to have only part time access, the preferred species are not at risk from the prolonged and relentless attention that all other wild and unmanaged grazing animals can apply.

Concern has been expressed about diminishing ground water supplies from the mountains, and cattle grazing can help redress this more safely and efficiently than any other way.

Much precipitation in the mountains comes in the form of fogs, mist, heavy dew and light rainfall, and there is also plenty of sunshine and wind which rapidly dries fallen tree litter and dead grass, and the leaves of shrubs.

Where grazing and fire have been denied for a long time and a heavy cover of dead litter has accumulated, the water catchment values are seriously impaired because a large percentage of the total rainfall never reaches the ground.

It is easily possible in the summer months to take the under layer of dead grass from beneath overgrown old grass after 5mm (or more) of rain, and start a fire with it.

If all the precipitations of, say 5mm or less that are denied access to the ground are totalled, it will be found that much of the annual recorded rainfall of each year is not being realised in water catchments.

Research in the northern hemisphere has shown that the evaporation of snow is increased when it lies over a thick ground cover of vegetation. In view of this, much of the snowfall in Australia may not melt to the ground but drift off in evaporation to perhaps become snow in New Zealand instead of replenishing our water storages for power and irrigation.

## WONNANGATTA

**The results of the appalling decision by Government to resume the titles of freehold land contained in Wonnangatta Station and terminate the licences of surrounding grazing allotments has effectively allowed that area to become an overgrown tangled litter of fire prone wilderness.**

It is unfortunate that management and pastoral improvements there had been in decline for many years, but it must surely be seen as a most retrograde move to eliminate cattle grazing instead of actively encouraging progressive pastoral management.

There could be no doubt that a reborn Wonnangatta Station with the Howitt Plains and the river flats fenced for more effective management could be a most viable 'stand alone' cattle raising enterprise capable of very valuable contributions to both productivity as well as protection of both flora and fauna in that locality.

Members of the Alpine Advisory Committee should recall the inspection of the Wonnangatta valley and approaches where a very obvious and extensive fire hazard has built up. They should also remember that a trial of fire reduction burning there was much more severe in its effect than the managers would desire, and then reflect upon the green, well grazed ground cover on such places as beyond the Buenbar Creek on the way to Tom Groggin Station, the Bluff and King Billy ranges, then ask themselves where they would prefer to be in days of extreme fire danger when there is smoke in the air.

With adequate grazing and careful patch burning Wonnangatta could also revert to a predominantly green and attractive place where after a few years there would come to be a very much reduced need for any controlled burning. Sufficient revenue could be generated from cattle production for weed control and other management costs which are now undertaken at taxpayers' expense.



Even though stock were poor, they still lived.

Then not only would visitors again feel safe there in summer time, but the vast area of alpine ash regeneration and uncut forests on the downwind side would be made less at risk from wild fire that could some time easily extend from the very rugged country to the north. In the event of the need, firefighters could be safely deployed from the Wonnangatta River to beyond Howitt Plains, as indeed could be the case in many other places throughout the mountains if due encouragement was given to cattle grazing. Furthermore, kangaroos that now avoid the place would probably once again regard it safe enough to re-establish themselves in that part of the Wonnangatta valley if the understory in the forests extending from the river flats became less impenetrable.

It is interesting and significant that a former holding paddock of Wonnangatta Station that carried a heavy concentration of cattle for part of each year for more than one hundred years is now reserved for a Special Protection Zone, because of the rare and endangered botanical specimens found there. Since they are found there, rather than in places with less grazing history. It suggests that the presence of cattle may have enhanced the continuity of those particular plants rather than endangering their existence.

It can only be that influential conservation groups with a genuine concern for the environment must be misled by the limited information available, and be unaware of the positive benefits to be derived from managed grazing, or the Government would not have made such a costly mistake.



## ECONOMICS

**Of all the misinformation, false claims, and half truths, the economic aspect of mountain grazing must be the least well understood of all, and critics who make unresearched claims that insufficient rentals are being paid for mountain grazing licences should study the subject more carefully, or risk being shown to be unwise and ignorant.**

The large areas of unfenced mountain wilderness, where there is no recourse to the Fences Act, to ensure cost sharing make a prospect too daunting and marginal for many to even contemplate involving themselves in Crown Land grazing.

Those who do persevere have usually, and often by family association, been involved for many years and have maintained feasibility by developing a herd of cattle that, like themselves, gain knowledge that is passed on to succeeding generations.

The fact that many blocks are unoccupied and attract little enquiry is indicative of marginal opportunity, and of course, those allotments are becoming more overgrown and unattractive every year that they remain unused.

Mountain Cattlemen have no desire to relinquish their hard won experience or their acclimatised herds of cattle and abandon their involvement as producers in the beef industry. Grazing allotments that are used each year provide a form of insurance that ensures maintenance of the herd through summer months. The capacity to maintain livestock in winter is always a limiting factor and most graziers without access to large areas of the generally low quality mountain grazing would drastically reduce their herds rather than endure the prospect of frequently having to survive both difficult winter and summer conditions for cattle in the same year.

The mountain runs do not have a 'stand alone' capacity, that is they need the support of improved pasture for approximately two thirds of each year.

If a grazier has no more cattle than he can safely carry on his freeholding of improved pasture, then there is no advantage to be gained by involving the expense of taking cattle to the mountains each year, therefore he needs to have more cattle than his home property can be relied upon to support every summer. Because the mountain grazing is usually limited by regulation or by nutritional value to about

four months duration, there then arises the problem and cost of keeping cattle (in excess of the home property capability) for the remaining eight months of the year.

This means one or all of three following options must apply:

1. Productivity is foregone on the home property to accommodate them.
2. Agistment or lease of improved grazing land is obtained.
3. Hay is provided.

Whatever is the option adopted, there is a very substantial cost incurred to maintain the cattle during that time. Droving, supervision, and recovery of cattle from the bush also represents a high cost in man hours and equipment. When the total cost for one year is calculated there is usually a sufficient but by no means excessive margin from which to pay Crown Land rental.

Because it is necessary for the management of mountain grazing to be part of an enterprise involving privately owned improved pasture land it cannot be viewed as a separate commercial entity.

A graph of A.B.A.R.E. statistics for the year 1988-1989 reveal the following: The average weekly income of the Australian male income earner was approximately \$720 while the incomes of the female retail workers and the average farmers were about equal at around \$420 weekly and the average earning of the Australia cattle producer notwithstanding the very high capital involvement, was close to \$330 weekly which is less than half of the average male income and about 20% less than was earned by the female retail workers for that year. Farmers' terms of trade still continue to decline in 1990.

The full disparity between incomes is unlikely to be shown because for most years in the past decade or more there has been insufficient farm income to maintain depreciating assets such as fences, buildings, and motor vehicles, and these unpaid costs do not always show on statistics.

By bearing in mind the continuing decline in terms of trade for primary producers and the fact that the values for most mountain grazing allotments were set originally by public tender, it is quite inconceivable that equitable rental figures for mountain grazing licences could be far above what financial inflation over the past years would extend the original values.

For some years Mountain Cattlemen have been paying much higher rates for very marginal unfenced land than has been considered a reasonable charge for fenced land with continuous year round grazing capability on Crown Land anywhere else in Australia.

What should also be concerning State administrators is the fact that cattle numbers were reduced by 800,000 in Gippsland alone (not all from Crown Land) between 1960 and 1980 while there has been a decrease of approximately 1,500,000 hectares of land from substantial farm enterprise in Victoria from 1969 to 1990 through suburban extension, hobby farms, etc. (Dr Mike Jubb, Director Department of Conservation and Environment, 20/6/90, VFF Conference).

## SUMMARY

With the transition after many centuries of primitive values to the needs of an introduced and civilized society much confusion has developed about how best to combine the protection of natural values and the preservation and use of resources needed to maintain modern living standards.

Scientific and technical knowledge and experience has enabled developments such as electrical and nuclear energy that have the capability to satisfy most of the energy needs of civilization, but fire will always have a continuing role in the natural environment.

The fact that timber and recreation resources need to be preserved and utilised in a permanently sustainable manner makes the well planned management of fire more important than ever before.

Many millions of dollars have been spent in recent years on fire prevention and suppression, yet in many places the valuable forests, human life, and neighbouring property development may be at greater risk next summer than when fires were contained by beating them back with hand tools and the branches of trees. Since repeated experience has shown that the frontal progress of an all engulfing wild fire can only be stopped either by a change in the weather, or by human endeavour only when it reaches areas bearing less inflammable ground cover, a review of present burning policy and complementary fire preventative measures should be undertaken.

The attrition of mountain grazing should halt immediately, for well managed grazing, while contributing to national productivity, provides a valuable fire mitigation service that is cost free to the taxpayer. It is an environmentally friendly, reliable and safe medium that could be better utilised.

Before blindly accepting the anti-grazing hypothesis from the limited sources available, students and commentators on the bushland environment should objectively consider the merits of cattle grazing and direct their primary attention towards control of widespread weed invasion, feral animals and vermin.

The importance of environment protection should transcend the political ambitions of Parliamentarians or the 'whats in it for us' attitude of public departments.

We who assist with management plans for the well being of our mountain environment should ponder upon the value of increased soil fertility as opposed to the eventual destruction and possible erosion by allowing grass and other vegetation to become dangerous fire fuel.

Much has been learned about land and animal husbandry and while we maintain a grazing management system that encourages individual stewardship and avoids 'the tragedy of the commons' we will have a most ecologically sustainable and productive management tool which should never be overlooked or underestimated.

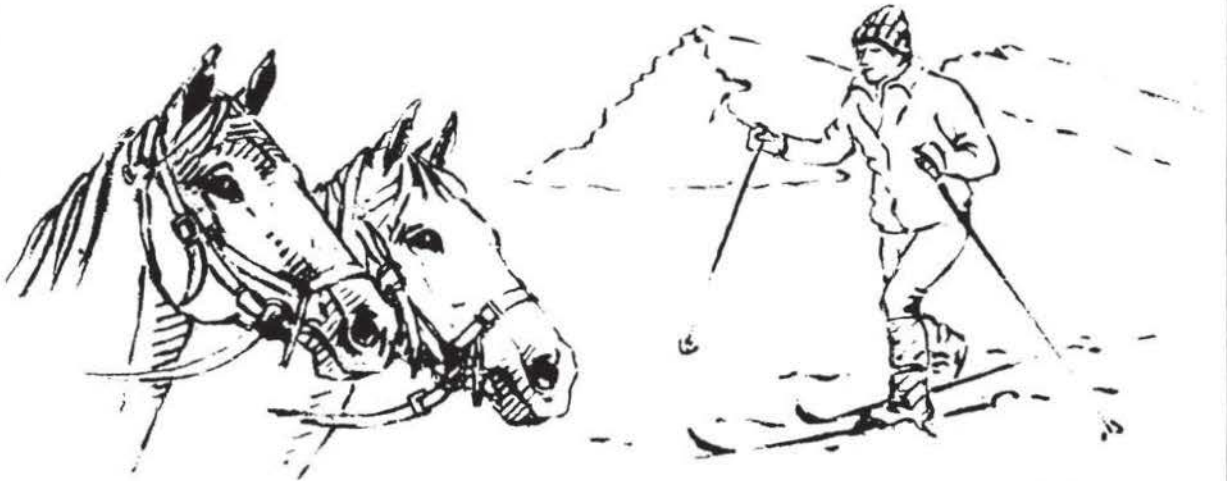
Negative attitudes should make way for positive planning and one of the most positive aspects of planning should incorporate well managed cattle grazing.

The rigours and risks of a grazing enterprise in the ranges and foothills of the Great Dividing Range, while they inspire romantic notions, are not the preferred vocation of many, but Mountain Cattlemen enjoy the challenge and the wilderness experience as much as any bush recreationist or wilderness enthusiast, and make a positive contribution to productivity and protection by their endeavours.



Stoney's

## **BLUFF & BEYOND**



## **HIGH COUNTRY** **ADVENTURE**

### **TRAIL RIDES**

- Ride with us in the true high country. We go east from Sheepyard Flat to The Bluff, Great Divide and beyond.
- We supply guiding, horses, catering, gear transportation and a good time.

Weekends, 5, 7 & 9 day rides

### **WINTER**

You can book with our winter company, High Country Adventure, and explore this stunning area under snow. We supply nordic skis, food, guides, instruction and fun.

Contact us for a color brochure, departure dates and trip notes for summer and winter trips.

**Chris, Helen and Graeme Stoney**

**P.O.Box 287, Mansfield, 3722, Australia.**

**(057) 752 212 Fax (057) 752 598**

## THE MOUNTAIN CATTLEMAN

Weathered hands hold light the reins,  
as he sits upon his horse;  
seeing snow gum on the ridges  
and a river's winding course.

