



Voice of the Mountains

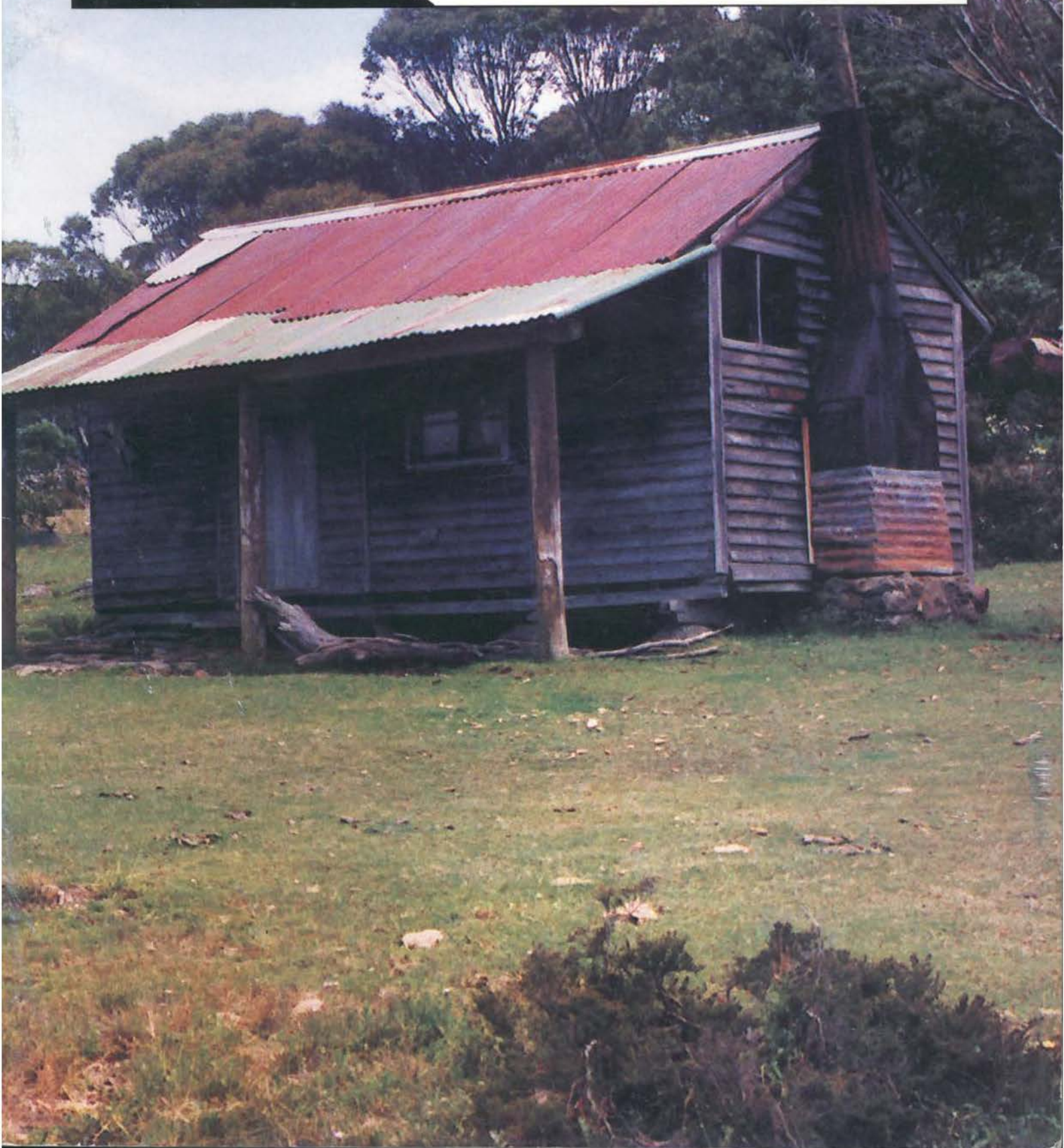
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Editorial Committee: Linda Barraclough, Debra Squires and Sue Silvers

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COVER

Main Photo: Youngs Hut (second) at Mount Jim (*Courtesy Mrs Marion Hair*).
Inset on rear: Remains of Youngs Hut (first) (*Photograph by David Oldfield*).

The first Youngs Hut is thought to have dated from the 1880s, and was in use until about 1928-1932. The second hut was built by the SEC about 1930, and was sold by them in 1952 to the McNamaras and Les Watt from Cobungra Station for £16. It was used by the McNamaras, Westons and stockmen from Cobungra Station, but today is used mainly as a refuge hut and for camping by tourists. A stockyard can be found near the original hut site.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

A brief look back at the achievements of the past makes one realise the depth and intensity of work which has been done by past office bearers of our Association.

Sometimes it may feel like an eternal rearguard action, however the level of public awareness and support for our cause and history gives great encouragement.

For the future we must continue to promote well-managed alpine grazing as an environmentally friendly, sustainable system of food production.

Hopefully, between the government land managers and ourselves there can be fostered a new sense of working together in the high country, based on a new respect of each other's point of view.

There is, as always, a need for continued vigilance, as those individuals and organisations opposed to grazing still work behind the scenes to achieve their aim of removing all cattle from the mountains. The mountains are big enough for everyone, as long as consideration, tolerance and good management are exercised.

Special thanks must be extended to Debbie Squires and Linda Barraclough for their untiring efforts in producing the excellent publication - *Voice of the Mountains*.

Thanks also to Sue Silvers who, as secretary, has helped make my transition to President a smooth one.

Harry Ryder



MCAV President Harry Ryder, Ron Briggs, Frank Ryan and Graham Hughes at the unveiling of the Don Kneebone memorial plaque.



Guy's Hut, Snowy Plains (*Photograph by David Oldfield*)

Havens of the High Country

An Exhibition and Book by David Oldfield

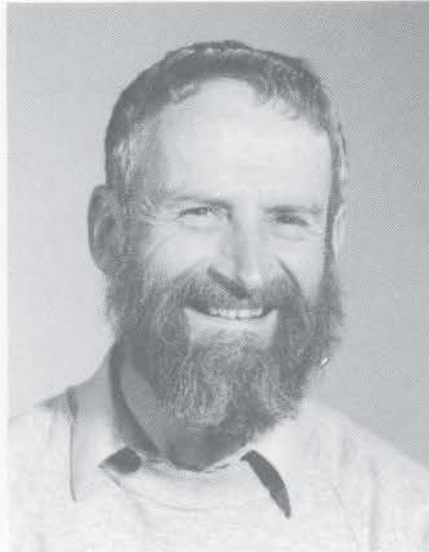
David Oldfield had been walking and photographing in the Victorian High Country for many years before Fitzgeralds hut was destroyed by fire. However it was that loss that made him decide that he would systematically photograph every remaining hut that he could find, a work as yet unfinished. This has now led to an impressive book, *Havens of the High Country: Photographs from the Victorian Alps*, and an equally important exhibition of the same name.

This work would be important enough on its own if it featured only the exterior photographs of the huts. However one of the delights in the book and exhibition is that, for the first time, there has been a strong emphasis on the interior of the huts. In these havens, on many a night around the fire, stories have been handed down of interesting times and hard times, good times and bad, and the cattlemen of past years.

Arriving in Melbourne in 1967 from his native Yorkshire, David already had a taste for the outdoors, having spent time in Britain rock-climbing. Photography had been an interest since school days so David immediately felt at home in the high country with his camera.

The Victorian alps are fortunate that a photographer of David's calibre has turned his lens in their direction. He is an Associate of the Royal Photographic Society and the Australian Photographic Society and began a two-year term as President of the latter in September 1996. He has judged national and international photographic competitions.

On arriving at a hut, David generally photographs it from all four sides, and then concentrates on interior features. He has a particular interest in objects found within huts, and locating



David Oldfield

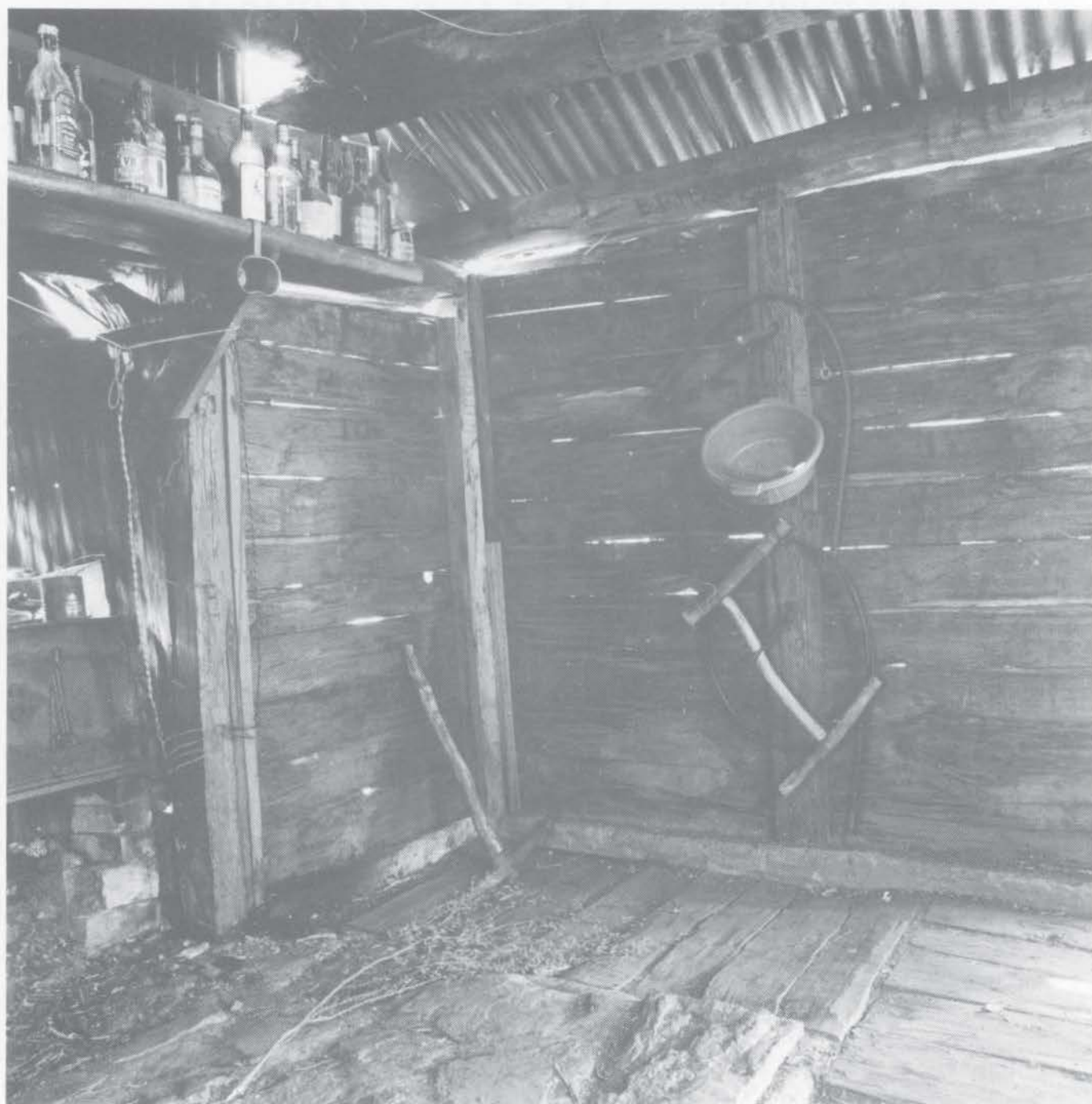
the older examples of graffiti. Invariably he photographs the fireplace. The images he produces often contain surprises - an old button on a floor, a shoe last on a bench, bunks made of hessian bags sewn together, all in crisp black and white photographs with perfectly balanced contrast. The type of photograph the hobby photographer always dreams of taking, one day. Invariably they make the user of colour film consider reverting to using black and white.

The book, *Havens of the High Country*, is approximately the old foolscap size, and has fifty pages. It consists almost entirely of black and white photographs, one or two to a page. The reproduction is outstanding, and the paper high quality.

Cattlemen's huts included in the book are: Kellys hut at Holmes Plain, Wallaces hut, Battys hut, Bindaree hut, Chesters hut at Tamboritha, Guys hut, Howitt hut, Treasures hut, Horsehair hut, Blairs hut, Ritchies hut, Ropers hut, Charlie MacNamara's hut at Dinner Plain, DAMM hut, Moroka hut, Westons hut, Kellys hut at Marum Point and others.

The exhibition that accompanies the book has been seen at the Royal Historical Society of Victoria rooms at the Royal Mint in Melbourne, where it was opened by the Hon. Graeme Stoney MLC, and is currently to be seen at the Gippsland Art Gallery, Sale, until 2 February 1997.

David is also fully aware of the historical importance of the project he has undertaken. He intends filing copies of all photographs with the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, and has also already handed a significant number of photographs to the Maffra Library, which has an established collection of hut photographs.



