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# Voice of the Mountains

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

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Editorial Committee: Linda Barraclough, Debra Squires and Sue Silvers

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FRONT COVER: Wonnangatta Station homestead, from a hand-coloured photograph by Hazel Merlo, courtesy Cath Noble, overprinted on a view of Wonnangatta Valley, 1994, by Phil Graham.

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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*I love a sunburnt country  
A land of sweeping plains,  
Of rugged mountain ranges  
Of droughts and flooding rains.*

So runs Dorothea McKellar's poem, 'My Country'.

In the face of man's small victories, the land itself imposes the limitations which dictate the human pattern, moulds the character of its people and influences their way of life.

Drought, bad seasons, frost, vermin, bushfire, markets, tariff barrier, slumps and lately beef contamination in export sales, have and will continue to feature prominently in the lives of Mountain Cattlemen and farmers generally.

Innate in us all is a sense of the rights of individuals and the precept that every man and woman is entitled to a 'fair go'. Just as we faced floods in the North East last year, now the frightening fear of drought and subsequent bushfire has again shown its ugly face over a large part of our great country. Mateship and support for our fellow cattlemen and farmers has been a long tradition. We hope that part of the proceeds from the auction of farming merchandise conducted during the 1995 Get-Together will assist drought-affected farming families.

Bringing the tradition of mateship and sharing we experience in the bush to the city is always a pleasure. Mountain Cattlemen were part of the 'Talk to the Animals' expo held in Melbourne last October, and we enjoyed the opportunity to speak to our city cousins, to explain our heritage, and to defend our rights. Thanks to all who helped in any way. You did us proud.

Thanks also to the Central Council for their support and guidance over the past year, during which much has been achieved.

No organisation prospers without its backbone of willing workers and supporters. Thanks to our Associate Members, who have worked so tirelessly in many capacities. Your efforts have not gone unnoticed.

My good wishes to you all for 1995.

*Mary Goldsworthy*

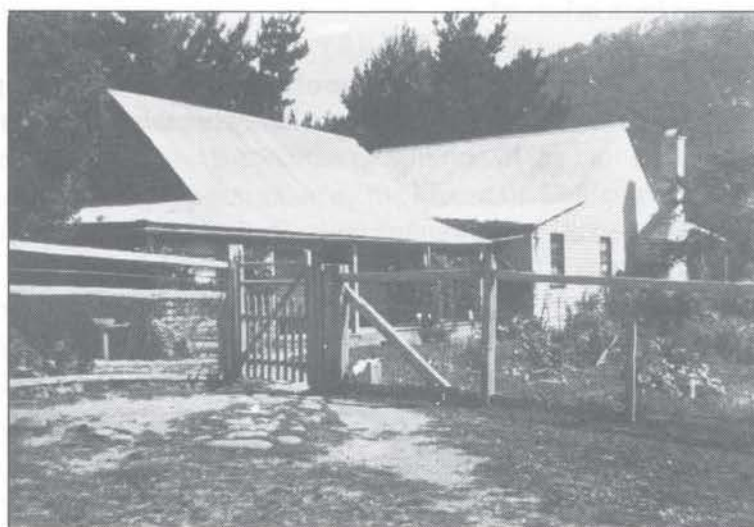
# Wonnangatta Station

For over 120 years Wonnangatta Station was an important part of the high country cattle grazing industry, until its purchase in 1988 for incorporation in the Alpine National Park.

Since that time, the cessation of grazing has led to a degeneration of Wonnangatta to the extent that it is now a major fire hazard.

The Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria believes that grazing should be resumed in Wonnangatta as a matter of urgency as:

- Its removal was in no way supported by scientific evidence.
- Its return would be the most efficient and effective way of protecting a valuable state asset and the visitors to it.
- The return of grazing is overwhelmingly supported by the local community and the majority of the recreational users of the area.
- The history of Wonnangatta is primarily a grazing history, and it is therefore important that grazing be reinstated so that the property continues to be maintained in keeping with that history.



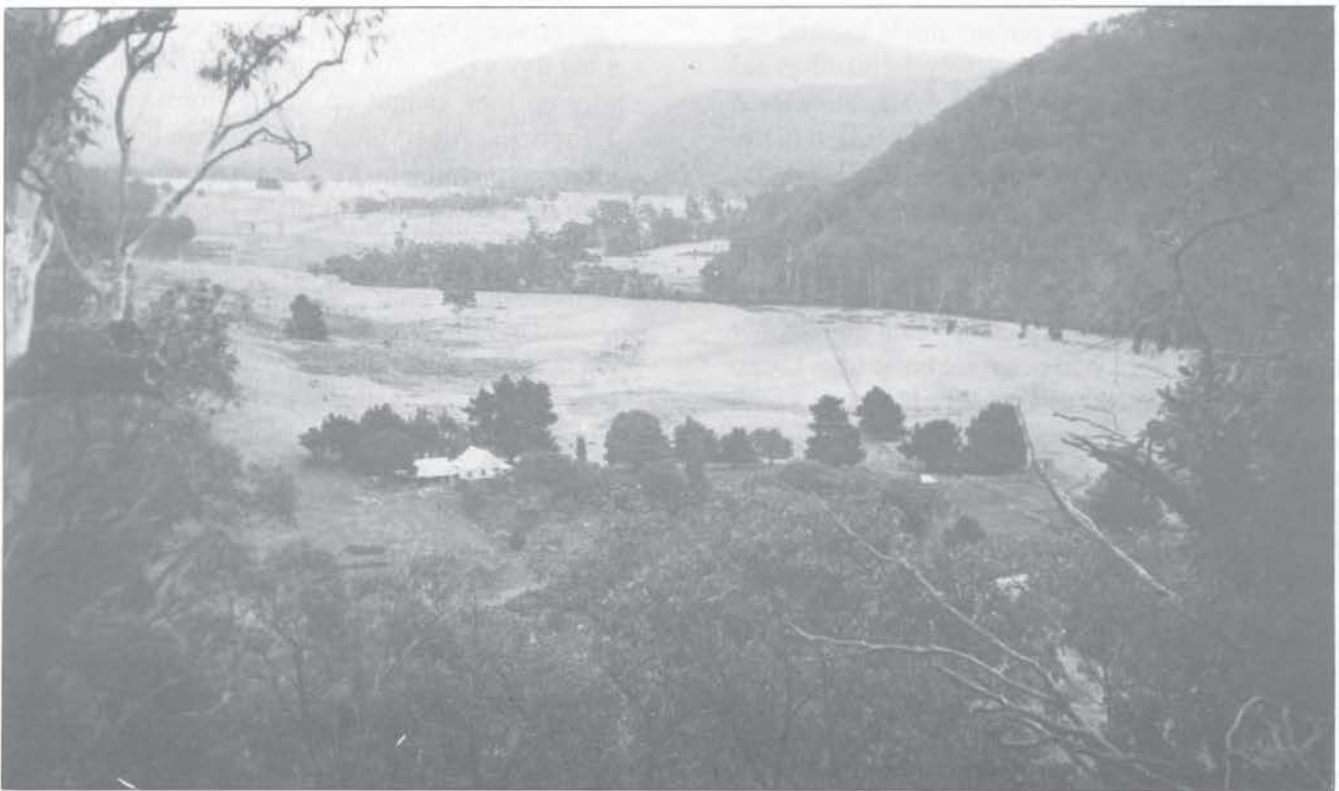
Wonnangatta Station in 1914

## Wonnangatta - A Family and a Funeral

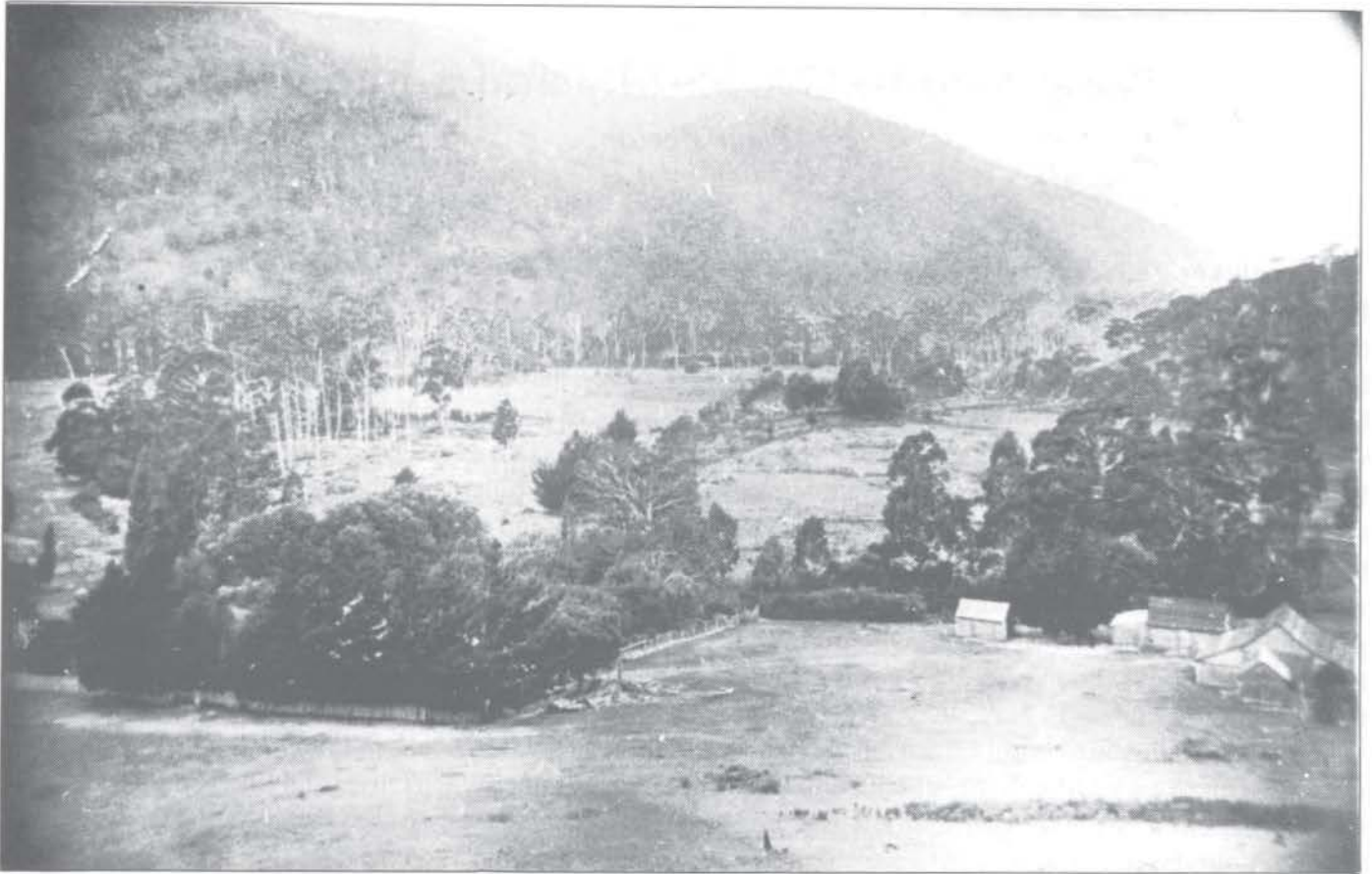
*Vince Phelan*

I only knew three or four of the Bryce family, for they had sold Wonnangatta before my time but old Mr Bryce, he was an engineer at a mine on the Dargo plains for a number of years. And then he bought, I think he bought a share off Oliver Smith, who lived next door to the Phelans in later years. He was quite a wild American, I think. He'd left a wife and family and came out to the gold rush and then he took up with Ellen Hayes. She came here with her husband and three children, two boys and a girl, and she left him and went with Oliver Smith they had three boys. Soon after they got together they took up a claim, I think, they were more interested in mining then, about fifteen miles above Dargo at a place called Mathieson's Flat. I doubt if they had any children of their own then but they left the three little Hayes children at Mathieson's Flat and came down to Dargo. They were both quite fond of whisky, and they stayed at Connolly's Inn longer than they expected to, a day or so, and when they went back the little girl was missing and was never heard of after. Some of the old-timers, I believe,

considered that her natural father came and disappeared with her, for he wasn't heard of after. One of the boys, the second boy, he and his brother, when they got on to Wonnangatta, to fill in a Sunday one of the things they'd do, Harry Smith told me, that was Oliver's stepson, they'd vault over logs with vaulting poles and the pole broke with Jim, his brother and went into his chest. He was pretty ill up there, he said, but when he got a bit better he rode off to Bairnsdale to the doctor and they put him in hospital and he died of T.B. in the lungs. The historians today won't have that because there's no account of Jim's birth and they reckon that's a myth, but I got that from Harry himself who was very clear in the mind. When Oliver and Ellen Smith had three sons and the wife was expecting another child, and he rode from Wonnangatta down to where Nellie Gibbs lived later, it's about thirty miles, to pick up a mid-wife. He brought a horse with him, and on the way up, it's a very steep climb out of the Wonnangatta River or the Crooked, to what they used to call, or still do call the Wombat Spur, and



A 1930s view of Wonnangatta Station Homestead and the flats upstream.



View of Wonnangatta, approx. 1900, across the homestead (obscured by trees) and sheds, to the flats downstream.

one of the horses knocked up and Oliver and the midwife rode the one horse in to Wonnangatta and there Mrs Smith delivered twins and she died soon after the birth. And the historians today claim that the twins were stillborn but my uncle assured me that Mrs Bryce told him what a wonderful effort old Oliver put up to try and save his twins. They lived about a week and they were the first buried in the Wonnangatta Station cemetery. Soon after her death, they introduced cattle from New South with 'pleura' and Oliver got so fed up that he sold out to Bryce and Bryce carried on then.

I can remember my uncle often quoting Mr Bryce packing a colonial oven on a horse from Dargo to Wonnangatta, sixty miles and he balanced it with a broken wheel off a battery, which was a terrific weight. But the horse, once the horse delivered the stove, he wasn't fit for anything else after that. But it was an amazing thing all the same, to do that.

The Bryce family carried on then till about 1914. Mr Bryce died in Lindenow, that is, Iguana Creek, but he's buried in the Lindenow Cemetery. Mrs Bryce lived on at Wonnangatta, she wouldn't leave because two of her daughters had died and were buried there. They reckoned they didn't know at the time, but years after they felt sure that she had died of the appendicitis. But Mrs Bryce wouldn't

leave because she wanted to be buried with her daughters and there was no road into Wonnangatta Station, it was either ride in or walk. So they kept the Station and sold it soon after she died. My uncle rode up to the funeral, from Dargo, that's sixty miles, a big day's ride, with the local policeman. On the way up they caught up to the storekeeper from Talbotville, Albert Stout. He had two horses and a little trolley going up the steep spur, four mile pull, with the sawn timber to make the coffin for Mrs Bryce and her sons had to make the coffin when he got there with the timber, to bury her.

They didn't have a minister at the funeral, but the man that took them up, Albert Stout, he was a lay preacher, a very sincere and a very religious man and he read the Burial Service. One fellow has written a book on Wonnangatta and he describes everybody that was there at the funeral, said the service was read by the policeman but that's not right. He had his facts fairly right, there wasn't that many rode up to the funeral.

*Transcribed and edited from a taped interview between Vince Phelan and Judith Hosier, from the Stockman's Hall of Fame and Outback Heritage Centre, Longreach, Queensland.*

# Allen Brothers, the Alexandra Syndicate and Wonnangatta Station

*Dr Brian Lloyd*

*The story that follows is an edited version of the final chapter of Tales of the Ten Mile: Ballybeg to the Bush, to be published later this year. In it he tells of the life and times of his great-grandmother, Mrs Mary Allen of Ten Mile.*

## Allen Brothers

When old Tom Allen, the pioneer of the Ten Mile on the Upper Goulburn, died in November 1904, he left an estate said to be worth about £100,000. George, the eldest son, died at his Pine Grove property, near Darlingford, in 1905 at the age of 40. Ted Allen was then the oldest of the five surviving sons, but he was set in his ways and not at all interested in assuming the leadership of the Allen enterprise. When his father died he was aged 38, living at Knockwood and quite content to be the outdoors man of the family, mustering and droving cattle. He showed no interest in marriage.

Ted had a fine reputation throughout the ranges for assessing the dressed weight of a beast while it was still on the hoof, and his judgment was often accepted as the basis for payment by a butcher to whom he sold cattle. The Allens' beasts were branded TA. Some of the locals, no doubt jealous of their success, used to say it stood for 'Take All'. Their spreading empire was not always popular in some quarters, but often they bought a property when it came on the market simply to ensure that it would remain occupied.

In 1905 the five Allen sons were registered as the owners of Ten Mile House. Jack was thirty then, and he was content to manage the various activities at Ten Mile, and to take his father's place as Postmaster and licensee of the hotel. It was young Tom (T.H.) who filled his father's shoes as the public head of the family. He became President of the Shire of Howqua in 1905 at the age of 29. Despite his rather morose appearance at times, Tom was a leader and his brothers accepted that, often referring to him as 'the skipper'.

With Tom at the helm, the Allens' business interests expanded during the Federation decades.

They had a butchers shop at Gaffneys Creek and another at Jamieson managed by Fred Hoare, an interest in the Carriers Arms Hotel at Howqua, where Mrs Allen's sister Bridget and her husband Tom Barnett remained.

They also had extensive leases for grazing. At various times in the Federation decades they had leases at The Springs and St Clair on the Yarra Track, and various lots of land on the Big River. When Timothy Kelly died, they took over the hotel and general store at Darlingford in 1908 on a lease for £375 a year, and also leased Kelly's lands at Darlingford and up the Big River at Enochs Point.

With the construction of the Eildon Weir at the junction of the Goulburn and Delatite Rivers in 1915, Tom Allen decided to move to Darlingford to take advantage of the increased trading opportunities likely to develop. Soon afterwards he built the store, butchery and post office at Eildon Weir, an enterprise that was prosperous during the construction days. The Eildon Store was managed by a young returned soldier, Ted Ryan, who married one of the Allen grand daughters.

Tom became a member of the Alexandra Council in 1918. It was clear that by this time the focus of the Allen Brothers had moved from the Ten Mile and Knockwood, and that the best opportunities were in the Goulburn valley at Thornton and Eildon Weir. In 1918 Ted Allen moved from Knockwood to Pine Grove and he put a manager in at the Golden Age Hotel.

## Wonnangatta

About 1918, shortly after the murders of Barclay and Bamford, Allen Brothers took over Wonnangatta Station. The acquisition provided about 1500 acres of freehold and some 88,000 acres of snow leases, and also brought in 150 head of wild horses and a large number of unbranded cattle. This added to the cattle grazing capacity at Howquadale, then held by the Gamble family, and the Allens' 3000 acre Bryant property near Delatite Station. Ern Allen had married a grand daughter of John Cole



Matthews, who took up Howquadale in 1866. Matthews' daughter Avis, a keen horsewoman, married Andrew Gamble from Colac, and this family had Howquadale after the old man's death in 1912. Ern Allen's wife Avis was their daughter.

Bill Hearn managed Wonnangatta for the Allens, and the cattle had to be driven in and out over narrow pack tracks through the Howqua River Valley. The idea of these acquisitions was to provide beef to the construction force on the Eildon Weir. The cattle were grazed in the Wonnangatta valley, and brought down to Howquadale and Bryants before being taken on to Eildon and Thornton.