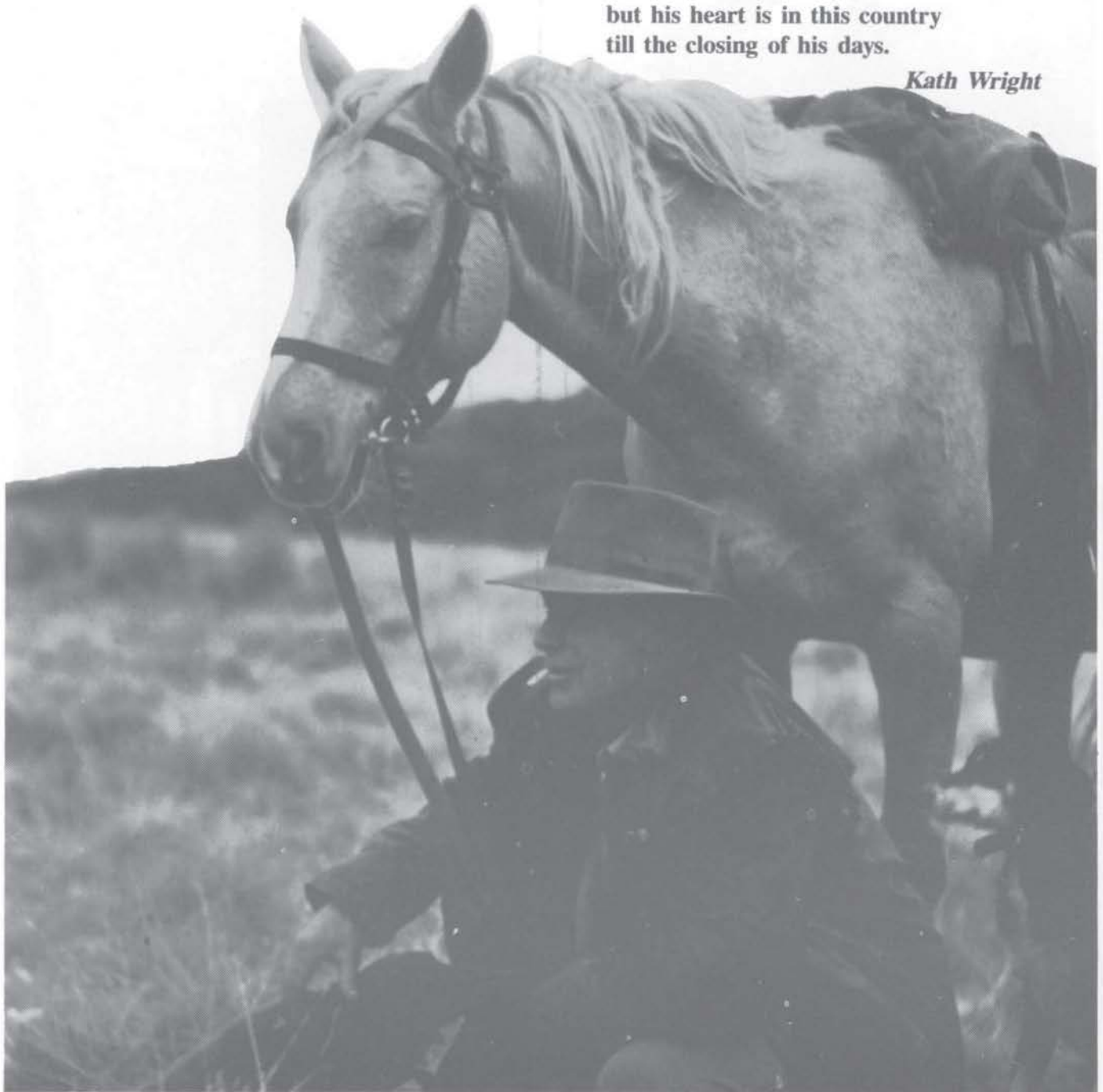
He watches sky and mountains  
and judges with a look;  
for he can read the weather  
as a scholar reads a book.

Below his broad and well worn hat,  
a face now lined by time  
shows quiet strength and dignity  
and a stubborn will of iron.

He's lost count of the seasons  
that he's brought the cattle high  
and ridden through the snow gums  
beneath a cold blue sky.

In his life he's known the hardship  
of Nature's fickle ways;  
but his heart is in this country  
till the closing of his days.

*Kath Wright*





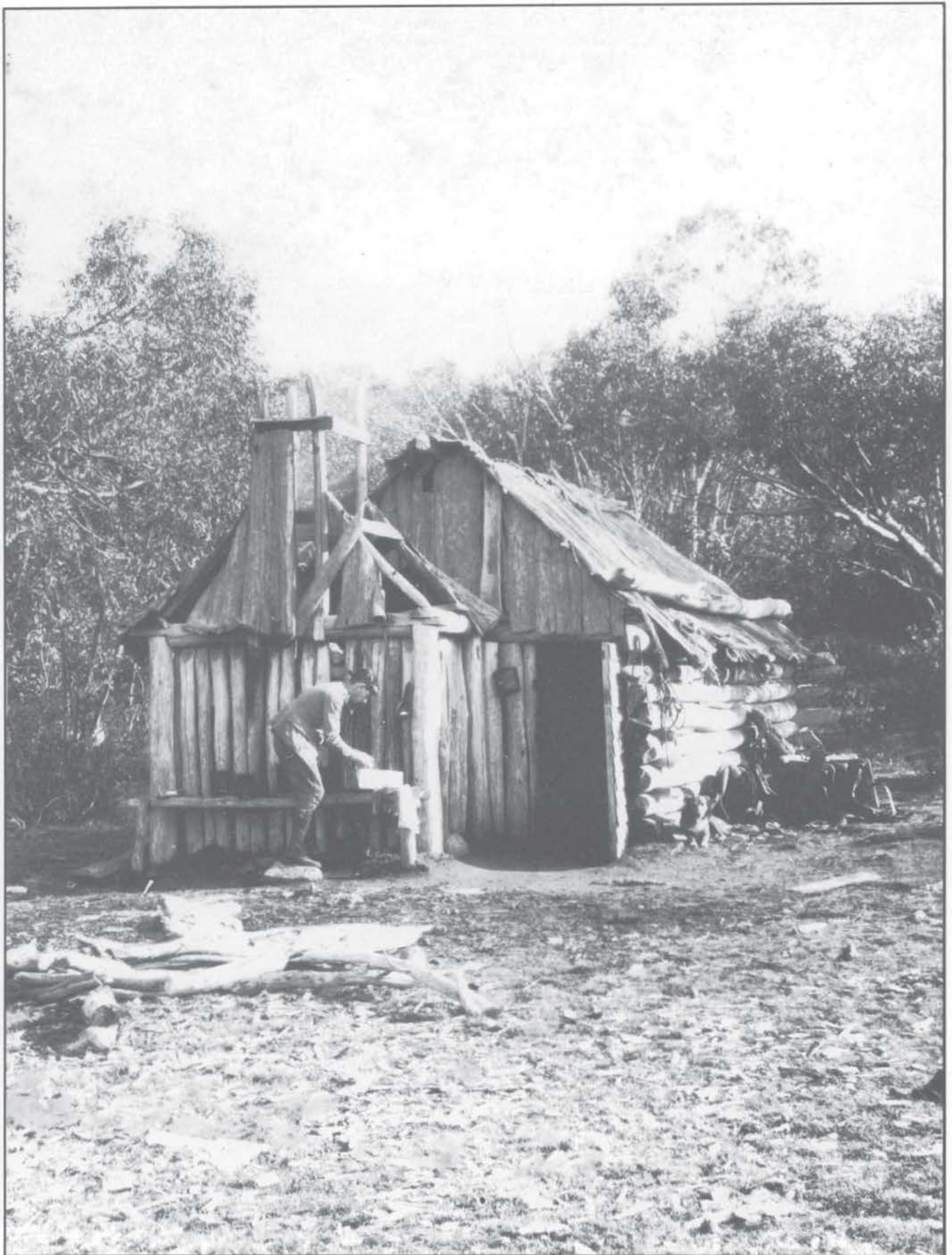
## ALF WAUGH'S ALPINE PHOTOGRAPHS

A.J. 'Alf' Waugh was a bank manager turned garage proprietor from Maffra. He was also an excellent semi-professional photographer who travelled to the high country on both sides of the divide. On a number of these journeys he accompanied Henry Miller, who held extensive runs around Mount Wellington. All examples of his work so far sighted are unsigned stereoscopic views. Some of the views on the pages that follow were taken on one such trip in 1912, and the others appear to be of the same vintage. Other examples of his work, including an excellent series of early cars on the Licola Road and the bridge over the Barkly River, were published in *Gippsland Heritage Journal* no. 9.

Alf Waugh died at Maffra in 1928.

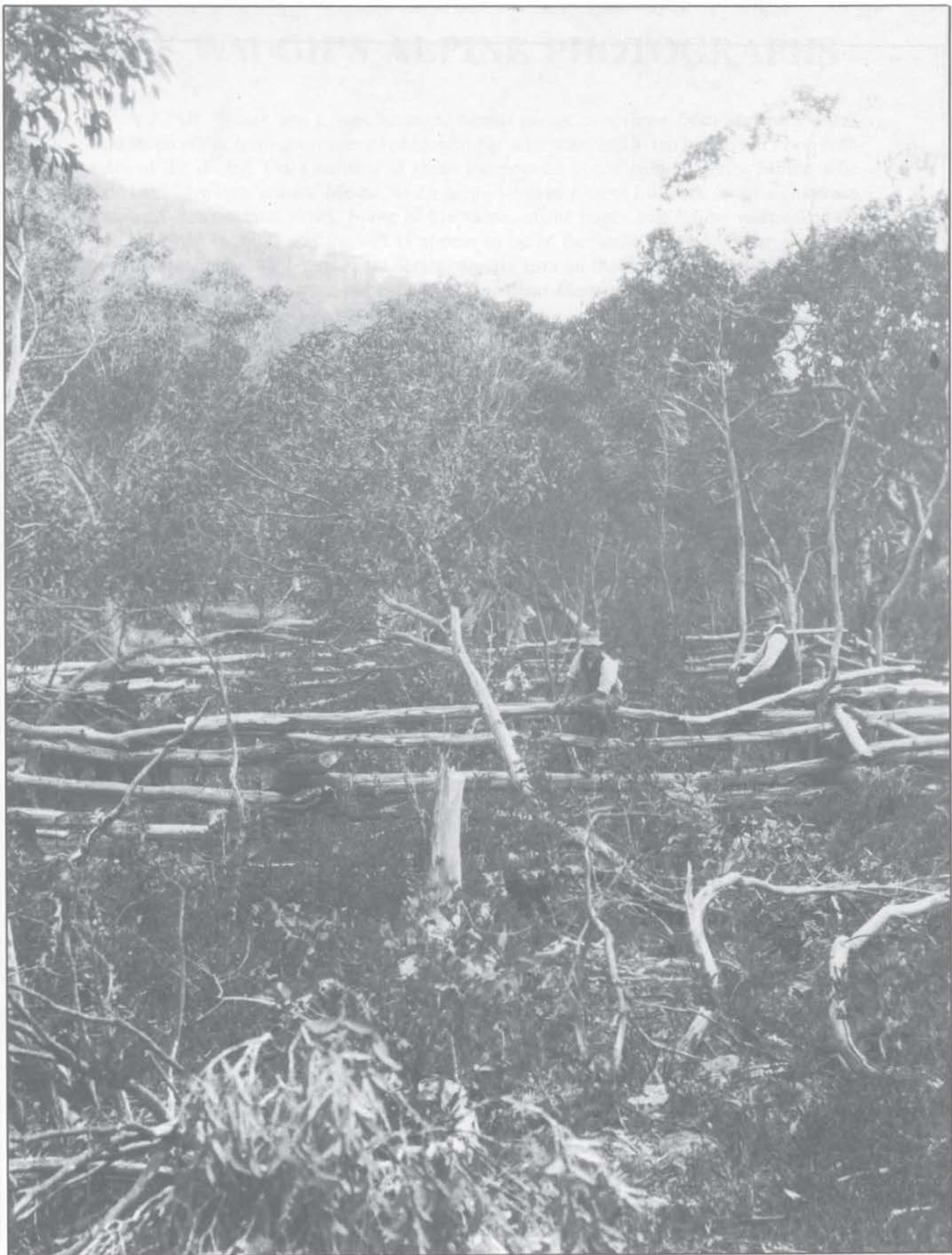


A party travelling to the High Plains. Alf Waugh apparently forgot to remove his bulky camera bags from the foreground of the photograph.



Riggall's hut, Wellington Plains.





Trapyard with wild horses caught on top of Mount Wellington. Denny Connolly and Henry Miller are on the rails.



A jumping competition on the High Plains.





Two-storey hut at Abbeyard.

## THE CROSS

They stand out darkly, clear against  
The flowering scrub, two rough-hewn bars  
Forming a rugged cross, beneath  
The Southern stars.

A bare, Bush cross, raised by some hand,  
Unknown, memorial may be  
Of friendship, whose last tribute was  
This sign we see.

No tended grave; for thorny briars  
Have knit them to the stony ground,  
And wandering cattle trample o'er  
The humble mound.

And yet this little lonely grave,  
Round which the sweet, wild bramble blooms,  
Seems quieter than the crowded space  
Of city tombs.

For here, tho' thorns and stones beset  
The sod, above the buried head,  
The voice of Nature gently lulls  
The sleeping dead.

What if no monumental pomp  
Bedeck the grave?—I'd rather see  
Yon fair blue sky than proudest tomb's  
Carved canopy.

What tho' no kindly knee will bend  
Beside,—no weeping eye bedew  
The lonely mound?—Still Nature to  
Her own is true.