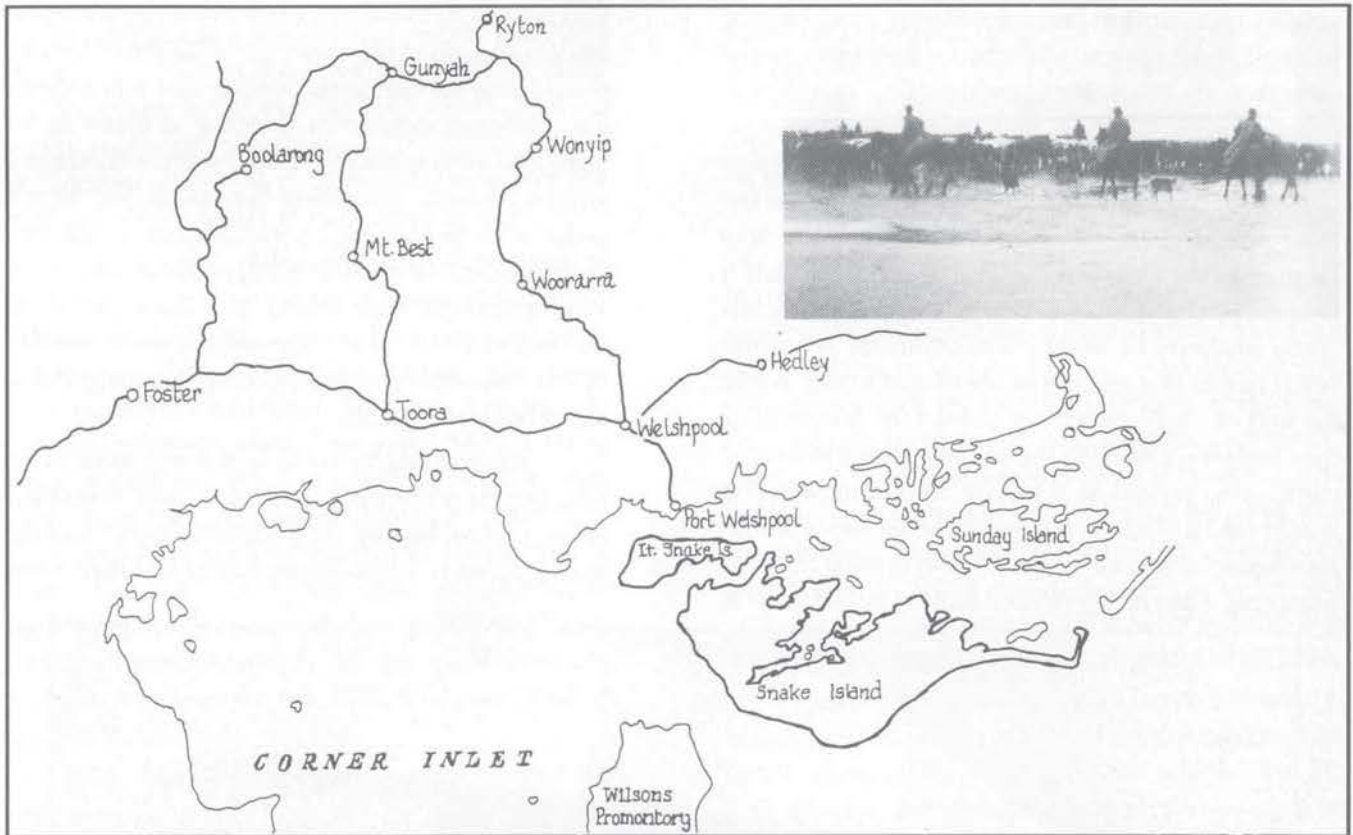
Ritchies Hut, (Photograph by David Oldfield)

Gippsland Art Gallery, Foster Street, Sale (in same building as Wellington Shire offices) is open 10am to 5pm, 7 days a week. The exhibition will be there until 2 February 1997. It will also be seen later in the year at several venues in the North East, which have not as yet been finalised - enquire at your nearest regional gallery.

The book *Havens of the High Country* is available from
The Black and White Enthusiast,
22 Nandi Ave,
Frenchs Forest NSW 2086
Phone and Fax: 02-9451 6801, Mobile 014-603 073.
Price: \$29.20 posted.

Snake Island and the Cattlemen of the Sea

In this article, which first appeared in *Gippsland Heritage Journal* No.20, Cheryl Glowrey discusses winter grazing of dairy cows on Snake Island, up until the start of World War II. Grazing continues there today, and Cheryl is compiling a full history of the island.



In 1908 W.F. Daff, a veteran of the Boer War, became the first Crown Lands Bailiff for Snake Island, collecting 6d per cow and 3d per head for younger stock, each week hill farmers agisted their dairy cows on the island. His appointment came about after pressure from farmers for the government to provide winter grazing land. Dairy farmers who selected and cleared blocks in the steep hills of South Gippsland found the cold, wet climate limited pasture growth during the winter months, restricting the number of productive cows they could carry. Farmers from the higher hill districts, many of them soldier settlers, established the traditions of taking cattle to Snake Island.

The choice of Snake Island for agistment was based on a history of droving stock across the sea from the mainland. Albert J. Smith, who held the

pastoral lease for Snake Island from the 1880s until 1906 was taking stock across from Nine-Mile Creek Paddock on Gellion's Run at Hedley, and possibly sub-leasing grazing rights on the island to the Gellion family.¹ In the two years following the cancellation of Smith's lease in 1906 and the resumption of the island by the Department of Lands and Survey for a wildlife reserve in 1908, Josh and Tom Hull pastured sheep and horses from the drought-stricken Mallee on the island. The Hulls may have taken cattle across for hill farmers before agistment became official, the low landforms of Snake Island and Little Snake Island lying off the coast of Corner Inlet providing secure grazing and shelter with small gums, banksia, ti-tree and grasses growing in the sandy soil. Kangaroos, wallabies, emus and water birds lived on the island, along with hog deer placed there in

the nineteenth century and added to by Smith in the final years of his lease.²

The autumn droving began in May on the change of the moon when tides were best, and continued fortnightly into July. Under the regulations of the Agisters Association, each farmer had to provide a drover for the crossing, and while this was a daunting prospect for some, it became the annual holiday for many hill farmers, offering a rare chance to meet with mates, tell stories and have some adventure. In the early years drovers carried their supplies with them on their horses for the stay, usually only one or two nights. A butt of chaff was tied to the back of the saddle, a blanket across the front and food for a few days in a sugar bag was carried on the rider's back. A loaf of bread, half a pound of butter and some beef, with perhaps a small bottle of sherry or whisky was common. A second sugar bag held a change of socks and towel, while the butt of chaff, necessary to feed the horses after they had swum through the cold water and mustered cattle, also served as a pillow. Sometimes, a dog would find a place on the horse for the swim across the channels. Not all horses took to the water, some panicking when inexperienced drovers pulled on their

mouths, or they started to bog in the soft sand on the edges of the track, plunging riders into the water.

The trip to Port Welshpool for the crossing could take two days for farmers from as far away as Boolarra South, though most would travel down through the hills the day before the crossing. Steve Mitchell, farming at Gunyah in the 1920s, tells of driving his herd along the Dingo Creek Road and looking across to see cows from Wonyip, Ryton and Budgeree making their way along the road.³ Drovers would wait for the herds coming and join together for company, sometimes bringing as many as 500 head into Welshpool in the afternoon; a continuous stream of cattle stretching for two miles, kept in order with hard-working cattle dogs. Once their cows reached the small holding paddock east of Port Welshpool, the men would stay the night in the Welshpool Hotel, or at a boarding house on the edge of Port Welshpool, revelling in the company before an early morning start.

The crossing to Snake Island was made at low tide, taking a carefully navigated path, sometimes as narrow as twenty feet, between soft, 'sinking' mud patches to Little Snake Island and then across



A group of Snake Island cattlemen (Photographer: J. Gunn, Centre for Gippsland Studies)

to Big Snake Island. Each year, the farmers elected a pilot who was paid 6d per cow to take charge of this sometimes treacherous crossing. The three and a half mile trip, taking more than ninety minutes, relied on the pilot's knowledge of the sea and weather, as well as his experience with the route from which the markers would often have been removed. Pilots would lead the cows into the water while their drovers forced the herd into the sea with cracking stock-whips, trying to prevent the lead cows getting too far ahead. Even with the low tide, cattle and horsemen swam two flowing channels about twenty feet wide, sometimes in thick fog. Not all the farmers could swim and feared the water, relying heavily on their horses to carry them across.

It is around the pilots that the greatest loyalties and the most enduring stories of Snake Island focus. In the years to 1940, Tom Hull was the first pilot, followed by Tom Findlay, a fisherman who knew the currents well and would lead the cattle into the water before dawn, when tides were lowest. Findlay was replaced by Albert Hellisen during the mid-1920s until Hellisen became bailiff at Yanakie in 1927. Findlay, with a reputation for firmness, returned as pilot until 1938. Hellisen piloted the biggest herd ever to cross at one time when 1100 to 1200 head were taken by 70 drovers, cattle spreading over half a mile in the sea, from Salmons Creek to the Middle Ground.

Tom Findlay was pilot in 1933 when the cattlemen faced their biggest loss. The decision to make a crossing rested entirely with the pilot and all seemed well for this spring trip to the mainland. A mile into the crossing coming off the island a hailstorm blew up. A second storm hit the herd as it left the shelter of Little Snake Island and the cattlemen struggled to keep the frightened animals on the track. When the third storm broke the men were caught in the narrowest part of the track, guiding the cattle through the quicksand-like bogs. Part of the herd broke, plunging into the bog. In a chaotic attempt to save the frightened cows, the cattlemen left their horses with one stockman and tried to bring the cattle back to the track on foot. They were unsuccessful, the tide rising all the while they worked and over 70 valuable dairy cows perished. For the unlucky farmers who lost cattle this was a harsh blow.⁴

Huts, yards and dams were gradually built on the island to improve conditions for the farmers. In

the early years the Department of Lands and Survey provided army bell tents, sleeping eight to ten men each, to accommodate the drovers who could not all fit into the huts. Mustering took place fortnightly from the end of July, to return cows before spring calving. It was an exhausting time, with men leaving the huts at dawn to cover their section of the island looking for cattle. Often, the weather in spring prevented the men from crossing and they would be stuck on the island for a few days or more with dwindling supplies. Once back on the mainland the cows were drafted out of the holding paddock in districts, those from furthest away setting out first on the trek home.

As they left the island the farmers would set fire to one or two acres of tussocks and scrub, burning to regenerate fresh pasture for the following season. The cattlemen also assumed a role in keeping the numbers of kangaroos and wallabies down, taking over from the recreational hunters who were increasingly restricted from the island. Left alone, kangaroo and wallaby populations increased to the point of starvation and the cattlemen believed that in protecting the pasture for cattle, they also ensured the health of these animals. These, and other 'management' practices would lead the agisters into conflict with the conservationists many years later.

Snake Island stories, often larrikin in nature, were repeated each trip around the fires in the huts to become part of a lore passed on to the sons of the first drovers, and their sons in time. Stories such as the time Tom Findlay crossed to the island with two horses and a dray in thick fog, without any of the usual landmarks; or, the time some wit locked the men in the hut and put a bag over the chimney. Snake Island continued to be essential for dairy farmers in need of winter grasses until the 1950s and 1960s, creating a wealth of stories and traditions. It is still used for agistment today by farmers who keep alive the practice of droving cattle across the sea.

Notes

1. Gellion diaries, 1898, held in the Port Albert Maritime Museum.
2. Adams, J., *From These Beginnings: History of the Shire of Alberton*, Alberton Shire Council, Yarram, 1990, p. 146.
3. Interview with Steve Mitchell, April 1996.
4. A. Lonsdale, *Mount 'A', (Mount Best), 1892-1982*, published by the author, 1982, p. 47

Cheryl Glowrey lives in Foster and is writing a history of Snake Island. Her uncle was a Snake Island pilot.

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With Cattlemen and Packhorses A Bushwalker's Photographic Legacy

Harry Struss, late of Eagle Vale Angus Stud, Llowalong, is possibly best known to readers as a breeder of fine cattle. It was therefore a delight to discover that during the 1930s Harry, then living in Melbourne, was an active member of the Melbourne Walking Club, and took many photographs during that time. With the club he took part in a number of extended walks, on the Bogongs, to Mt Skene, the Cobberas, Buffalo and Mount Erica. Often they were accompanied by cattlemen with packhorses, one being George Gregory of Glencairn and another being E. McCallum from Benambra, who was paid £25 for packhorse transport on the Christmas 1938 trip to the Cobberas and Mt Pilot.

The photographs include the best yet seen of Rumpffs Middle Ridge hut, and some excellent pictorial records of packhorses with early hikers. In

all, there are several hundred photographs in the collection, with few details of where they were taken. Many of the huts and buildings are unidentified, although obviously in the high country.

Harry Struss died in 1995, and some time after his death his widow, Mrs Wemyss Struss, was sorting through his photographs and realised the importance of many of them. We are grateful to her for her permission to reproduce them here. It is intended, in time that they will become part of the Stratford Historical Society Collection.