The Allens' Darlingford hotel, store and butchery were abandoned in 1921 as they were submerged by Lake Eildon, and the store at Eildon Weir was destroyed by fire about the same time. Then at Thornton Allen Brothers acquired the Rubicon Hotel from Henry Baker, the general store from Carters, the bakery and a 27 acre property known as Wightmans at Thornton. Tom Allen moved to Thornton and Ted Ryan took over the management of the store there for the firm. After a time managing the Victoria Park leased property at Berrigan, Ern Allen moved to Thornton for a short time to manage the Rubicon Hotel.

The Gambles sold Howquadale station to Captain Ogilvie in 1921, then the Allens purchased it in 1924 and held it until 1929, when it was taken up by Thomas Stephenson and his brother-in-law Hutton, families with Kyneton and Mildura connections. The property changed hands again in 1933.

## The Alexandra Syndicate

Jack and Ted Allen appear to have pulled out of the firm in the late 1920s, and Wonnangatta Station was taken up by the Alexandra syndicate, comprising Tom and Ern Allen, with Jack Hoban and Sir Reginald Barnwall of Thornton and Jack Rennie, who had a fine farming property at Acheron and was married to Margaret Allen. The syndicate appointed Bob Elliott from Alexandra to manage the station with the help of his sons Keith and Ivan and a man named Clive Lester. They ran about 1,000 head of cattle on the leases and wintered them on the open grasslands of the Wonnangatta valley. They also kept about 40 horses on the property.

The first phase of the Eildon Weir construction was completed in 1925, but further remedial construction commenced in 1929, the year in which Allen Brothers sold the Rubicon Hotel and store. There were pressing debts to settle, and Sir Reginald Barnwall got the hotel for the bargain price of £4000. He is said to have sold it a few years later for many times that amount.

By this time Tom was ill, and he died in January 1933 aged 56 years. After the loss of the only active cattleman with Ern Allen's death in 1934, the syndicate could not continue and sold out to Alex Guy and his sons Jack and Arthur. After Tom Allen's death, Allen Brothers had to be wound up. Jack Allen died in December 1950 aged 76. Ted Allen, the drover and outdoor man of the Allen Brothers, suffered badly from his earlier privations in the bush, and in his old age he was badly crippled with arthritis. Nevertheless, he lived to the good age of 82 and died in Cheltenham in February 1949.

Mrs Avis Allen carried on for a time at pine Grove with Bob Elliott as manager, but that property was later leased out before it was sold to the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission in 1950.

The youngest of the Allen family, Maggie Rennie, died as a widow in Alexandra in 1963. Sid Allen, the youngest son, saw his Darlingford properties inundated twice by the rising waters of Lake Eildon. He died at Boorolite in 1965.

*Dr Brian Lloyd is also the editor and publisher of Off to Wonnangatta: Victorian Mountain Cattle Country in 1922 by Marge Allen. This tells of the author's ride from Mansfield to Wonnangatta in 1922, and is illustrated with photographs taken on the expedition. It is available from Dr Lloyd, Histec Publications, 13 Connor St, Brighton East 3187 at \$10 posted.*

## Wonnangatta - The Elliott Years

*Ivan Elliott*

My father was Robert James Elliott, known as Bob. He married Florence Fell and they had a dairy farm in the Goulburn River valley, between Molesworth and Alexandra, and had two sons and three daughters, I was somewhere in the middle when I was born in 1913.

We moved into Alexandra when I was about six, and we stayed there until we moved to Melbourne for employment and other reasons, about the beginning of the Depression. Things were pretty tough in Melbourne, so my father took on managing Wonnangatta Station and my brother and I went out there with him. I was sixteen and my brother Keith was eighteen and a half.

Wonnangatta Station was approximately eleven hundred acres of river flat, there was a leasehold covering 120,000 acres that took in all the high plains, Mount Howitt High Plains, Snowy High Plains, and you ran cattle on the high plains in the summer months because in the winter it was all under snow. The scenery was something to be believed, beautiful scenery up in that country.

There was no road access, all pack tracks. Supplies were all packed in by pack horse from Talbotville, about 25 miles downstream. There was a road up the Crooked River. They used to get supplies in to the store there. Albert Stout had the store and we'd go in perhaps every three weeks or month. Depending on, in the winter time there might be floods in the river and you couldn't get down. Very urgent when you ran out of tobacco.

The only people employed there were Dad, my brother and me, and there was another chap named Clive Lester. He stayed with us for the five years that we were there. We did all our own cooking. My father always had a roast dinner of a Sunday. There were sheep there for killing. We killed a sheep practically once a week.

Dad had done cattle work before, around Eildon, out the back of Eildon. He had cattle out in the mountains there.

The station had been owned by Phillips and Ritchie, but they sold out after the murders and the Allen brothers from around Eildon bought it. There



A group inside the Wonnangatta Station Homestead during the New Year period 1931-1932. It includes Bob Elliott (on the left), Clive Lester (possibly next to Bob Elliott) and Ivan and Keith Elliott (possibly on the extreme right). The other four members of the group were part of a party organised by the Molphys from Glenmaggie.

were four brothers and they had it for a year or two. Two of them pulled out so they formed the Alexandra syndicate. Bill Hearn was manager for the Allen brothers first. He was a big man, twenty-two stone, riding a horse up those mountains. They appointed my father after Bill Hearn.

They didn't come to visit often, only occasionally. There was only one or two of them that used to come out. Then they would stay for three or four weeks, I suppose, and would go out and work with us.

We would have been running about a thousand head on Wonnangatta in those days, with about five hundred breeders. They were mixed then, but they were changing over to Herefords. It was always the hardest part of the year to winter them, because you didn't have the winter country. You had to reserve the clear flats for the cows and calves and the rest you put out into the bush, wherever you could find a bit of grass. The high plains would carry five or six thousand head, no worries, during the summer but then of course, you couldn't use them in the winter. But that was the main problem, wintering your stock.

When the cattle were up top for the summer, we would ride up every two or three weeks to check them. We mustered in March, that took about two or three weeks, because they'd get down the sidelings and everything. We used to use salt a lot, whenever we went up, to try to encourage them to come to salt. There was a hut on Howitt Plains and a hut on Snowy Plains. We used the Howitt hut mostly. There was yards, there was a 500 acre paddock on the Howitt Plains and yards over in the paddock so you had a holding paddock for anything that had to be done. One time there blackleg broke out, we had to get things done in a hurry. My brother rode to Mansfield for some serum, non-stop, a straight eighty mile ride and back again. We were getting them all into the yards and sorting them out when he came back. We finished up losing about 16 vealers.

In those days the cattle sold were two and three year old bullocks. They were mostly sold at the end of the muster. They were taken in to Alexandra. That'd take you, say, over a week, because you only did about sixteen mile a day. Down the Howqua River and out on to the northern side of the Divide.

At mustering in the autumn you very seldom

got it done without getting snow and bleak winds howling across those plains. It's unbelievable how cold it can be. I can remember having some people from down Heyfield way, a young fella, he was howling with the cold, he was that cold he was howling. It's a marvellous thing, that. There could be howling winds on the plains and you drop down the side and it's just like going into an oven, the wind's going over your head.

The worst trips we had were mostly packing supplies in, we had some terrible trips. I can remember leaving Talbotville one morning with bright sunshine, we loaded up about six pack horses and headed off. We'd just hit the top of Mount Wombat and clouds come sailing over and in five minutes it was snowing. It snowed. You travelled twelve miles along the top of Wombat Range and it took us, I'd say, six to seven hours with a howling wind and snow driving in. We had snow all over us. We had lunch in our overcoat pockets and it was too cold to get our hands in to get it out. I think the whole trip took us about twelve hours. Normally you could do it in four.

We had about forty head of horses, we bred our own. There were a lot of brumbies on Wonnangatta. In the early days there was over 200 head running wild, but we caught most of them. They were trapped in trap yards and taken in to Alexandra and Indian Remount bought them. We drove them into Alexandra in mobs of eighty or a hundred. These horses at one time in Eildon Weir, the first Eildon Weir, there was two weirs built, they started to swim across the weir on us, but they turned back and came out again.

We held the horses in yards each night. That was a bit of a problem because they scared very easy. Same as cattle, you've got to start whistling long before you get near them, or talking. You don't get right up to them and start yelling out. They used to send people out from Alexandra to help, might have been seven or eight.

We broke some of them in to use them for riding horses. They were the best horses of the lot really in the bush, very sure-footed. They were a mixture. I suppose. They weren't real classy horses to look at, they'd be inbred, but you picked out a few that you liked and I'll guarantee that you could yell at those horses through the bush and they'd never miss a beat. You get a down-country horse and they're stumbling and falling.

Dad shod our horses as we needed them, all our hacks were always shod. We didn't break a lot of horses in, just as you needed them. There was a ring yard down at the main yards, a crush and everything was there.

We didn't leave the station area often. My mother and the girls lived in Melbourne. We'd go home for a couple of weeks, perhaps. I was there eighteen months before I went home, just for a bit of a break. We used to go to Talbotville and the mail used to run up the Crooked River and we'd get the mail bus to Stratford and the train from Stratford to Melbourne.

My mother and the youngest sister and a couple of other friends came up for a visit once. I remember going down to Talbotville to meet them. One rode behind me all the way with a pillow behind her bum. That wasn't my mother, she rode all right. They stopped about a week.

I spent a lot of time trapping in the winter months. In those days rabbits were in plague proportions and you had to be at them all the time

or they'd just take over. I used to set a hundred traps, mostly on the flats. That took up most of my day. By the time you went round your traps, gathered all the rabbits, reset all your traps, scun your rabbits, because there was no carcasses any good, those days, too far away. Go home and peg them all out. Then you did an evening round again. I didn't do a night round, but a late evening round. And you get forty traps on your back, I'll tell you, they're pretty heavy!

I pegged the skins out, and later sent them to Melbourne to Dalgety's or wherever. You did them up in packs of, say, eight. It took about eight to a pound, I think it was. You got very poor prices those days. I can remember sending two thousand skins in, in one lot and got seven pounds for them. And that was weeks and weeks of work. Of course they used to put it over you a bit too, I think. They had that many grades, it was unbelievable.

I did all the trapping. My brother Keith was fencing, and clearing pack tracks, where trees fall over them. They had to be cleared. You couldn't keep my father down. You'd get a bad winter's day



Horses at Wonnangatta during the 1930s or 1940s

and when the cows and calves were all in the paddocks, he prance up and down the passage and have a look up the valley, walk back and get his book. Ten minutes later he'd be walking up again and having a look and he'd finish up putting an old oilskin on and off he'd go.

It only snowed very occasionally at the homestead, but didn't lie though. It used to snow but it'd be gone in a day. With the cattle we didn't worry a lot about the ones in the bush. We kept pushing them away but they kept coming into the frontage all the time. Herefords were very good, they'd stop away back in the bush but a lot of the other breeds kept coming in on the frontage.

I didn't do much trapping in the summer months, it was mostly poisoning. There was an orchard at the homestead. When the apples were ready we chopped them up and free-fed them. We'd drag a trail with an old horse and log, like a V log with a spike in it just to drag a trail. Free-feed them for a couple of nights, then you put the strychnine in the next night and they'd be laying everywhere. It killed them pretty quickly.

The skins weren't much use. They didn't seem to like poisoned rabbits, don't know why. They mostly took the winter stuff. A lot of people lived on rabbits in those days. We didn't live on them but we'd have a feed occasionally. We grew our own vegetables. Dad used to do that. Any spare time he'd be down the garden.

The fruit was mostly apples and plums. There were quite a few walnut trees. I remember walnuts used to fall when you got a wet, windy night and I remember getting eighteen kerosene bucket-fulls under the walnut trees. I'd go down and pick 'em up. There wasn't much sale for them. I was going to be very smart, I was going to break them all up. I was looking in the Weekly Times where there was nearly double the price for shelled walnuts. Here's me, cracking these walnuts and filling up the old Swallows and Ariel biscuit tins. Worked out, I was losing money.

We had a little milking cow, a little Jersey. She was a really terrific milker. We used to run a calf on her, lock the calf up at night, only milk her of a morning. Got more milk than we could cope with. We used to set the milk to get scalded cream. You'd just warm it up, nearly bring it to the boil, pour it into the big white enamel dish that we had and you'd get cream an inch and a half thick on the top. We

used to make our own butter until we eventually got a little separator.

We baked all our own dampers. There were two camp ovens, one small one and one big one. That was nearly always a night job, after tea, mix up the dampers and put them on. They were really a scone, not the old-fashioned damper where you just put it near the coals. But no taste in it much. We used to make scones, make beautiful scones. Scone, blackberry jam and scalded cream.

There are people I remember. The Higgins used to come in. They had runs out on Bennison Plains. The Higgins and the Kellys, they used to come down to Wonnangatta after we finished mustering each year. Harry Smith lived down the valley, about twenty mile down. Then there was Albert Stout at the Tarraville store.

My father managed it from about 1927 to 1934 and then the place was sold again, to Alex Guy down Dargo way. He had two sons, Arthur and Jack

Looking back over my life, Wonnangatta always stands out. It was a real experience to be out there those years.

You never rode past anybody. It was an insult to ride past, you always called in when we used to come in for supplies. The kettle was always on the boil, a cup of tea and a yarn and off you'd go again.

Sometimes we'd go six months and wouldn't see a soul. The only people we used to see was odd people walking through, like the Melbourne Walking Club, or something like that. They'd come walking through. They'd stay at the homestead. We were glad to see them. It's a funny feeling, you know, when you do see somebody after months and months just seeing your own faces all the time. We welcomed the strangers with open arms.

*Transcribed, and edited to first person narrative from a taped interview between Ivan Elliott and Judith Hosier from the Stockman's Hall of Fame and Outback Heritage Centre, Longreach, Queensland.*

Ivan Elliott died on 27 February 1992, in his eightieth year. Ivan loved talking about Wonnangatta and he recalled his time there with great affection. His ashes, together with those of his brother Keith and his wife Daisy, were scattered at the place they loved most - Wonnangatta.

## Wonnangatta - The Guys

*Arthur Guy*



Arthur and Jack Guy (centre), at Wonnangatta Station with Ivan and Keith Elliott, probably in the early 1950s. Jack, requested to 'hop on a horse quickly for a photo', is sitting on a pack saddle, which accounts for the halter on his horse.

My father was Alex Guy, the son of Edward Remington Guy. He had the Moroka and T Tree runs, we were at Glenlee then. I was born there in 1906. My earliest memories are of taking a few head up, we didn't have a lot. We'd take a tent, that's all, and a few blankets and that. Pretty rough camps, some of them. We took corn beef, and spuds. Pop used to cook damper. We used to take enough bread to go up, and last us a few days. It wouldn't take us long to muster.

I started taking tourists out from the Melbourne Walking Club and the Melbourne Women's Walking Club, because my father did it once, got tired of it and handed it over to me. That's how I met my wife, Agnes Miller. There was twenty-five went in one group, I took it from St Bernard Hospice across the Barry Ranges, across to Wonnangatta. I did a lot of those things just to see the country myself, I was only young at the time. I'd take seven or eight packhorses, I nearly always

have someone with me to help to do the job. I didn't have to set up camp for them, all I had to do was to look after the horses, and that was enough. It would have been about 1930 I started up doing that. We finished up, I think, when the war broke out.

The Guys bought Wonnangatta in 1934. We were running it in conjunction with Glenlee, about 25 mile from Wonnangatta. We'd ride in in about seven or eight hours, we'd nearly always have a packhorse with us. We'd go up, and muster the plains, or muster Wonnangatta and take the cattle to the plains and that for the summer, and have to keep going up every now and then, the cattle'd come back to feed at Wonnangatta. We'd go back every now and again every fortnight or three weeks, and take the cattle back to the plains again. They were easy to drive back.

There were five main paddocks on Wonnangatta, Dave's, the New Paddock, the Pine Paddock, the Cow Paddock and the Creek Paddock.



Arthur Guy

We used to have the rabbits trapped in Wonnangatta. We had a good man on it, we had an expert, Harry Price. And this man was there for thirteen years, and I don't suppose he rode a horse five times all the time he was there. He had a little old push bike and did a wonderful job. He caught up to thirty thousand in a season with the traps.

I didn't work on building Guys hut. My brother did, and my uncle, Denny Connolly, and Harry Price. Harry Price built it, he did the most part of it. Denny Connolly was my uncle, and he was a great horseman. He rode buckjumpers in Melbourne at the Melbourne Show. He was a wonderful horseman and a great bushman. He worked for Henry Miller at Upper Maffra for years, and then, as soon as we bought Wonnangatta, he came back to us. He lived with us all the time we had Wonnangatta. They had the old horse, a couple of old horses, to pull the logs together, and that's about all. It had an iron roof, we packed the iron in, I helped to pack that in. It's easy enough to pack it, as long as you have a quiet enough horse. The horse soon gets used to it. You'd put on seven to ten sheets, iron's not very

heavy, it's only five foot iron or six foot iron. You'd put a bag of ferns on, or a bag of hay on underneath, to keep the iron away from the horse. It was quite easy, you'd load it on horizontal.

When you build a hut in the bush you want firewood and water, that's the main thing, we always reckoned, firewood and water. There was a creek right close there, and firewood behind us.

When we first went to Wonnangatta, there were a lot of herefords there, and the St John's wort was there, so we changed from the herefords over to the black polls, and then after a few years we went from the black polls to a black poll crossed with a hereford, they're the best cattle you can get.

We never had real brumbies there, but we had horses that you couldn't run in, horses that belonged to the station. When we went there, I think there was 40 horses there, they were running everywhere. They weren't really brumbies, they were branded horses, but you couldn't get them into the yard. But we got rid of them in the finish. We mustered them, and drove them down to Sale and sold them. I think they averaged somewhere about four pound a head. We brought one lot down, my brother and I, and paddocked them down at Heyfield for a little while. Then we sent them over to Sale, but they were no good, not saleable, no price for them.

We bought the land at Heyfield before we bought Wonnangatta. It really ran itself. Pop used to come down here and look after the cattle here, and drive them up to Crooked River and then on up to Wonnangatta. We'd buy cattle in Maffra or Bairnsdale and truck them down here and drive them up past Cobbanah to Crooked River.

*Transcribed and edited from a taped interview between Arthur Guy and Judith Hosier, from the Stockman's Hall of Fame and Outback Heritage Centre, Longreach, Queensland.*

## Working at Wonnangatta

*Alex Traill*

My first job was at Castleburn, with the Treasures. I went down to milk cows, feed dogs and look after the place down there with Mr and Mrs Treasure while Freda went away skiing. Then they wanted me to stay with them. I was about thirteen or fourteen. I stopped with them in the house. Mrs Treasure asked me a few questions, what I did, what time I got up and all that. I said, 'Oh, about seven o'clock' and she looked at me and said, 'Oh, do you get up that late?' she said. 'Listen', she said, 'Freda, when she's home, we used to hear her cantering down the driveway just as it was breaking day,' so I was put in a room and she was through the wall, sort of, and if I didn't get up before seven she'd be knocking on the wall at quarter to seven or half past six to let me know it was nearly time to get up.

Then I started working for Guys. That was about when I was fourteen and a half, or fifteen. How I got the job was another boy, Harold Websdale, that we reared, was working for Jack Guy.