Grass deepens over love, as well  
As o'er the loved: who does not know  
The death of memories? Leave the graves,  
God's weeds will grow!

Softly I pass thee by, lone bed  
Of some sealed soul; when I, too, free  
From Strivings, rest, earth clasp me round  
As peacefully.

*Jennings Carmichael*





### **Mr C.J. (Jim) Gough**

The peaceful passing of Mr Jim Gough at his home at Howes Creek on 29 December 1990 marked the end of an era for one of Howes Creek's oldest and most respected families.

Jim was the youngest, and last surviving member of the family of the late John and Mary Jane Gough, his 12 brothers and sisters having predeceased him. His parents came from England about the middle of the last century and settled on a small holding at Howes Creek. Their settlement has left a milestone in the history of the area which can never be erased. After his marriage to Miss Doss Willaton, they lived on a property now submerged under Lake Eildon. Eventually they returned to the original family farm site, rebuilding the home which had been extensively damaged by fire.

Jim loved the land and was an ideal farmer in every sense of the term, and maintained a high standard in all his stock, not only on the home property but on the run which he held for some years in the high country.

He carried his 86 years lightly until some months ago, when his health took a rapid downward turn. After treatment in Melbourne he returned home, as did also his daughter Margaret, who was a trained nurse and cared for him until his passing.

Compiled with the assistance of the *Mansfield Courier*.

### **Mr Keith Robert Elliott**

Another former stockman from Wonnangatta station, Keith Elliott of Bairnsdale, passed away on 29 June 1990. Keith was born at Alexandra on 23 October 1910, the eldest of five boys. When Keith was 13½ he joined his father and brother, Ivan, to drive a mob of cattle to Wonnangatta Station where his father, Robert, became manager. After Keith completed his education he returned to Wonnangatta where he was employed as a station hand for ten years.

Keith often spoke of his time at Wonnangatta. When he was 16, he and his father discovered blackleg amongst the stock on Mt Howitt. His father immediately rode to Talbotville to order the vaccine, for delivery by train to Mansfield. Keith was then despatched to collect it, which involved a round trip on horseback of 170 miles in less than 24 hours. His efforts were successful, with just six head dying of the disease.

Keith married Daisy Callaghan at Richmond when he was 26, and they spent their honeymoon riding across the Alps. After his marriage they moved to Melbourne, returning to Bruthen in 1955, where they lived until Keith's retirement in 1978. His last years were spent in Bairnsdale close to family and friends.

### **Mr Norman George Purcell**

Norm Purcell, a highly respected member of a pioneer Merrijig family, passed away peacefully at Wangaratta Hospital on 1 April 1990 after a time of indifferent health.

Norm was born at Merrijig 71 years ago, the third son and sixth member of the family of William and Frances Purcell. After being educated at Merrijig State School he worked on the family farm and developed his shearing skills at an early age. He became a gun shearer and followed the seasons through Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania, shearing into the late sixties. Being on the fringe of the high country, Norm became a skilled bushman.

Norm bought his first land in 1946, and added to it in the early 1950s, farming it successfully up until his death. He married Carmel Reardon, daughter of another pioneer family, who was an unfailing backstop over the years, as were their family, Joan, Robert, Greg and Raymond.

There was always an open home at Norm and Carmel's for people from all walks of life. Norm made friends easily with young and old, establishing a great rapport with younger people which crossed the generation gap. It was not surprising that such a large number of friends and relatives attended his funeral.

Compiled with the assistance of the *Mansfield Courier*.

### ***Mrs Ina Faithfull***

Respected Omeo resident, Mrs Ina Faithfull, passed away on 13 October 1990, aged 99. She was born at Omeo in 1891, one of the eight children, of Walter and Sarah Greenwood and lived in the district all her life.

Ina first rode to the Bogong High Plains in 1913, with Fred Faithfull and his four sisters. During this trip it snowed night and day and the party camped

at Wallace's Hut. In 1920 Ina married George Leslie Faithfull at Christ Church, Omeo. After the wedding the couple moved onto 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 at Omeo. The family has had a strong association with the High Plains since the 1920s which continues today.

*(Ina's grand-daughter, Terri-Anne Faithfull, wrote of her grandmother in Voice of the Mountains, No. 12)*

### ***Mrs Ellen Violet Gibbs***

Nellie, as she was better known, was born at 'Glenlea', Crooked River in 1904, the fifth child of Alexander and Catherine Guy. She attended the old Crooked River State School before leaving school at 14, when she was employed by the Treasure family to help with the education of their children. She rode to the high plains in summer and then to Castleburn during the winter months. After a few years she went to work in Melbourne to help save money for her marriage to Wally Gibbs, the Crooked River mailman. Wally was from Briagolong.

After the 1936 floods, they purchased 'Glenview' at Crooked River from Paddy Culhane and worked together to establish their property. After the birth of Nancy and Ronnie, Wally died suddenly in 1951. This left Nellie to raise two young children and run the farm by herself, a challenge which she accepted admirably.

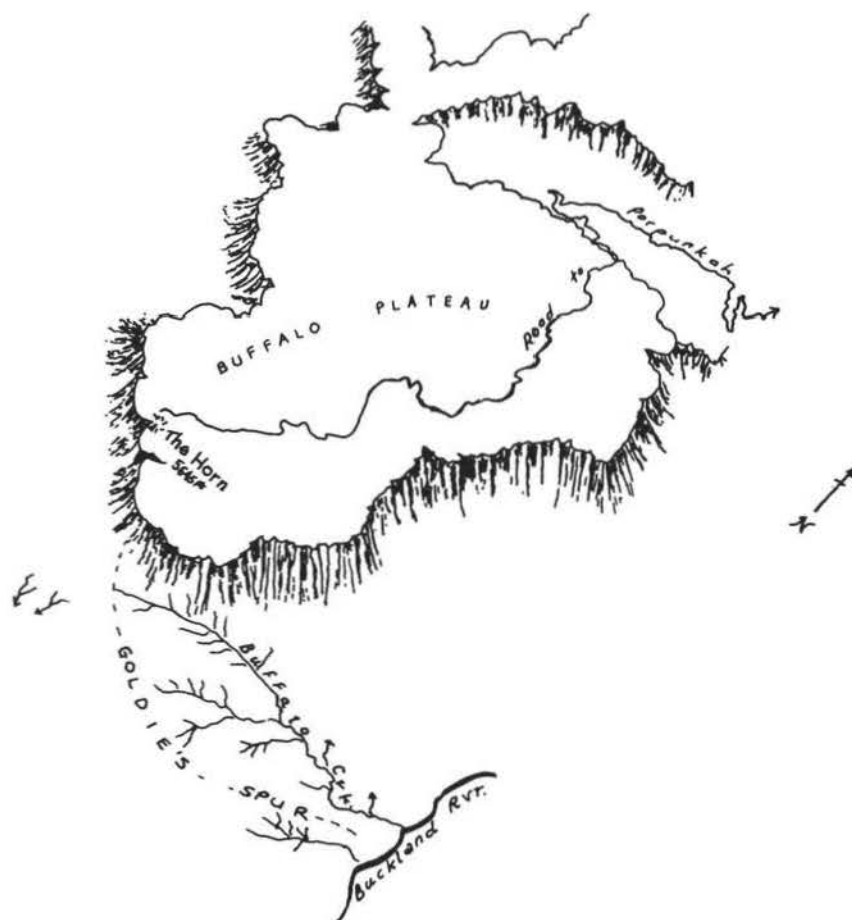
In her later years Nellie was hostess to many visitors from all parts of Australia, and indeed, many parts of the world. She died at 'Glenview', just two kilometres from her birthplace, on 11 October 1990. Many will remember Nellie seated at her kitchen table with a pot of jam and bowl of cream, spreading scones as fast as her visitors could devour them. A generous and hospitable woman it was widely acknowledged that the heart of Crooked River was in Nellie Gibbs' kitchen.





# GRAZING ON MOUNT BUFFALO

*Percy G. Weston*



Buffalo Plateau, showing the approximate location of Goldie's Spur

In the summer of 1844-5, Thomas Buckland, with Thomas Goldie as head stockman, arrived in the upper reaches of the Ovens Valley with a mob of 640 cattle after passing through the Myrtle Creek run. After a brief reconnoitre, he decided that the rich grazing plains of the lower Buckland Valley offered the best prospects. They pitched their tents, then both went to work on building a wattle and daub house and rough stockyards before winter came.

The spring of 1845 saw him thoroughly explore the upper regions of both the Ovens and Buckland Rivers. To prevent his stock from straying too far up the Buckland and beyond, he decided to build another house some ten miles up from Port Punka as he first named the location of his home. There at the foot of what is now known as Goldie's Spur, he installed Thomas Goldie with instructions to see that the herd was kept within the valley confines in winter months.

Dry conditions and scarcity of feed forced Buckland and Goldie to high grazing country at the south end of Mt Buffalo which runs for several miles on the west side of the Buckland River. From Buckland's obituary, obtained from the Mitchell Library, it is evident that Buckland and Goldie found that cattle had discovered easy access to the plains around The Horn, and had followed their tracks there. They were thus the first white men to ascend the mountain. Buckland had somehow acquired a knowledge of botany and whilst mustering in the autumn of 1847, noted the location of several new plant species he had found.

But with cattle prices low and markets far away and in financial trouble, Buckland returned to work with the firm of Walker Bros who had a trading post in Fort Street in Sydney. P.J. Smith was left in charge at Port Punka and Goldie up on the Buckland.

In early 1852, Buckland, then resident in Sydney, received news that gold had been discovered at Spring Creek near Beechworth. He returned post haste to Port Punka and began to drive small mobs of cattle across to Beechworth to supply meat to the horde of miners. He was thus in residence at Port Punka when Baron von Mueller came through in late January 1853, and Buckland's obituary shows that he escorted the Baron, accompanied by Malachy, to the top of The Horn on 26 January; drawing the Baron's attention to new plants on the way.

Thomas Goldie was the first settler or squatter in the Buckland Valley and gold was discovered there by Henry Pardoe early in November 1853. By that time Buckland's herd had increased to about 1200. He was lucky in that, by following the cattlemen's pattern of droving cattle to the mountain tops of Buffalo and the Divide, they were out of reach when some 5,000 miners took out claims by Christmas 1853. Buckland and Goldie thus had a virtual monopoly in supplying energy giving meat to the hard working miners and in two years Buckland had made a fortune by selling meat to the miners. He then returned to Sydney to enter politics and became the President of the Bank of New South Wales.

Goldie continued grazing in a small way and he was joined by Pat Monaghan, Wards, Dunphy and James Fitzgerald (my grandfather) who had taken out the third claim at Golden Point. This group continued to graze cattle on the south plateau of Buffalo for their lifetimes, taking their small herds for highland grazing in early summer via Goldie's Spur. Cattle numbers taken to Buffalo over those years were about 200 head.

In the spring of 1886, Bill and George Weston, after reconnoitering the north side of Buffalo, found what could be a possible track to the top. With funds provided by the Bright Alpine Club, they cut a bridle track in a matter of three months, finishing the track in December 1886.

The summer of 1888 promised to be dry and hot, so a group of farmers from Porepunkah and Eurobin organised to take a mob of 100 head up the bridle track to the frontal plains. Taking a few old quiet cows to the front and splitting the herd into groups of about 20, they proceeded Indian file up the narrow track to the top. This grazing venture was a great success and for my father, George Weston, it was the beginning of an annual drive ending in 1923.

It has long been recognised that Mt Buffalo presents itself as one of the most dangerous and difficult fire hazards in Australia. Cattlemen were



Bill and Dora Weston

duly concerned and searched out ways to minimize the danger. The sides of the mountain are steep and carry both scrub and tree cover which is highly flammable. Fires that have started at the base have been known to race up the side and spread burning litter everywhere on top, setting the plateau ablaze in a couple of hours. What steps, you can well ask, did cattlemen take to avert tragedy?

As a child, I can well remember my father setting off on a Friday evening to spend the weekend with co-leasees, making tracks to every plain on the plateau. These tracks served a dual purpose, serving both as firebreaks and ensuring that cattle reduced fuel for fire. They also made the muster at the end of April much easier and it was at that time that further fire prevention measures were taken. Once in every three or four years there would be a dry autumn, and as cattle were driven off, fires would be started by throwing lighted wax matches in the dry litter along the sides of the tracks. With moisture



rising in the soil, this burning was never severe and only travelled a short distance before going out at night. Next year there would be a green border to the cattle track wherever fires had been started. Also at this time, if early frosts dried up any surplus grass on small plains, a light singe would ensure that the green cover next summer would never carry fire.

Thus, before the road to Mt Buffalo was completed in 1909, there was a network of cattle tracks all over the mount and my father felt that two or three men could control any fire. In the 35 years that he grazed cattle there, there was never any serious invasion by fire. In the drought of 1914, fire came up from the west side and away went my father. Two days later when it was arranged that I would take up food supplies, only a couple of miles had been travelled before I met my father returning. Again, in early 1918, fire threatened grazing areas round The Horn but patch burning along tracks in the previous year soon put the fire under control, two men doing any fighting.