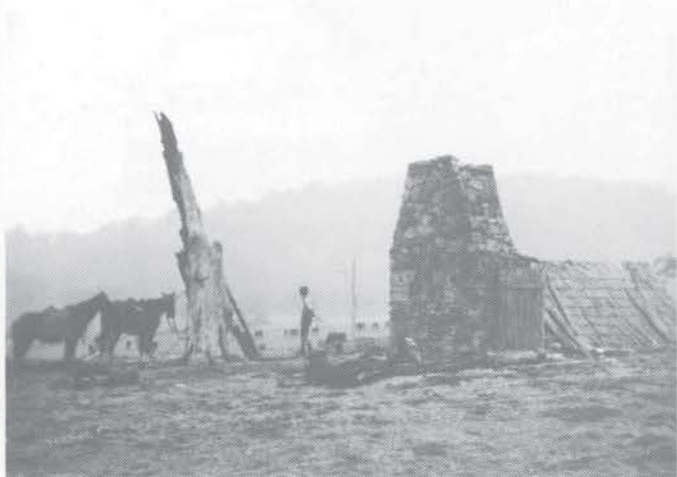
In a number of cases identification of huts is sought, and if anyone can assist they should contact *Voice*, by writing to P.O. Box 86, Bairnsdale 3875, or by telephoning Linda Barraclough on 03-5145 5290.



Harry Struss at an unknown cairn, probably on the Bogongs.



An unknown horseman, possibly at the Cowambat Flat, in 1938/39.



1. Hut and yards, unknown location, possibly at the Limestone.
2. Hut, unknown location, possibly on the Limestone.
3. Ruins, unknown location.

1. Walkers and packhorses crossing a creek.
2. Loaded packhorses and the guides' horse 'on a break'.
3. Walkers and packhorses crossing a river.

All the photographs taken on this page are from a trip to the Cobberas in 1938/39.



1. Unknown hut on the Bogongs, with loaded packhorses, undated.
2. Dibbins Hut, after the packhorses have been unloaded, undated.
3. Rumpff's Hut, on Middle Ridge, Barkly River.

1. Unknown farm buildings, taken during a trip to the Cobberas in 1938/39.
2. Hoskins, near Jamieson, undated.
3. Awkward to pack, these horses are loaded with at least six pairs of skis each, location unknown.



Sharing a hat of water with the packhorse, this walker was photographed on a trip to the Cobberas in 1938/39.

Sounds of Wonnangatta

By a gentle place that lies beside the sprawling Great Divide,
The sounds of distant memories come whispering.
Sounds of people down the years, through their laughter and their tears
Stir my spirit; till I'm wondering and listening.
And I fancy it all started with dark hunters, long departed,
Rustling barefoot through the grassland stalking snake and kangaroo.
Round a fire, while children chatter, old men tell the story that a
Name came from the Dreamtime; Wonnangatta, Wonnangatta.

1860, Howitt saw it, and it wasn't long before it
Was a home to hardy settlers seeking solitude, not gold.
With hungry miners to appease, Smith found making hams and cheese
Kept the cabin fires burning when the winter winds blow cold.
Life was peaceful by the river, but the goods must be delivered
To the goldfields by the pack-trains going through from Bright to Grant.
I can hear the clods that spatter, and the horses' hooves that clatter
On the rocky river crossings; Wonnangatta, Wonnangatta.

William Bryce packed in provisions but he had much grander visions,
Saw a homestead in the valley, saw a dairy and a barn.
He saw gardens, and fruit trees, and he knew that it would be
Worth anything to make this magic place a family farm.
So his wife and children came, not seeking pioneering fame,
Just to work, to do the job right; to conserve this precious land.
Hear the mealtime dishes clatter, and the lively stories that are
Sounds of happy family living; Wonnangatta, Wonnangatta.

I hear names of men from history, other names still cloaked in mystery,
Barclay, Bamford, Phillips, Ritchie, Allen, Elliott, and Guy,
They're the men who mustered cattle, ran the brumbies, won the battle,
Built the huts that shelter strangers when the blizzards rage up high.
I can hear the stockwhips ringing, sturdy mountain ponies bringing
Herds down ancient stock routes to a meeting on the Dry.
For the valley pasture's flatter and the steers grow sleek and fatter
In their cosy winter haven; Wonnangatta, Wonnangatta.

No more stock are slowly stringing, and there's no more Clancys singing,
For now you are a National Park where everyone can be.
And in place of lowing cattle I can hear the fiendish rattle
Of the trail bikes and the chainsaws; rubbish there for all to see.
You will have some pine-log fences, notice boards to dull the senses,
Every detail of your life so carefully planned
By a distant bureaucrat a world away from things that matter,
And I worry for you now, remote and lovely Wonnangatta.

John Andrews

LOVICK'S Mountain Trail Safaris



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

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Life Membership of the MCAV presented to Jack Lovick

At the MCAV Central Council meeting held at Mansfield on 19 November 1996, Jack Lovick was presented with Life Membership of the MCAV by the Association's President, Mary Goldsworthy. In making the presentation, she said:

Jack Lovick is one of the founding fathers of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria, and has worked tirelessly for it from its beginning in 1969. I don't think there has been a year since then when Jack has not represented the Mansfield Branch on its Central Council. The Lovick family has been associated with the High Country from the very earliest days. Jack's family were one of the earliest grazing identities on Mt Buller. At the end of the 1950s Jack moved his grazing operation to King Billy/Mount Clear, an area he still grazes during the summer months. Jack was also one of the very first to recognise the potential of the tourism industry and began his horse riding safaris long before anyone else thought of the idea. In 1980 he was declared one of Victoria's Living Treasures by the Victorian Tourism Commission. A declaration which caused much mirth around the mountain grazing industry, and no doubt much amusement to Jack himself. Jack has also been one of the first to be called out on search and rescue missions through the mountains, and has been instrumental in saving many lives. In recognition of this he was awarded the British Empire Medal as officer in charge of Mountain Search and Rescue Operations in the Mansfield region. Despite problems with his health in recent years, Jack's spirit and determination have continued and will continue to carry him through. It is my pleasure to present his Life Membership to him today.

Members of Central Council congratulated Jack on his award, and thanked him for his contribution to the Association over so many years.



'Our Cattle Liked the Scenery, The Higher They Got The Better They Liked It'

Klaus Hueneker opens a few windows on twenty years of recording the oral history of the New South Wales part of the High Country.

A new broom has swept across the snow-covered parts of New South Wales in the last fifty years, a broom that took away the sheep and the cattle and replaced them with skiers, bushwalkers, photographers, anglers and men who tamed its waters. As a walker and ski tourer with a fairly green tinge I found that my mind was a product of the new but my heart ached for the old. This ache soon turned its attention to the rustic huts, stockyards and homesteads, recently vacated but with their history unrecorded. Twenty years and four books later, it has proved a very fertile ground.

The book *People of the Australian High Country* (1994) is the third volume of history. It followed on the success of *Huts of the High Country* (1982) and *Kiandra to Kosciusko* (1987). Greg Borschman, who is currently researching *The People's Forest*, an oral history project for the National Library, did much to inflate my ego in a review of the people book in *Out There*. He said:

this book is like a Bible, a sacred text. It is a work of love, of passion, that cost its author plenty over twenty years, and yet returned immeasurable gifts.

It got me thinking about what the costs and gifts of this sort of work really are.

But first, how did it all start? I went on a bushwalk to Four Mile Hut near Kiandra in 1974. The hut had only recently been rediscovered and we were some of the first to see it. From the outside it seemed compact and tiny, hardly big enough to stand in, but on the inside there was room for our group to sit down and boil the billy. It seemed as though the last owner had only just left. There were calendars and pin ups on the hessian-lined wall, some copies of *The Watchtower* from the Jehovah's Witnesses lay in a makeshift shelf and numerous boxes were crammed with old mining tools and paraphernalia.

One box contained several sticks of decomposing gelignite, an unstable substance, and I, being a naive fool, took on the job of removing it and dropping it into an old wombat burrow. It did not explode nor has it since, at least not to my knowledge. The longer we stayed the more obvious it became that the fellow who built it had a keen eye for detail. He had cut numerous jam and kerosene tins into strips and nailed them over the gaps between the slabs. Hundreds of tiny leather washers stopped the heads from sinking through the metal and kept moisture from seeping into the timber.

By the end of the weekend I was hooked, hooked enough to go further, to the giant sluicing hole at the Nine-Mile gold diggings, to Broken Dam hut, to Boltons hut on the Finns River, and to many more places of beauty, enchantment and history. I began to wonder what sort of faces were behind the charcoal names scrawled on the rafters, who and why had they built the huts, and what had happened to them after their land became a National Park? It was the beginning of hundreds of ski tours and bushwalks, much note scribbling, shooting off rolls and rolls of film, collecting boxes of old photos and seeking out the old but sharp minds that could unlock so many secrets.

Why, for example, were the slabs at Four Mile hut so short and who had cut up all those strips of iron!? By a series of coincidences, of which this work is full, I met Bill Hughes, a former resident of Kiandra. He told me that his brother Bob had built the hut in the 1930s, that the slabs were probably intended for tunnel supports at the Elaine Mine and that his brother was a rather meticulous bachelor who always polished his shoes and whitewashed his fireplace. Bill also told me that he was the navigator on the first ski crossing from Kiandra to Kosciusko in 1927 and that he and Bob had participated in the



Detail of the restored wall at Four Mile Hut, 1980.
(Photograph by Klaus Hueneker)

search for Seaman and Hayes, two skiers who perished near Mt Kosciusko in 1928.

Bill related the first of a number of dramatic and sometimes gruesome tales. As a boy he used to visit Bill Glennie, an old Kiandra miner. One time he got a bad foot infection which required re-bandaging every day, but the cantankerous old man would tear it off again as soon as Bill was out the door. His end came one night when, after a heavy dose of whisky, he accidentally stumbled into the fireplace, possibly knocked unconscious and then got burnt. Bill found the remains next morning.

This is Man from Snowy River country and chasing brumbies was part and parcel of being a stockman. Jim Nankervis was riding hard and fast in the Cascade area when his horse decided to go one way around a tree and he the other. He lay semi-conscious for some hours and had to resort to lighting a grass fire to alert his mates as to where he was. Cecil Piper, after his first chase, spat blood for six months. That was on the Upper Cotter near Canberra.

I took the halter and put it around the
brumby filly's neck, a two year old brumby filly.
I took my eyes off the timber and the trees and



Cecil Piper and packsaddles at his farm on the
Goobarragandra River. (Photograph by Klaus Hueneker)

the logs, and my knee hit one tree and threw me out of the saddle. I hung in the iron and the horse kept going. He wrapped me around another tree and the stirrup leather pulled out of the saddle. Of course I was fairly stunned.

The latter was typical of the understatements I often heard.

A story with a 'loaded dog a la Henry Lawson' flavour came from Harold Rial.

A group of stockmen were out on the China Walls [near the Geehi River] looking after stock. Someone had brought a flagon of wine and some rum in, they all got full. By the time they sobered up they realised they hadn't burnt the country. So they got a kerosene tin and cut the top out of it. They got a big punk off a tree, it's a fungus, like a sponge. They stuffed it into the kero and soaked her. Then they set a noose and caught a wallaby. They wired this punk to his tail, lit it and let him go. Of course the first thing that he'd do is run into a thicket of dead wattle to hide, and the next thing, the fire'd burst up behind him. Off he'd go again. It burnt the China Wall out.

One man whom everyone around Jindabyne had a story about was Straighty Pendergast, a



Hut on the Ingeegoodbee River in 1949. (Hueneker collection)

member of a very large and widely dispersed Pendergast clan. He was a notorious practical joker, not afraid to occasionally tussle with the police. One of his pranks was to show Dr Bullock that his fortress-like hut on the Crackenback River (now next to the ski tube which goes up to Perisher and Blue Cow) was not as 'Pender proof' as he thought. He identified the chimney as the weak spot and used it to drop a dead kangaroo into the fireplace. When Dr Bullock arrived for a fishing holiday at his mountain shangri la he was greeted by an awful stench.

I soon discovered that I was dealing with a generation some of whom could not read or write, at least not in the erudite way we do today, but who had a very strong oral tradition. They were particularly good at delivering well-thought-out one liners. 'You could hear yourself think' was Cecil Piper's offering about the silence of the bush. Herbert Golby told me 'We didn't go to town or anything like that - too many gates to open for a start'. A Kiandra resident was asked to give a report on the weather. He said 'By jove it was a cold night, we had everything on including the piano.' Bung Harris summed up life at Yaouk, an isolated valley, thus 'I think we've been buried here all our lives.' The octogenarian George Day's view of life, 'not far to

look back, a long way to look ahead', took me a long time to work out. I had to get a bit older first.

Being such good story tellers, I decided when writing the people book, to let my interviewees speak for themselves, ie in the first person, and without changing their manner of speech. For the reader it would then appear as though the old timer was speaking directly to him or her. Years ago I was inspired by the book *Report from a Chinese village* by Jan Myrdal. He let the villagers tell their story without modification, he resisted embroidering the human face of life in a Chinese village. It was a very honest book.

Now that I am doing my own looking back, I can see that my wanderings in the high country represented a search for meaning in my life. For years I felt like an outsider, the school kid who, because he was a New Australian, couldn't become a prefect, the spectator without a seat, the thread without a fabric. I had to overcompensate for the loss of a German culture in Europe and find a new one down under.

The high country with its mixture of old world phenomena like snow, ice and skiing and its peculiar Australian characteristics like snow gums, pygmy possums and slab huts provided the scenario for the



Robert Hughes, builder of the Four Mile Hut, on his Arab pony, c1922. (Hueneker collection)

birth of a new me. The metamorphosis has been so successful that locals now come to me for their family history or copies of old photos. Some have been inspired to do their own recording or to compile a family history.