He had the job and he went away to work down below, to Stockdale for Mac. Ross. The Guys asked me would I go down and work and I said, oh, yes, I'd go down and work. That's where I went and I was there for twenty years.

Jack and Arthur Guy would ride in to Wonnangatta, that was the only way. We'd go from Waterford to Crooked River and we'd pack salt in from there for the cattle and we'd take all our food and that, cooked stuff, stuff to cook such as corned beef, or Arthur and Jack's sister and them cooked corned beef and you'd have that. When that run out well, you just had the other in the safe up there and cooked that when you run out of meat.

It took a day from Waterford to Crooked River and then a day from Crooked River into Wonnangatta Station. There were thirteen rooms in the homestead and all the furniture in it was made by an old ship's captain what was friends of Bryces. He made all the furniture out of blackwood up at Wonnangatta. The furniture that was there was really



Arthur Guy loading packhorses at Wonnangatta on one of his early trips as a tourist guide. Blindfolding a young horse with a bag during the loading was a common practice.



beautiful furniture, wardrobes, tables and things like that.

There was only Harry Price when I started working for Guys, in the big old homestead. He used to do grubbing briars, trapping dingoes and fencing and things like that. He was a real good man, a man who could put his hand to anything. Jack Guy and Denny Connolly, found him. He'd come to Grant on a motor bike and he went around prospecting and looking for gold, he was there for a while and he just got into Wonnangatta, walked into Wonnangatta and they found him there. All his clothing was made out of animal skins and that. And they took him up there and gave him food, he was light on for food or lived on what he could catch and trap. They took him up there and he was there for thirteen years, I think, fencing and building yards and things like that. And he sort of looked after everything. We'd go up every now and again, pack stuff in and have a look around the cattle, salt the cattle and he'd go up for the muster.

He was all alone there. Every month, when we went in, we'd take him fresh food. That's why we used to go in. He was very quiet and didn't mix much. He was terrified of snakes and poison, and as far as a man or person goes, he was a real gentleman. He used to poke around Wonnangatta, and ride his bike to trap rabbits from one end to the other. You wouldn't see him, he'd be up and he'd be gone at daylight and you wouldn't see him until dark, at night. But if you wanted help with cattle or anything he'd always come and give you a hand but it would be under sufferance. He'd sooner get out and go his own way. I did build a couple of swing-bridges with him and that. He was very good to work with. Harry also set up a hydro-electric scheme on Conglomerate Creek to charge the batteries for his wireless. Before that Arthur and Jack packed batteries in for it, but they didn't think much of the acid being spilt in the saddle bags. Harry loved to get the newspapers they packed in for him, too.

Of a night, he used to come and have a talk for a while but he never used to say very much. He was very quiet and he never used to talk a great deal. He'd be into his own room, and do his own little diary and that, he used to put down everything that he did, sort of, grubbed briars or blackberries or dingoes, what he got. He had it all written down in a book, how many rabbits he'd got, how many briars he'd grubbed out.

He used to read quite a bit. He was a good mechanic, good all round, he could put his hand to anything really and with Wonnangatta, I think, Guys, finding him there or him arriving there, was the best thing that could have ever happened, for both of them, really. Harry was satisfied there and liked it there and he did the work there well. I reckon myself, it was very, very good that they did get him and he kept an eye on everything there.

When he left it was to go to Yarra Junction growing potatoes with his brother. He'd been there thirteen years and he had a pretty lonely time and I think he wanted to get away with some of his family. He also had sisters too, living in the same area. He'd only come out about once or twice a year, he'd ride his push-bike out from Wonnangatta, always for Christmas. He came back after Wally Gibbs died. Nellie Gibbs, Arthur and Jack's sister at Crooked River, wrote and asked Harry would he come back and manage the place there which he did. That's where he was up until he died.

During the summer months, just before the summer you'd brand the calves and get everything ready and any cattle that was to be sold out, speyed or dehorned, we'd do it then. Then we'd put them out on the runs, up on Howitt and Snowy Plains, you'd take em up there about November. All the dry ones went to Bryces' Plain or Snowy Plain and all the cows and calves went to Howitt Plain. The Guys used to run about a thousand head. They had about three hundred-odd breeders and they used to sell anything from 170 to 200 head or two or three year olds every autumn at Heyfield. We'd go up there and pick out, mustering the best.

About every month or so, during the summer, you'd ride up and salt them, pack a load of salt on the pack horse, take it and put it out in the places where they salted them. You'd call them and they'd come to you, that kept the cattle quiet.

The muster was about March. We'd go up then to muster, to get them in to take them to Heyfield for the sale. There'd be a whole heap of men over Bennison end, Chesters, Gells, Cummings, Higgins and they'd muster over that end. Guys would muster their own end and a few of Guys' would stray over their way and a few of theirs would stray our way and we'd pick a day to meet and we'd bring them all to what we called the Big Plain. Then we'd cut out the cattle to go both ways, bring them back and they'd take theirs back. There'd be about twelve or fourteen men there all together, during the mustering.



Harry Price, photographed on one of the trips he made out of Wonnangatta several times a year on his bicycle.

We'd end up with anything up to a hundred on the Big Plain, they'd muster over Bennison end and they'd take the cattle in and cut out in their yard and then any of Guys' left they'd keep separate and bring 'em back over and muster on the way and we'd muster on the way to them, we'd just have to cut ours out.

We'd also go to Howitt and muster all the big calves in ready to wean. And you'd have them in the paddock at Howitt, they had a paddock fenced in at Howitt, and soon as ever we got the sellers down to Heyfield, we'd come back and go straight back and wean the calves. What we'd do with the cows and calves to be weaned, we'd take them from Howitt to Snowy, where the yard was. Next morning we'd draft them and then we'd take all the calves to Wonnangatta. We had the yard down there and we'd watch them three days, four days, poke around with them until they settled down and then the job was over.

We'd leave the cows at Snowy, they always used to take some to Heyfield and Maffra. We'd leave them in the paddock on Snowy and as soon as it come towards winter we'd go back and take them down to Heyfield and just leave the rails open and soon as it snowed all the other cattle that was left

on top would come off themselves back down to Wonnangatta.

During the winter we worked down around Waterford, fencing and slashing and tractor work, clearing, picking up, crutching sheep and sheep work. They also had sheep, so there was always plenty to do, never a dull moment. And there were visits to Wonnangatta to check cattle.

When the homestead was burnt down, we were on our way up to Wonnangatta to take cattle down to Heyfield for the winter. When we arrived at Wonnangatta, all that was there was hot ashes. It was still smoking, smouldering and it was cold and all we had was food. We had no sleeping bags, no nothing because we always slept at Wonnangatta. And we went down into the old blacksmith's shop by the yard and we camped in there and lit a fire and we sat by that all that night and afterwards, Arthur, he turned round and come back. Next morning he rode straight back out to Crooked River to report it and Jack and I went on up to Snowy Plains, lit a fire in the hut there and we slept on the floor with a couple of horse rugs that night, and cut the cattle out. The next night we went from there over to Higgins' hut, we got a couple of Wogga rugs out of Jack Higgins' hut which was very much appreciated

and we took them all the way to Heyfield with us with the cattle.

Then the hut had to be built at Wonnangatta. We got a builder from Bairnsdale, a relation of Guys, a fella by the name of George Annand. He came with us and there was Jack, Arthur, and myself and the builder. We went to Wonnangatta from Crooked River and we packed iron from Crooked River. Five foot lengths of iron on a pack horse for the roof and we used a lot of the iron from the old homestead that wasn't burnt too bad. So we set sail in there to build and we had an old draught horse in there and I pulled all the posts with that draught horse, for the hut that's built there now. And the timber also was pulled with the draught horse and the chimney was built. George Annand, myself, Jack and Arthur, we all had a hand in doing it, the whole lot of it, but the old draught horse that was in there did a real good job, pulling all the posts and everything. She pulled her heart out. But to pack iron in, was a very big job, five foot lengths were packed in there and all the other material that we needed also was packed in. With the house burned down, you had to have somewhere that you could go to keep dry because a tent, it's alright in fine weather, but not too good in the wet. It took about a week to build the hut.

Snow up on the plains could be a problem. There was one year they had very heavy snow. We rode up from Waterford to Wonnangatta and the horses weren't down at Wonnangatta when we got there. So we tried to go up to Howitt to see where they were, and we couldn't get to it, there was too much snow. There was only one horse got through, come all and she lived and all the others were found the following spring when we went in, under the hut at Howitt, all in a heap, dead, where they'd been trying to get home.

With the cattle, only very odd ones were snowed in because once it started to snow the cattle would always be on the move. They'd always get down to the lower country and horses would too, but it must have snowed very heavy and beat them and that's how they come to get trapped. They were trying to get off but they couldn't. Cattle seem to have more sense or more something about the weather, when it snows they're on the move straight away.

All the horses we were using were bred on the place. They had their own stallion. I used to break in all their horses there, when we were up there.

They never bought a horse, only a stallion now and again. They used to breed all their own, and had some good ones too.

The Guys had a lot of pack horses. Arthur Guy, he used to pack the food for bushwalkers, from Crooked River to Wonnangatta, up Howitt and round, years ago, and that's how Arthur met his wife, Agnes. She was one of the Melbourne bushwalkers. They were a good bunch, if they'd come to your hut or house, Wonnangatta, wherever they went, they'd always leave food. They were different to a lot of others that used to come. They'd burn all your billies and take all your food and there'd be nothing when you got there. But the Melbourne Bushwalkers you've got to take your hat off to 'em. They were really good. Arthur used to do quite a few trips with tourists, they used to hire him with the horses and that to carry their gear. But that was before my time.

There was always someone walking through the bush. You'd meet them up on the plains, up on Howitt or Snowy, sometimes you'd wonder how they'd find their way about because you'd ask them where they're going, and they'd say they were going such-and-such place, but they are going in the opposite direction. Anyhow they found their way, we used to help quite a few. You'd find them lost and put them on the right track, then they'd usually find their way out or turn up somewhere. A lot of them used to go wrong. I suppose we all do that, don't we, get lost at different times.

Then the four-wheel drives started to come in. There was a road in from the north-east before there was one from Crooked River to Wonnangatta and once they come in you couldn't leave anything about where you could before. Everything and anything, before the four-wheel-drives came, was there when you went back, but after the four-wheel-drives started to come in, well, everything disappeared. Anything and everything.

*Transcribed and edited from a taped interview between Alex Traill and Judith Hosier, from the Stockman's Hall of Fame and Outback Heritage Centre, Longreach, Queensland.*

## Books and Articles about Wonnangatta

Wonnangatta Station has been the subject of so many books and articles that one could be excused for being confused. The bibliography that follows lists a good proportion of the major works. A number, not being widely available, are held at the Centre for Gippsland Studies, Monash Gippsland, and this is indicated in the bibliography as [CGS].

Allen, Mary Margaret. 'Off to Wonnangatta' in *Mansfield Historical Society's Magazine* no.1, pages 9-16, Nov 1983.  
Account of a trip by horseback in 1922, up the Howqua Valley and over Mount Howitt to the Wonnangatta Valley. Describes scenery, camping and working cattle [CGS]

Allen, Marge. *Off to Wonnangatta: Victorian Mountain cattle Country in 1922*. Melb: Histec Publications, 1992. 26 pages: ill., maps. ISBN 9587705 3 0  
A similar account to that above, with annotations by Brian Lloyd and illustrated by photographs taken on the trip.

Barraclough, Linda. 'The Sale of Wonnangatta Station' in *Voice of the Mountains* No.12 (1989) pp 16-21.  
Discussion about sale of Wonnangatta Station to the Victorian Government by the Gilder family.

Bath, J.G. 'The Wonnangatta Valley' in *Journal of Agriculture* (Victoria) May 1957 pages 273-280, 294.  
An account of the early settlement of the Wonnangatta valley, particularly the Bryce family. This valley and the Buffalo River Valley are assessed for suitability for agriculture and the possibility of settlement. [CGS] This article continued in a subsequent issue.

Blake, Jim. 'Harry Smith leaves his valley' in *Melbourne Walker* vol.18 pages 6-9, 1947, ill.  
Discusses the life of Harry Smith and the Wonnangatta murders. [CGS]

Brennan, Niall. 'Historical aspects of the Wonnangatta Valley' in *Victorian Historical Magazine* vol.22 no.2 pages 67-84, Sept 1947.  
Journal article. [CGS]

Brennan, Niall. *Tales from the Australian Mountains*. Adelaide: Rigby, 1979. 143 pages. ISBN 0 7270 1113 8.  
Includes a chapter on Wonnangatta.

Brennan, Niall. *Man upon his Mountain: Murders at the Wonnangatta Station*. Morwell, Vic: Alella Books, 1984. 200 pages, ill., map, ISBN 0959987967.  
Novel based on the Wonnangatta murders.

Cabena, Peter. Land use change in the Upper Wonnangatta Valley. 1975. 71 pages. ill., maps, appendices, bibliog. Thesis for Bachelor of Arts (Honours) Dept. of Geography, University of Melbourne. [CGS]

Examination of changes in land use in the Upper Wonnangatta Valley, from cattle grazing to logging and the growth of recreational use. Conflicts between the uses and their environmental impact are discussed.

Corrigan, F.M. Country Roads Board: Report by F.M. Corrigan, Deputy Chairman, on Buffalo-Wonnangatta Exploration Survey 8th-11th March, 1955. 42 pages, processed.

Detailed report and recommendations following tour of inspection from Catherine Station to Crooked River.

Elliott, Ivan. Interview between Ivan Elliott and Judith Hosier. 1991. [CGS]

Transcript of an interview between Ivan Elliott, who worked for the Alexandra syndicate at Wonnangatta, where his father was manager, and Judith Hosier from the Stockman's Hall of Fame.

Grant, Clyde. 'Wanderings on the Wonnangatta; seeking our most inaccessible mountain' in *Melbourne Walker* vol.26 pages 19-26, 1955.

An account of a walk up the Wonnangatta River and an ascent of Snowy Bluff.

Guy, Arthur. Interview between Arthur Guy and Judith Hosier. 1991. 17 pages. [CGS]

Transcript of an interview between Arthur Guy, a co-owner of Wonnangatta, and Judith Hosier from the Stockman's Hall of Fame.

Johnson, Dick. 'Wonnangatta Station' in *Park Watch* June 1988 pages 26-27. Ill [CGS]

Brief account of the geology and history of Wonnangatta Station, including its purchase by the Government in 1988.

Mortimer, Wallace Malcolm. *The History of Wonnangatta Station*. Melbourne: Spectrum, 1981. 142 pages, ill., maps. ISBN 0909837902.

Detailed history of Wonnangatta station, with almost all emphasis being on the pre 1920 era.

Noble, Cath. 'The Guys of Crooked River' in *Voice of the Mountains* no.11 (1988) pp 15-17.

History of the Guy family, who owned Wonnangatta Station from 1934 to 1970.

Noble, Cath. *The Guy Family*. Valencia Creek, Vic: the author, 1986.

Family Tree of the Guy Family.

Phelan, Vince. Interview between Vince Phelan and Judith Hosier. 1991. 35 pages. [CGS]

Transcript of an interview with Vince Phelan, who discusses, among other things, the Bryce family at Wonnangatta, and Judith Hosier from the Stockman's Hall of Fame.

Ricketts, John J. *Victoria's Wonnangatta Murders*. Melb: the author, 1993. 147 pages, ill, ISBN 0 646 14829 X

A detailed examination of the Barclay family history and the investigation of the Wonnangatta murders.

Stephenson, Harry. *Cattlemen and Huts of the High Plains*. Armadale, Vic: Graphic Books, 1980.

Several chapters on Wonnangatta, the Bryce and Guy families and Wonnangatta are included.

Stoney, Chris. *The Howqua Hills story*. Mansfield, Vic: the author, 1993 (2nd edn). 116 pages: ill., maps, bibliog. ISBN 0 9588825 1 7.

Includes details of the partnership between Barclay and Jack Bullock, and a number of others associated with Wonnangatta such as the Allens and Hearn.

Taylor, Phillip. 'Wonnangatta: place of mystery' in *Walk* vol.30 pages 40-41, 1979. [CGS]

A brief account of the Wonnangatta murders.

Traill, Alec. Interview between Alec Traill and Judith Hosier. 1991. 17 pages. [CGS]

Transcript of an interview between Alec Traill, who worked for the Guy family at Wonnangatta, and Judith Hosier from the Stockman's Hall of Fame.

Trease, Susan. *The History of Wonnangatta Station*. 1990. 14 pages, ill., maps, bibliog., GIAE Gippsland History Project. [CGS]

Student project at what is now Monash University, Gippsland Campus.

Victoria: Dept of Conservation, Forests and Lands. *Alpine National Park Wonnangatta-Moroka Planning Unit: proposed Management Plan*. 1989 314 pages, ill., maps, appendices, bibliog., index. ISBN 0 73060 471 3. [CGS]

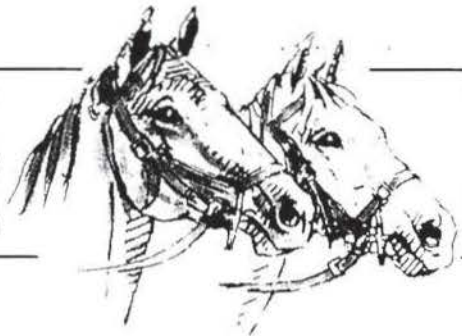
Proposed plan for the management of the Wonnangatta area of the Alpine National Park.

'Victoria's Shangri-la' in *The Melbourne Walker* vol.28 pages 4-6, 1957. [CGS]

Article arising from the 1955 survey of the suitability of the area for road access.

Compiled by Linda Barraclough

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## The Hut's Sad Farewell

I've just to close my eyes, and then quietly dream,  
Of Bogong plains afar, with spurs so lush and green,  
And the winding track, that rose from Shannon Vale  
Where once I left my footprints, climbing the six mile trail.

With memories unfolding, many pictures I can see,  
There's cattlemen in the saddle, and stock roaming free;  
To greet us was our hut, always cosy and so warm,  
A haven during mustering, and a shelter from a storm.

But one evening in December, a red glow filled the sky,  
Too large a fire had been lit, by travellers passing by.  
'It's just an old hut' some said, but there's solitude there I feel,  
As that little old hut, had so much history to reveal.

Such sorrow it would have felt, as its walls scorched with rising heat,  
Destroying memories of the family, and visitors it would meet.  
Hikers, trail riders, that o'er mountain tracks did pace,  
A new hut would lack memories, and never take its place.

One hundred years before, George and Jack were on the trail,  
I see them in the saddle - riding up from Shannon Vale -  
With packhorse, axe and saw, they selected trees to cut -  
Shaping palings from snow gums, and shingles from woolly butt.

With a dream they rode - of a future for their sons,  
That when the war was over, they'd graze cattle on the runs.  
Harry and Darcy would ride with Jack from the valley of Omeo,  
From Shannon Vale Bren would ride, when returning from Borneo.

Vera Fitzgerald





## ON BUNDARA

The stock tumble down  
in their tracks overnight  
as the full moon hangs low on Bundara.  
The ice settles down  
on the ground overnight  
there's no sun anymore on Bundara

But once it was green  
and the tall grass waved  
when the run was ours in the old days  
but the new-agers came  
and their dreams were not ours  
now they've seen to the death of the old ways.