In 1923, when Harold Clapp took over the tourist management of the mountain, grazing licences were cancelled. My father reluctantly left the mountain but was able to boast that he left it in prime condition by never allowing tornadoes of fire to ravage the plateau. A vacant lease was then secured on the Bogong High Plains, and my brother Eric has pastured his cattle there ever since in summer months.

Since 1923 the Buffalo story is rather tragic. Wild fires in 1926, 1939, 1973 and 1983 have left many sections scarred and hideous with fire killed trees to be seen in many parts. To some extent conservationists endorsed the changeover in the twenties and still try to abolish grazing. If they took a good look over Mt Buffalo today, its sorry condition should convince them of the folly and futility of their ideas.

## SNOWY RANGE HORSEBACK TOURS

*Kevin Higgins, one of a long line of Mountain Cattlemen, and his staff,  
can take you to places including . . .*



WOOD'S POINT  
WONNANGATTA  
TARLI KARNG  
MOUNT HOWITT  
BOGONG PLAINS

Phone (051) 48 2268  
or write C/- 7 Allman St., Heyfield, 3858

WE HAVE OUR OWN HIGH COUNTRY ACCOMMODATION ON  
THE LAND OUR FAMILY HAS HELD FOR OVER 130 YEARS.



## THE SNOWY MOUNTAINS STOCKMEN

Well, my memory is fading I'm getting on in years,  
There are fragments of my life I can't recall  
Many little things remind me of the years I've left behind me  
But one vision lingers clearest of them all.  
I see how the country changes as the plains merge with the ranges,  
And the foothills reach up to the great divide,  
I see mountains and clear streams most folk only see in dreams,  
Up where the Snowy Mountains stockmen used to ride.

Now those men were hard as granite—they were resolute and tough,  
Just as rugged as the ranges that they rode.  
But at night around the fire those men never seemed to tire  
Of the mustering yarns those stockmen often told.  
But that era now has ended—all their grazing rights suspended,  
All the packhorse teams have long since been retired,  
But I always will remember the freedom and the splendour  
Where those Snowy Mountains stockmen used to ride.

It's not all a bed of roses—it's like any way of life,  
There are times you wish you'd never seen the place!  
When those winter winds start blowing and by night time it is snowing  
And the driving sleet's like gravel on your face.  
Then the fog rolls in with darkness to complete the mountain's harshness  
And you cannot see your hand before your eyes,  
So you leave it to your horse to select your homeward course  
To where your mates are waiting 'round the fire'.

Though those men all loved the mountains and the mateships that they found  
They relinquished all in making way for change  
Now the modern mountain flapper goes by four-wheel drive or 'chopper'  
To supervise the running of the range.  
And the memories I will treasure are of hardship and of pleasure  
A taste of hell and heaven side by side  
Of splendours quite amazing and of sheep and cattle grazing  
Up where the Snowy Mountains stockmen used to ride.

*Boyd Mould*





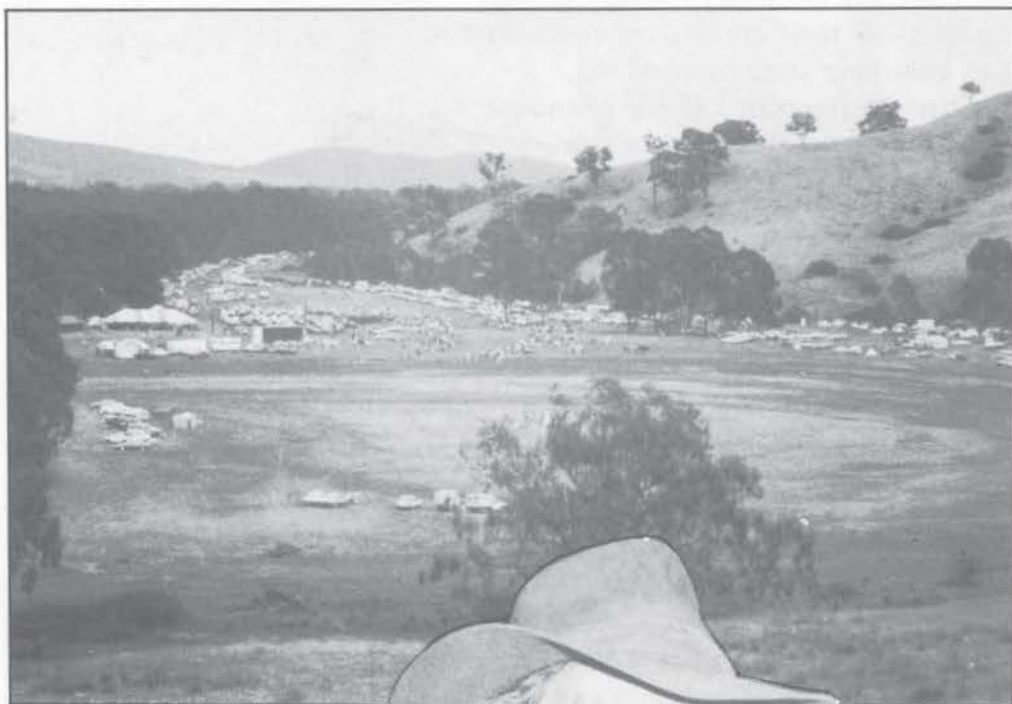
## 1990 GET TOGETHER, BOWMAN'S FOREST

The 1990 Get Together was held on Max and Leanne Blair's property at Bowman's Forest. The wide flats, leading down to the river proved to be an excellent venue, and the large crowd enjoyed the weekend to the full.

The Get Together committee ran a tight program, and everyone was glad to have a chance to catch up on friends, have a chat, and watch the champions battle it out in the various events. Once again Tommy Smith and the Blair family dominated the whipcracking, and once again Frank Ryan won the neatest pack in the Packhorse championships. The highlight of the weekend was, as usual, the

running of the Cattlemen's Cup, won this year by Peter Faithful from Omeo. Ken Connolly from Omeo came in second, and Leigh Woodgate from Buchan became the first Cattlegirl to take out a place in the Cup when she came in third.

Kelvin Quonoey, from Merc, Sharp and Dome, who sponsored the Cup, dedicated his firm's contribution to Lloyd Kelly, Ben Cooper, Jack Roper, Jim Edmonson, Jack and Tom Maddison, Bren, Darcy and Harry Fitzgerald and Wally Ryder. 'They loved the mountains,' he said, 'and understood them and knew how to look after them. They would have been proud of these efforts to sustain common sense.'



Detailed placing for the events held over the weekend were:

***Whipcracking: 10 years and under***

1st Simon Bergin (Macclesfield), 2nd Corinne Hoddinott (Macclesfield), 3rd Luke Mitchell (Bairnsdale)

***Whipcracking: Over 10 and under 15 years***

1st Sam Sellwood (Bright), 2nd Neil Heywood (Everton), 3rd Barbara Jeffs (Omeo)

***Whipcracking: Open***

1st Tom Smith (Bruthen), 2nd Mick Hyde (Cobram), 3rd Martin Neilson (Myrtleford)

***Whipcracking: Ladies Australian Championship***

1st Tanith Blair (Bowmans Forest), 2nd Leanne Blair (Bowmans Forest), 3rd Sharon Dear (Bairnsdale)

***Whipcracking: Cattlemen's***

1st Max Blair (Bowmans Forest), 2nd Greg Charleson (Albury), 3rd Tanith Blair (Bowmans Forest)

***Whipcracking: Open on Horseback***

1st Mick Hyde (Cobram), 2nd Max Blair (Bowmans Forest), 3rd Ron Connley (Omeo)

***Great Australian Packhorse Championship***

1st Ron Connley (Omeo), 2nd David Olsson (Benambra), 3rd Peg Halbwidl (Cobungra), Neatest Pack Frank Ryan (Cheshunt)

***Stockman's Dash***

1st John Canning (Springhurst), 2nd Leigh Woodgate (Buchan), 3rd Darrin Hoddinott (Macclesfield)

***Associate's Dash***

1st Michael Kelly (Sale), 2nd Steve Boulton (Sale), 3rd Jody Galway (Warrandyte South)

***Open Relay Race***

1st Sale Team of Frank Boulton, Steve Boulton, Michael Kelly and Raymond Roberts; 2nd Buchan Team of Rick Hodge, Ian Webb, Leigh Woodgate and David Kelly; 3rd Omeo Team of Erica Connley, Sarah Connley, Brenda Connley and Kristen Thiele.



***Cattlemen's Cup***

1st Peter Faithfull (Omeo), 2nd Ken Connley (Omeo), 3rd Leigh Woodgate (Buchan)

***Stock Horse Time Trail***

1st Frank Boulton (Sale), 2nd Dennis Heywood (Everton), 3rd Ron Connley (Omeo)

***Bowmans Forest Footslog (Senior)***

1st Paul Waite (Wodonga), 2nd Thomas Timmins (Omeo), 3rd John Treasure (Stratford)

***Bowmans Forest Footslog (Junior)***

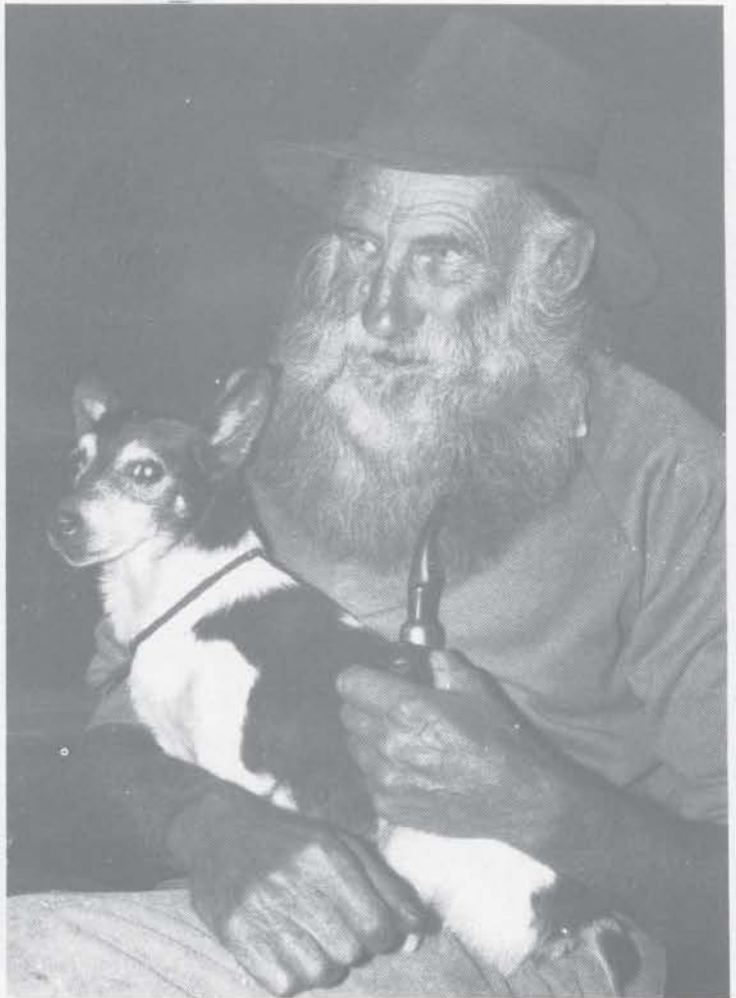
1st Peter Reynolds (Kilmore), 2nd Duana Hicks (Gundowring), 3rd Brett McNamara (Whorouly)

***Sackrace 14 Years and Under***

1st Brett McNamara (Whorouly), 2nd Ben Elkington (Whorouly), 3rd Luke Elkington (Whorouly)