This project has also helped me to find a relevant meaning of history, especially Australian history. Unlike these interviews and the life force that the men and women in them gave to the past, history was a barren academic exercise, a set of words about strange phenomena strung together in a void with little relevance to reality. By seeing, searching, listening, walking, skiing, photographing and imbibing I began to appreciate something about the fickleness of this land and its impact on the minds of people. I came to understand how economic necessity made it easy for early settlers to burn the snow grass and fell alpine ash, and why for them it was a place of sweat and toil rather than inspired magic.

Further learning took place on a spiritual and economic front. I came to understand that it was important not to throw in the towel and to take one step, one thought, one word at a time. Whenever I focused on the end result (the grand work) I got in a tizz and a panic, but when I stayed with each little building block I remained centred. The wisdom of

ancient holy men that the process is more important than the end result kept being reinforced almost every day.

And then there is the matter of patience and courage, something of which one can never get enough. Patience to wait for transcripts, for photos, for grants, for corrections, for energy, for goodwill, and not to mention the right vibes. I needed courage both emotionally and financially. A decent volume of history can cost \$100,000 to produce if you consider the costs of travel, photography, transcribing, typing, editing, typesetting, printing etc. Once in print it can, if it is popular, generate a turnover of half a million dollars and make a substantial contribution to our economy.

But money seems of little import if one is not touched or seduced by the greater force. Some call it God, some call it the pulse of the universe and some call it the pull of the heart. I'm glad the high country grabbed and captivated my soul. The only trouble is, what now?

Autographed copies of the book *People of the Australian High Country* are available from Tabletop Press, 2 Lambell Close, Palmerston ACT 2913. Ph: 06-242 0995, for a price of \$39.95. Klaus' earlier book *Huts of the High Country* has recently been reprinted for the fifth times. Its price is \$29.95. Please send a cheque or money order and add \$5 for postage.

For my friend, Stuart Hair

We were sitting under the snowgums, as many have done before,
Sharing a billy of tea, taking turns to pour.
The others had left early, taking a day to explore
The wilds of Wonnangatta. Yes, as many have done before.

My companion was a bushman, he was almost 69
And many of those years he had battled, you could see that in the lines
On his face and the determined set of his chin
And his small pale eyes reflected the strong kind man within.

His sandy hair had greyed and thinned, and his fair skin freckled by the sun
Had a rugged weathered texture. You could tell that here was one
Who had toiled and maybe struggled but had played hard at fun as well;
He had ridden the broncs and the bucking bulls as sometimes he would tell.

There was often a hint of a twinkle in his eye as he prepared, in a measured way,
With his raspy voice to regale you with one of his many tales.
He always had all the details of the characters in his yarns,
Who they married, where they settled, the cut of their horse,
Even the year they built their new barn.

He never seemed to move quickly when harnessing his horse
But the job would be done before I knew it, and that efficiency of course
Came from experience like back in the 50s working the pack horse job
Taking in supplies for the survey crews of the forestry mob.

With a string of five or six pack horses and maybe a dog or two
There would be plenty to do without hurrying and cussing while out for a month or two.
I wondered if he got lonely but it seems its the bushmen's way
To feel part of the country they're travelling through and in harmony with the day.

A year or two has passed since that day at Howitt Hut
When we shared a billy and stories. I know it's true, but
I refuse to think of my friend as dead
For all I know, as they say, he's just crossed the Divide to check out the trail ahead.

Jan Hobbs
June 1996



Stuart McMillan Hair

Stuart McMillan Hair, cattleman, early tour guide, bushman and long-time Associate member of the MCAV, died 20 April 1996 at Maffra. Stuart, who was born at Sale in 1926 while his parents were living at Willung, began working in the bush with Rex Miller on the Wellington runs. Rex was the son of Henry Miller, the 'King of Mount Wellington'. This was during World War II and Stuart, aged about sixteen was paid two pounds ten shillings a week, and his keep.

After that Stuart worked for a time for Harry Treasure of the Dargo High Plains, and then began working with Andy Estoppey from Briagolong. With Andy he packed many a trip for the Melbourne Women's Walking Club and Melbourne Scout Groups. Stuart and Eric Bateson ran the last packhorse trip for the Melbourne Women's Walking Club in 1954. During this time he packed supplies for survey crews before the roads went in, packing from Briagolong to Bennison Plains. Packing rates were six shillings a day per horse, and a pound a day for the man.

In 1951 he married Marion Estoppey, daughter of Andy and Margaret Estoppey. Stuart, Andy Estoppey and Bob Dunsmuir ran cattle on Grazing Lease No 57, using the Moroka Hut, built in 1945 by Andy Estoppey, Bill Gillio, Arch Timbs and Eric Bateson.

Later in life, Stuart spent ten years caretaking and in charge of the training at the Sale racecourse. During that time he always took his holidays to coincide with the droving of the calves from Benambra to Bairnsdale with Allan Taylor. In all he made over twenty of these annual trips with Allan Taylor, Leon Ford, Plugger McMahon and Laurie Hiscock. On retirement Stuart spent ten years actively working with Riding for the Disabled at Maffra. However with his love of the bush he also helped Clive Hodge with his mountain trail rides.

Clive's first meeting with him was when Stuart was working for Bill Pendergast from Khancoban, and they were coming off Kosciusko with a hundred horses heading for Khancoban. After working with Clive he went on to help Ross and Magda Brown with their mountain and beach rides.

In 1994, despite major heart problems, he rode from Stockdale to Tom Groggin for the Jack Riley ride from Tom Groggin into Corryong. One of Stuart's last big trips was with Ross and Magda Brown from Valencia Creek to Merrijig in 1995 for the Get Together. Stuart was finally unable to beat cancer, and at his funeral Ross Brown sang 'Old Khancoban', the song Stewart always asked for around his many campfires.



Frank C. Johnson

Well known and respected photographer Frank Johnson died during 1996. Born in 1908, he began taking photographs as 'an interesting hobby' while managing a large station near Winton in outback Queensland. During World War II he worked with the RAAF photographing Beauforts along with other commissions.

After the war, a suggestion that he approach *Stock and Land* resulted in a commission at the Royal Show. From that came more commissions, and although he joined the staff in a rather informal manner in the 1950s, he also worked on a freelance basis for many other rural newspapers. Frank and his camera were a common sight around the yards during sales and his acceptance by those there is evidenced in the images that he captured over the years. Unfortunately no printed collection of his extensive work exists, although many of his images from the Omeo, Benambra and Ensay area are in Ian Balmer's book *Selling the Mountain Calves*. He truly was the roving rural photographer who captured the essence of the bush with his camera.

In all, Frank Johnson was a photographer for over fifty years. He retired with a reputation as the unsurpassed master of country photography. He was also a true gentleman.



Frank Johnson, photographed by Phil Weymouth, at the Omeo Sale in 1993.



Some of Frank Johnson's most valuable photographs were those taken early in his career. The one shown above typifies that type of photograph. Pictured at the Omeo Sale in 1948 are Messrs Joe Holston, 71 yrs, George Fitzgerald, 81 yrs, Harry Witham, 84 yrs and W.J.C. Pendergast, 84 yrs.

Drovers of the High Plains

Let me sing you a song
Of memories bye gone
The big muster was just coming on.
Of 'Old Riders' I met
That I'll never forget
How they always helped me along.

George Faithfull, my Dad,
O'er the plains we would ride
Pete McCoy, was with us as well.
We'd call out Salto!
When mustering in snow
And listen for sounds of cowbells.

Now Ben Cooper rode high,
Ross Blair watched the sky
As changing weather rolled in.
The Fitzgerald men
Harry, D'Arcy and Bren
Were waiting for the musters to begin.

There's Bill Hicks, Carl Weston,
Our bushcraft we're testing
To cut out the mobs on the plain.
Perc Huggins, Paul Swetnam,
Kelly boys, Kevin and Pat,
Were ready to work out in rain.

And there's Charlie Mac
Sitting back on his hack,
Rich Miles, Maurie Faithfull and Bill.
Ken Faithfull and Colin
Came out of the scrub
With mavericks lost round the hill.

Wally Ryder and Ropers
Were cutting cows out,
Don Kneebone recited a poem,
And when that's all done,
We've all had our fun,
Down off the plains for home.

The Big Muster's passed,
It won't be the last,
They head down the mountain trail,
With dogs on their heels.
Now most of us feels
The aches and soreness near tail.

I still go up there
In the fresh, fragrant air,
Watching them now from a seat.
Young nephews now ride
To keep up the pride,
For brothers Richard and Pete.

But just like the old days
Of now gone by
I sit on the campfire chair.
The camp over cooking
The black billy boiling
On the High Plains, way up there.

I miss the drovers
Who left there behind me
With names now in 'God's Care'.
The friendship, the mateship,
Good times on the 'Bogongs'
Was one we'll always share.

Johnny Faithfull

This poem was winner of the
MCAV Bush Laureate 1996.



Don Kneebone Mountain Heritage Award

The fourth annual Don Kneebone Mountain Heritage Award was held at the 1996 Get Together on the Guy property at Kilbride, Waterford. This property was the site of the inaugural event, but unfortunately the hayshed used as a venue the first time had disappeared. Participants in the first round resorted to shade under the trees, down near the river, in competition with the speaker system.

This award was instituted in memory of MCAV bush poet Don Kneebone, to encourage amateur performance of verse and yarns in the bush tradition. At early Get Togethers and other events, Don could often be found on the back of a truck, 'giving' a poem, well before the current and welcome revival of bush poetry.

After his death, Dana Kneebone, Don's widow, edited and published a book of his verse, *Where the Mountain Waters Flow*. It is her expressed wish that the award should be held in the current manner, with initial rounds 'somewhere down the hill under a tree', and that the finals be performed from the back of a truck. It is to be primarily an amateur event, with emphasis to be placed on encouragement of new performers and the welcoming of old friends. She believes it would be Don's wish that there should never be a monetary prize for taking part, that the privilege of performing bush works is a reward in itself.

The two major trophies awarded, that of the Heritage Award and Bush Minstrel, are also in the same tradition. The Heritage Award is a cattle bell,

often heard in the bush in years gone by, attached to a leather buckle with the names of recipients. The MCAV Bush Minstrel Award, which unlike the main Award, is open to professional performers and previous recipients of the main award, is an Australian-made hurricane lamp, of the type to be

found at night in the huts where yarns were told and poetry recited. Both recipients, and the winner of the annual MCAV Bush Laureate Award for a written (as opposed to performed) work, receive an engraved pen - hopefully to put to use in compiling further works.

Finalists

in 1996 were: Paul Treasure, Jacqui Porter, Sue Beeton, Ricky Hodge Billy Ross and John Andrews. The final results were:

Don Kneebone Mountain Heritage Award

Rick Hodge, Buchan.

MCAV Bush Minstrel

Noel Cutler, Milawa.

MCAV Bush Laureate

Johnny Faithfull, Omeo.

Alan Brewer's Encouragement Award

(For a young or first time performer)
Jacquie Porter.

And we were wrong!

Staff of *Voice* wish to apologise to Jan Hobbs for incorrectly awarding the Don Kneebone Mountain Heritage Award in the results in last year's *Voice*. Jan won the award at the 1995 Get Together with an inspired reflection on the bushmanship of Clive Hodge.



The current and former holders of the Don Kneebone Mountain Heritage Award: Jan Hobbs, Ricky Hodge, Noel Cutler and Alan Brewer.

Plaque unveiled to honour Don Kneebone

Don Kneebone would have been in his element, standing tall in a rain-drenched oilskin as drizzle hissed on the coals of a campfire, reciting self-penned poems to the delight of his peers.

Instead, the cattlemen and women who converged on the Wabonga Plateau, south of Cheshunt, on the first Sunday in November did so in their former colleague's absence to honour a man whose life was governed by his love of droving and a commitment to defending high plains graziers' rights.

Born on September 25, 1922, Don rose to regional prominence with the formation of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria in the 1970s and was elected president of the group's North East branch in 1983.

He retired from that position in 1987 but remained deeply involved in industry matters, serving as a delegate to the association's central council and promoting its battle to retain grazing leases through his increasingly-public role as a raconteur and poet.

His ability to pen charismatic verse and toss together an entertaining yarn or two were rewarded with the release of printed and, later, recorded collections of his works, one of which was presented as a wedding gift to the Prince and Princess of Wales.

Don died in June 1991 at his home at Bobinawarra.

The informal afternoon gathering was Wabonga, a freehold property on the upper King River, was attended by more than 100 people,

including Kneebone family members and friends.

Among those present for a memorable plaque's unveiling were Don's first wife Peg, widow Dana, younger son and daughter Noel Kneebone and

Christine English and their respective partners Ruth and Brendan, former son-in-law Bill Symons, and six grandchildren.

MCAV president Harry Ryder of Tawonga recalled his first meeting with Don, on a family outing to the Catherine River, and described him as one of a handful of stalwarts responsible for the establishment of the group.

Branch president Ron Briggs and property owner Frank Ryan also praised Don's contribution, and a selection of poetry was read by Graham Hughes.