The cruel winds blow hard  
through the valley below  
off the snow on the peak of Bundara  
the motherless calves  
send their cries on the wind  
there is death everywhere on Bundara.

But once it was green  
and the tall grasses waved  
when the run was ours in the old days  
but the new-agers came  
and their dreams were not ours  
now they've seen to the death of the old ways.

Once cattlemen mustered  
in thick falling snow  
but no cattle now low on Bundara  
the stock horses roam  
through the bush old and slow  
they've no home anymore on Bundara.

But once the land thrived  
and the stockmen rode tall  
when Australia was proud of the old ways  
but our spirit has failed  
and we rode to a fall  
for Australia's forgotten her old ways.

The briars are thick  
and the weeds are unchecked  
as the storm clouds descend on Bundara  
soon the lightning will flash  
and the wildfire rage  
as the land will be ash on Bundara.

*Philip Maguire*

# Royal Commissions into Fires and Forest Grazing

Immediately after the fires in January 1939 in Victoria, a Royal Commission headed by Judge Leonard Stretton enquired into their causes and made recommendations. This Royal Commission is well-known, especially as the mountain cattlemen of today are still fighting a rearguard action to try to make people understand that its findings are very open to question.

Less well known is that following that Royal Commission there was another, a Royal Commission into Forest Grazing, also headed by Stretton.

Stretton was clearly confused by the array of evidence ranging from the practical experience of graziers to the hard-line anti-grazing and 'no fire' policy of Forest Commission Chairman Albert Galbraith. Under his administration the Forest Commission, which had established a strong fire ban policy from its inception in 1919, soon was at odds with cattlemen. From the evidence put forward by cattlemen at these enquiries it was clearly indicated that dangerous degradation would occur if good management was abandoned. Now, fifty years later, these predictions have come true.

Graziers were well aware of the possibility and incidence of fires caused by lightening, but merely considered them in a forest environment as an extension of their own fire management that reduced potential 'hot spots' that, if ignited during hot, dry and windy summer conditions, would seriously interfere with the balance of nature, destroy mature alpine forest, and be likely to heavily reduce the grazing capability for many years.

It would be interesting to review the evidence of Forestry officials and others that was given to the various enquiries. Were they inept as manager and witnesses, or did they deliberately withhold evidence relating to lightening? The word appears only once in the findings of the 1939 enquiry, where Stretton acknowledged 'the rare occurrence of fire by natural causes ... such as lightening'! It would appear that in writing his final recommendations he was unduly influenced and awarded undue credibility to the more professional presentations of forest officials and others who were more powerful with emotion and words, as opposed to logic and simple knowledge.

We take this opportunity to list the names of cattlemen and some of the others who gave evidence at the 1939 Commission, followed by extensive sections from the evidence given by Harry Treasure. Anyone wishing to read the full transcripts of the evidence can do so at the Public Record Office of Victoria reading room at Cherry Lane, Laverton. The reference number required to obtain the transcripts to read is: VPRS 2576 unit 1. Copying of them is not allowed. In some cases evidence may also have been reproduced in local papers at that time.

We also take this opportunity to reproduce evidence given by Harry Treasure to the Forest Grazing Commission. He cites rabbit damage, for which it is still difficult to gain acceptance, and graphically depicts the consequences of the 1939 fires.

## Witnesses called before the Royal Commission into the 1939 Bushfires.

The enquiry sat first at Melbourne, Healesville, Kinglake, Marysville and Alexandra.

### Mansfield 16.2.1939

**Albert Henry Gear**, farmer of Tolmie.

**Arthur Rex Solly**, farmer of Tolmie.

**John Augustus Bostock**, grazier of Mansfield.

**William Francis Lovick**, grazier of Mansfield.

Lovick states he gave up leases in the mountains three years ago as it was too dangerous under present management, and that was the opinion of every man in Gippsland and the North-East. Prior to 1926 he had practised burning, say, 3,000 acres of a 10,000 acre run, with the next year 1,500. What was burnt last was not burnt next. 'We never burned anyone out, and never lost any lives'. 'The practice was followed from Wangaratta right through to North Gippsland, from the Snowy Mountains to Mount Wellington.'

**John Alexander Cameron**, grazier of Mansfield.

**Edwin Ormond Kelvin Phillips**, grazier of Howqua.

**William George Read**, farmer/garage prop of Tolmie.

**Maurice Mahoney**, grazier of Boorolite.



### Woods Point 17.2.1939.

**Clarence George Henry Poole**, farmer of Ten Mile.

The enquiry then proceeded to Colac, Forest, Lorne, Willow Grove and Noojee.

### Maffra 2.3.1939.

**Garfield Riley**, grazier of Munro.

**Harry Lewis Treasure**, grazier of Dargo High Plains.

A full transcript of his evidence appears below.

**Norman Fullerton Chester**, of Glenmaggie.

[Kevin] **Michael Molphy**, grazier of Glenmaggie

‘We were up there, I think on the Tuesday when the fire came through. We got in a patch of mountain ash that had been burnt last October, and waited until the fire went past us. The fire never touched that patch of ash at all.’ ‘It was very hot. As far as we could see, the fire on the tops of the trees seemed to be hundreds of feet ahead of the fire.’

**John Dennis Guy**, grazier of Waterford.

‘You would not light a fire that would be dangerous to anyone.’ Stretton then said: ‘They do it in other parts of Victoria. I have been told quite frankly they burn. In fact I knew it before I started on this Commission. What is the difference in your district that they will not do it?’ Reply: ‘They are practical men who have been in that country all their lives.’

### Omeo 3.3.1939

**John Samuel Langtree**, grazier of Reedy Flat.

**William Douglas McCoy**, grazier of Ensay.

Holder of a lease on Mt Nugong. ‘My father before me, and my brother and myself have had that land.’ 75,000 acres, from 1907-1936. ‘Why did you give it up in 1926?’ Reply: ‘The policy of the Forest Commission in putting restrictions on fires. They demanded a guarantee of, I think, £15 or £25 that there should be no fire on that area during our lease. My memory is not too clear on the amount. That was an impossible condition.’ ‘There was a fire in 1907 when we took over those ranges. About 3,000 head of cattle were then carried there. At certain times lately, I doubt it would carry more than 500 or 600 cattle.’ He indicated the area was neglected during the war, and then wet summers made it difficult to clear.

**Frederick William Rowe**, grazier of Upper Livingstone.

Rowe complained the country was too scrubby to walk to the head of one fire, and they had to wait for the fire to come to them.

**William Parnell O’Brien**, grazier and Brigade captain of Swifts Creek.

**Arthur Mervyn Pearson**, grazier and agent of Omeo.

**James Noel Braid**, grazier of Hinnomunjie.

The Commission then proceeded to Belgrave and Melbourne.

### **Percy George Weston**

Percy Weston travelled to Melbourne to give evidence when anticipated hearings in Bright were cancelled. He quoted from a newspaper article that he had submitted for publication in 1935. ‘If you go to extremes, banish the grazier and his cattle, allow the grass and rubbish to accumulate in the forests, and open up the mountains for tourist traffic, sooner or later you will have a conflagration which no human agency can attempt to control, and which would destroy every living plant and trees in its path and thus expose the countryside to the devastation of erosion. Have the forest fires of 1926 at Noojee, and the other fires been forgotten already?’ He pointed out there had been a deputation of field naturalists to the Premier in recent months to protest against the renewal of grazing licences on Buffalo. ‘I know three graziers who held licences for 35 or 40 years before cancellation of their licences in 1923. Credit is due to them for its condition. They burnt in autumn and kept serious fires off the Plateau for 40 years. In 1928 there was the first fire out of Bluff River. There were six or eight years accumulation of rubbish. Has rain not come the Chalet would have been lost.’ The first year he knew of bushfires on the High plains was in 1926, because every area was burnt before that every four to eight years.

The enquiry transcripts conclude with addresses on 17.4.1939.

## Evidence given by Harry Lewis Treasure to the Royal Commission into the 1939 Bushfires.

Those asking questions were Mr Gowans, assisting the Commissioner, Mr Officer (in his first an only appearance, for the Sale Grazier's Association) and Mr Barber, appearing for the Forests Commission.

MR GOWANS: Your full name is Harry Lewis Treasure? — Yes, and I am a grazier with grazing interests on the Dargo High Plains. I have Crown land there leased from the Lands Department.

I understand that you were a heavy loser in the recent fires? — Yes, I lost a considerable number of cattle, anything up to 900 head of cattle and seven miles of fencing. We had a hard fight to save the buildings. Eight men worked hard one day and we finished up the day with hardly a man able to see; we were blinded with smoke.

(indecip) like you with interests up there are not likely to be lighting fires? — No. My son and I have been grazing there for years. We were running about 1800 head of cattle during the spring. We bought 400 or 500 more thinking that if we could hold them through the summer there would be a bit of a rise in the autumn and we could make a little money from them. Our only fear was that we might get burnt out. We thought that we would then lose our grass.

(indecip) is, in fact, what happened? — Yes, we did not only lose the grass, but we also lost two-thirds of the cattle as well.

(indecip) you any idea of the type of people likely to cause fires in January? — No. Graziers get a lot of the blame but no grazier will light a fire during a time like that unless he is mad.

(indecip) fires seemed to connect in that country? — I suppose we rent anywhere about 100,000 acres. One fire seemed to come in from a westerly direction from country that is not occupied by anybody at all. The other seemed to come over the main dividing range from a north-westerly direction. I think those two fires met in our country and swept on in the direction of Cobungra and Omeo.

(indecip) say that no grazier would light fires at that time of year. How does that square with the statement that has just been made to the Commission that graziers do have to light fires illegally and get

away? — I did not say that they did not light fires but I think that no grazier would light a fire at that time of the year.

(indecip) you mean in the middle of January? — In the middle of January and in February with such a dry time.

(indecip) would be between November and December that graziers would light fires for spring feed? — I daresay that would be possible.

(indecip) and probable? — And probable.

(indecip) would like you to put your views before the Commission as shortly as you can without repeating any views that have been put already.

THE COMMISSIONER: We do not wish you to cut your evidence short, but we have had so much evidence on similar lines that we almost know what has happened. — I would like to give an outline of the country that I am occupying. I have been there for 60 years, practically all my life, and I have a good idea of the conditions and of what has happened there. We have been burnt out in 1918, in 1926, and in these fires. Prior to that we never had a bad fire. I do not say that there were not fires that might have killed a small patch of timber in little places. Prior to 1918, before there was much restriction on the lighting of fires, that country was populated with miners, diggers, fossicking along the rivers for gold. There were up to 100 diggers working along the Dargo river and each man had his hut. They had no fear of ever being burnt out and they never were burnt out. If they had been there during the recent fires, not only their houses would have been burnt but the men themselves would have been burnt to death. In those days there were no restrictions on the lighting of fires and yet the travellers, tourists, etc. were safe. The country was burned regularly whenever it would burn and that stopped any fires from getting a hold and going a long way. If one man happened to light a fire in one locality it could not go far because it would run into burnt ground. That was all right. No timber was destroyed. Later on the restrictions were imposed and in 1918 I suppose there was a lot of debris, bracken, leaves and undergrowth that had been hoarded up in the bush. I think a fire started during February over the other side of the Dividing Range. It came through our country and killed thousands of acres of beautiful woolly butt timber. We were lucky with our cattle but it burned down a lot of our fences. We had no more fires from then until 1926 when another one

occurred under similar conditions. There was a heavy fire in February which killed more valuable timber, and almost exterminated the Woolly butt on the northern side of the range, leaving it on the south side where it was more shady. After those fires the woolly butt trees died. Once they are burnt they will never suckle but a new lot will come up from seed. I know of places now where a light fire has thinned out the young seedlings and the forest has been practically remodelled. It is there again but if another severe fire goes through the young seedlings before they grow to about 15 years of age and shed more seed, the woolly butt in that area will be exterminated for all time. There has been practically no fire there since 1926. Odd patches may have been burnt here and there but there have been very few. We had no fires until last January. In our area of approximately 100,000 acres hardly a tree was left living on the other side of the spurs and ranges except in very small patches where there had been a fire within the last two or three years.

(indecip) did not go through those areas? — Those areas are there and I would be pleased to show anybody through or let them inspect them if they wish to do so.

(indecip) are not advocating a return to the age of uncontrolled burning, are you. You are not suggesting that we should lift all restrictions? — No, I should not think that would be altogether a good idea. I think there should be some restrictions but the restrictions would be almost unnecessary if the people were compelled to burn. That is what I think. If something is not done and the present policy is continued, there is no doubt it will not be safe for people to live in the mountains at all. I think we were lucky in this fire on the Dargo High Plains last January, but had we been down on the runs or on the river, I do not think we could have lived. I do not see how a man could have escaped. There is not a living tree left along the Dargo river for 60 miles, and all the logs and debris washed up by the water is scorched right out. With reference to erosion, I think the mountain country is lucky this year. Erosion is bad after heavy rains. It washes the soft soil down into the rivers. Had we got heavy thunder storms after the January fire, the valleys would have been practically filled up. However rain came down very steadily and nothing worth speaking of has been washed away. There is little or no erosion after a light burn, but it is different with heavy fires such as we have had. They not only burn the debris and wood

on and above the surface but they burn into the soil itself. There are acres of ground that has been burnt right down to the grass roots and if we get heavy rain on top of that it will cause much erosion. Luckily, we did not have it this year.

(indecip) the danger from erosion now over? — Yes, practically. The loose soil has settled down and the grass will be growing. The worst danger is over. I was in Melbourne some years ago and met the late Mr J.W. McLachlan MLA. We were discussing these mountain areas and particularly the areas that I was interested in. He said 'We would not mind giving you those areas clear of rent if you could keep them absolutely clear of fires.' I think that had Mr McLachlan said to me 'We do not mind giving you those areas free of rent if you can preserve the timber' I would have said 'If you will let me do it in my own way, the timber could be preserved.'

This was followed by detailed discussion on the path of each section of the fire, and the amount of burning prior to 1918, and the possibility of the fires having been as a result of fires lit as early as September by graziers wanting summer grazing.

(indecip) do you think that the fires that came this year might have been caused by people lighting fires for spring feed earlier in the season and that those fires were not completely out and were resurrected in the bad weather? — That would be a very hard thing for me to say. We knew that one fire in a westerly direction from our locality had been burning for several weeks. My son was up on the High Plains and when he came down he said he was a bit afraid of that fire.

(indecip) is not impossible that this big fire was the result of earlier fires that had been lit for feed and had never gone out properly? — No, it is not impossible. Some of those fires were on the burn for weeks.

Mr OFFICER: If those fires were the cause, or if they had not gone out and were the later cause of this big fire, that would be due to the fact that you had to light them and then cannot look after them because it is against the law. I do not mean you personally.

Mr BARBER: In September? There was no Proclamation then? — If there is rain of anything up to one inch, they will go out. A shower of rain might stop them and the logs would start up again later;

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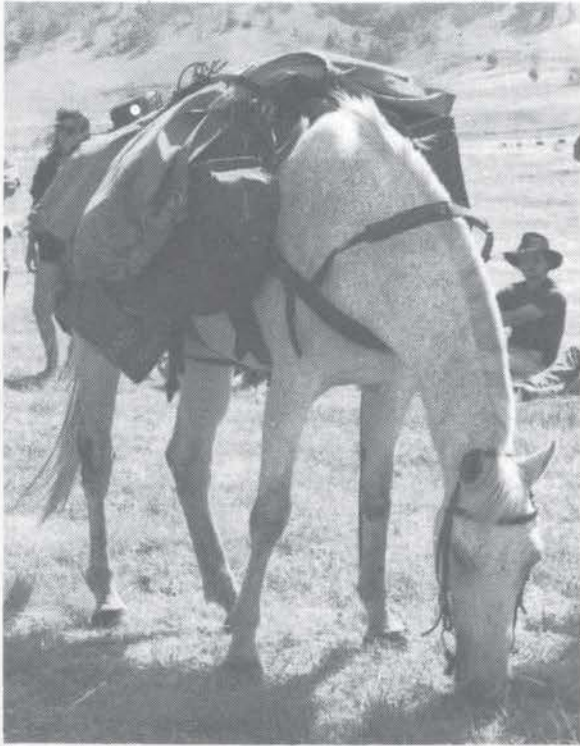
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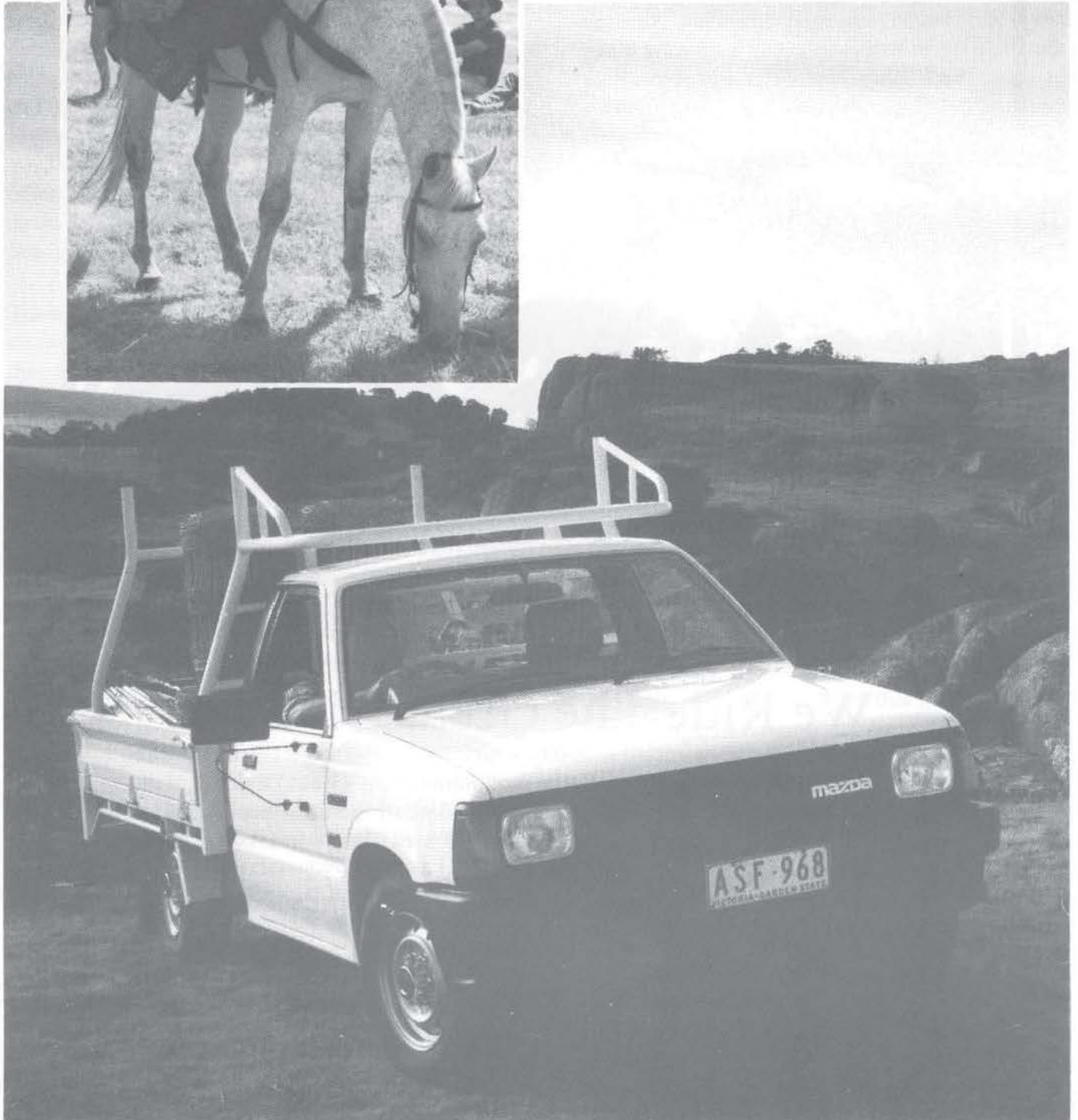
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*When it's not the  
Packhorse, Mountain  
Cattlemen use the  
Mazda Workhorse!*



but in most seasons fires lit in September, October, and even in December, go out absolutely. It is seldom they will burn in December.