## *A MOUNTAIN MUSTER*

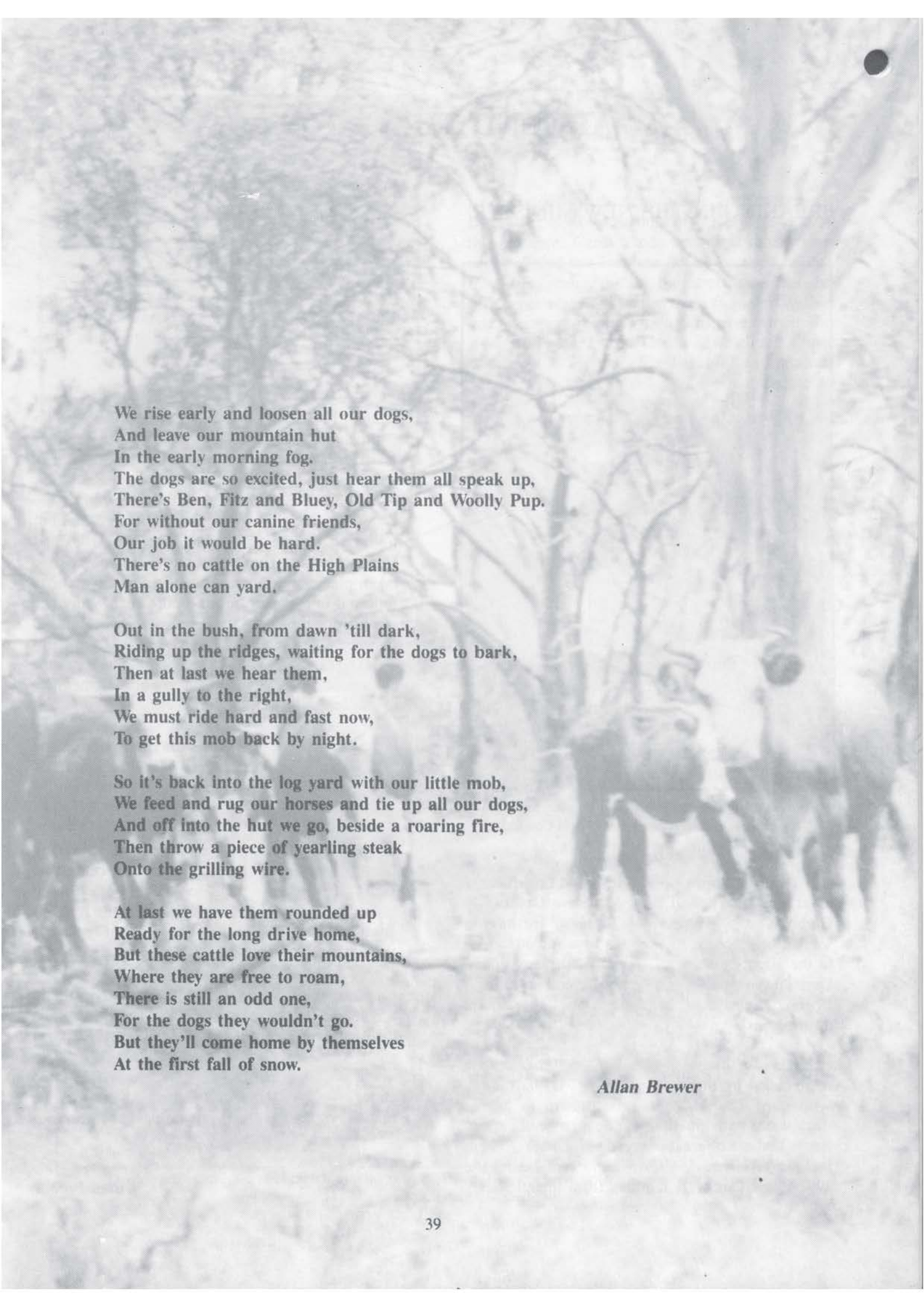
It's great to camp at mustering time,  
In the hut at Davies Plains  
Lay at night curled up in your bunk  
And listen to the rain.  
You hear the thunder crack  
And you know that really soon  
The rain drops on that old tin roof  
Will soon play out their tune.

There is something in this mountain air,  
That makes you feel alive,  
Or is it in the billy tea on which all bushmen thrive?  
Salt beef and damper, sometimes a feed of stew  
Is all the fare the bushmen need  
To see their long days through.

Mustering time, it comes around,  
In autumn of each year,  
And for weeks beforehand, you check on all your gear.  
Grease your saddle and your bridle,  
Put a rivet in the reins,  
Don't forget your horsebells, or your hobble chains,  
And there is one other thing, just before you go,  
Don't leave behind your horse rugs,  
For it will surely snow.

We packed up salt and horse feed and dog tucker too,  
For dogs can't work if they're not fed,  
Same as me and you.  
We pack up our provisions, on Barney and old Buck,  
And take along some OP rum,  
In case the weather should turn rough.





We rise early and loosen all our dogs,  
And leave our mountain hut  
In the early morning fog.  
The dogs are so excited, just hear them all speak up,  
There's Ben, Fitz and Bluey, Old Tip and Woolly Pup.  
For without our canine friends,  
Our job it would be hard.  
There's no cattle on the High Plains  
Man alone can yard.

Out in the bush, from dawn 'till dark,  
Riding up the ridges, waiting for the dogs to bark,  
Then at last we hear them,  
In a gully to the right,  
We must ride hard and fast now,  
To get this mob back by night.

So it's back into the log yard with our little mob,  
We feed and rug our horses and tie up all our dogs,  
And off into the hut we go, beside a roaring fire,  
Then throw a piece of yearling steak  
Onto the grilling wire.

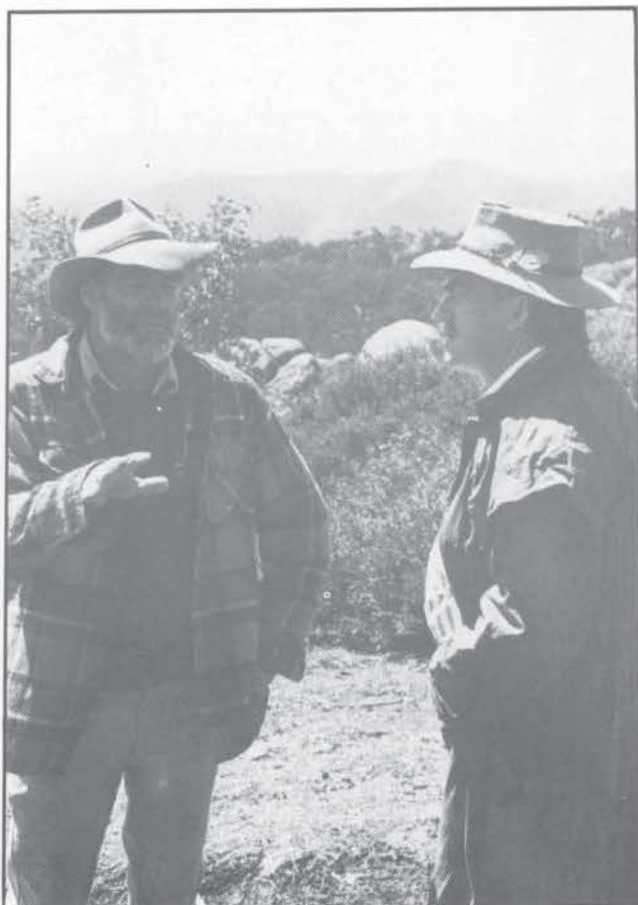
At last we have them rounded up  
Ready for the long drive home,  
But these cattle love their mountains,  
Where they are free to roam,  
There is still an odd one,  
For the dogs they wouldn't go.  
But they'll come home by themselves  
At the first fall of snow.

*Allan Brewer*



# AROUND THE TRAPS...

## BREAKING IN THE NEW MINISTER



Executive Officer Graeme Stoney makes a point in discussion with Steve Crabb. (Courtesy Mansfield Courier)

The Minister for Conservation and Environment as at 10 January 1991, was Mr Steve Crabb. Mr Crabb is also Minister for Tourism. He has on several occasions expressed his love and attraction to the High Country and has visited many times. Over the past year he has been to several ski resorts, Bogong High Plains, Mt Stirling and other alpine destinations.

His forthright and decisive manner is appreciated by those user groups who have dealt with him. The MCAV looks forward to having discussions with him this year on a range of current issues that are of great concern to members. These include Wilderness, Crown Land rentals and the 1991 Phase-Out of 11 families from their leases.

## DAVIES PLAIN

Davies Plain is an alpine grazing lease of approximately 9,000 acres, situated on the headwaters of the Murray river between Mt Pilot and Mt Buenbar. It is presently leased by Tom Groggin Station.

The lease was first taken up by the Gibson family from Benambra about 1905. The Gibson family also held grazing leases on Mt Pinnibar which they relinquished about 1982.

About 1950 the lease was transferred to the Nankervis family from Tom Groggin Station, following their eviction from the Kosciusko and Cascade leases. These evictions should never have taken place, and one can see the disaster that has followed in that part of our alpine area. Sadly, we see history repeating itself.

The Davies Plain's hut was built around the turn of the century and there is evidence of two other huts in the area before that.

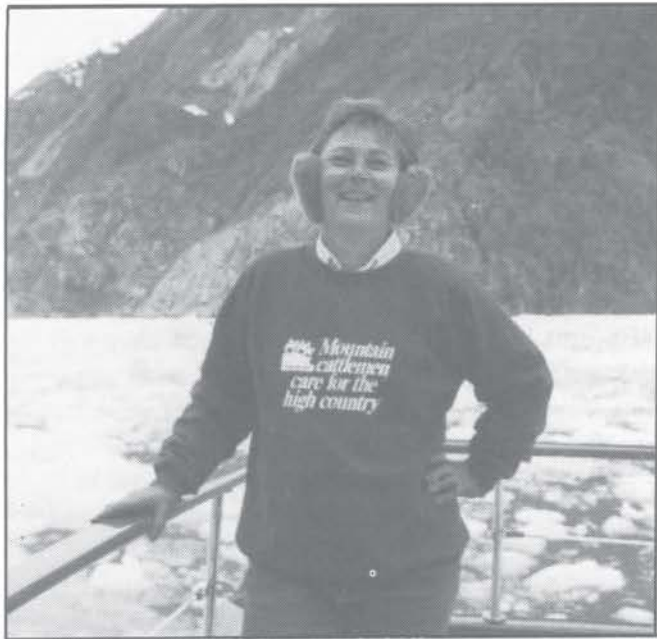
Scratched on the door is the inscription 'April 1917, Caught buck—christened Mac after initials of our first names'. I often wonder as to the identity of those early mountain stockmen.

Davies Plain's hut is steeped in our high country history and heritage, having spanned a century of cattle grazing in the area. However our much-loved hut is badly in need of repair and despite requests from the present leasees to make urgent repairs to the hut, so far these requests have been denied.

I feel if present plans to declare Davies Plain a Wilderness Area are allowed to go ahead, Australia loses another piece of mountain country heritage.

It is about time that we stood up and declared enough is enough, and let our high country be managed as it has been for the past 180 years.

*Allan Brewer*



Last year we showed how the word had been spread to Egypt about the Mountain Cattlemen—this year we have gone from one extreme to the other and travelled to South-east Alaska! Ingrid Judson was photographed while taking in a tour of the glaciers. Has anyone taken the cause to Buckingham Palace?

## HERITAGE RIDE

Spotted in the *Bairnsdale Advertiser*, 21 December 1990, an account of a 'Heritage' ride. In this instance, Carol Skoda and eight other riders accompanied the Treasure family on their muster. It was interesting to see the impression that this experience obviously had on those from the city. *Not one member of our group will ever forget this wonderful place, wrote Carol, ...we all felt a tinge of sorrow to leave such a beautiful and peaceful place. It made us all reappraise our lives and be thankful for some of the simpler things in life. We all felt proud of the fact that we had taken part in something that is part of our heritage and should be preserved for posterity. In today's changing times, thought must be put in, and acted on, to preserve some of our country's traditions.* It is good to see that some 'city dwellers' are getting the right message!



Our Victorian Cattlemen can match it with the best. Rick Hodge and his horse 'Midnight' who won the 1990 Lake Jilamatong Cup in New South Wales.



# HORSEMEN TO THE RESCUE

Winter 1990 was one of the best for many years as far as snowfall was concerned. The snow cover was excellent for months, but the perfect conditions brought other problems for local State Emergency Services, Police, Department of Conservation and Environment officers, and Mountain Cattlemen. Mansfield SES unit is assisted by a mounted search unit comprising, in the main, members of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association, as well as other experienced and capable local horsemen.

On five occasions over the winter months the mounted horsemen were called out to assist in searches for people lost in the snow or in the bush. The following is a personal account of one such search.

One would rather be anywhere but at Black Dog Creek in the middle of winter. With cloud touching the ground just metres away, rain bucketing down, ti-tree bent double with the weight of the water and the Howqua River in medium flood from the melting snow, this was not the place to be.

At 11 pm on a Tuesday, and for the third time in recent weeks, a call came from SES controller, John Howie, to the Mansfield SES horse section that a youth was lost on Mt Buller. He had been missing since 3 pm. No doubt with a heavy sigh, the available horsemen tumbled from their warm beds to organise horses, floats, wet weather gear and radios.

By 7 am North Face Spur exits from Mt Buller had been checked. Horsemen used Klingsporns Track from Mirimbah and Round Hill Track from Doughty's Road, to survey the trails under the summit of the mountain. The horses continued their ascent until the snow became too deep to proceed. Riders scanned the snow for any sign of the lost youth attempting to walk out of trouble.

As horsemen rode into Mirimbah for a hasty lunch (a pie from the store), they received word that out-of-place tracks had been discovered by searchers based at Mt Buller. The tracks led down Camp Creek towards Black Dog Creek.

An hour's drive saw floats parked at Eight Mile Creek and horses heading upstream. Visibility was deteriorating as Black Dog Creek valley was

identified with the help of Senior Constable Bernie McWhinney, Conservation and Environment ranger,

David Hurley, and mountain cattleman, Graeme Stoney, who went in on foot. Radio communication was poor, but the message came through that a search party, including members of the Maffra SES, from Mt Buller Village had found the youth. They were preparing to camp on the eastern side of Black Dog Creek below the snowline.

With night approaching, the horsemen split into two groups to decide which route offered the best access to the main search party. The horses handled the flooded river well. The second party, using the original hiking spur from Little Buller to Eight Mile Flat, discovered a route that led them to a point about a kilometre from the river. Bush-bashing through ti-tree, the foot party managed to reach a point opposite the horses.

With radios effected by water, no further contact was possible with the main search party further up the creek. It was dark as the groups pulled back to Eight Mile Flat. The walking party was forced to link arms and cross the Howqua in a line to avoid being swept away in the darkness. Their only light came from flares and torches on the bank.