An inscription on the plaque, attached to a weighty chunk of rock and displayed at the entrance to a double-storey log hut, reads:

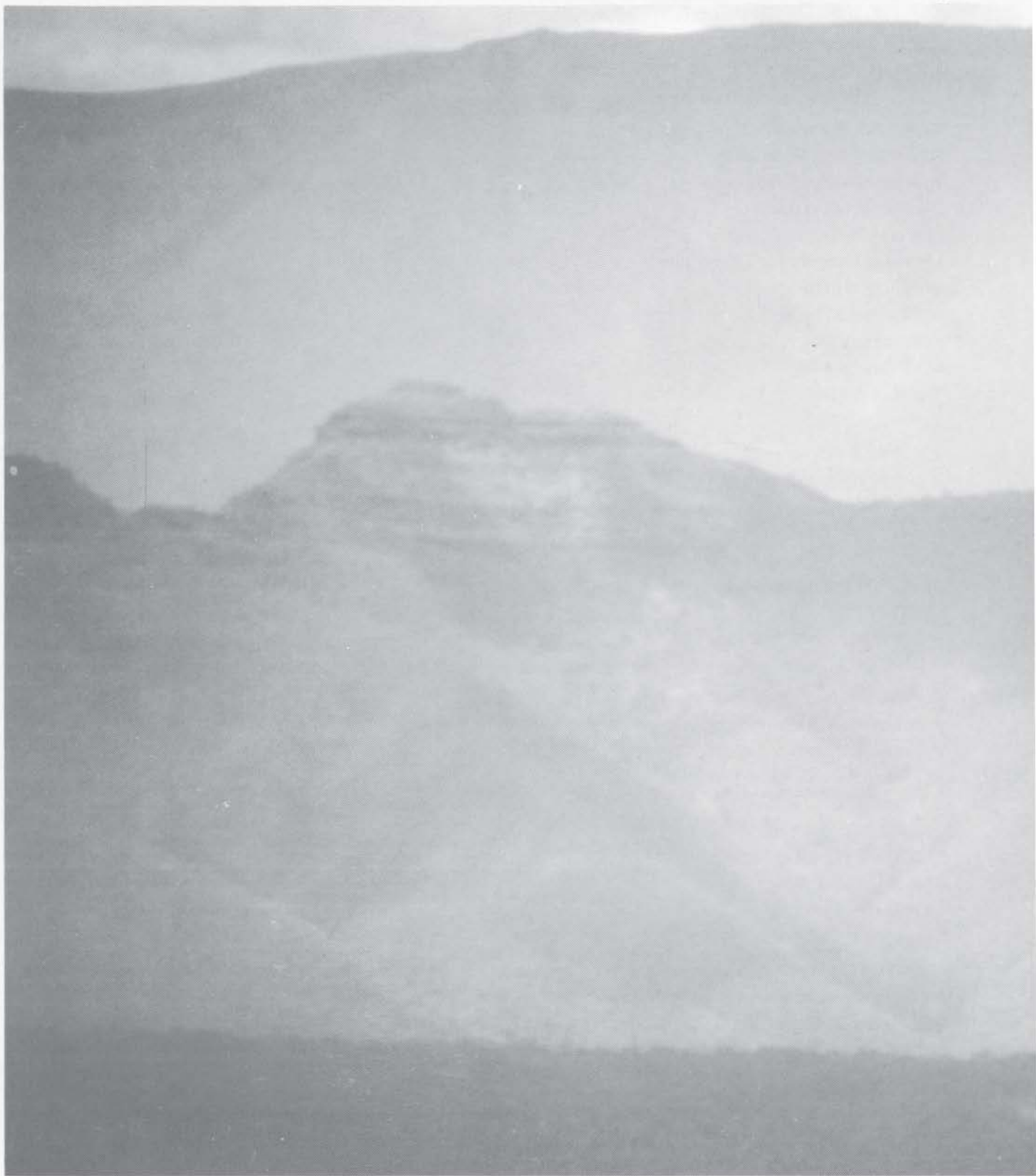


Frank Ryan, owner of Wabonga, with the plaque that was unveiled in honour of Don Kneebone.

*In memory of Don Kneebone
25.1922 to 20.6.1991
Mountain cattleman, bush poet
and foundation member of the
Mountain Cattlemen's
Association of Victoria*

Story and photograph courtesy *The Alpine Times*

THE CRINOLINE



The Crinoline from the Licola-Jamieson Road



Those old-time mountain cattlemen
Are surely a breed to be held apart -
To meet and listen to their tales
Can do wonders for your heart!

At a Get-Together a few years back
At the Faithfulls, down Dargo way
Wide-eyed I listened to the yarns that were spun
'Round the bar at the end of the day.

A few months before I'd taken a horse
And ridden up along the Crinoline,
So I looked to speak with the holder of the run -
And was soon at the bar with old Kevin Higgins.

I talked of our climb in the heat,
Of my brave horse to who all this was new,
And whilst I had to guide him well
I still had wide eyes for the view.

The climb up had been hot and tricky -
The rockface stern and unyielding,
And the track we were following
Soon dwindled to something unfeeling.

At the top we looked across to see
A pair of eagles putting on a show -
True nobles, they glided on silent wings
Silent eyes surveying their realm below.

Old Kevin's face soon split with a grin
As I convinced him of my awe
And how those cattlemen must be pretty tough
To run their stock before.

'Well,' he said, 'things sure were hard -
I remember a time way back when
We used to run sheep up there
Instead of being cattlemen.

'You saw that good feed on the ledges
Right down the sides of the slopes?
It was hard to get, but the sheep did OK
Reckon they were more like mountain goats.

'But when we came to muster them
The dogs wouldn't go down,
So in the end we'd roll rocks over the top
Until the sheep'd hop back round.

'Never lost a sheep,' he said,
And of course I didn't doubt
That men of Kevin's calibre
Would always get their stock out.

Old Kevin and his mates are leaving now
Each year there's a little more room
At the end of the bar where they were found
Catching up on old times and new.

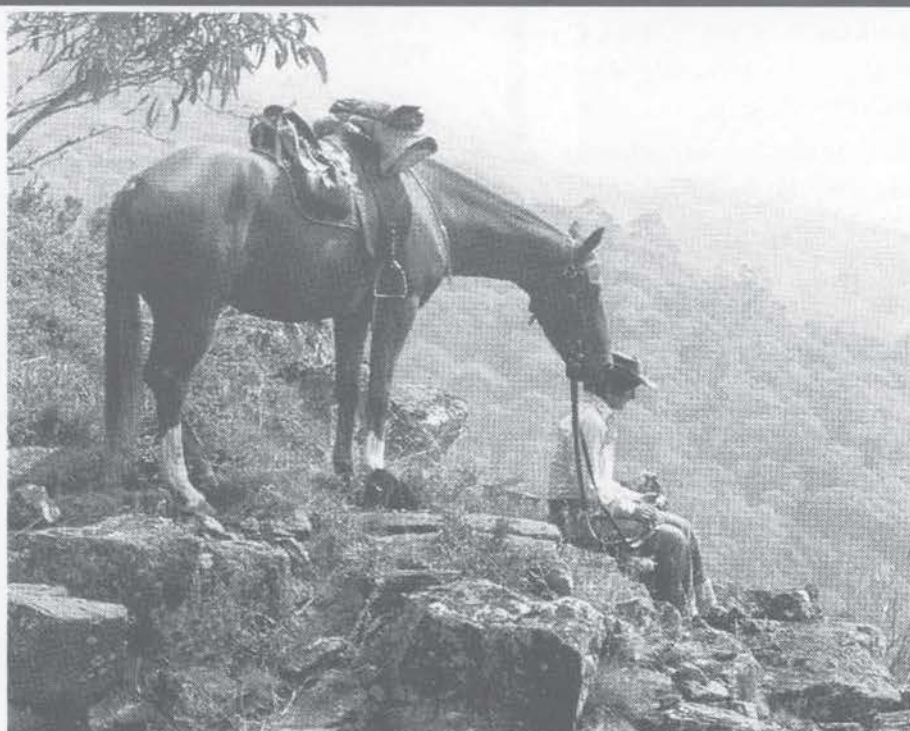
Along with their passing and the marching years,
We'll soon be taking their place at the bar;
I just hope that we can live up to
The standards they have set us so far.

Sue Beeton

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For a brochure and full details contact Ben and John Treasure,
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Mountain Cattlemen immortalised in bronze

A life-size bronze statue of a mounted stockman - dedicated to the pioneer Mountain Cattlemen, has been erected on Mount Buller, commissioned by Rino and Diana Grollo. The unveiling was performed by the Hon. Graeme Stoney MLC on 1 June 1996. In freezing, misty weather, Mountain Cattlemen and their families, friends and dignitaries assembled on the mountain for the ceremony, and then joined Mr and Mrs Grollo for lunch. The *Mansfield Courier* had this to say:

'Horsemen returned in the mist to Cow Camp on Mt Buller on Saturday for the unveiling of a statue honouring the Mountain Cattlemen.

Seventeen oilskin clad representatives of cattlemen's families gathered on horseback to form a backdrop to the statue while 150 spectators and guests braved the near freezing temperature and strong winds.

The bronze statue was commissioned by Rino and Diana Grollo of Mt Buller Resort to honour the families who helped pioneer access to Victoria's high country. The sculpture by Melbourne artist Michael Meszaros has been placed on a rock base in the Mt Buller village centre adjacent to the clocktower and Cow Camp Plaza.'

In his capacity as Legislative Council member for Central Highlands, Graeme Stoney had the task of unveiling the statue. He spoke of the hardships that mountain cattlemen endure, of the sacrifices they have made, and of the traditions handed down through the families to the present day.

Mansfield Mountain Cattlemen families, past and present, were represented, and President Mary Goldsworthy attended the ceremony and lunch with Harry, Sue, Adam and Philip Ryder, and members from other MCAV branches.

Two plaques dedicated to the mountain cattlemen and their families will be fixed to the base of the statue.

Members of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association would like to sincerely thank Rino and Diana Grollo, who in their understanding of history and tradition have created a milestone in the long process of the recognition of the traditions and heritage of the Mountain Cattlemen.

(And, with thanks to the *Mansfield Courier* for allowing reproduction of the article quoted above.)



'Unveiling' the statue.



Cattlemen of the future, Philip and Adam Ryder, at the statue.

Women I've Known

The stockman, the drover, the ringer, the rover -
Are well known in verse and prose;
But the wife, the mother, the daughter, the other
Has rarely been treated as one of those.

From the mountains to the plains, from
droughts to flooding rains,
The men of Australia, both great and small
Have been laughed at and lauded, adored
and rewarded,
Even when heading for a fall.

These songs of the boys are filled with the joys
Of life on our rough piece of earth.
The pranks that they play on the others each day
Ring loudly with laughter and mirth.

But, when we do write about the women
of stout
Disposition who helped build this land,
We hear of their toil, the thankless hard
boil,
With nary a smile close at hand.

Now the women I've met since I've been able to get
Out to the land and see what it's like
Sure work pretty hard, but that's only a part
Of the richness and joy of their life.

No matter how hard it gets out in the yard
Or back at the homestead and garden,
One thing I've been shown by the women
I've known
Is a heart that seems never to harden.

They laugh long and loud and do themselves proud
No matter how tough it gets.
Their own brand of humour is one that I'd sooner
Meet than anything else I've seen yet.

They go out to work to help bring in the
dirt
Back up from last season's course.
They smile and chuckle as they tighten the
buckle
On the still unbroken horse.

Regardless from where they came, strangers are
welcomed all the same
No matter if it's night or day.
They're met with a smile and greeted in style -
In the women's special way.

Kids they bear with grace and a smile on
their face
Whilst they make havoc out in the barn.
Their mothers just grin and keep it all in
Until they meet their friends for a yarn.

Then the tales come out, some tall, others stout
About the foibles of those they hold dear;
They all get treated with the same laughing
features
Be they family or others so near.

Sometimes the laughter can be a little more
than just free,
As the stress of this life takes its hold.
But beneath that strange smile, true hearts
beat all the while
With a warmth of more value than gold.

So why don't we write about these women's
great might
And the strength in their own sense of humour?
For surely it's their laughter we should keep
going after
Instead of cheap gossip and rumour.

Sue Beeton

Hannah Flanagan, her descendants and others

When talk turns to the women of the Victorian high country, those most often mentioned are three generations of Treasures, Emily, Clara and Freda. There are others who are less well known, who deserve more research, and among them is Mrs Emily Gregory, who rode side saddle from Mansfield to Glenmaggie in the 1920s to register her claim to land at Glencairn. Checking through early records, female names appear on high country leases or freehold for the Faithfulls, Pendergasts, Flanagans, O'Rourkes, McMichaels and others.

Somewhere, in the back of my mind, I can remember someone (was it Charlie Stagg?), telling me that he remembers being told the story of 'The Woman from Snowy River', who came from somewhere up East Gippsland way, possibly around The Turnback. She was remembered for a heroic ride, sidesaddle, through mountains and down a treacherous descent with her baby in her arms, desperately trying to reach medical aid for the child. My informant couldn't remember her name, or even if the baby survived, but she sounds like a good mother for the Man from Snowy River.

(And, in passing, there is a suggestion from a family historian that Jack Riley, one Man from Snowy River, if there was ever just one such man, was actually a Pendergast. It has been claimed that he chose to take his mother's name.)