There is then some procedural discussion.

Mr OFFICER: What is going to happen in the next few years? — we contend that our country is ruined. It has been spoilt from the grazing point of view. Next year ... and possibly the year after, there will be more grass than we know what to do with. After that we content that our country will not have two-thirds of its previous carrying capacity.

THE COMMISSIONER: Why? — Where the timber was growing, there was grass all through it. Now the young timber will come up in millions and it will grow that thick we will not be able to get through it. In a few years later it will make an enormous litter on the ground and grazing will be practically nil.

(indecip) thought you would get sweet grass all along? — We will for one season, but each year the undergrowth will grow up more.

(indecip) fallen logs or scrub? — Fallen logs will come down later. The heavy fire of the kind we had in January will ruin the country absolutely from a grazing point of view. A light fire is all right. It would be a lesson for anyone to see the country next year and then again in about five years time.

This completed his evidence to the Royal Commission in the 1939 bushfires. What follows is a newspaper report of his evidence to the Royal Commission to inquire into Forest Grazing.

## **Evidence to the 1946 Royal Commission into Forest Grazing.**

### **The Drift of the Forests Fire and Rabbit Damage a Problem**

The following is a full statement by Cr H.L. Treasure, one of the leading mountain graziers who gave evidence before the Forests Commission at the Maffra sittings before Judge Stretton. Cr Treasure presented a case for the Grazier's Association and the Avon Shire Council, of which he is a member:-

Cr Treasure said: I am a grazier and work in conjunction with my sons on the Dargo High Plains. I have been there following this pursuit all my life.

We rent about 100,000 acres of rough mountainous country from the Crown, 5,000 acres of which we have fenced into nine paddocks with good substantial wire fences, erected under permission from the Lands Department. We have stable, garage, nine lots of stock yards, huts for camping, and two dwelling houses.

There is no erosion on or about the Dargo High Plains and it is false to say that cattle cause erosion in any shape or form. Cattle do not eat that coarse grass close enough to the ground to cause erosion, and if they did it would be disastrous to the owners, as cattle would not thrive. Where there is erosion in the lower hills it is caused definitely by rabbits. They are eating everything sweet and edible right up to the snow line. They have killed or are killing out all the sweet and luscious grasses and herbage, leaving only the very coarse and non-nutritious stuff, and thus rendering much of the hillsides almost bare.

If any scientist could devise a plan or a scheme to exterminate the rabbits, the hills, in common with the inland country of Australia, would be troubled very little with erosion.

Where grass and vegetation has been destroyed, erosion will start, and the rabbit is slowly but surely doing the job. While the non-practical man can easily blame the cattle. But they are not doing it. From the seventies until the year 1918 I do not remember a bad bush fire. Then the ridges and gullies were quite open and comparatively clear underneath the growing timber. Grass was everywhere from the rivers to the mountain tops. There were miners, diggers, prospectors, and stockmen all through the hills, and bush fires were very common, but they never killed any timber. The prospectors lit fires to clean up the country so that they may find reefs, while others seemed to start fires in rough places for the purpose of cleaning it up. Restrictions on burning did not seem to be enforced until about the year 1910.

It was impossible for a fire to burn far or fierce, and no growing timber was ever destroyed.

During the year 1918, after a period of little or no fires, we had a very bad fire during mid-summer, fanned by a north-west wind. This fire was travelling easily 30 miles a day, and it burned a lot of our fences about the Dargo Plains and killed a lot of good woollybutt timber; but fortunately the cattle seemed to escape.

During the summer of 1926 we had another bad fire, which came from we don't know where, and fanned by a north-west wind. This fire was going through the air in leaps of from five to eight miles by pieces of burning bark driven in the wind. It killed a lot more of the woollybutt timber, along with a fair amount of snow gums. It burned more fences, but very few cattle were caught in it.

The next and most disastrous fire that I ever knew or heard of was during January of 1939, after a period of 13 years in which was accumulated a great amount of debris, such as dry grass, leaves, bark, fallen timber, undergrowth, etc. This fire almost cleaned up the balance of the woollybutt timber, including the young saplings that had grown after the 1926 fire. It also killed a large percentage of snow gum timber, and scarcely left a green leaf on any tree in its path. It destroyed considerably over 1000 head of cattle belonging to my sons and myself. It burned the greater part of our fences and it was with great difficulty that we saved the homestead, though the strenuous efforts of eight men.

This fire travelled at from 50 to 80 miles in one day, going through the air and lighting up many miles ahead. Apart from the great loss of timber which will take from 80 to 100 years to grow up again, the mountain country through which this fire spread is practically ruined from a grazing point of view, as wherever the timber was killed the seedlings and suckers have grown so densely that it is impossible to ride through the lot of it, and cattle will not stay on it.

I wish to point out that the woollybutt and mountain ash timber will, after being killed, only grow from seed - it never suckers. After a fire the young seedlings come up in millions and if a second fire takes the young saplings before they are old enough to flower and shed more seed, the timber would be finished for all time.

At the present moment the country burned by the 1939 fire is covered with millions of seedlings, which are from eight to fifteen feet high, and it would be most disastrous if another fierce summer fire took them now. A light fire, however, would protect them. I suggest that for the high mountainous country that judicious burning be resorted to. For instance, during the autumn and spring (mostly in the autumn) that many patches and breaks be burned; and this be done by the grazier. I firmly believe that it will be impossible to prevent fires altogether. They will start,

and if by no other cause lightning will start them. I can honestly state that I know a dozen different fires started by lightning, four of which were in my own paddocks. If debris is hoarded up through the bush for a number of years we are only making a cane for our own backs, and paving the way for a national destruction, namely, our forest timber.

It is now seven and a half years since our last bad fire, and I look to the future with a little dread for the safety of the cattle, the young growing timber, the fences, etc.

If the grazier were to blame for all this destruction I would say hunt him out, but I say that he is not to blame. I do not say that the graziers never light fires, but if he lights them at a proper time he is warding off disaster, and I also feel quite sure that he is becoming more fire-minded.

Another matter I wish to query is this: If the grazing leases in the mountain country is abolished, where are the supplies of beef cattle going to come from for fattening purposes? A very large percentage of these cattle are bred and reared in the mountains.

To put cattle there on agistment even would be most unsatisfactory; in fact, I do not hesitate to say it would be a rank failure.

The article is from a clipping from an unknown local newspaper apparently dated 18 July 1946, in the Wilson Scrapbook, Stratford and District Historical Society. The same scrapbook includes a summary of the evidence from a Melbourne newspaper, with this additional summary of evidence given by Norman Chester.

**James Chester**, auctioneer and grazier, said that he controlled about 60,000 acres of forest land. On a conservative estimate, 5000 cattle from the mountains were sold annually at the Traralgon, Heyfield Maffra and Briagolong markets. Their average price would be £10 a head.

He did not think erosion came from the top country. Rabbits in the foothills were the trouble. There had been no bad fires in the cattle country since 1939. An area set on fire under the guidance of the Forestry Department would not kill the big timber as it would not get out of hand.

## **Royal Commission into Forest**

## Grazing - Final Report and Recommendations

In his final report and recommendations, Stretton claimed that 'the setting up of control of grazing calls for the most urgent action. The extermination of the rabbit is a matter of even greater urgency'. In an enquiry dealing principally with erosion, this is the only time in his findings that rabbits are mentioned. Later: 'It is repeated that grazing, with its associated practices, is by no means the sole cause of man-made erosion.' Further into the report, he describes, as an example, the erosion caused by sheep in the high country. He then made the quantum leap to again claim that because, in his opinion, graziers had caused some of the 1939 fires, that they were responsible for all of the damage to water catchments that resulted from the fires and the subsequent heavy rain. This is a matter that the MCAV continues to dispute today.

It is interesting to note his comment, further into the report, that 'With certain minor exceptions, there has been no attempt to regulate the number of cattle grazed under licence or lease on a given area ... Such lack of control may lead to over-grazing, which is generally harmful, or to under-grazing which, by failing to prevent coarse growth, may also be harmful, ...'. Later: 'It will have been apparent that your Commissioner has been dominated, one might almost say oppressed, by the realization that grazing is but one of many activities which might injure the forests, ....' 'To focus attention upon grazing alone or to suggest measures of controlling it alone is to suggest a mere tinkering with that whole of which it is but a part.' He then commented favourably on the operation of a Cattlemen's Committee, 'which is taking a part in self-government of its members' grazing rights and obligations in respect of the Bogong high plains.' Then: 'Your Commissioner has ventured to suggest that there are certain classes of graziers; furthermore he is convinced that the general standard of care of or indifference towards forest welfare differs sharply as between the graziers of different forest districts.

It is because of those beliefs ..... that it is not recommended that a sweeping change to grazing by agistment be instituted. The change, if made universally, would give rise to justifiable dissatisfaction and resentment. It is better, it is

suggested, to allow the behaviour of the graziers in any one district to determine what method of management shall be instituted.' .... 'Wherever it is possible to do so with justice, it is wisdom to let men settle their own affairs.'

His final recommendations were:

1. That a land utilization authority, charged with the duty of protecting all land, be created.

2. That, subject to the directions of a land utilization authority, or failing the creation of such a body, the control of all forest lands and of all activities in the forests be vested in the Forests Commission.

3. That in exercising control of grazing the Forests Commission be guided as far as is safely possible by the advice of graziers, preferably to be given by their representative associations.

4. That in forest grazing districts in which graziers have shown that they are not to be trusted to protect the forest, a system of agistment of cattle by the Forests Commission be instituted.

5. That wherever the forest has been materially injured by fires, it be closed to all possibly injurious activities pending its regeneration.

6. That the happening, in an assigned area of a lessee or licensee, of injurious fires which cannot be fairly considered to have been lit for a reason not related to the grantee's rights or interest in the area, be sufficient ground upon which to deprive the grantee of his grazing rights, without further proof of the cause of the fires.

Compiled by Linda Barraclough,  
with assistance from Jim Commins.



## New South Wales Bushfires

As a result of the extensive bushfires of January 1994 in New South Wales attention has been focused on the MCAV's views on modern fire prevention. Jim Commins was quick to draw attention to the issues involved, in a news release of 11 January 1994.

'New South Wales has paid the ultimate price for its policy of withdrawing grazing, and lack of protective burning of its forests and National Parks', he said. 'That state had ample warning that its policies were wrong in 1990, when the Coroner at the Byadbo inquest highlighted a failure in the New South Wales Parks and Wildlife Service attitudes and philosophies towards fire prevention.'

Mountain Cattlemen have long promoted the use of grazing as an important management practice in conjunction with fuel reduction burning on public land. This wisdom has been proved correct in the recent tragic bushfires in New South Wales.

Recent studies have shown that grazing has a positive impact on the reduction of fuel loads, and this, combined with proper fuel reduction burning at appropriate times, would have substantially lessened much of the intensity of the recent fires and certainly reduced the appalling costs to property owners and the public services involved.

'This proposal, that grazing is an efficient fire management tool, was been adopted, in 1990, by the Victorian Alpine Advisory Committee, and should be incorporated into Government policy. It should also be drummed into the heads of all Government agency personnel involved in the care, protection and management of all public land', he said.

The uncompromising attitude of conservationists and the lack of fuel reduction burning has proved to be irresponsible, dangerous and fatal. 'Lessons must be learned from the past',

Jim Commins said. 'Aborigines used a fire regime for thousands of years before the coming of the Europeans. Fire is a part of nature in Australian forests, and adequate low-intensity fuel reduction burning should always be a part of good management. Cattle create many enclaves of safe habitat and should be introduced into major parks as a productive, complementary and smoke-free management tool. Grazing will always prolong the benefit of protective burning with a much reduced need for subsequent repeated burning over a period of years.

Jim was quick to praise the Victorian Department of Conservation and Natural Resources for its use of fuel reduction burning, and the use of fire retardants during bushfires. However he warned that fuel reduction burning had been severely cut back over the past years, and this must be addressed immediately.

'Fortunately, cattle grazing in the Victorian high country is protected by legislation, and strongly supported by the Victorian Government. However we would argue that in many areas where cattle grazing has been phased out, it should be restored without delay,' Jim said.

The MCAV offered sincere sympathy to all who had been personally affected by the fires in New South Wales. 'At the same time we must clearly understand that we cannot lock public, or private, land away, and claim that Nature will look after itself. It won't, and this has been tragically demonstrated once again by the most recent disaster in New South Wales. It is to be hoped that a clamour for more fire fighting resources will not overshadow enquiry as to why bush fires are becoming increasingly dangerous,' Jim said. Mountain Cattlemen are justified in their slogan - Alpine Grazing Reduces Blazing.



# **MCAV Submission to Victorian Fire Management - Code of Practice Project.**

The Victorian Department of Conservation and Natural Resources is currently undertaking a Fire Management - Code of Practice project. The MCAV has provided a detailed submission, covering the historical perspective, the Land Conservation Council and grazing/fuel reduction, a response to the argument that grazing increases fire risk, research on the impact of grazing on fuel loads, the overseas experience, MCAV policy and recommendations.

The submission was supported by an Honours Dissertation on 'The Effects of Grazing on Fuel Loads and Vegetation in the Barmah Forest, Victoria', by Louise Silvers, and a report by Dr A.D. Wilson on various matters in relation to the Bogong High Plains.

**The Policy of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria regarding the relationship between managed grazing and fuel reduction burning.**

The MCAV has a very strong policy regarding fuel reduction burning in conjunction with grazing. Its view is shared by the majority of the rural community.

1. The grazing of cattle substantially reduces the potential for wildfire, which apart from immediately devastating the area, can result in severe soil erosion and degraded water catchments.

2. Grazing by cattle in alpine and subalpine, as well as lowland environments, is a valuable and cost effective management tool, that is equal or superior to fire and fuel reduction burning, because it can be controlled more efficiently.

3. Where fuel reduction burning might not be appropriate, managed grazing provides a 'smoke-free' alternative.

4. Grazing is a controlled form of fuel reduction whereas fire can occasionally get away.

5. Because forest grazing is a predominantly seasonal part-time operation, it not only reduces fire hazard but enhances rather than destroys the diversity of natural vegetation.

## **Recommendations**

The MCAV recommended that any Code of practice for Fire Management should apply the following environmental care principles in the planning process:

1. To acknowledge that well-managed grazing can reduce the frequency of fuel reduction burning by controlling the regrowth.

2. That grazing be recognised as a method of reducing fuel loads, and wherever appropriate should be used as a management tool and incorporated into fire management plans.

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## DANDY

I watched my old horse as he lay in the sun  
Fast asleep it would seem  
And I thought to myself as I watched him  
          there  
I wonder if horses dream?  
And if they do, do their dreams go back  
To the long gone misty years  
When they cantered around at their mother's  
          side  
With never a care or fears.  
I bred this horse from a mare I owned  
Who had seldom known a peer  
Unless it be this son of hers  
That I have been watching here.  
He was born a beautiful chestnut colt  
A credit to all his race  
With three white feet and his father's coat  
And his mother's blaze on his face.  
Dandy I called him, a dandy he looked  
When he trotted proudly around  
As though he knew he was bred from the best  
That had trodden this stretch of ground.  
Remember old chap when I caught you and  
          taught  
The things that you learned so well  
To stick to the chase and never give up  
And to be my servant and pal.  
Do you dream of those tiring droving treks  
Over many a dusty mile  
Though your gleaming coat was dark with  
          sweat  
And you still walked with that springy style.  
Then home once more thru' the starlit night  
With you pulling all the way  
A roll on the ground and a feed of chaff  
Then rest for another day.  
Sometimes I'd go with bridle in hand  
When the Devil was in your brain  
And round you'd go with your tail in the air  
And round and around again.

When you thought I had chased you long  
          enough  
You'd pull up with a thundering snort  
In the farthest corner from where I stood  
Then allow yourself to be caught.  
Expecting that token kick in the ribs  
How you swung on the reins with fright  
You knew that it never hurt you much  
But you always thought that it might.  
The time we headed that hell-bent bull  
As he made for the river's bend  
A bull that is thwarted whose course is  
          changed  
Is nobody's bosom friend  
How you balked and swerved as he swung his  
          head  
In a vicious deadly arc  
For those cruel horns on the head held low  
Can leave you a tragic mark.  
But they never got us, those bulls we chased  
And we angered quite a few  
I never got more than a nasty fright  
But the credit was all to you.  
When a beast would break from the mob we  
          drove  
I need never feel despair  
You never seemed to have to start  
You already were half way there.  
I think I took you for granted then  
But I always knew your worth  
But I had ridden others on which  
I would never tighten a girth.  
And now when I ride you quietly round  
And a beast from the pathway turns  
You're off like a shot to bring it back  
And that same old fire still burns.  
Dream on old pal for the night draws nigh  
And the light at the harbour gleams  
For me your rider and you my horse  
There is little left but dreams.

*Wilbur Olsen*

## MCAV honours Ross Blair with Life Membership

Since 1835 each generation of Mountain Cattlemen has produced men who are hardy, self-reliant and worthy of the strong friendship and respect of their peers.

Ross Blair is certainly no exception and at a barbecue in his honour last October the Association paid tribute to his contribution to its heritage with life membership.

The barbecue, which was held at Whorouly Reserve, was organised by the North-East Branch, but members from Mansfield, Gippsland and Omeo were in attendance. Clive Hodge also dropped in on his way home to the Snowy Mountains.

In accepting his award from Association president Mary Goldsworthy, Ross proved to be a man of few words. He said that he was proud to have been a Mountain cattleman all his life and thanked the Association for the honour of Life Membership.

Jack Lovick, who travelled across from Merrijig for the occasion, recalled meeting Ross on the Bogong High Plains in rather fortuitous circumstances back in the early 1970s.

Jack and some companions had ridden from Horsehair Plain across to Youngs Tops, en route to Youngs Hut, but the weather was bad and visibility poor. Being unfamiliar with the territory they were

unsure whether they were on the right track and anxious to make it to the hut by dark.

According to Jack, they were most surprised when a dingo materialised out of the mist in front of them, followed seconds later by another.

'We were even more surprised when we saw they were wearing collars,' he recalled. Anyway, the next thing we knew a horseman appeared as well, and it was Ross.

We told him we had to get to Youngs Hut, and he said he didn't know if he'd be much help because he was unfamiliar with the territory as well.

But, like the good bushman he is, he took us directly there.'

Ross Blair's version of the events was somewhat different. He said that when he first saw the riders he thought they were a bunch of brumby runners from Omeo and that his dogs had disturbed them.

'I reckoned we were going to be in trouble and I was happy to find it was the Lovicks,' he said.