Daylight found the section reforming for a return to Eight Mile Creek with an offer of assistance to the party who had found the youth. Thursday was sunny and bright, allowing technology to complete the task begun so many hours before. The police rescue helicopter dropped a chainsaw to the search crews and winched the boy to safety.

Attention then turned to the evacuation of the seven rescuers from the head of Black Dog Creek. A fresh rescue crew, made up of SES, DCE and police personnel was ferried across the swollen Howqua River by horsemen and guided up the track blazed the previous day. At this stage there was the possibility that the rescuers would have to spend another night in Black Dog Valley.

However, late in the day they arrived at the river. For them it had been a tough two days. For the mountain horsemen and SES volunteers it was the end of an unpaid shift which had them in the bush for 35 of the previous 48 hours with little to eat and drink, and always wet.

For all volunteers it meant two days away from their normal work commitments; for some it meant treating an injured horse, or carrying out mechanical repairs. It meant teams of searchers from both sides of the mountains working together as one unit.

These horsemen were doing a job that had to be done.

*Courtesy of Mansfield Courier.*

## **WONANGATTA CARAVAN PARK**

Powered Sites

Kiosk, Mechanical Repairs

Petrol Available

*Props: David and Dianne Guy*

Phone:  
(051) 40 1265

RMB 2315  
WATERFORD  
STRATFORD 3862

## **TONY and LEONIE PENDERGAST**

**OMEIO and BENAMBRA**

**DAY AVENUE, OMEIO — PHONE (051) 59 1271**

### **WE SELL A LARGE RANGE OF FARMING MATERIALS**

For all farm merchandise, timber and hardware.  
Fire and General Insurance. Paint. Gas and Appliances.

Water accessories — Mono and Davey Jet and Fire Fighting Pumps,  
Galvanised and Fibreglass Water Tanks.

Silvan Spray Equipment, Cement Sheep Troughs.  
Poly Pipe and fittings, Garden Hose and Sprinklers.

Access to your complete building requirements.  
Corrugated Iron, Spouting, All Doors and Fittings.  
Spas and Bathroom Fittings, together with a large range of Plumbing  
Supplies.

Sheds — we can assist you with all your sheds.  
Thorton or Trubuilt Sheds and Garages.

Live Stock Products. A full range of:— Salt Blocks; Most Drenches; Dips  
and Pour Ons; Vaccines and Jetting Fluids. All Stock Feeds.

**FULL RANGE OF HIGH COUNTRY CLOTHING AVAILABLE.**



# CATTLE IN THE BUSH AROUND TAMBO CROSSING

*Jim Conn*

Prior to about 1908, a year when the Tambo River ceased to flow in many places, cattle grazed far and wide along the creeks and gullies and the river course itself.

The countryside was now feeling the full effect of the great rabbit plague which came down from the north.

When the rain came, culminating in a series of floods in 1911 and 1912, stock throughout the bush area made their appearance again.

In the mining area of the township of Stirling, now defunct, the miners who had vegetable flats had to look again to their fences. As a small boy I was set the task of chasing cattle away from our home in the bush.

I do not remember sheep ever having grazed in Stirling, but there were a few goats which were kept by at least one family as a milk supply.

Farther to the south and east some of the Tambo Valley farmers occasionally ran sheep. A story was often told of two farmers going far afield and buying a considerable number of sheep as there had been a light fire through a wide area of the bush and a timely rain had produced good feed.

Before the rabbit scourge great areas of the bush were lightly grassed under the trees. There was also occasional burning for the protection of the homes of those who lived in the bush. However these grassed areas have diminished in size over the years.

Grazing along the Tambo Valley was widely used in the closing years of the last century. I have in my possession a copy of a diary kept by one of the pioneers who put in a lot of his time between Tambo Crossing and Ensay. Several times he mentions mustering cattle up the Haunted Stream, the creek running through Stirling. He also mentions mustering on Shady Creek, to the west of Tambo Crossing. Another mustering point was a place near the Double Bridges, where there was once a half-way hotel between Tambo Crossing and Bruthen. The mustering point referred to in the diary was Maindample, where there was a hut and yards. This place is now marked by a fingerboard sign as Maindample Track, on the eastern side of the Omeo

Highway about a kilometre north of the Double Bridges sign. This area of bush grazing was used by the Davidson family of Tambo Crossing until the end of World War I.

A story is told of a gruesome find down the Tambo River somewhere in the wider area near Maindample, by one of the earlier generation of the Davidson family, who came across human remains in a pile of flood driftwood. Some months, or maybe years before a man was known to have fallen into the flooded Haunted Stream while trying to cross the flooded creek by means of a single log spanning the stream.

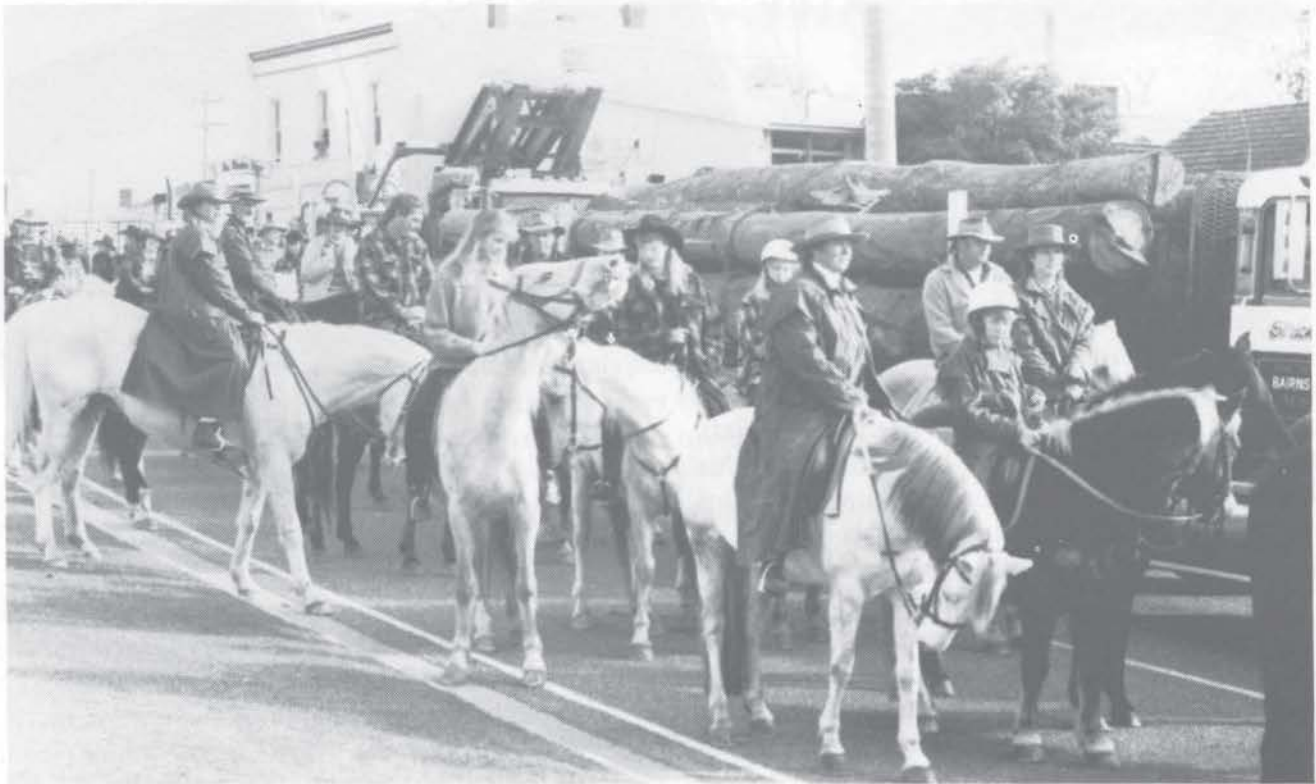
Coming along to the 1920s, the Forest Commission, as it was known then, placed advertisements in the papers inviting tenders for grazing in the State Forest. Location and area were stated. George Dean acquired a run up the Haunted Stream and put a mob of cattle in the bush to graze for quite a number of years. While he was doing this it was his practice to ride into the Stirling area every Sunday during the winter months. The cattle were branded either J or GD. He lost quite a number of cattle one winter and suspected a bit of cattle duffing, so for a time after that he branded much the same but with the letters EAN added. As far as I can recollect he vacated his lease some time in the 1940s.

Towards the end of the 1950s his neighbour, G. Wilson, applied for and was granted the lease. He put his herd of breeding cows on the run for the winter months, but the amount of grazing was quickly deteriorating and the losses were a bit disproportionate.

In 1961 Wilson died, and it was I who spent many days riding the forest tracks, which traversed the bush west of Tambo Crossing, searching for the cattle. Quite a number of them were never found, but a few bodies were.

This episode was the final chapter in some sort of controlled grazing in the bush in the region. No one would consider such a program now as the bush has become quite useless, even from an emergency point of view. As the practice of regular light burning has of recent years been almost totally abandoned the bush has become just about covered by an understory of scrub. There is just no grazing left.

## MOUNTAIN CATTLEMEN LEAD BAIRNSDALE RALLY



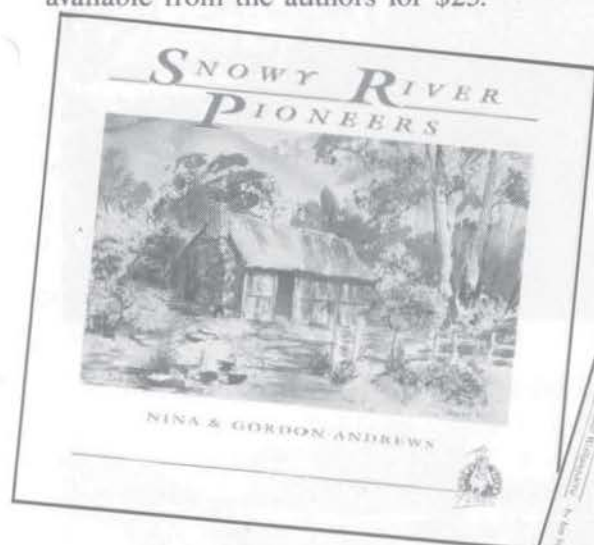
Mountain Cattlemen and their supporters took part in a rally at Bairnsdale during the year. This was organised to coincide with the meeting there of the rural sub-committee of the Victorian Cabinet. The Cattlemen, accompanied by Mrs Heather Mitchell, led the procession, which also included participants from the forests industry, miners, small business, friends of Pyramid, VFF and other groups.



## HIGH COUNTRY BOOKMARKS

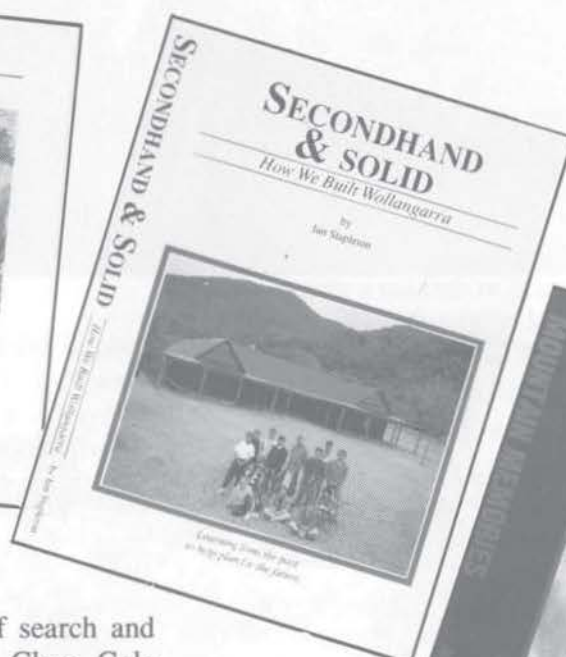
Once again new books have been published on the High Country, ranging from the glossy for the coffee table to works of scientific research.

Nina and Gordon Andrews from Orbost have produced *Snowy River Pioneers*, a 48 page book full of colour reproductions of paintings by Nina Andrews and Vere Moon. The text, by Gordon Andrews, includes anecdotal material on the Rogers of Gelantipy Station, drover Charlie West, the Moons of Buchan, Jackson's Crossing, the Hicks family of Roger River and Suggan Buggan. It is available from the authors for \$25.



Perhaps the best known story of search and rescue in the High Country is the Cleve Cole tragedy. Now, Mick Hull, a member of the ill-fated party has produced *Mountain Memories: Sixty Years of Skiing*. Mick has compiled his reminiscences from his time spent skiing in the alps up to and including his time spent competing in Austria. Much of the book has been devoted to the Cleve Cole rescue, which will be especially interesting to those who remember the event. Numerous black and white and colour photographs supplement the extensive text. However if you're looking for your name in the index, don't give up straight away. This book has the peculiar system of indexing by first name. First look under your given name, then under title, such as Dr or Mrs, and if that fails—ladies look under your husband's name! The book retails at \$55.

Ian Stapleton has produced another book, on his second camp, this time downriver from Licola. Wollangarra was declared open on the same day as the National Park was proclaimed further up the valley, so it is heartening to know something went right in that area on that day. In this book, *Secondhand and Solid: the Story of the Building of Wollangarra* he gives brief details of his first camp, Mittagundi near Glen Wills, and pays tribute to the cattlemen and friends who have helped with both projects. The book costs \$20, plus \$5 post, and is available only from Wollangarra, C/ Post Office, Licola 3858.