Are there other women we should be considering? And who was the earliest, who could be considered to have operated in her own right? This question arises through a curious set of circumstances that happened at the 1996 Get

Together at 'Kilbride'. Among the group indulging in family history discussion were Michael Higgins of 'Glencourt', Glenmaggie, grandson of Mick Higgins and Mary Veronica Kelly, and two of his sons. With them was Don Porter, the MCAV archivist, who is married to a grand-daughter of John Cornelius Higgins of Glenmaggie, a brother of Mick Higgins, and Don's daughter, Jacqui. That meant that Michael and his sons, and Jacqui Porter were

all descended from Michael Higgins and Hannah Flanagan, who ran horses for the Indian remount trade on the Crooked River in the 1800s.

I realised that in them I had a number of descendants of Hannah Flanagan, the selector in whose name the deeds to a portion of the Tamboritha

freehold were issued. Given a little geographic licence, that land was just over the hill behind us. I decided to photograph them to record the occasion.

At that point Gerry Coleman of 'Fortuna', Maffra, camp chief of the Coleman camp at Get Togethers, pointed out that he was the son of Annie Kathleen Flanagan, another member of the same family, who married Pat Coleman. He added that her sister Margaret Flanagan had married his father's brother, Bill Coleman. Another Flanagan, Charlotte, also held high country in her own name.

Sometimes, when we look at families only by surnames, we lose track of family linkages that occur through the female line. While they may not have been sitting on the rails at the saleyards, the history of the women of the high country is a fertile field awaiting more study.

Linda Barraclough



Michael and Edward Higgins, with their father Michael Higgins, Gerry Coleman and Jacqui Porter.



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1996 Get Together 'Kilbride', Waterford

For those who attended the 1996 Get Together at 'Kilbride', the Guy family property at Waterford, and there were over 3,000, the weekend was a great success. The weather was hot, the bands were terrific, and everybody seemed to have a good time. As usual the dog high jump was a crowd pleaser, and we were all thrilled for Tim Faithfull when he raced in to take his second Cattlemen's Cup. And isn't Rick Hodge a multi-talented fellow? Second in the Cattlemen's Cup, and recipient of the Don Kneebone Mountain Heritage Award and winner of several other races.

Mazda were generous in their supply of work vehicles for the weekend, as well as the event stage. Pallots of Bairnsdale supplied two magnificent trophies for the winners of the Senior and Junior Cattlemen's cup, and other sponsors, although not listed here, were also deeply appreciated.

Results for the weekend were:

Mountain Cattlemen's Cup:

- 1st Tim Faithfull
- 2nd Rick Hodge
- 3rd Barbara Cooper-Babidge

Junior Mountain Cattlemen's Cup:

- 1st Luke Mitchell
- 2nd Diana Hurley
- 3rd Adam McCormack

Run-a-muck Cup:

- 1st Drew Holloway
- 2nd Liam Wagge
- 3rd Brett Hau

Leigh Woodgate Open Race:

- 1st Rick Hodge
- 2nd Paula Morgan
- 3rd Derek Faithfull

Jim Treasure Memorial Sprint:

- 1st Shelley Battams
- 2nd Susannah Doyle
- 3rd John Treasure

Associates Dash:

- 1st Rick Hodge
- 2nd Sharon Pendergast
- 3rd Shelley Battams

Wally Ryder Horse Walking Race:

- 1st Luke Mitchell
- 2nd Steve Ryder
- 3rd Danielle Clemson

Great Australian Packhorse Race:

- 1st Neville Wright
- 2nd Gordon Moon
- 3rd Richelle Wright
- Neatest Pack: Kaye Hildebrand

Relay Race:

- 1st Marchall
- 2nd Cooper
- 3rd Treasure

Dog High Jump:

- 1st Rob McKimmie's 'Erckle'
- 2nd Derek Gibbs' 'Banjo'
- 3rd Pat O'Brien's 'Gus'

Open Whipcracking:

- 1st Noel Cutler
- 2nd Jack Cross
- 3rd Craig McDonald
- 4th Adam Holden

Ladies' Whipcracking:

- 1st Diana Hurley
- 2nd Rosemary Hurley
- 3rd Aleshia Sievers
- 4th Irene Higgins

Junior (16 and under) Whipcracking:

- 1st Diana Hurley
- 2nd Jarrod Fulton
- 3rd Adam Holden
- 4th Aleshia Sievers

Juvenile (10 years and under) Whipcracking:

- 1st Wayne Campbell
- 2nd Brian Campbell
- 3rd Rick Quilford
- 4th Paul Osborne

Veterans' Special Whipcracking:

- 1st Ken Hallett
- 2nd Graeme Errickson
- 3rd Bill Hodgeson
- 4th Clive Hodge

Don Kneebone Mountain Heritage Award:

Rick Hodge, Buchan

Bush Minstrel: Noel Cutler, Milawa

Bush Laureate: Johnny Faithfull, Omeo

Allan Brewer's Encouragement Award:

Jacquie Porter



1996 GET TOGETHER





1996 GET TOGETHER



The Worst Day of My Life

Graziers who have cattle runs on the high alpine regions have good reason to know that the autumn break in the weather can be a very anxious time. In the early years of this century, when winter temperatures were at least ten degrees lower than they are now and there was no radio to forecast weather changes, it was difficult to decide on the time of mustering. In the droughts of 1902 and 1914, when there was virtually no feed for cattle on lower areas, graziers left their cattle on the high runs until the autumn break, hoping that it would not be too severe.

My father, George Weston, had Mt Buffalo as a cattle run from 1888 - 1923, and though it is about 1000 ft lower than the Bogong High Plains, it could still be a very treacherous mountain. As drought and a plague of grasshoppers had left no feed in the home paddocks, cattle were left on the mountain until the first break at the end of April. But Buffalo is very rugged and mustering difficult when cold weather scatters the cattle to sheltered areas. Two quick mustering trips early in May 1914 brought off 90 percent of the cattle before a second change brought a heavy fall of snow. The mountain ranger at the time was 'Buffalo Bill' Weston, my father's brother, so he kept an eye out for any strays. Cattle had done well in the summer months and as they were bringing good prices, it was urgent that the twenty missing head be located.

When Bill went to check on the reservoir up Crystal Brook that supplied water to the chalet, he noticed cattle tracks in the snow beyond the reservoir. Promptly he sent a message down to my father who as promptly made plans to rescue them. At eleven years of age I was included in the rescue attempt.

On the second Sunday in May, on a cold frosty night, we left at 4am and by the light of a waning moon, reached the top by daybreak. Then the sky quickly clouded over and snow began to fall. We crossed by an old cattle track from McKinnon's Turntable to below the Devil's Couch where there was a possible crossing of Crystal Brook, which was running high. My father's high stock horse led the

way across, but even though I put my feet up on the front of the saddle, my medium sized pony had little height to spare. As a result I received a wet tail.

The heavy overnight frost had reduced the temperature to about 20°F and had frozen a thick crust of ice on the 9 inches of snow. As the day wore on, snow fall got heavier and heavier till the depth reached about 18 inches. The soft snow on top of the ice crust made it difficult for the horses to extract their feet to step ahead and travel was painfully slow.

It was not long before my hands and feet were numb with the cold and we could not dare to dismount into the snow. For the whole day we were tied to the saddles. Thanks to my father's long experience on the plateau, he instinctively knew where to look in a sheltered spot for the cattle. Taking a wide circle around them, he directed me to get back on the tracks by which we came, to lead the way out. My father then cracked his whip several times to encourage the twenty to follow. The cattle were not so long-legged as our horses so it took nearly three hours to get back to the crossing. There were a number of well-grown calves in the mob and they found the going very slow and difficult.

All through these six hours of travel in the snow, my hands and feet were numb with cold. The only thing that saved me was that at times I could let go the reins and place my hands on the warm shoulders of the pony. But even that meagre warmth did little to reduce the numbness of my fingers.

It was 3pm when we got back to the crossing where the heavy frost had reduced the flow. Thankfully I crossed without getting wet again and the cattle followed easily as they had been brought in that way. But it was a case of getting off the mountain before dark. There was only a foot of soft snow back to McKinnon's Turntable and that mile only took about 40 minutes.

Once back on the road where there was only 3 inches of snow we pushed the cattle along to reach The Fort (now Mackey's) near 5pm. As the cattle were very hungry, we left them there to get some food in the bush. We hastened back down the

Wilhemina Spur to get across the Ovens River before dark as the heavy rain was causing a rise.

Even when we got back home, my hands and feet were still numb as temperatures had been below freezing all day. Though my mother prepared a dish of luke-warm water in which to place my hands and feet, I will never forget the exquisite agony as the blood began to circulate again in those numb limbs. Thankfully I did not lose any fingers or toes for they had been numb for so long that loss was possible.

No doubt many cattlemen of the high country have had similar experiences when blizzard conditions have caught them at mustering time, but as long as I live, the trauma and ordeal of that day will live in my memory. Even in my skiing days, when caught out on Feathertop or St Bernard in blizzard conditions that made breathing difficult, and death

to some, it was always easy to retreat to near-by shelter. On that long, long day on Buffalo there was no escape.

The muster of cattle from the Bogong High Plains in the dry autumn of 1923 was the most tragic in the history of the region. Though I have some memory of our predicament, all the other cattlemen from the Ovens and Kiewa had difficulties of some sort. Unfortunately the *Alpine Observer* stories of those days are not available on microfilm but the issues of May and June 1923, carried stories of cattle being rescued. Vince Phelan of Dargo had similar troubles.

Percy Weston



A temporary village on Buffalo, at a time more salubrious than that described by Percy Weston.

WHO should read this? ideally, a couple in their forties or fifties - 'couple' meaning two compatible individuals; a little capital, no debts, a philosophy not dependent on a consumer oriented life-style, and a love of Nature and the outdoors - all of these would help.

WHY read on? Because this is your chance for a change, your chance to improve the way you live, in fact your chance, at last, to start really living in a real world, with real people, in a real environment.

WHAT is all this about?

It's about LIFE-STYLE in idyllic surroundings, at a peaceful pace, on a self-sufficient budget.

Surroundings: a small farming community encircled by State Forest, with National Parks to West, North and East; mountains and rivers for walking, riding, fishing, boating, bird-watching, painting and poetry; snow (in season!) an hour away, the sea not much further.

Pace: quiet for a third of the year, steady for a third, moderately busy for a third; with the work-place 30 yards away, breakfast and lunch can be leisurely affairs, in the home or outside in the private courtyard; there's time and opportunity for music, a walk in the garden, meditation, and chatting with friends and clients.

Budget: it draws on two businesses, the first being an accommodation business (4 self-contained guest units) just the size for a single person to handle easily, the second being a bookshop (only 3,000 titles) also just right for one person.

WHERE is all this? In Victoria's High Country, at an elevation of 2,000 feet, in the town of OMEO. The newly proclaimed 'Great Alpine Road' runs through the town, linking with the Hume Highway to the North, the Princes to the South - the tourist potential is self-evident.

WHEN?

To plan for tomorrow, you need to act today. Things look set to boom, but for the time being all we are offering is LIFE-STYLE - a great one.

HOW to proceed? Just ring 051 591411, or 051 591388 and ask for Win or Bruno; or write to 'Colonial Bank House', Day Avenue, Omeo 3898.

FACTS - Town Centre, freehold site 1,688 sq.m., the buildings taking up 365 sq.m., of which half is the residence/home. The principal building was the 'Colonial Bank of Australasia', a grand edifice from last century. Grounds are undulating, well planted. Asking price of \$325,000 allows for location, site size, good quality brick buildings, and the modest but adequate nature of the businesses. Price relates closely to the valuation of June 1996 by a Qualified Valuer of the Australian Institute of Valuers and Land Economists.

POTENTIAL - approval was given for 6 more guest units to be included on this site (permit would need to be reactivated); the private courtyard could lend itself to a venue for afternoon teas; and sufficient spare street frontage remains for building another shop or office.

New on the Book Shelf

Victorian Alpine Huts Heritage Survey

by Graeme Butler and Associates, 1996.

While not strictly a book, this report may be of interest to historians and others with a close interest in our alpine huts. The report was commissioned by the Historic Places Section of the DNRE, as part of the three-state agreement that created the Australian Alps Liaison Committee. The report is an architectural survey, with historical notes and floor plans, of all buildings in the Alpine National Park (so those searching for huts such as the one at Wire Plain, which is in the Hotham reserve, will be disappointed). A modern photograph of each hut is included. While there is obviously much in the report that is correct, questions have been raised as to the accuracy of details in a number of entries, and those attempting to use the grid references and track locations for some of the huts have suggested they should not be relied upon.

The report makes recommendations for future care of the huts, including a suggestion that log/slab huts such as Moroka hut, Guys hut and Millers hut be covered in second-hand corrugated iron for their future preservation.

The report is available from the Australian Alps Liaison Committee P.O. Box 20, Bright 3741. It costs \$80 for a poorly bound set of about 200 sheets of double-sided photocopied pages.