Ron Briggs told the gathering that Ross had taught him what it was to be a Mountain Cattleman.

'When I first started out he was there to provide me with a lot of guidance and advice. I'll always appreciate what Ross did and I hope I can be as helpful to the next generation as he was to me,' Ron said.



The Hon. Graeme Stoney, Ron Briggs, Max Blair, Ross Blair and Mary Goldsworthy on the occasion of the presentation of life membership to Ross.

## MUSTERING

They start the day off calmly,  
With hot coffee, and a yawn,  
Saddle horses, call dogs quietly,  
In the cold, crisp, air of dawn.

Riding out at walking pace,  
For there's no need to race,  
Speaking soft, the language plain,  
Like the whispering fall of rain.

Riding easy, between boulders,  
Pushing openings through the scrub,  
Bullwhips draped round shoulders,  
New falls tied on, and rubbed.

Following the walking tracks,  
Looking out for marks and signs,  
Recalling all the ear marks,  
Which tell what's yours, and mine.

Mustering, in ones and twos,  
Or groups of three, or four,  
Search the hills and clearings,  
Always looking out for more.

We find them down in pockets,  
Boxed in by sheltering scrub,  
'Way down, way down Horrie',  
Shouts Brian to his dog.

The dogs get in behind them,  
Flush them out, all in a rush,  
A ton of mountain Hereford,  
Charges headlong, call her bluff!

'Fan out, fan out, get in behind,'  
Drive them through the scrub,  
'Get in behind, get in behind',  
To his dogs, cries Brian gruff.

'Keep 'em moving, slowly forward',  
Mustered mob one seething mass,  
Angus steers, crossed Hereford,  
Being mustered for the boss.

'Get forward! Block that fence hole!'  
'Don't let them make camp there',  
'Get in behind, get in behind',  
As the bullwhips crack thin air.

Guide the leader through that gateway,  
No need to drive them hard,  
The mob of cattle follow,  
Now all gathered in the yard.

They end the day quite calmly,  
With hot coffee, and a yarn,  
Of cattle's charge, adrenaline rush,  
Call in the dogs at dusk.

We'll draft them in the morning,  
For this day is surely run,  
The camp fire, stars are shining,  
And it's time to turn in, son.

Tom McLean

## DRAFTING

Oh there's an art to drafting,  
Mountain cattle in the yards,  
You can tell the master's working,  
Sorting out the wheat from the chaff;  
They've mustered in the hills and scrub,  
From pastures green, on Alpine plain,  
Brought their cattle in again,  
Fattened up, prepared for sale.

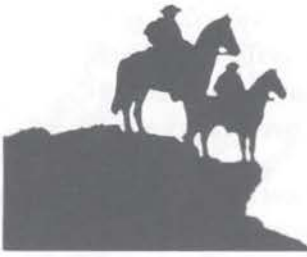
First they split them cow from calf, Divide  
them up in even halves,  
Drafting them to separate yards,  
Decisions here are not so hard;  
Then they sort them calf by calf,  
Ear marks used to tell them apart,  
Sort them into brothers' parts,  
Soon decisions made are hard.

Standing in half circles, men,  
with bamboo poles in hand,  
Goading, prodding, feeling out,  
Which have breeding, which have not;  
'Block behind you, cut him off!'  
'Don't let her go!', 'Rubbish that',  
'Let that one pass, no breeding there.'  
Decisions made here are with care.

Drafting out the future breeders,  
Cutting out the runts and steers,  
Decisions on their future need,  
Are all precise, and without fear,  
Sorting out the calves to keep,  
Tell them from the steers to sell,  
Keep runts for fattening, and a feed,  
For men, like cattle, too must breed.

Oh there's an art to drafting,  
Sorting out the wheat from chaff,  
High Country Cattlemen are fast  
Becoming, rarer than times past,  
But men like Bennison and Holmes,  
The Kellys, Higgins and the Shaws,  
Still make their mark with simple skill,  
And come next year, they'll be drafting still.

Tom McLean



## *Lyle McCready*

Lyle Richard McCready was born in the Colac district in 1907, and followed a career in engineering, concluding with 25 years with Ford at Geelong.

In 1961 he decided to leave Ford and move to North-East Victoria, and 'Mountain View' at Dandongadale, where he ran cattle. Not long after this the Mountain Cattlemen's Association was formed, and Mac was a foundation member. It remained his greatest interest for many years.

Lyle acted as temporary secretary to the N.E. Branch from 31.5.1969 to 21.1.1970, and was elected Branch President in 1970, served in that position until 7.6.1973, and was again elected 18.6.1975, serving to 9.6.1976.

In 1974 Lyle was elected Senior Vice President of the Association and served in that position until 1979. He was then appointed Public Relations Officer of the MCAV, a position that later became known as Special Projects Officer, a position he held until October 1989.

In October 1991 Lyle McCready was presented with Life Membership, and although in failing health, he continued to attend branch meetings until just prior to his death. His thoughts were always for and of the betterment of the Association. His forte was the presentation of the Cattlemen's point of view clearly and firmly to the Government and its representatives in various departments.

In 1984 Lyle decided to retire and settled in Whorouly and entered into local matters, until his health began to be a problem. He lived there for nine very happy years, but finally moved to Myrtleford four months ago, where he died on 10 September 1994.

The deepest sympathy of the President, Central Council, Members and Associate Members goes to his wife, Vicky.





### ***Tom Purcell***

The death of Thomas Sidney Purcell at Mansfield on 27 June 1994, at the age of 72, ended the life of one of the best known and highly respected cattlemen of the snow country of North Eastern Victoria. Tom and his brother Jack were in partnership in the cattle breeding business trading as 'J & T Purcell of Merrijig'. Their Hereford and Hereford Shorthorn cross cattle held pride of place in the annual sales at Mansfield. This partnership lasted for 47 years. The partnership also was the Licencee of the Hunt Club at Merrijig for some 15 years and were mine host to many travellers. In the 1960s the brothers took safaris into the snow country of North Eastern Victoria.

Tom was a foundation member of the Mountain District Cattlemen's Association and their partnership held mountain leases for summer grazing. Tom was a returned Serviceman, having served for two years in New Guinea. He was a member of 'The Cracks', the horsemen who provided the riders for the film 'The Man from Snowy River' I and II.

Tom Purcell was a member of most of the search parties in the area looking for lost skiers, bush walkers and the like. His knowledge of the mountains was of extreme value. He was also an accomplished entertainer, playing the piano and singing at many parties and gatherings wherever the people from the bush met.

In future when the people of the High Country of Victoria and beyond meet, Tom Purcell will be remembered as a True and Great Australian Mountain Cattleman.

He leaves a wife and three sons to mourn his loss.

*Ian Balmer*

### ***Agnes Guy***

Mrs Agnes Julia Guy, who died peacefully at home near Maffra on 13th December 1994, was one of a group of bushwalkers from the Melbourne Women's Walking Club who were active in making access to the high country possible for women. A number of these excursions were carried out with the assistance of Arthur Guy, at that time one of the owners of Wonnangatta, as guide and provider of packhorses. Agnes Miller met him during one of these trips and they were married in 1948. Coming from Melbourne, Agnes adapted readily to the bush, and was noted for her hospitality and ready welcome for visitors. Agnes and Arthur lived at the Guy family property of 'Glenlee' at Crooked River for a time before moving to their property near Maffra in 1953. Arthur continued to run Wonnangatta and the family's high country leases with his brother Jack Guy, and Agnes was called upon to be responsible for the home property for long periods while Arthur was away at Wonnangatta.

Agnes maintained a lifelong interest in her church, community work and the travels of others. Her extended family was also a source of great pleasure for her.

Agnes Guy is survived by her husband Arthur, and her daughter, Catherine Noble, and the sympathy of the MCAV goes to them, along with Charlie Noble and her grand-daughter, Susan.

### ***Kyran Kelly***

The sympathy of the Association goes to the Kelly family of Omeo Valley on the recent death of their son and brother, Kyran, following a road accident on the Omeo Highway. Kyran, who was 36, had in the past worked on the Kelly lease with his father Pat and the loss of this member of the younger generation is deeply regretted.





### *Kevin Higgins*

With the death of Kevin Higgins of 'Glencourt', Glenmaggie, at the age of 76 on 17 November 1994, the MCAV has lost one of its most long-standing and respected members.

Kevin's family were originally from Crooked River, where they raised horses for the Indian remount trade, but he lived all his life at Glenmaggie. After service during World War II he purchased 'Glencourt', which had been selected about 1866 by his great-grandfather, Patrick Garvey, from the family estate. He ran this property in association with the Higgins family's high country freehold near Mount Tamboritha, and its associated runs. A well-known mountain cattleman who worked with him in the early years was his mother's brother, Jimmy Kelly, who held the lease around Holmes Plain. In the early 1960s he also purchased land on the Wellington River beyond Licola.

Kevin was a member of the Licola Stockowners' Association, and when the MCAV was formed he became a foundation member. He was often to be found escorting visiting parliamentarians and dignitaries on inspection tours of the high country, and even until recent times he could still be found at Get-Togethers judging the packhorse event - where he was supremely qualified to adjudicate.

Kevin combined his operations at 'Glencourt' with the position of 'dogman' with the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources until, on his retirement, the position passed to his son Terry. Amongst his peers, his reputation as a bushman remains unsurpassed. Matters of high country history were referred to him as a matter of course. His death, while so many thought there would still be more years for him to pass on his knowledge, is a matter of great sadness, and the sympathy of the MCAV goes to his family of Michael, Terry, Maureen and Colleen.



Ron Sweetapple and Kevin Higgins at a Heyfield sale, about 1987.



### **Ron 'Ike' Sweetapple**

Ron Sweetapple, who died on 13 July 1994, aged 79 at his beloved 'Glencairn', was the fourth generation of his family to own that property. Known to many as 'Ike', he spent some of the younger part of his life at Glenmaggie and Maffra, but lived continuously on the family property north of Licola from the early 1940s.

The Sweetapples' association with the high country dates from the late 1860s. Their name first appeared on the Dargo High Plains run in 1870, but it was probably used by them slightly earlier. About 1868 the family moved to Glencairn, although they also retained interests at Glenmaggie for many years, where they ran sheep and cattle. In later years, Ron ran the property in association with his mother, and they were highly respected by the bushwalkers who called by.

Ron first began running cattle around Mount Skene with George Barraclough in the 1940s. They him moved to the Connors Plain-Spring Hill area when the Rumpff brothers from Seaton stopped running cattle in that area several years later. He still held a run there at the time of his death.

Ron was a bachelor, and lived alone at Glencairn. He continued the family tradition of welcoming visitors, and had a keen sense of the history of the land around him. While his death, which occurred as a result of being struck by a falling tree limb, was unexpected, and not at all the way his many friends would have wished him to go, it was somehow appropriate that he died at Glencairn. No-one, least of all Ron, would have cared to see it otherwise.

### **Tor Holth**

Tor Holth was an adopted son of the high country and all Mountain Cattlemen will be saddened by his premature death on 17 October 1994, from advanced emphysema, at the age of 61.

He will long be remembered for his definitive history of the Bogong Cattlemen - *Cattlemen of the High Country*. This was a book that for the first time captured the unique character of the mountains and the Mountain Cattlemen.

Tor was born in China in 1933 and educated in Norway and England. A highly talented architect, artist and writer, he came to Australia at the age of 27 and was almost immediately drawn to the high country.

The mountains held him spellbound. He was fascinated by the aura surrounding mountain people, seeing in them a quality that appealed strongly to his own pioneering spirit and sense of adventure. He was at home with them as they were with him.

I was privileged to spend a few hours with Tor only two days before his death and even though he was extremely ill he spoke of nothing else but his beloved high country and the great friends that he had made. Not a word about his own discomfort. He faced his illness with enormous courage, remaining cheerful to the end.

Sadly, the Mountain Cattlemen have lost a great friend. In the last months of his life Tor made his vast collection of audio tapes and photographs available to the Association for copying and also bequeathed a number of old artifacts collected in his numerous trips through the mountains.

Our thanks and appreciation will always be with him and we extend our sincere sympathy to his wife, Jane, and sons, Kim and Christian.

*Philip Maguire*

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# The Stockman's Cup

It was somewhere up the country, on a snowy  
mountain's side,  
That a group of mountain cattlemen had gathered  
there to ride.  
They were men of noted horsemanship and each  
was filled with pride.  
They were men of natural stamina, with weather-  
toughened hide.

And each had brought a dollar note, and such  
would be the prize  
To be gathered by the winner of the race they  
would devise.  
But more than a purse was here at stake, as each  
would realise.  
For pride and reputation were emblazoned in their  
eyes.

And each was proudly straddled on a pony  
mountain-bred.  
With feet as sure as a mountain goat, and hint of  
brumby-head.  
Though short by normal stature, they displayed an  
eager tread;  
With experience their sires, out of dams the same,  
they said.

The race would be decided over course of  
mountain track.  
Through the creek and up the hillside, around the  
rock and back.  
A test of team endurance - neither courage they  
should lack.  
The winner sure to be the one to run with reins let  
slack.

Though the route was clearly viable, a sense of  
fear was borne  
In each and every rider who assembled there that  
morn.  
It was different from the mountain scrub, pursuing  
beast of horn.  
Now, between their safety and their egos, each  
was torn.

A stockwhip crack ran through the hills to start  
them on their quest.  
And every mounted horseman then put in his very  
best.  
And when the winning stockman crossed the line  
to end the test,  
He longed in anxious wonder for the safety of the  
rest.

It mattered not who won that race, a lesson had  
been taught,  
That comradeship and shared respect, is  
something can't be bought.  
But all agreed, again next year, the battle should  
be fought.  
And so was born the Stockman's Cup, where  
prestige would be sought.

The concept grew, and more events were added  
just for fun.  
But bigger prizes soon induced some cheating to  
be done.  
Then thoroughbreds from racing stock began to  
get a run.  
And no-one cared for much at all, except the  
money won.

Then came the day a rider fell and death became  
his purse.  
Bad sportsmanship and greed they said, and it was  
getting worse.  
The bickering, the politics - then words were  
spoken terse.  
But no one clearly recognised that money was the  
curse.

And now those snowy mountain sides, and the  
valleys in between,  
Are left in silent wonderment, to muse what might  
have been.

*Noel Cutler  
Milawa*

*Noel Cutler became the inaugural  
MCAV Bush Minstrel, reciting this poem at the  
1994 Get Together at Bowmans Forest*

## 1994 Get-Together at Blairs', Bowmans Forest

Mobs of cattlemen and associates rolled up at Blairs' on a warm and windy Friday afternoon. We struck camp and settled in for an action-packed weekend on the banks of the Ovens River.

In the evening the bush band belted out their stuff. A bunch of eager beavers managed to raise a fair bit of dust while the rest preferred to tap their boots to the beat and sink a few coldies with old mates.

As Saturday dawned, the heat was upon us, as was the action. Though this year we were in for a bit of a change. The winner of the Cattlemen's Cup would now be determined by the best overall tally from each rider's time trial, whip-cracking ability and the Cattlemen's race. Thus competitors demonstrate a range of skills that they put to use in day-to-day life.

The time trials set the ball rolling. The riders were required to display control and speed as they and their mounts negotiated a short but challenging course (consisting of gates, jumps, obstacles and that bag of salt).

Later, with the Ovens River as a backdrop, we gathered for the Don Kneebone Heritage Award. Hanging on every word, we chuckled as Bob Healy spun his yarn about the banded hoop-snake, and smiled as Sue Beeton told a tale of bringing cattle down. We also heard poignant pieces from the Hoggs, Mary Goldsworthy and Alan Brewer.

Paul Treasure captured a special moment on a trip to the Northern Territory with perfection. And to top it all, we were treated to hearing Noel Cutler and Mick Walsh battle it out for the inaugural Bush Minstrel Award. Great entertainment for all!

During the yarn-spinning came the packhorse trials. It seems Frank Ryan's time wasn't quite as neat as his pack!

Then came the footslog. And what a slog it was! Congratulations to Lachlan McKenzie, who powered home to pick up the blue sash, bare feet and all!

Around five o'clock, the entire camp gathered in the shade of the beer tent to enjoy the dog high jump. In the under 21-inch category Minnie jumped a winning six feet, ten inches, followed closely by an enthusiastic Kelly in her first-ever dog high-jump.

Rusty jumped an impressive seven feet, three inches to take out the over twenty-one inch category. And Sheila deserves a special mention for her effort.

The fun continued on Saturday evening and well into Sunday morning, thanks to the thigh-slapping tunes from the Avalons, Ray Kernaghan and Co.

The Junior cattlemen's race kicked off at nine the next morning, and Tim Faithful tallied up the most points to take out the Junior Cup.

Congratulations to Ken Connley who won the Cattlemen's Cup. Leigh Woodgate deserves special recognition for her history-making victory in the Cattlemen's Race.

Later in the afternoon, the riders let their hair down as they competed in relay, barrel and flag races. The 'Run-A-Muck' Cup, the final event, topped off the weekend. The name says it all!

Many who enjoyed the weekend may not have realised the amount of work necessary by the North East Branch after the devastating floods a short time before had made the site inaccessible. Bowmans Forest proved to be a fantastic weekend for all who attended. May we have many more!

*Terri Clarke*





The results from the weekend were:

**Juvenile (Under 10 years) Whipcracking**

- 1st Paul Manwarring
- 2nd Katie McCormack
- 3rd Rees Murray

**Junior (15 and under) Whipcracking**

- 1st Jack Cross
- 2nd Michael Manwarring
- 3rd Dianne Hurley

**Ladies Whipcracking**

- 1st Dianne Hurley
- 2nd Rosemary Hurley
- 3rd Tanith Blair

**Open Whipcracking**

- 1st Noel Cutler
- 2nd Jack Cross
- 3rd David Manwarring

**Whipcracking (On Horseback)**

- 1st Justin Blair
- 2nd Jack Cross

**Dog High Jump (Under 21")**

- 1st 'Minnie' (owned by Glen Chalwell)
- 2nd 'Kelly' (owned by Davon Quigley)
- 3rd ' ? ' (owned by G. Clarke)

**Dog High Jump (Over 21")**

- 1st 'Rusty' (owned by A. Carey)
- 2nd ' ? ' (owned by Jenny Bird)

**Mountain Cattlemen's Cup**

- 1st Ken Connley
- 2nd Chris Stoney
- 3rd Wayne Connley

**Junior Cattlemen's Cup**

- 1st Tim Faithful
- 2nd Dan Connley
- 3rd Tarina Connley

**Australian Packhorse Championship**

- 1st Neville Wright
  - 2nd Ron Connley
  - 3rd Jim Kiely
- Neatest Pack awarded to Frank Ryan

**Associate Dash**

- 1st Sharon Pendergast
- 2nd Nick Cook
- 3rd Barbara Cooper-Babidge

**Wally Ryder Horsewalk**

- 1st Krystal Blair
- 2nd Ron Connley
- 3rd John Casely



**Stockhorse Time Trials**

- 1st Ron Connley (riding 'Bracken')
- 2nd Ron Connley (riding 'USA')
- 3rd Barry Stephan

**Runamuck Cup**

- 1st Horse No. 7 (The Far Canal Syndicate)

**Flag Race**

- 1st Barry Stephan
- 2nd Tanith Blair

**Bowman's Forest Footslog (Senior)**

- 1st Lachy McKenzie
- 2nd Allister Scott
- 3rd Tom Denahy

**Bowman's Forest Footslog (Junior)**

- 1st Haylie Maddison
- 2nd Derek Begg
- 3rd James Ryder

**Tug of War**

Whorouly Recreation Reserve

**Children's Art**

- 1st Simon Petiffer
  - 2nd Clare Mason
  - 3rd Coralie Peters
- With a special award to Paul Treasure

**Don Kneebone Heritage Award**

- 1st Alan Brewer

**Bush Minstrel Award**

- 1st Noel Cutler





# There's a little bit of Clancy in us all

Tho' I'm a city dweller  
I would love to change with Clancy  
and wield a stockwhip in my hand where cattle call,  
for I too am a bushman  
in my wild, erratic fancy  
There's a little bit of Clancy in us all.