Another for the coffee table is Klaus Hueneke's, *Kosciusko—Where the Ice-trees Burn* (published by Tabletop Press). This is the third book with an alpine perspective produced by Hueneke, his others being *Huts of the High Country* and *Kiandra to Kosciusko*. His first two books were principally text with photographs as an added interest, whereas this book is principally photographs taken by the author, with evocative text. Those who enjoy the alpine vista in a photograph, be it Victoria or New South Wales, will enjoy this book.



## ***CATTLE ON THE HIGH PLAINS***

Keep the colour in our mountains,  
Let those white faced cattle roam,  
Where kangaroos and brumbies  
And wild dogs make their home.

The heather clumps are scattered  
Through eucalyptus trees,  
And native flowers by millions  
Sway gently in the breeze.

The drifting grey clouds gather  
Where twisted snow gums grow,  
And mists of dawn rise slowly  
Where mountain waters flow.

There'll be echoes through the gullies  
As a scrub bull makes a call,  
And we'll herd the cattle homeward  
As night begins to fall.

*Neil Hulm*



## ***MEMORIES OF THE HIGH PLAINS***

Us three hundred cattlemen rode down over the hill,  
And the crowd joined in the singing of 'Advance Australia Fair'  
I turned towards Mt Nelse, from where our cattle must go,  
Where the pasture is still lush, and the mountain daisies grow.  
And I thought of those who for a hundred years now,  
Have saddled their horses to ride the High Plains.  
To muster their cattle before the winter snow,  
Bringing them back to Omeo and other valleys below.

Fitzgeralds hut is there to, now a hundred years old,  
Which has sheltered many a traveller from the winter's cold.  
Where logs have been left to make a warm fire,  
Also some spare rations to see them all through.  
There were home made wooden stools, table, and old beds too,  
A large fireplace, and billy; for the tea to brew.  
Where iron pots, and frying pan hung for the cattlemen's tucker,  
Those walls hold many memories of those staying to muster.

Signatures are many from visitors young and old,  
Trail riders, and scouts, also skiers that were cold,  
What beautiful scenery for them all to view!  
The mountains sometimes purple, sometimes blue,  
With valleys appearing as a sea of mist.  
A place of inspiration—peace and rest,  
Given by God, where we can all relax,  
To remain there though, we must really care,  
Not to spoil the beauty we've been given to share.

Around a large log fire, while the wind blew cold,  
Stories of early pioneer cattlemen have been told.  
How areas were cleared, to make accessible tracts,  
So that hikers, and horses, could travel well with packs.  
Travellers would sometimes become lost, as they were impeded with scrub.  
Cattle are now thought to cause erosion on the Bogong Plains,  
But if withdrawn, tracts may become inaccessible again;  
Grazing has helped the balance of nature to be maintained.

But a new era dawns—it will be the last muster there,  
No more will trail riders and cattlemen the High Plains share.  
Without a good pair of legs, who will be able to enjoy the view?  
And how incomplete will be the picture without cattle there too,  
Grazing on the plains has ensured feed during drought,  
Enabling continuation of production on the leases throughout.  
The future for the young may depend on whether crops freshly sown,  
Enables them to maintain the high standard their forefathers have shown

*Vera Fitzgerald*



**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
OF THE MOUNTAIN CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION  
OF VICTORIA INCORPORATED,  
HELD ON MONDAY 29 OCTOBER 1990  
AT 24 COLLINS STREET, MELBOURNE.**

**PRESENT:** Keith Whittam, Bill Crump, Anne Whittam, Jim Commins, Clive Hodge, Magda Brown, Ross Brown, Graham Connley, Louise Hayward, Phil Maguire, Don Kneebone, David Treasure, Ian Roper, Barry Hicks, Max Blair, Kevin Kelly, Frank Hill, Roger Oxley, Robert McGregor, Andrew Miller, Graeme Stoney, Doug Treasure, Alan Brewer, Sue Silvers, John Andrews, Roslyn Andrews, Jack Lovick, Mr J. Grant, Mrs J. Grant, Tim Barker, Ian McMichael, Bill Hicks.

The Chairman, Mr Alan Brewer, welcomed everybody to the Annual General Meeting of the Association and opened the meeting at 11.10 am.

**APOLOGIES:** Were received from John Rogers, Lou Lieberman, Lyle McCready, John Cook, Terry Murphy, Bruce McCormack, Harry Ryder.

**MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING:** Moved Jim Commins, seconded Graham Connley that the Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting as printed in the *Voice of the Mountains* No. 13 of 1990 and circulated to all Members and Associate Members be confirmed. Carried.

**PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS:** The President of the Association, Mr Doug Treasure, addressed the meeting. He said that the past year had been one of variety for the Association. He had come to see the intricacies of the working of this unique organisation. In the past he said, he thought all we had to do was keep in front of the cameras. This was still very important, and he urged all members to keep our flag flying whenever we can. He said that we needed to remind the public that we are very much alive and well and part of the mountain environment with a positive contribution to make. He gave a brief resume of this year's work as he saw it. He said that the Get Together at Bowman's Forest was one of the best run that he had seen, and thanked Harry and the team from the North East Branch. He stated that the net income from the Get

Together was \$36,651.39, and noted that it was imperative that we keep this fund-raising event very high in our priorities. If this income was to be halved our effectiveness would wane. Whilst we spend what seems to be a lot of money, everyone within the organisation operates on a shoestring budget. It is the only way that we can survive he said. He noted that the past year had seen the timber industry under continued and increased pressure. The MCAV has been well represented at timber industry rallies. In February at Morwell, and then Melbourne, and Morwell again in October. Mr Treasure said that through our affiliation with the Public Land Council we are working closely with the timber industry and other user groups in the Alpine area. He said we must continue our support of the Public Land Council in its work for multiple use of public land. The Public Land Council will do a lot of the public education which is needed on Alpine and environmental issues.

The President said that in March we participated in the Moomba procession. He had a number of people from outside the Association comment that we need to promote our heritage image, and the Moomba ride did that for us.

Mr Treasure said that he had been a guest speaker at Apex, Rotary and schools during the year, and had done two specific television interviews relating to our current position. Too many people think we no longer exist because we are not in the news every week, but they are eager to hear about us when they can.

In August this year 13 members of the Association attended a celebration dinner to mark the 5th anniversary of Rosemary Varty's electoral victory in Nunawading. Our part in the victory was acknowledged.

After talking to a number of Liberal Party members at that dinner, he said he wondered if we should run a 'come and see' tour of the Alpine



grazing areas for these now opposition members, so that they will have a better knowledge of us and our situation in the future.

Another noteworthy event for the year was the formation of a working committee to discuss and plan the proposed phase outs on Bogong, the Bluff and other areas. So far we have attended two meetings at the Department of Conservation & Environment head office, and whilst progress is slow, discussions are continuing. Mr Oxley, a Rangeland consultant who we have employed to look at the effects of grazing in the Alpine area is with us today. Mr Treasure thanked Roger for his attendance and said we looked forward to hearing from him.

Mr Treasure thanked Graeme Stoney and Jim Commins for their effective work for the Association, and for the amount of time they put into it. Mr Treasure also thanked the Central Council delegates who give the organisation direction and do most of the on-the-ground hack work.

Mr Treasure thanked the Secretary for her year's work and asked her to mention and explain the increase in paperwork.

Mr Treasure thanked Keith and Anne Whittam and all the Associate members for their support.

In conclusion he thanked the office bearers and offered best wishes to the incoming team for the year ahead. He noted we had a lot of work ahead of us, and the ability to handle it.

Moved that the President's address be received, Clive Hodge, seconded Phil Maguire. Carried.

**EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT:** Several major issues are being dealt with by the Executive of the MCAV at the present time.

At long last the Department of Conservation & Environment have agreed to have regular round table discussion on a range of problems which have faced our members for some years.

The group is called the Alpine Grazing Working Group and consists of several Regional Managers, Advisors, Senior Melbourne conservation & Environment management and Doug Treasure, Sue Silvers, Kevin Kelly, Jim Commins, Harry Ryder and myself.

The group was first convened to discuss and examine the options for phased out Cattlemen.

However we took the opportunity to pursue other problems including the exorbitant back fees which are outstanding and which some members are refusing to pay, the lack of progress with 7 year licences, individual members' problems with the Department of Conservation & Environment, and the wording of the 7 year licence agreement.

The phase out procedure is going through the motions of looking for alternative areas. (We don't believe there are any viable ones).

Our position is that the Government has promised that no Cattlemen will be disadvantaged by the phase outs, and if anyone is seriously disadvantaged, we will continue to stock the phased out leases even though the phase outs are now legislated.

The next meeting could bring the crunch and we may have to become even more hardline than we have been at meetings to date.



Proprietors

Leo & Joan Myers

**155 Macleod Street,  
BAIRNSDALE, 3875**

Phone (051) 52 6436 A/H (051) 57 9234

**SPECIALISING IN**

**STOCKMAN**

**&**

**FARRIER SUPPLIES**

**WHEN ONLY THE BEST  
WILL DO**

**CALL IN AND INSPECT  
OUR STOCK**



**FEES:** The VFF have been representing the MCAV at ongoing discussions with the Department of Conservation & Environment about future charges for Crown Land throughout the State.

#### **REVIEW OF PUBLISHED SCIENTIFIC MATERIAL ON ALPINE GRAZING**

Funded by the National Farmers' Federation grant, Mr Roger Oxley has just completed draft reviews of both the Kosciusko and Bogong areas. Associate member, Mr Dale Anderson has been of assistance to the MCAV. He has located some unpublished scientific work which will be of use to Mr Oxley and the Association.

**GENERAL:** There has been a swing back to more sensible attitudes to the use of resources in Australia and the Green movement is on the back foot. This is because the groups pushed too hard and were unrealistic in their claims and demands. Unfortunately for us, the Alpine Park and Mallee Bills were introduced at the height of the Green influence on political parties. It is vital now that we get some scientific arguments together and go to both parties and explain our position. If possible we need to demonstrate that Alpine Grazing can be compatible and in balance with the obvious changes that have occurred in the Alps since white settlement. We further need to demonstrate the economic, environmental and historic value of our industry and launch a strong campaign to hold and improve our position. However until we get the scientific material we need, we really cannot successfully progress further.

**MARKETING OFFICER'S REPORT:** Anne Whittam reported as follows: We have had a fairly quiet 12 months, figures are down and you will notice profit is too. We only had shops at two events this year, the Get Together where we achieved a record in sales, and I would like to thank Russell and Sue Clay and the others for helping Keith with the shop for the weekend, as I was unable to attend because of school. The other event was the Dargo Walnut Festival, and I have to thank Rob and Sharon Summers for their work. They picked up the stock and organised the shop. Lastly, I would like to thank everyone for their concern about my health, I am fighting fit again.

**SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT:** Mrs Silvers reported as follows: I have pleasure in presenting my fifth Annual Report as Secretary/Treasurer. Full membership of the Association stands at 86. Associate membership

## **CASTLEBURN 18th ANNUAL HEREFORD BULL SALE**

**Wednesday, June 12th, 1991**

**Bairnsdale Municipal Saleyards**

**(Undercover Seating)**

**OFFERING 40 BULLS**

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

**DARGO HIGH PLAINS BRED CATTLE**

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

Further details contact (051) 57 1471 or 57 1226

Agents: DALGETY FARMERS

currently stands at approximately 1,800 of which 1,402 are financial, and we can still claim an international interest as we have Associate members in the United Kingdom, United States of America and Alaska.

The Association has had another busy year negotiating with the Department of Conservation & Environment on a number of issues, including fees (past, current and future), the issue of phase outs, drafting of the 7 year licences going on at the moment among all other matters. The Association has proposed a new zone or region which will cover alpine and bush grazing licences. This proposal of Jim Commins, to be called the Eastern Forest Zone has been put to the DC&E and VFF review of Crown Land rentals, and the Alpine Grazing Working Group. As yet there is no indication that the Department will accept this proposal. It would, however, be the answer to the vexed question of alpine and bush grazing fees, and the fee would relate to the licenced area and be based on the average carrying capacity. I predict that negotiations with the Working Group will be drawn out and lengthy. We shall all have to be patient.



In May I attended a meeting in Myrtleford called by the Land Conservation Council as an introduction to the Wilderness Special Investigation Report. It is disturbing to note that the maps provided in the Report for public comment are wrong, and this fact is acknowledged to the Association by the LCC in writing. How any constructive comment can be properly based on incorrect information is however, an issue not addressed by the Land Conservation Council. At the end of May, Graeme Stoney and I attended a seminar in Mansfield run by the Soil Conservation Association. Graeme was one of the speakers at this seminar. It was here that the Alpine Planning Team from Bright showed a series of slides, one purporting to be damage caused by horse riders within the Park. The Planning Team Manager was embarrassed when it was pointed out to him that the damage had in fact been caused by Telecom, that the Department had made no effort to repair

the damage, or get Telecom to do so, and that in fact the damage was outside the Park boundaries by some 8 km. This is the type of misinformation being hawked around by the Planning Team in an attempt to justify their position to restrict Park users.