Gippsland Heritage Journal No. 20

From the late 1920s to the early 1940s various groups of cattlemen, in conjunction with the Victorian Government Tourist Bureau, operated escorted tours. These have become known as the Skyline Tours and involved such people as the Fitzgeralds, Guys, Bill Gillio, Andy Estoppey and the Blairs. In this issue of *Gippsland Heritage Journal* sixteen photographs from various Skyline albums have been reproduced. They include views of Bryce's hut, a carved wooden 'man' at Miller's hut, Dibbin's hut and a very heavily laden packhorse! Copies can be obtained by sending \$8.00 to Kapana Press, Box 86, Bairnsdale 3875.

Verses of the Mountains - a collection of poetry from Jack Treasure

This 100 page book was available at the 1996 Get Together at Dargo. It is a collection of verse mainly by Dargo Mountain Cattleman Jack Treasure with contributions from W.J. Wye, Marie Pitt, Roslyn Hogg, Hazel Merlo, Angela Bull and members of the Treasure family. The majority of the works have not been available in the printed form until now and make entertaining reading for those interested in this aspect of the history of the Mountain Cattlemen. The large typeface will be appreciated by those with failing eyesight.

A Bibliography of Oral Histories on the Australian Alps by Sue Hodges.

This substantial report, published by the Australian Alps Liaison Committee, and available from the above address at a cost of \$20 for in excess of 280 numbered pages, is good value for historians. It lists 465 interviews of people on various subjects relating to the Australian Alps. The interviewees include cattlemen, construction workers, skiers and other recreational users. A summary of the contents of the interview is given for each, such as that for Vince Phelan of Dargo, that notes he 'mentions the history of the Guy family, [and] the Man from Snowy River legend'. Details of the whereabouts of tapes and any summaries are given. There are five indexes: to interviewers, interviewees, subjects, persons mentioned and places mentioned. In all, it is a useful reference for serious students of high country history.

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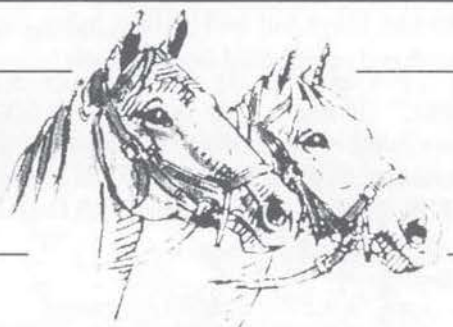
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R.M. Williams Outback Heritage Award

In 1988 David Treasure, then President of the MCAV, and a small group of Mountain Cattlemen rode through the city of Melbourne to the R.M. Williams store in Elizabeth Street to accept the inaugural Outback Heritage Award - a bronze statue of a bush rider. In the intervening years, another recipient that springs to mind is the committee that looks after the meeting tree at Barcaldine, under which striking shearers formed the Australian Labor Party. The latest recipient of the Award is Slim Dusty, who considers it to be one of the most important he has received.

The MCAV congratulates Slim Dusty on receiving the Award, without any doubt his music celebrates the heritage and traditions of the bush.

Many may also remember that both R.M. Williams and Slim Dusty were guests of honour at the 1986 Get Together at Catherine Station, but may not realise that that was the first time the two had met. The MCAV is proud to be associated with both.



Nanette Hall

A 'Galloping Grannie'

Nanette and John Hall of the Buckland Valley, along with their family, run cattle on nearby bush and alpine leases. Nanette, however, has just completed her first Tom Quilty 100 mile endurance ride. Nicknamed the 'galloping grannie' in local papers, Nanette was accompanied by her granddaughter, Alecia Rebesco. Both came equal 47th overall (and 14th in the light-weight division) in a time of fourteen and a half hours. Given that more than 300 riders entered, with over sixty failing to complete the course, their placings are an achievement indeed.

Twenty members of the North East Branch joined the welcoming parade through the streets of Myrtleford on the Thursday prior to the week-end ride. The local mountain men and women were warmly applauded.



Alecia Rebesco

Roll on Gibbo River

Come all ye mountain cattlemen,
Come all and gather round,
We'll take a trip to East Gippsland,
We're all Benambra bound.
Then on to the Gibbo River,
You can come from near and far,
Roll out your Connelly camping swag
And sleep 'neath moon and star.

Roll on Gibbo River
Roll down to the sea,
Roll on Gibbo River
What a lovely place to be.

Yes, the lovely Gibbo River
With mountains all around
And in your clear cold waters
The perch and trout abound.
The folks come in their hundreds,
It's an annual event,
And camp along your lovely banks
In caravans and tents.

Roll on Gibbo River
Roll down to the sea,
Roll on Gibbo River
What a lovely place to be.

By day we do some fishing
Or pan a little gold,
Like our forebears before us
In the good old days of old.
At night around the campfire,
You know it won't be long
Before someone strums an old guitar
And we all burst into song.

Roll on Gibbo River
Roll down to the sea,
Roll on Gibbo River
What a lovely place to be.

We take a walk in the early morn
And breathe in the clean fresh air,
So close to Mother Nature
There's beauty everywhere.
A slice of God's own country,
No better place on earth,
I'm proud to be a part of it -
It is my place of birth.

Roll on Gibbo River
Roll down to the sea,
Roll on Gibbo River -
What a lovely place to be.

Marjorie Jarvis



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MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE MOUNTAIN CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA INCORPORATED HELD AT THE VICTORIAN FARMERS' FEDERATION, 24 COLLINS STREET, MELBOURNE ON FRIDAY THE 27TH SEPTEMBER 1996.

PRESENT:

Sue Silvers, Bill Crump, Jim Commins, Cathy Junor, Mick Jordan, Norma Marshall, Ross Brown, Janine Cooper, Buff Rogers, Peter Monds, Mark Coleman, Natasha Mansfield, Kevin Kelly, Roger Hollis, Harry Ryder, Jack Hicks, Stuart Hicks, Frank Ryan, Allan Brewer, Chris Hodge, Celia Hodge, Clive Hodge, Barry Hicks, Steve Ware, Peter McCormack, Peter Knight, Clair McCracken, Diana Seelenmeyer, Doug Treasure, Cora Davey, Pauline Venn, Nug Wyllie, Ron Briggs, Mary Goldsworthy, Ros Andrews, Wendy Symons, Jean Marrow, Rhonda Treasure, Chris Stoney, Larry Oliver, Pat Oliver.

The Chairman, Doug Treasure opened the meeting at 11:00 am and extended a warm welcome to all the members present. He introduced the associate members present, and called for apologies.

APOLOGIES were received from:

Keith and Morva Rule, John Andrews, David Perrin, B. MacGregor, Ann and Keith Whittam, Simon Turner, Jack Lovick, Rusty Connley.

MINUTES of the previous Annual General Meeting of the Association as printed in the *Voice of the Mountains* No.19 of 1996 and circulated to all members and associate members be confirmed was moved by Jim Commins and seconded by Kevin Kelly. *Carried.*

The Chairman asked the President of the Association, Mrs Mary Goldsworthy to address the meeting.

Mrs Goldsworthy addressed the meeting as follows:

When our Olympic Games teams returned to Australia a couple of months ago, we were all united in a feeling of national pride. We were all proud of our unique Australian character. Mountain

Cattlemen may also claim a place of pride in the Australian arena. This feeling of being specially Australian is felt by Mountain Cattlemen and their supporters alike. It comes from a mixture of history, traditions, skills, the cattle we breed, our huts, packhorses and our general way of life, plus respect, care and honesty.

Our special heritage was acknowledged not long ago, when a life-sized bronze statue of a mounted stockman was erected in the village at Mount Buller. Dedicated to the pioneer Mountain cattlemen of the area, the unveiling ceremony took place on a misty June morning in near-freezing conditions. Mansfield branch members provided the assembled company with a backdrop that has delighted film producers in the past. The seventeen oilskin-clad riders bore testimony to the hardships and traditions so much a way of life in the mountains. The Association is indeed grateful to Rino and Diana Grollo, who so generously commissioned this fitting tribute to Mount Buller's pioneers.

This year the Gippsland Branch hosted the 1996 Get Together. Their efforts were truly amazing considering the circumstances. I do not propose to go into what occurred in the planning stages and immediately prior to the weekend itself, however a friendly and financially successful Get Together resulted. My personal thanks to David Treasure, MP, Member for Gippsland East, who intervened on behalf of the Association and managed to smooth the way. To David and Diane Guy, who stepped into the breach - your generosity and willing support will long be remembered - thank you.

Progress on the issue of travelling livestock on Victorian roads has been difficult and frustrating. When all seemed in order by mid-December last year for a satisfactory outcome in 1996, a State election was called. With the outgoing Minister for Roads and ports went all activity on the issue - at least it was put 'on hold'. The Association requested a meeting with the new Minister which was granted

on the 20th June. At this meeting we expressed our concern and urged the Minister to bring the matter to a satisfactory conclusion. I am pleased to report that we have had a reply from the Minister who says that he has begun the process of amending the Road Safety (Traffic) Regulations which will cover uniformity of signage and the responsibility of drivers in respect to the movement of livestock on roads. He has also asked that questions on drivers' responsibilities in respect of stock on roads be included in the driver's licence test. The new legislation will also allow for exemption from obtaining permits for Mountain Cattlemen moving stock from home properties to high country runs, and back again at the end of the grazing season. The Minister anticipates that these matters will become law by mid-1997. I would like to say that this issue has taken two and a half years to come to resolution, and I would like to thank Allan and Sue for their whole-hearted support over that time.

Seven year bush grazing licences will be issued within a matter of weeks. The Crown Lands and Assets section of the Department of Natural resources and Environment have stated that these licences will be divided into two categories. One for

runs which adjoin current National Park licences and one for general bush grazing areas. The licences will follow the format of the standard Agricultural licence. Initially these will be interim licences for two years to bring them to 1998, when the current alpine licences fall due. They will then be renewed for a period of seven years. At the present time we are still negotiating with the Department in respect of a special conditions clause they wish included to cover exclusions from various areas.

Rapid changes in technology and communications systems covering access to information via the internet has necessitated our entrance into that medium. Our revised student information will shortly be available both on the internet system and in booklet form.

Last year I urged all members and especially the younger generation, to give generously of their time and to become active in the affairs of the Association. Apathy and the 'let someone else do it' attitude will place our Association at the crossroads. We need to plan ahead and display good management practices as our seven year alpine licences move closer towards renewal. Gone, I agree, are the highly emotive protest rides of the 1980s. These have been replaced with the less publicised day-to-day hard negotiations to protect members' grazing licences.

We need to acknowledge that the gains and privileges that the members of the Association sometimes take for granted have only been won and kept by hard work, perseverance, and representation on many different bodies. Sue and Doug were this year elected as members of their regional Catchment and Land Protection Boards. Our continuing presence on these regional governing bodies, as well as the Public Land Council of Victoria, is vital.

During the year our marketing operations ran off the rails, but thanks to Sue, the merchandising is now moving along again. This is an area in which I appeal today for your help. I do not feel that circumstances necessitate the appointment of a Marketing Officer. This is providing that members and associate members will assist in the marketing tent at the Gibbo Park Get Together. This enormous task can work with your support. Future Newsletters will appeal for that assistance.

On behalf of the Association I thank our many willing helpers. To Linda Barraclough and Debbie

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Squires - your editorial efforts get better every year. To Don Porter for his continuing work with the Photography Contest and the collection of archival material. Jim Commins and Doug Treasure have continued to work efficiently behind the scenes as our Special Projects Officers.

I would especially like to thank Allan Brewer, our Executive Officer for the past two and a half years. My grateful thanks for all your assistance and encouragement. You willingly travelled long distances to meetings and gave freely of your time, despite your ever-increasing workload. Thank you for your unselfish efforts over so many years of involvement with the Association. To our Secretary - Sue Silvers, your work yet again this year has been of great benefit to us. Your efficiency and dedication is gratefully acknowledged.

Mrs Goldsworthy's address to the members was received with acclaim.

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

The past year has certainly flown and it has not been an easy one. Beef producers have seen a downturn in cattle prices much worse than in 1974. Although prices were not as low, we all know how much higher our operating costs are than 22 years ago.

However I believe it has bottomed out, and although in the short term cannot see much improvement, the long term position is much brighter.

We must all hang in there and improve our product, and more importantly, the presentation of that product.

Although the Association could be seen to have laid low these past few months, I can assure you this is far from the truth.

A lot of behind-the-scenes work has gone on and much has been achieved with great effort from Sue and Mary.

A daunting task undertaken has been to rectify the marketing situation, which had unfortunately fallen into chaos. Marketing has not been moved back to the office at Mansfield. Naturally this means extra work for Sue, but once again she has taken it in her stride and as in all crises, has handled it.

After three years plus of persistence, and many trips to Melbourne, the Stock on Roads recommendations have been resolved. They include standard signs for travelling stock and most importantly, driver education.

We had always stressed the need for consideration of members travelling to and from their leases, and this has also been included. As we have seen another election and a change in portfolios, this has meant more follow-up to the new Minister for Roads and Ports in the Hon. Geoff Craige, whom I would like to thank for his prompt action. I would also like to thank Bill Baxter for the work done by him on behalf of the Association.

The future of the Association in my opinion, is at the crossroads, and it seems the same few are doing the running of, and the decision making for the Association. I urge all members and in particular our younger members to stand up and take on positions of administration.

I believe that the reins should be handed over, and as my own workload has increased owing to family and business commitments, and coupled with the travelling involved, I find it necessary to stand down and now submit my resignation from Central Council.