But Clancy's ghost is rising now  
down by The Overflow  
and The Banjo's pen is rising from its sleep  
for it's whispered in the mountains  
that the cattlemen must go  
no longer there to ride the rugged peaks.

There's a little bit of Clancy in us all  
sometimes we hear the bushman in us call  
but if he came back today, what would Clancy say?  
Would he recognise himself in us at all?

Along the littered streets  
down in the dusty, dirty city  
there's a building where they sit and draft the law  
but it's far from drafting cattle  
it's a Parliamentary battle  
and the bushman doesn't matter anymore.

But they've never been a-droving  
where the seasons come and go  
nor wished to see a mountain sunrise burn.  
They'll never know the mountains  
till they've lingered there alone  
for it's only then that they'll begin to learn.

There's a little bit of Clancy in us all  
sometimes we hear the bushman in us call  
but if he came back today, what would Clancy say?  
would he recognise himself in us at all?

*Philip Maguire*

## Around the Traps

Why 'Around the Traps?' you may ask. Well, in the old days, when Alan Brewer was but a lad, rabbit trapping was a more frequent form of both revenue raising and pest control than it is today. And the bush, strangely enough, was a little more populated, as struggling selectors tried to make a go of it on holdings too small to be considered viable today. Morning and, more especially, at night when they could see each other's lantern light, neighbours would meet 'out around the traps' near their boundaries, exchange a greeting and a bit of news, and move on around their trap rounds. 'See you out around the traps' was a common farewell when they met elsewhere, and became part of our language.

We take this opportunity to greet you, and pass on the odd bit of news, before going further on our rounds.



### Associate Honoured

MCAV members, and especially those who attend Get Togethers, may be familiar with the face above. Tess Coleman of 'Fortuna' near Maffra is most commonly found extracting money in the Marketing Tent. On this occasion she was honoured by being named Citizen of the Year for Maffra for her prowess in extracting blood as co-ordinator for many years of the Maffra Blood Bank. Makes you glad it's only money she's after in the Marketing Tent. Congratulations Tess!



### Identification of Hut sought

The photograph of the hut which appears above recently came into the possession of a hut-historian, and all attempts to identify it have been fruitless. If anyone can identify it, they are invited to contact *Voice*.

While on the subject of old hut photographs, the **MCAV Archives** continue to grow under the care of Don Porter, especially from photographs brought to Get Togethers for copying on site without them having to leave the owner's care. Due to space constraints arising from our Wonnangatta feature this year, *Voice* was unable to bring the usual four pages from the archives, but they will return bigger and better next year.

### MCAV Photograph Competition

The MCAV photograph competition was held again this year, under the very capable and enthusiastic organisation of Don Porter, and with the much-appreciated support of **Kodak Australia**. Results will be announced at the Get Together, and a selection from the winning entries will be published in next year's *Voice*.

## From the Dargo High Plains to Canada

If you were to travel to the other side of the world and visit the University of Alberta in Edmonton Canada, you might be surprised to come across a well-known picture of our high country.

The picture, which was taken some years ago by Linette Treasure to promote the Mountain Cattlemen, is of her family driving a mob of cattle to the Dargo High Plains. This one now hangs in one of the rooms of the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. It is beside an appropriate counterpart - a picture of a Canadian high country log cabin set among pines and spruce.

The framed Mountain Cattlemen poster was presented to Alberta University heads at a special farewell function for an Australian delegation of educationalists from Melbourne University. The Australian group, which had been in Canada to study education there, included Linette Treasure.

A highlight of the recreation time in Canada was the visit to the Calgary Stampede, an international counterpart to our Mountain Cattlemen's Get Together. At that stampede there was one soft blue Australian Akubra amongst the thousands of big, white Stetsons as ranchers and cowboys gathered with other spectators in a huge stadium for the world-famous chuck wagon racing.



In her 'Mountain Cattlemen care for the High Country' windcheater, Linette Treasure promotes the Cattlemen at the Calgary Stampede.

## Two Books for Collectors

Two books that may be may have slipped by collectors of high country literature have recently been published.

The first is *Whipcrackers Eat Humble Pie Too: Selected Bush Verse* by 'The Backblocks Bard' by Noel Cutler, with illustrations by Alexander Mein. The book takes its name from its second poem, which Noel performed in public for the first time to win the Don Kneebone Award in 1993. No longer eligible to win the award in 1994, he returned with the second poem in the book, 'The Stockman's Cup' to become the inaugural MCAV Bush Minstrel in 1994. That poem also appears in this issue of *Voice*, so you can judge his considerable talents for yourself! Others are there, such as 'How to persuade a Reluctant Heifer to become a Productive Dairy Cow', which he also performed. In all the book contains 23 poems, with many of them illustrated by Sandy Mein's excellent sketches.

The book is available from Noel, at RMB 1130, Milawa 3678, phone 057-27 0421, at \$12.95 posted.

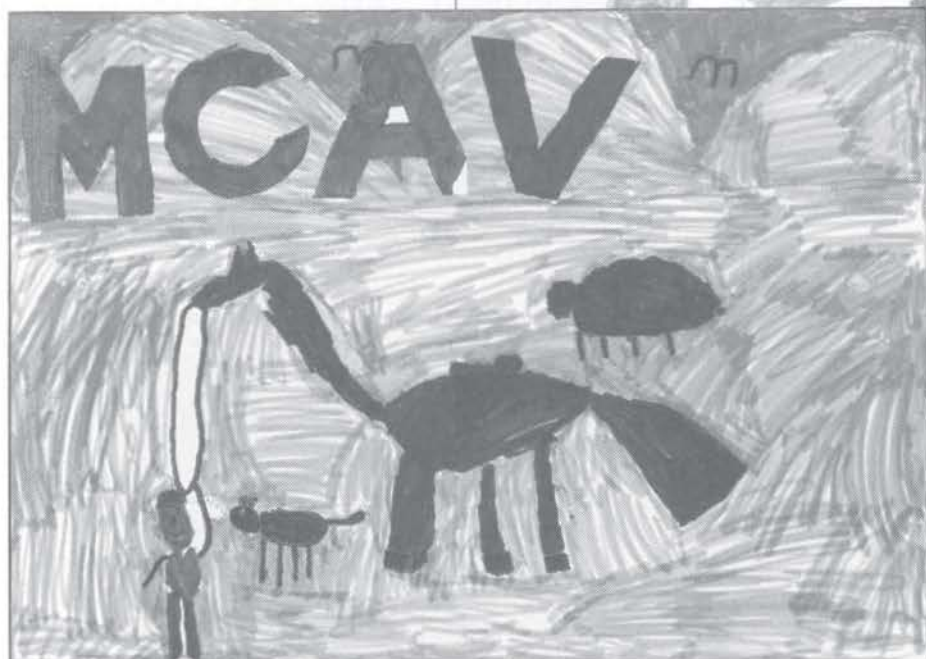
The second book is *Footsteps from the Past: A Centenary publication of the Melbourne Walking Club Inc., 1894-1994*. Edited by Vic Routley, this book looks at walking in the early years, the twenties, thirties, forties and after 1950, mainly through original and mostly unpublished writing of those times. Several cattlemen's huts are pictured, and there are also one or two good pictures of packhorses being used by hikers. Many early personalities are mentioned throughout. The following comment, from Alan Budge, typifies the relationship between early cattlemen and bushwalkers:

Cattlemen's huts were a boon for the walker. They were unlocked with no bar on their use. I remember once arriving with two mates at a cattleman's hut after trudging through rain for most of the day only to find it occupied by a party of stockmen. For all practical purposes the building was full but the boss said warmly, 'Come in boys. I wouldn't leave a dog outside on a night like this.' He didn't either for the dogs spent the night inside too.

The book, of 144 pages, is available from the Melbourne Walking Club, P.O. Box 2446V, Melbourne 3001 at \$14.95 plus postage of \$3 for up to three copies.

## Flags from High Country Kids

When the MCAV called for designs for a new flag, the children of Gelantipy Primary School forwarded some very bright and striking suggestions. Due to space constraints, we are unable to reproduce them all for readers to enjoy, however, a sample of their work features on this page. Thanks to Elizabeth Gardner (Grade 6), Jessica Moon (Grade 1), Amy Rogers (Grade 1), Nicholas Moon (Prep) and Rebecca for their colourful efforts. Well done!



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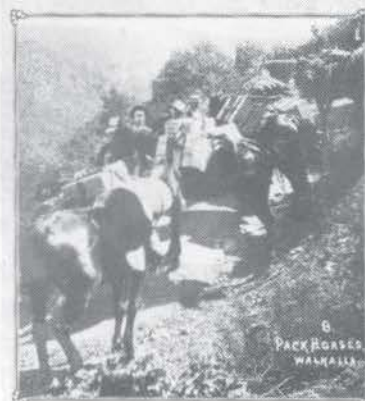
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## Setting a Cracking Pace



Dianna Hurley, granddaughter of Kevin Higgins, on the way to winning the Ladies' and the Combined Boys and Girls' Whipcracking at the Royal Sydney Easter Show, 1994. She began her whipcracking career at MCAV gatherings.

## Help sought with old photo



The assistance of readers is sought regarding the photograph that appears immediately below. It is thought to be an early photograph of some mountain cattle, possibly from near Mansfield (Merrijig seems to be mentioned), in the vicinity of Lake Eildon. It has

been suggested the owner may have had a Scottish-sounding name, but no further details are known. If anyone can make any suggestions or provide further details, they are requested to contact *Voice*.

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# MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE MOUNTAIN CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA INCORPORATED HELD AT FARRER HOUSE, 24 COLLINS STREET MELBOURNE ON FRIDAY 23RD SEPTEMBER 1994.

**PRESENT:** Doug Treasure, Allan Brewer, Sue Silvers, Don Porter, Rhonda Treasure, Kevin Kelly, Mick Jordan, Chris Stoney, Roger Hollis, Sue Beeton, Frank Hill, Mary Goldsworthy, Max Blair, Harry Ryder, Stuart Hicks, Jack Lovick, John Hopkins, Wendy Symons, Jim Commins, Louise Maguire, Phillip Maguire, Paul Dix, Peter McCormack, Jean Marrow, Ros Andrews, John Andrews, Ross Brown.

**APOLOGIES** were received from Lou Lieberman, Pat Coleman, Mark Coleman, Mr and Mrs Woolmer, Annie and Keith Whittam, Bill Crump, Graham Connley, Barry Fitzgerald, Charlie Lovick, John Lovick, Terry Murphy and Bruce Treasure.

The Chairman welcomed all members of the Association and thanked them for attending. He opened the meeting at 10.50 am.

**MINUTES** of the previous Annual General Meeting of the Association as printed in Voice of the Mountains No.17 of 1994 and circulated to all members and associate members be confirmed. Moved Jim Commins, seconded Peter McCormack.

The Chairman invited the President Mary Goldsworthy to deliver her address.

## **PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS**

Twenty-five years after its formation, the reins of leadership of this Association were placed in a woman's hands. This has indeed been an honour and a challenge for me.

The contribution of women, both in the pioneering era and particularly in the High Country, should not be regarded as transient. Whether as companions, spouses, sisters, aunts, mothers or daughters, women have played and will continue to play a vital role in their own right, as well as in

support of their menfolk, who have generally gained more recognition.

1994 has been a year of highs and lows. In January, the Association celebrated the 25th anniversary of its formation. What started out as a small but dedicated group of Cattlemen with support from a small number of associate members, has grown into an effective industry leader with 82 full members and over 2,000 associate members and supporters.

The North East Branch did us proud in our celebration of this milestone with their presentation of the 1994 Get Together and Heritage Weekend. Thank you all Branch members and associates who worked so hard to put such an innovative and special program together and achieved a fine result.

Our decision to proceed with an in-depth scientific study is, I believe, a step in the right direction. This project will be of immense importance to our future and the credibility of the Association. An undertaking such as this will not be successful without the wholehearted support and co-operation of all concerned, so I urge all members and associates to fully assist our efforts.

Speaking of hard work and co-operation leads me to congratulate newly awarded Life Membership recipient Ross Blair and Honorary Associate Members Don Porter, Linda Barraclough and Debbie Squires. Your hard work and generosity with your time has been greatly valued by the Association.

Our Association is unique because it draws supporters and associate members from the length and breadth of Australia - and in fact from the USA and the UK. Our supporters come from all walks of life and all political persuasions, and it is important to recognise that despite these differences we are united in one single aim - to keep forever safe the Mountain Cattlemen and cattle grazing in the alpine regions of Victoria.

To our members and associate members your continuing support is warmly welcomed and deeply appreciated.

My grateful thanks to Allan Brewer who during the year assumed the office of Executive Officer so capably. To you, Doug, as Chairman thanks for your smooth handling of those duties. To Jim Commins, your many contributions on special projects have been outstanding. To Ros Andrews who since 1991 has expanded and managed the marketing department of the Association so successfully I offer the Association's sincere thanks.

I must also thank the members of the Central Council who have guided me through this learning period. I have been grateful for your patience and co-operation. Lastly to our Secretary, Sue Silvers, who has completed another extremely busy year. On behalf of our Association thanks for your support, hard work and friendship.

To those families who have lost loved ones this year, I offer the Association's condolences.

In conclusion I would like to thank the present office bearers and offer my good wishes to those elected today.

The Chairman thanked the President, and asked the Executive Officer to present his report.

## **EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT**

1994 has been a year of achievement for the Mountain Cattlemen's Association.

Our annual Get Together at the Blair family's property at Bowmans Forest was used as an opportunity to promote our culture and heritage, and to that end was advertised as the Mountain Cattlemen's Association get Together and Heritage weekend.

The Mountain cattlemen have a long association with heritage, and it is important that this be continued and recognised.

The weekend was an outstanding success, and the North East Branch are to be congratulated on their efforts.

An important step forward by the Mountain Cattlemen's Association is its decision to undertake scientific research into the effects of alpine grazing.

Opponents of alpine grazing have always claimed that results from narrowly defined studies of small areas apply to the whole of the high plains. Lack of research into the wider issues has led to difficulty in presenting the Association's belief that grazing does not harm the environment, but enhances it.

It is important for our future to develop a body of scientific knowledge encompassing the whole of the alpine grazing area which will support both the Mountain Cattlemen's philosophy and their experience.

All members of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association mourn the death of Lyle McCready. Lyle was a foundation member of the MCAV, was a Vice-President, and held the office of Public Relations Officer for many years.

Lyle was responsible for the design of the Ford Falcon motor car, which replaced the Zephyr in 1960.

As his heart and soul was in the High Country, when Lyle retired from Ford he purchased a property at Dandongadale. He ran cattle there, and on his high country lease.

The Association was lucky to have a man such as Lyle to help and guide them in those early days.

Lyle was always there for the Association and always willing to pass on his knowledge and experience. We have lost a wonderful man and a great ambassador.

The Association extends its sympathy to Mrs McCready and family.

To all Associate members - thank you for your loyalty and support. I also wish to thank Mary Goldsworthy for her untiring commitment as President this past year. I wish also to thank our Secretary for her devotion to the Association.

Good luck to each and every one of you, we all look forward to 1995.

## **SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT**

I am pleased to present my ninth annual report.

Full membership for the year 1993/1994 stands at 80 members of which 51 are financial. The Associate membership register lists 737 households. A proportion of this figure represents family membership. At the present time 384 are financial. The Association has five honorary Associate members, and six life members.

The MCAV must be congratulated on its ability to run a full-time professional organisation on such a small membership base. This is achieved through the hard work and dedication of its office bearers and a strong and committed Central Council. It is important however, that all members of the Association should keep in touch with the issues which involve their industry. This is best done



initially, I believe, through the Branches, and all members should be strongly encouraged to attend Branch meetings. I recommend that Branch Presidents make personal contact with their members in an effort to promote a higher level of participation.

Subscriptions will continue to come in during the year, with a significant number of Associate members paying their fees at the time of the Get Together.

The past year has been interesting and busy.

From a purely personal point of view, a major event was the removal of the MCAV office from the rear of 19A Highett Street to a new office set-up in High Street Mansfield. The old office was very small and lacked privacy. There was no storage facility for old files and documents, and it became difficult to work amid the clutter. I am pleased to say that the new office has plenty of room, good storage, and presents a more professional profile. All round it is an excellent working environment, and members of the Association who have visited would agree with this view. It also serves to demonstrate just how far the MCAV has travelled in the past ten years. I used to work from a desk in the corner of a room in my house in Melbourne. We now have a professional office, office bearers communicate through a network of fax machines, and increasing numbers of mobile telephones! Communication is now extremely fast and efficient.

Another change in direction came with this year's Get Together at Whorouly. The North-East Branch put on a really interesting weekend, and courageously changed the Get Together direction by placing a strong emphasis on the heritage of the Mountain Cattlemen in addition to their horse riding skills. The Branch should be congratulated for their hard work which paid off so handsomely.

Central Council met five times this year, in October, November, February, May and August to conduct the business of the Association, and make some hard decisions regarding the future.

At the November Central Council meeting, an application for full membership by Allan Brewer was approved, and the Council asked him to take the position of Executive Officer for the rest of the year. We thank Allan for taking on this job and for his help and support for our new president, Mary Goldsworthy.

In May the MCAV was named as Defendant in a claim for damages arising from an accident which

occurred at the 1993 Get Together at Omeo. Legal representatives for the Association's Insurer have indicated that they will strongly defend this action. Investigations undertaken by the Insurer have revealed that the Association was in no way negligent, and liability has been denied. The case is now listed for hearing in the Supreme Court.

In October 1993 MCAV had a meeting with the Minister for Conservation and Environment to discuss various concerns regarding alpine grazing. Matters resolved included the Department's method of charging. Several members have complained to the Association that they were being charged for the number of cattle allocated on the licence, although the numbers sent were significantly lower. The Minister agreed that as from the 1993/94 season, Cattlemen would be charged only for the number of cattle taken to the runs. He stated that the Department would no longer count the cattle as they went up, since a clause in the licences required the licensees to advise the Department of the number sent in each year.

Despite a strong case being put to the Minister on the subject of cattle numbers on the Bogong High Plains, he remains firm in his decision that the number of stock Cattlemen should be allowed to take up would remain at about 3160 adult equivalents. The method of counting cattle in adult equivalents remains an issue of contention.

The Minister has confirmed that although the concept of counting cattle as adult equivalents applied initially to the Bogong High Plains, it was a method of counting which, for uniformity, would be applied to all areas within the Alpine National Park. Adult equivalents will not apply outside the Park as a general rule.