I believe that the subject of the transferability of licences will be an issue which will tax the resources of this Association in the future. The Alpine Grazing Working Group has already signalled that the transfer of the licences with respect to Tom Groggin Station will be a test case.

On behalf of the Association I have applied for three Government Grants. One for funds to produce an information kit for schools, one for funds for a Submission in response to the Wilderness Report (due to be released early next year), and one to reimburse the Association for monies spent responding to Government on the several Crown Land Rental pricing panels.



## GIPPSLAND **PARTY HIRE**

Marquees, Tables, Chairs, Dance Floors, China, Cutlery, Glassware, Woodenware, Round Tables, Silverware, Catering Equipment, Lighting, Urns, Stages, Barbeques, Bunting.



*Weddings, Balls, Parties, Civic Functions, Golf Tournaments,  
Festivals, Seminars, Auctions, Dances,  
Concerts, Barbeques, Official Openings,  
Field Days, Conventions, Race Meetings.*

**Cnr. Raymond and Foster Street**

**Contact us for a quote for anywhere in Victoria**

**SALE  
44 4124**

Our President has asked me to identify areas where the shifting of paper has become our Association's nightmare! This year I have been asked to provide information to over 200 students. This involves me sending out a kit consisting of a copy of *Voice of the Mountains*, our information sheet, photocopies of information on Wilderness, the Impossible Dream, overseas experience with grazing in mountain country and a photocopy of information on the phase outs which runs to 21 pages. I remind you that I receive, on average, a student request almost every day of the week. I also type up notes of meetings, Minutes, copies of Reports etc. and these are forwarded to all Central Council delegates and Branch Secretaries. There is also considerable work involved in drafting documents. I also respond in writing to all letters received, and most telephone calls, there are six large lever arch letter binders in my office to prove it! In all the secretarial, record keeping and bookwork in now a full time job.

Financially the Association is in a reasonable shape. The Central Account was able to contain expenses to within its budget, marketing showed a

profit somewhat lower than last year owing to a drop in sales, an increase in the cost of stock, and the writing off of books. It is a credit to the Marketing Officer's good housekeeping that operating costs have been well contained, and you will note also that the balance of Anne's honorarium was paid from this Marketing account.

The Trustees of the Trust Account Fund and its necessary documentation was lengthy and so monies were held initially in our Solicitor's Trust Account, then transferred to the Central Account and then into the Trust Account.

On the advice of our Auditor I recommend the Association now pay advances to Branches directly into that Branch bank account. This will put an end to a situation where an advance by cheque is made, for example for a Get Together, and that cheque not be banked for six months with a subsequent loss of interest. As Treasurer I therefore recommend that any advances for any purpose be not paid directly to the Branch, but be transferred into that Bank Account.



Two to Ten Day Rides

Snowy Plains Wonnangatta Dargo Tarli Karng Moroka etc.

Cattle Country Wilderness National Parks

Horses, equipment and provisions all provided.

**Clive Hodge**

**A Cattleman with a lifetime of  
mountain experience**

*Smyth Road, Valencia Creek, via Maffra,  
Victoria 3860.  
Telephone (051) 45 4293*



The year ahead may be an expensive one for our Association. Our difficulty is in the area of forward planning because we never know when, or how, we may be required to respond, and therefore the Association must insist that its members, and I mean its full members—those who put their cattle into the Mountains each summer, take a more responsible attitude to their Association. One of the members said to me recently that we were, in a sense, a Union in that the elected Council fought for the rights of all members equally, and that all members should stand together as one body, and this is very true. It is therefore disappointing for your Central Council to be informed of members who greatly underestimate their cattle numbers and pay a lower subscription fee, and I therefore regretfully recommend that a minimum fee for full membership to this Association be considered by this meeting.

Moved Jim Commins, seconded Ian McMichael, that the reports of the Executive Officer, Marketing Officer and Secretary/Treasurer be received. Carried.

## **HEYFIELD PANELS**

### **Heyfield Trailer Hire**

**D & P COLEMAN**

**Panel Beating   Spray Painting**

**Oxy and Arc Welding**

**24-Hour Towing**

**Arranged**

10 Temple St.,  
Telephone :                      P.O. Box 65,  
(051) 48 2541                      HEYFIELD, 3858.

## **SETTING OF FEES**

Discussion on the recommendation that there be minimum fee resulted in a motion put by Doug Treasure and seconded by Jack Lovick that the Minimum fee for full membership subscription to the Association be \$100 (to include the first 100 head), \$1.50 per head thereafter with the exception being full members now not running cattle in the high country. Jim Commins proposed an amendment of \$100 minimum with 50 cents per head which he later withdrew and an amendment put by David Treasure that the minimum fee be \$100 (to include the first \$100 head) with \$1.00 per head thereafter to a maximum of \$500, seconded Clive Hodge, was put to the vote and carried.

## **FIXING OF HONORARIUMS**

Honorarium for President/Chairman: Moved Clive Hodge, seconded Ross Brown, that the Honorarium for the President be \$2,500 with expenses, Chairman \$1,500 with expenses. Carried.

Honorarium for the Executive Officer: Moved Doug Treasure, seconded Bill Hicks, that the Honorarium be \$3,750 plus expenses. Carried.

Honorarium for the Secretary/Treasurer: Moved Clive Hodge, seconded Jim Commins, that the Honorarium be \$12,000 plus expenses. Carried.

Honorarium for the Assistant Secretary/Marketing Officer: Moved Ross Brown, seconded Clive Hodge, that the Honorarium for the Assistant Secretary/Marketing Officer be \$2,000 plus expenses. Carried.

Moved Doug Treasure, seconded Clive Hodge that the meeting be adjourned. Carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.45 pm, and resumed at 1.20 pm.

## **ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS**

The following Officer Bearers were elected for the year 1990/1991:

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

Senior Vice President: Mr H. Ryder, nominated by J. Commins. Elected.

2nd Vice President: Mr G. Connley, nominated by D. Treasure. Declined.

Mr David Treasure, nominated by Mr G. Connley. Elected.

3rd Vice President: Moved Doug Treasure, seconded Ross Brown that the position of 3rd Vice President be abolished. Carried.

Executive Officer: Mr G. Stoney, nominated by Doug Treasure. Elected.

Marketing Officer: Mrs A. Whittam, nominated by Clive Hodge. Elected.

Special Projects Officer: Mr J. Commins, nominated by G. Stoney. Elected.

Secretary/Treasurer: Mrs S. Silvers, nominated by Mr Don Kneebone. Elected.

Assistant Secretary: Mrs A. Whittam, nominated by Mr G. Connley. Elected.

Auditor: Mr Bill Crump, nominated by Mr K. Whittam. Elected. Moved G. Stoney, seconded C. Hodge, that Mr Crump be thanked for his work during the last year. Carried.

The Chairman vacated the Chair to Mr G. Stoney for the election of the Alpine Advisory Committee representative and the Chairman.

AAC representative: Ian Roper, nominated by J. Commins. Elected.

Regarding the position of Chairman, Doug Treasure reported that he had found the position to be of assistance to him.

Mr Alan Brewer, nominated by David Treasure, was elected Chairman of the Association.

Mr Brewer resumed the Chair and introduced Mr Roger Oxley to the Meeting. Mr Oxley is a

Rangeland Consultant, formerly with the CSIRO and has been consulted by the Association on the scientific aspects of grazing on the Bogong High Plains and effects of the cessation of grazing in the Kosciusko National Park. In respect of the Bogong High Plains, Mr Oxley believes that the vegetation and grasslands are in equilibrium. He notes that changes do occur, that they are based on changes in climate in a cyclical basis, and cannot be blamed on grazing. He spoke generally about his work, and answered questions put to him by members.

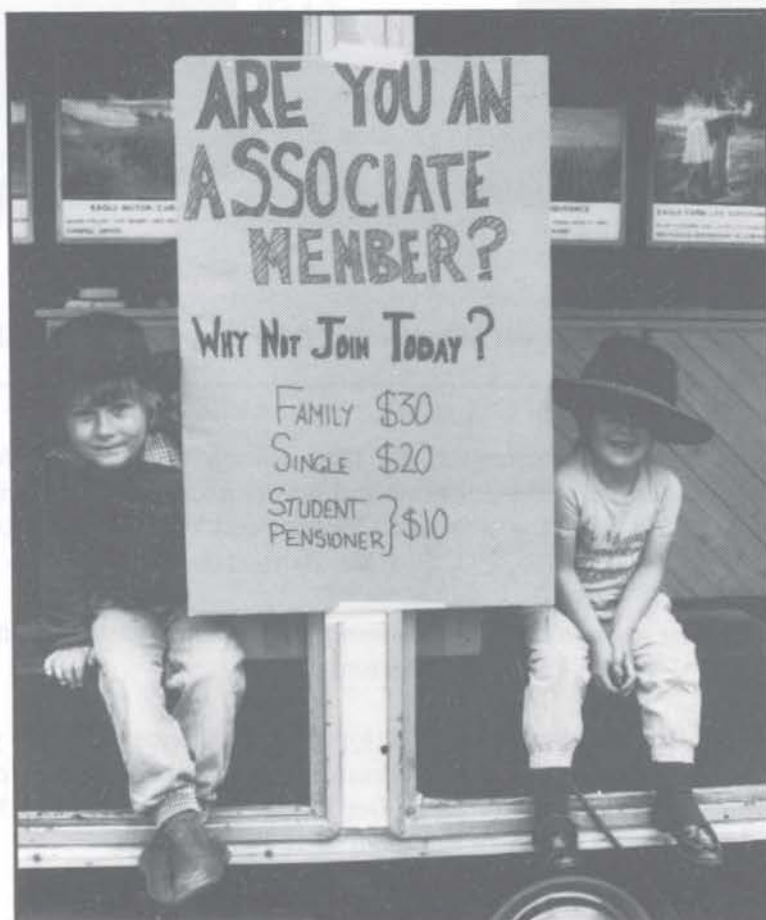
## OTHER BUSINESS

In respect of the Scientific Committee Mr Stoney stated that it would remain in force and ready to move at any time if necessary.

The subject of the next Public Land Council move on Wilderness was discussed, and plans for a public education on the issue of Wilderness were outlined. Moved J. Commins, seconded David Treasure, that the MCAV continue its involvement with the Public Land Council. Carried.

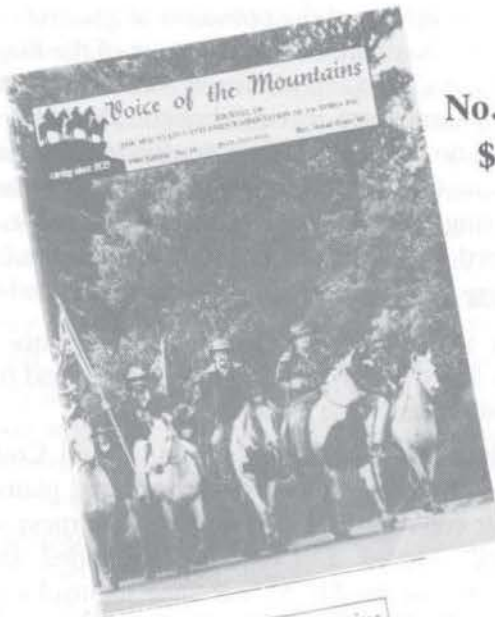
Don Kneebone said that there was a discrepancy in the honorarium for the Assistant Secretary/Marketing Officer in the figures and moved that it be noted for explanation. Seconded Ross Brown. Carried.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 2.25 pm.





## BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE



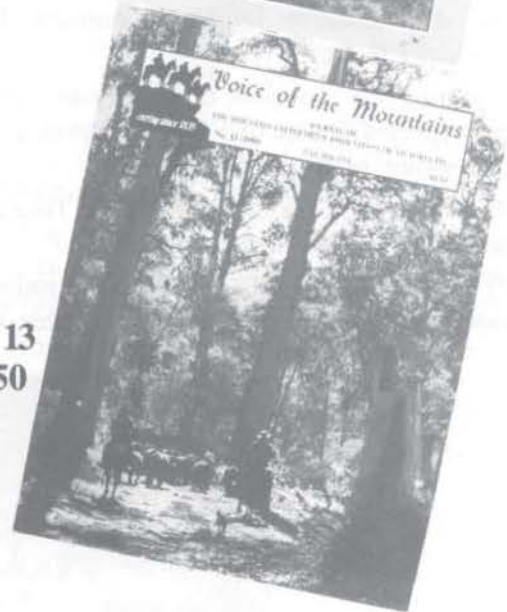
No. 10  
\$4.00



No. 12  
\$4.50



No. 11  
\$4.00



No. 13  
\$4.50

Available from: *Voice of the Mountains* P.O. Box 86 Bairnsdale 3875

Contributions are always welcome for the next edition of *Voice of the Mountains*. Photographs, either black and white or colour, and historical or topical articles are especially sought. New advertisers are also welcome. Please send contributions to *Voice of the Mountains*, P.O. Box 86, Bairnsdale 3875.

*Voice of the Mountains* is grateful for the assistance of Rhonda Treasure during the collating of the previous issue.

We are also grateful to the following people for their assistance with this year's edition: Julie Marland, B. Commins and Rhonda Treasure (photographs), Ross Noble and Ailsa Barraclough. *Voice* would not make it to the Get Together if it were not for the competency and support of the team at E-Gee Printers.