The Association had also asked the Minister to agree to a new agreement on grazing in the Alpine Park. The MCAV felt that this was necessary in order to remove some of the errors and anomalies in the licences. The Minister refused this submission, and stated that he felt it more important to work through particular issues of concern. Furthermore he noted that to negotiate a new agreement would prolong the period of uncertainty regarding alpine grazing, and any new agreement would need endorsement by all political parties in the Parliament.

The Minister also noted the MCAV concern that the commitment for 7 year bush grazing licences had not been met. He agreed that these licences

should be issued before the commencement of the 1994/95 grazing season. I am pleased to report that discussions have now commenced regarding these licences, and although a commitment regarding time was given, it would seem sensible to be flexible on this and get the licences right, rather than push to have them available this summer.

In December 1993 and January 1994, members of the Association were involved in filming for a video which was to form a major part of the MCAV education kit. It is enough to say that what started out badly became infinitely worse. Some initial private difficulties with the film crew led to one person attempting to complete the project. Filming was completed, and was not satisfactory. It is more than disappointing that an opportunity to produce an important project led to not only a financial loss, but also the loss of valuable time. Negotiations are shortly to take place to allow the project to go forward again.


In January 1994, MCAV responded to the appalling and tragic bushfires which engulfed vast areas of New South Wales, with a hard-hitting news release. In it, Jim Commins pointed out the folly of removing grazing from National Parks, and the cost to the entire community of a lack of fuel reduction burning. The experienced and commonsense approach to these issues shown by Mountain cattlemen attracted the attention of the media, and members of the Association put the MCAV view strongly on both radio and television. The Association also took the opportunity to provide the New South Wales Select Committee into the bushfires with a lengthy and detailed submission on the benefits of fuel reduction burning in conjunction with grazing.

It is interesting to note that suggestions are being made in New South Wales at the present time, that drought affected cattle should be allowed to graze in National Parks. We are watching for any further developments.

February/March 1994 saw MCAV members with support from the Department of Conservation and Environment re-open the old cattle track around the northern face of Mt Magdala. This involved some hard physical work, as a rock slide had blocked the track in 1984. Apart from the historic significance to Mountain Cattlemen, this re-opened track provides a more comfortable path for those who do not wish to climb the summit, and provides a

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sheltered, less tiring alternative in deteriorating weather conditions. Thanks and congratulations are extended to all those who took part. It was pleasing to see that this achievement was reported fully in the local newspaper, and acknowledged by Wild magazine.

In March 1994 Jack Hicks and Harry Ryder represented the MCAV at the Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council Seminar on the Bogong High Plains, where Jack Hicks presented the Mountain Cattlemen's perspective on alpine grazing. It can only be hoped that some of the old prejudices and anti-grazing sentiments were dispelled, or at least that the Association's perspective gave the delegates some serious food for thought.

During the year the Association has put two lengthy submissions to Government on the subjects of catchment and Land Protection Legislation, and Fire Management Code of Practice. MCAV was appointed to the consultative committee on the Fire Management Code of practice project, and Jim Commins presented the MCAV submission and spoke to Government officials on the relationship

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between well-managed cattle grazing in conjunction with fuel reduction burning, an irresistible and commonsense approach to land protection.

The Association has also been granted observer status on the Mt Stirling consultative committee preparing a consultancy brief for an Environment Effects Statement. The Association will also be putting a submission to that committee.

Of recent concern has been the push for World Heritage nomination for the Australian Alpine area. The Association responded with letters to Federal politicians, and the Minister for Conservation and Environment in Victoria. The Minister has replied by letter stating that Victoria is not pursuing World heritage status for the Victorian Alps, and there the matter currently rests.

During the year the Central Council called for entries in a competition to select as design for a MCAV flag. There was a good response, and the Central Council selected a design submitted by Associate member Mr John McKindley.

Requests from students for information on alpine grazing and the role of the MCAV is an ever-increasing burden, as are requests from schools to provide speakers. This can be a problem when a speaker is required in Melbourne. Many schools have camps in north-eastern Victoria, which makes it easier for Cattlemen by reducing time and travelling. A decision needs to be made as to whether it is worthwhile sending speakers down to Melbourne.

I have represented the Association on the Public Land Council this year, and our President joined one meeting to get a feel for the way the Council works and the issues it addresses. The Public Land Council is an important forum to discuss current issues, and I enjoy the meetings and consider the work done there to be productive.

Central Council has spent a good deal of time considering a proposal to undertake a major research project. Allan Brewer has outlined the reason for this in his report. A decision as to who will undertake this project, and how it will be progressed will be made in the very near future.

I wish to present to the members the Financial Statements for the year 1993/1994. I do not propose to cover the marketing section, as this will be done by Ros Andrews. You will note a healthy balance in the assets. The Association hopes to utilise part of these funds in a research project. I am concerned to build on the financial position, and would therefore

recommend the members consider an increase in membership subscriptions. It now costs in excess of \$8.00 per member per annum to produce the quarterly newsletter and the Voice of the Mountains. These are sent out to all members and associates during the year free of charge. I believe the membership would consider a small increase to the following categories of membership: Full Members, Family Members and Single Members. The last increase in membership subscriptions occurred in 1988.

In conclusion I would like to thank those associate members who give such terrific support throughout the year, and also members of the Central Council for their assistance and hard work. Finally I wish to congratulate our President, Mary Goldsworthy on a great performance during 1993/1994.

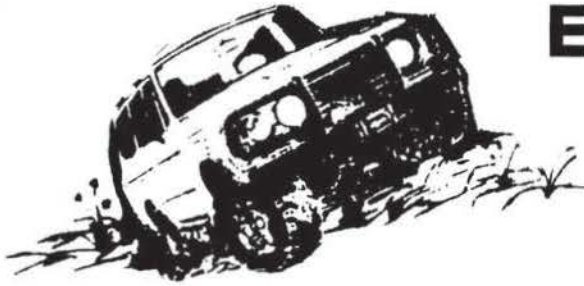
## MARKETING REPORT

The 1993/94 year for marketing has been an interesting one. It has been a year of sorting out. Turnover for the year was \$28,811, down from \$35,784.71 last year.

Wholesale sales were up and it is good to see our products being marketed more widely through the wholesale network. Miscellaneous sales, e.g. mail order, remained fairly constant but event sales were down by \$5,225.38, or 23%. This was mainly due to a smaller turnover at the Get Together. It was, however, pleasing to see that marketing sales were not down to the same extent as attendance figures, so relatively speaking we did quite well.

There was some conjecture prior to the Get Together as to whether having outside vendors in attendance would prove to be to the detriment of the marketing department. I am unable to say if this proved to be the case. Sales were certainly down, but as previously mentioned, when compared with the attendance numbers, they actually increased. I believe that people who want to buy MCAV goods will do so regardless. There were certainly several favourable comments relating to the variety of activities, things to look at, and goods to buy.

Net profit for the year was \$6,626.89, down from \$12,800.80 last year. The main reason for the drop in net profit was the decision to rationalise stock holdings. During the previous two years we were able to identify colours and sizes of garments which were moving very slowly, an example being



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children's windcheaters. Although we had not purchased any of these in the previous two years, at the current selling rate there was still over four years' stock on hand. A similar situation existed with teenage and small adult sizes.

The decision was made to discontinue those lines and move the existing stock before it became unsaleable. There is a limit to how many functions garments can be taken (even in plastic bags), and still remain in saleable condition, especially for wholesale. At the 30th June this year the total stock of those lines was just 14 garments. To achieve this result it was necessary to discount the price on these lines with obvious effects on profit.

As a result of comments and suggestions from customers over the last few years, a decision was made to introduce a new windcheater. We had a few hiccups along the way, but we now have a garment with a new look that is of a much higher quality. It has only been available for a few weeks and so far is proving to be very successful. We have been busy clearing the few remaining windcheaters of the previous style.

The 'royalty' system with Thomas Cook continues to work well, and I believe that there will be a much greater demand for the new style windcheater through Thomas Cook outlets.

Thank you to all my helpers. Firstly to my husband John whose accounting expertise, caravan pulling experience, and general assistance has been invaluable. To Tess and Pat Coleman, Geraldine, Mary O'Brien, Carley Andrews, Paul and Judy Dix, Sue Beeton, David Shelton, Carmen Stebnyckyz, Galia Hardy, Kate Stoney, Chris Hammond, Fay Hoffman and her daughter, Frank Hill, Frank Sedgman, Barry Masters, David Morrison, Norma and John Marshall and any one I have neglected to mention - thank you for all your wonderful help at the Get Together, 4x4 Show, and Bush Dance. It is impossible to carry out these tasks without help, and I am very grateful for the assistance from all these folk during the year.

Special thanks to Don Porter whose assistance with graphics, bromides etc., has continued throughout another year in his customary obliging way.

The Chairman thanked the Secretary and Marketing Officer for their reports.

Moved John Andrews seconded Mary Goldsworthy that the financial statements for the year 1993/1994 be accepted. Carried.

The Chairman made special mention of the work done by Jim Commins for the Association, and thanked Jim for his attention to the Association's business over the past years.

### **SETTING OF SUBSCRIPTION FEES**

It was agreed that there should be no increase in associate membership fees for the 1995/1996 year.

Moved Allan Brewer seconded Ross Brown THAT full membership fees be increased for a trial period. That the minimum fee remain at \$100 up to and including the first hundred head, and that there be an increase of .25 cents to \$1.25 per head thereafter up to a maximum of \$500. That the next newsletter should explain the reason for the increase. Carried.

### **FIXING OF HONORARIUMS**

Moved Ross Brown seconded Jack Lovick THAT the Honorariums for the year 1995/1996 remain at the same level as for the year 1994/1995. Carried.

It was agreed that if the Chairman was also a Special Projects Officer, then only an Honorarium for Special Projects should apply.

### **ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS**

The Chairman declared all positions vacant and remained in the Chair for the election of office bearers.

President: Mary Goldsworthy nominated by Jack Lovick was elected.

Vice President: Harry Ryder nominated by Allan Brewer was elected.

It was agreed that the position of second Vice President be dropped.

Executive Officer: Allan Brewer nominated by Mary Goldsworthy was elected.

Special Projects Officers: Jim Commins nominated by Allan Brewer was elected. Doug Treasure nominated by Allan Brewer was elected.

Secretary/Treasurer: Sue Silvers nominated by Ross Brown was elected.

Marketing officer: Sue Beeton nominated by Sue Silvers was elected.

### **Appointment of Chairman**

It was agreed that a Chairman other than the President was of assistance.

Doug Treasure nominated by Chris Stoney was elected.

### **Public Land Council Representative**

Sue Silvers nominated by Mary Goldsworthy was elected. Mary Goldsworthy nominated by Ross Brown declined.

### **Appointment of Auditor**

Mr W. Crump nominated by John Andrews was appointed.

### **Alteration of Constitution**

The motion proposed by G. Connley and seconded by A. Brewer at the Central Council Meeting held at Harrierville on the 24th November 1993 was considered by the members.

THAT Clause 3(1) of the Constitution relating to Qualification for Membership be altered from 'grazing on Crown Land' to 'grazing on broad area Crown Land'.

The motion was carried.

It was agreed that it was necessary to differentiate between broad area Crown land and small acreages involved in unused roads and water frontages.

The Chairman then asked Don Porter to address the members.

Don Porter spoke of the progress made in copying and cataloguing the photographs and tapes donated to the Association by Mr Tor Holth. He expressed concern that the Mountain Cattlemen families were slow in bringing their old photographs and documents to him for copying.

He understood that families treasured their old records, and explained that he could copy them on site at the Get Together and return them immediately. He hoped that more families would assist this year. He announced that there would be another photograph competition at the Get Together in 1995, and that the last event was extremely successful. He also reported on progress with the area set aside by Thomas Cook in their new establishment for a Cattlemen's display area. The area has been designed, but the signage is not yet ready. The area will display MCAV memorabilia, photographs and museum.

The Chairman thanked Don Porter for his report. President Mary Goldsworthy spoke about the work Don Porter had done for the Association over the years, and presented him with Honorary Associate membership.

Mary Goldsworthy then presented Life Membership to Max Blair on behalf of Mr Ross Blair. Mr Blair's Life Membership will be celebrated at a picnic day on the 2nd October.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

1. Jim Commins spoke of the work done for the Association by the late Mr Lyle McCready.

2. Jack Lovick noted that the RAS had recently arranged for a mob of sheep to be driven through the City of Melbourne and unfortunately the sheep had broken away. He noted that when the Mountain cattlemen had driven a mob of cattle along the same route, the cattle had behaved perfectly.

3. Allan Brewer informed the members that he is donating a book of his poetry to the Association for sale through the marketing department. The book to be arranged by Linda Barraclough and Debbie Squires.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 1.00pm

## THE ORAL HISTORIAN

A strange thing happened down in Gippsland,  
A little while ago,  
And though it caused a mighty laugh,  
We should tell, so all will know.

She was bright and sweet and pretty,  
From a remote university,  
Come up to the bush, she did,  
To tape record mountain history.

He was old and deaf and slowing now,  
But still a man of note.  
He'd had a famous mountain run,  
In a place the most remote.

She asked him would he honour her,  
And help with her degree,  
And talk into her tape machine.  
She asked most pleasantly.

'Another bloody one', he thought,  
'The same story come to hear.  
Full of words and promises,  
But never bring they beer.'

She set it up and promised him,  
That whatever he may say,  
The tape would not be edited,  
A true record of the day.

She began to ask the questions,  
Of the cattle that he bred.  
She had a scheme of what to ask,  
Right in her pretty head.

'What were the cows you had?  
Were they herefords red and white,  
That you used to top the market with,  
Bred in that remote site?'

Well, that was fine, he heard her well,  
But thought she was most slack.  
For surely any sane person,  
Knew his prize angus were all black.

So up he spoke, and told her that  
He'd have angus till he died.  
Then the bloody stupid bird,  
She went and asked him 'why?'

'The wort', he said, 'the bloody wort',  
It chooses cattle red and white.  
It gets into their pigment, see,  
And they lose all their sight'.

Now any bushie round about  
Will tell you nice and quick,  
That herefords on St John's Wort  
Can end up very sick.

But still, out from the city,  
No knowledge for her friend,  
She persisted with her questioning,  
Not seeing round the bend.

'Warts', said she, 'do tell me more,  
Of the effects these sores have had.  
I hear a tone within your voice,  
That tells me they are bad.'

'Bad', he cried, from years of toil,  
In horror did he shiver.  
'The worts make the stock so mad  
They drown themselves in the river'.

She drew near, recorder on,  
With sympathy in her eyes,  
And asked more about these warts,  
Like 'What colour, and what size?'

'Size', he thought, 'what a question.  
Will she never stop?'  
'Well, three foot high, or more,  
Green, with yellow flowers on the top'.

'A plant,' she said, in knowing voice,  
And wished she'd used her scone.  
In her belief she knew it all,  
The recorder still was on.

She knew she could not edit  
As much as one word from that tape.  
By the time she realised what she'd done  
It was, by far, too late.

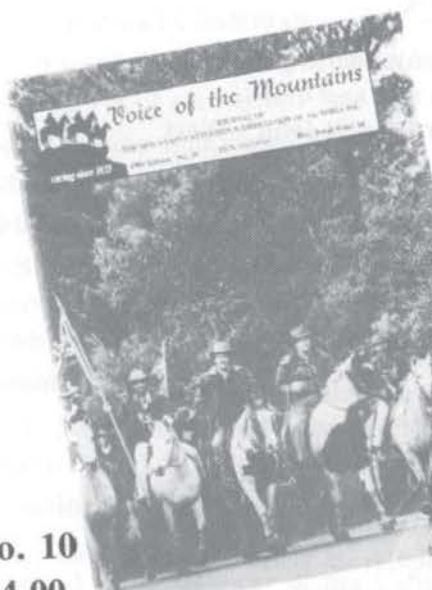
So with her fine university degree,  
And despite her questioning plan,  
When it came to life's experiences,  
She matched not that mountain man.

And away somewhere in the archives,  
Of a fine, national institution,  
The words, unedited on that tape  
Extract full well a retribution.

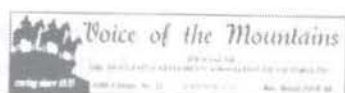
*G.A. Knights*



## BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE



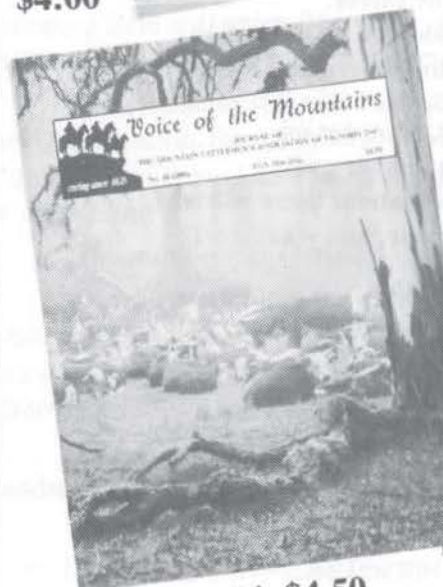
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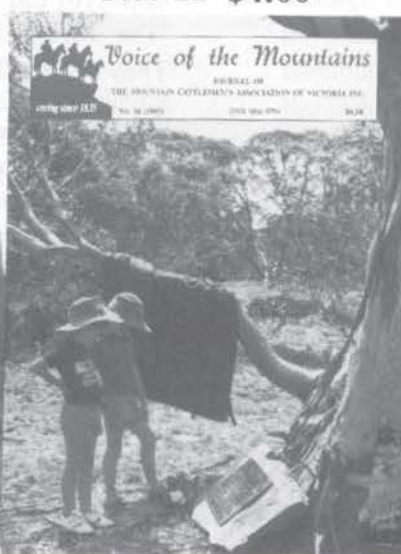
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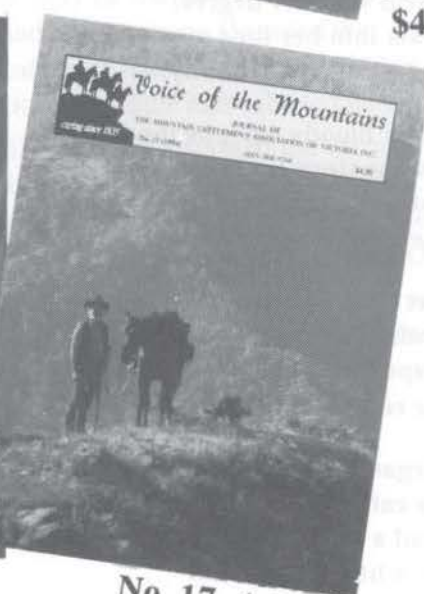
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The Committee for *Voice of the Mountains* would like to thank everyone for the wonderful support we have received this year, and the unusually large amount of material received. This has meant that a number of poems and items have not been able to be included, despite the addition of eight extra pages this year. We hope to be able to use some of them next year, but would still welcome poems, stories and, in particular, good black and white photographs of activities in the High Country.

*Voice of the Mountains* is grateful for the assistance of 'The Anapaks' yet again in the compilation of this issue. We are also grateful to the following for their assistance:

Cath and Charlie Noble, Sue and Harry Ryder, Jim Commins, Tim Gibson,  
Colleen Hurley, Kevin Higgins and George Knights.

E-Gee Printers have again coped magnificently with our impossible deadlines and we thank them for their patience above and beyond the call of duty.

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