To Sue and Mary, thank you for your help over the past year, and I wish the Association all the best for the future.

The SECRETARY/TREASURERS REPORT was presented by Sue Silvers:

I have pleasure in presenting my 11th annual report to the members and associate members of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria Incorporated.

At the present time there are 82 full members of the Association, and I regret to say that only 45 of these are financial. The associate membership is made up of 142 family memberships, 285 single memberships and 54 pensioner/student memberships. Two-thirds of the associate membership is financial.

The major issues which have involved the Association over the past 12 months have been: 7 year bush grazing licences, travelling stock legislation, information on alpine grazing for school teachers and students, and marketing.

I shall cover these issues in that order.

Last year I began my report with a summary of the position regarding the issuing of 7 year bush grazing licences. In that report I made a mistake which I will now correct. The date for the renewal of the alpine park licences in 1998, not 1997 as I had stated. I am now in a position to advise members that it is proposed that the 7 year bush licence documents will be issued from the Department of Natural Resources and Environment on the 1st October 1996. The documents will follow the new standard agricultural licence under the Land Act 1958 and be issued on similar terms. There will be some special conditions, and I shall come to these shortly. Stocking rates will be discussed with the individual licensee. It should be noted that licensees who currently hold an alpine grazing licence as well as an adjoining bush licence area will initially receive a bush licence for 2 years. This is to establish a common date for renewal with both bush and alpine licences. At the request of the Department, it was agreed that where there are adjoining alpine and bush runs, the system of entry and exit dates for the bush runs would be trialed during the next two years - but only with the agreement of the licensee.

Special conditions will also apply to the bush runs. These conditions will cover:

Planned fire protection operations. The Department will advise the licensee when fuel reduction burns are planned.

Stock grazed on the run must be owned by the licensee.

The licensee must advise the Department when stock are put on the run, and when they are mustered.

Stock must be adequately tagged or identifiable.

Maximum stock numbers to be grazed on the runs will be determined by the Department after consultation with the runholder on the understanding that determination of maximum stocking rates will not necessarily be based on the average stocking rate of recent years.

Licences will be renewable and transferable. They will also be able to be reallocated if, for some reason, they lapse.

The Department has also requested that stock should be excluded from parts of the licence area

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where such an area is to be used for timber harvesting and forest regeneration; where there is an area of conservation significance; any area of rehabilitation works, or if an area is used regularly for camping, recreation or education purposes.

The Association has objected to any blanket exclusion clause in the licence document, and has requested the Department to add the wording that stock may only be excluded from areas within the licence area *only after it can be proved to the satisfaction of both parties that cattle are causing damage.*

In arguing this point the Association has relied on the Oxley report in the Woodgate case. There the Department were insisting that cattle were damaging a regeneration area and wanted them removed for three years. After a proper study of the area, which involved Department staff, it was found there was a better strike of seedlings on the grazed site, than on an adjoining site which had never been grazed.

At the time of writing this report I must say that the Department are somewhat reluctant to accept our argument.

I wish to request that members with bush grazing runs let me know when they receive their licence documents. I am requesting this information in order to be able to keep the members' Register up-to-date. The Association may also have to assist the Department in any case where a licensee does not receive a licence document.

I might remind members that it has taken the Association seven years to reach the point where these licences are about to issue. This is an objectionably long time to have to wait for bureaucracy to move. I can assure members, however, that without constant urging from the Association, these licences would never have issued. In fact some Department officers denied they were ever promised in the first place. It is not mistrustful of members to imagine that with proposed exclusions, and no fixed licences, their cattle might soon be out of the bush altogether.

Our President has informed you that there will be amendments to the Road Safety (Traffic) Regulations 1988 to take effect in May 1997. These amendments will relate to uniformity of signage (presently covered by VicRoads, but not included in regulations), and to spell out the responsibilities of drivers when encountering stock on roads. For example, drivers will be required to give way to stock, and to obey instructions given by the person in charge to minimise the risk of collision. Drivers' responsibilities in respect of stock on roads will also be included in the driver's licence test. In respect to travelling stock, members are covered by the following exemptions from the need to carry a permit:

Local municipalities may exempt a person from the requirement to have a permit in respect of:

- livestock being driven on a once-yearly basis from a 'high country' location back to their 'low country' grazing property while passing through the municipal district.
- livestock being driven on a once yearly basis from a 'low country' grazing property to their 'high country' location while passing through a municipal district.
- grazing of livestock if it is part of a municipal fire prevention program.

- any applicant (for a permit) where it is satisfied that past performance is such that no supervision be required.

- where the Council considers it is inappropriate.

Now, I remind you that it took seven years to get bush grazing licences. It has only taken our President two-and-a-half years to achieve this excellent and successful result. I have to tell you that the determination and dogged persistence shown by Mary Goldsworthy achieved this result. She is to be congratulated for this achievement.

We have been trying for some time to find a way to easily cope with requests from students and teachers for information on alpine grazing. Last year Tim Barker suggested that we put the information in our school booklet on VicNet. Again we were held up for some months until the Association purchased a computer for the office. We were then able to revise and upgrade the booklet and put it on disc. This has been done, and the next step is VicNet. I believe that we should also have some copies in book form, and shall be requesting the Central Council to authorise this at our meeting this afternoon. Many schools travel to the Mansfield region during the month of August, and into the first half of September for their Outdoor Education school camps. Members should know that each one of these schools requests a speaker from the Mountain Cattlemen's Association - there were more than two per week over that period this year. I would especially like to thank Bruce McCormack who undertakes these talks competently. This year he has been assisted by Jack Lovick and Terry Murphy. I would like you to thank them most sincerely for giving their time so generously, and always after hours. I have no doubt that other Branches have similar requests.

Our MCAV marketing section collapsed in the early part of the year when Frank Hill found himself unable to continue with the task. The stock was collected from him and brought back to Mansfield, with part being held by Mary at her home. We found that there was a lack of windcheaters and t-shirts offered for sale and this was rectified. We have needed to carry a range of colours and sizes in our garments due to these being advertised in Voice of the Mountains. In the June/July Newsletter we advised our members and supporters that we now had windcheaters in stock. We received a large number of mail orders through that Newsletter, but

I was very disappointed that of the thirty to forty garments ordered, only two were from MCAV full members, with the exception of an order for six in children's sizes. In view of the fact that most of the complaints about lack of stock came from members themselves, it is discouraging to find that when stock is available, their support is non-existent. We are about to send out a Newsletter within the next two weeks. In it I will be specially mentioning t-shirts for the summer. I hope the response from members will look up significantly. Some time ago it was suggested that each Branch would take responsibility for a stall to promote and sell MCAV goods. For the usual reasons of apathy this very good idea has never been taken up. May I suggest that there be a change in this response today, and that each Branch commits itself to one event in its district within the next 12 months. The exception should be the Omeo Branch which has its hands full with the 1997 Get Together. I suggest Mansfield nominate one of its Bush Markets, or its Show. Gippsland might consider the Dargo Walnut Festival, and perhaps the Bright Autumn Festival in the North East. Then there are the various regional Information Centres. The Mansfield centre stocks a range of merchandise on

a consignment basis. This works very well, and there is a reasonable monthly turnover. Each Branch should also make an effort to contact and arrange stock for their Information Centres, and indeed any other outlets they can find. Mary has mentioned the marketing tent at the Get Together. I trust that a large band of helpers will come forward to assist with that. I also hope that full members of the Association will work with associate members in the marketing tent. In the meantime, the marketing caravan is still housed in one of Chris Stoney's sheds, and we thank him for kindly allowing this situation to continue. I shall return to the marketing issue when I get onto the financial statements in the Treasurer's report.

Early in 1995 the MCAV commissioned the School of Botany at the University of Melbourne to conduct a survey into the question of alpine grazing. We hoped to identify areas where there were gaps in knowledge and scientific study regarding the development and change in the biodiversity of the alpine regions of Victoria. This report was delivered to the Association by the middle of the year, and was accompanied by a large data base of reference material on grazing in the high country, both in



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Australia and overseas. The report also contained suggestions for future directions for the Association. As it was a privately commissioned work, it will not be released into the public arena. The report sets out a series of gaps in current knowledge, and suggestions as to where the MCAV might become involved. Based on one of the recommendations made in the report, a series of plots has been planned, one has already been upgraded. It is imperative that the Association justify the expense of the report, and undertake the research suggested. The base is already in place, Central Council must now go forward with the second stage, and seek professional assistance with research and monitoring.

The 1997 Get Together has already been mentioned. As you know it had been advertised to take place at Wombat Crossing, but at the last minute was switched to the Guy property at Waterford. The uproar over the Get Together was quite spectacular, and indeed the event came very close to not being held at all. For those of you who did not understand what happened, or heard only part of the story, I

shall now clarify. In spite of the fact that the Wellington Shire Council acknowledged in July of that year that the Get Together was to be held in its precinct, there was no mention of any permit being required by it. On 30th October I was informed that a town planning permit was necessary, and that the Shire would not allow the Get Together to proceed without one. The permit was applied for, and proceeded through the usual channels - slowly I might add, but all the time I was assured that 'everything will be alright, it's only a formality'. Well it was not 'only a formality' at all. At the very last minute, and with only weeks to go before the date of the Get Together, the Shire advised that the permit was to be granted with conditions. The main condition was that the MCAV would be required to contribute to roadmaking costs which were estimated to be in excess of \$6,000. This coupled with other minor conditions would have made the Get Together unviable. Plans for Wombat Crossing were immediately scrapped, and an alternative site at Guys organised. As the Get Together was still to be held within Wellington Shire, a town planning permit was still required. Everything went according to plan, and the Get Together was successfully held. I would like to add that the town planning permit listed 14 conditions. Most of these covered matters which the Association always addressed, such as banning open fires on the Get Together site. However it might be of interest to you that one clause required that all persons attending the event should be briefed about evacuation procedures. It is presumed that, in the event of a bushfire, the site would be evacuated. One can only speculate on the wisdom of moving some two thousand people, many of them children, out of a safe, cleared and slashed, grassy area through heavy bush, in the face of an oncoming bushfire. Fortunately the Association was not required to meet this dangerous challenge.

The 1997 Get Together is to be held at Gibbo Park near Benambra, and East Gippsland Shire have informed the Association that no town planning permit is required.

The Alpine Advisory Committee has met three times over the year, with two field trips, one to the Bryces Plain area, and another based at Howmans Gap, where the Committee discussed the problems of pest plants and animals and looked at the problems of English Broom. The Committee also considered several transfers of grazing licences, the

future direction of the Australian Alps Liaison Committee and many minor matters dealing with the Alpine National park. Having now completed its current agenda, the Committee is in abeyance pending advice from the new Minister for Natural Resources and Environment. I am aware that several matters have been referred to the Committee for deliberation, but it has yet to be re-activated.

This year I was appointed to the Public Lands Committee of the Goulburn-Broken Catchment and Land Protection Board. The work involved with this Committee will be of great importance to the MCAV in the future, dealing as it does with uses of public land within the catchment, which is vast - stretching from the Alpine Park to the Murray River. Its work is predominantly to do with the catchment, obviously, and water quality in particular. The Public Lands Committee is still in its infancy, and I anticipate that the issues to be put before it will be of interest and concern going into the future months.

I thank the Central Council members for their support over the last twelve months. I would particularly like to thank Mary Goldsworthy, who has been a most thorough and able President of the Association, for her valued friendship and support.

As Treasurer I now present to the members the 1995/96 financial statements. You will see that the Marketing traded at a small loss during the last 12 months. Stock had been seriously depleted over the previous 12 month period, and you will see that the Association has made significant purchases of merchandise in order to bring stock levels back up. These purchases, apart from a number of small items, largely consist of windcheaters and t-shirts. The reasons for the downturn in marketing have been previously explained, and we now look forward to a better trading position in the coming 12 months.

Members should also note that the Association shows an operating deficit for the past year. This is represented by one non-recurring item, namely the fee paid to Melbourne University for the scientific review.

The purchase of a new computer for the office has further reduced members' funds.

Allan Brewer asked the Treasurer to explain the item in the financial statement regarding debtors from the 995 Get Together. Treasurer reported that this item referred to goods bought at Auction by C. and G. Lovick which had not been paid. The

Treasurer was asked what action she had taken to recover the funds and said she had written and repeatedly phoned. She was asked to write again.

Moved Mary Goldsworthy seconded Ross Brown that the financial statements for the year 1995/1996 be accepted. *Carried.*

SETTING OF FEES

Moved Jim Commins seconded Buff Rogers that there be no alteration to either the full member or associate member fee structure for the coming year. *Carried.*

FIXING OF HONORARIUMS

Moved Peter Monds seconded Mark Coleman that the Honorarium for the President shall be \$3,000 plus expenses. *Carried.*

It was agreed that there would be only one Vice President.

Moved Ross Brown seconded Harry Ryder that the Honorarium for the Vice President be \$1,000 plus expenses. *Carried.*

Moved Allan Brewer seconded Mary Goldsworthy That if there be an Executive Officer then he or she shall be given an Honorarium of \$1,000 plus expenses. If there be no Executive Officer, then this Honorarium shall go to the Vice President. *Carried.*

Moved Buff Rogers seconded Kevin Kelly that the Honorarium for Special Projects Officers shall be \$1,000. *Carried.*

Moved Mary Goldsworthy seconded Jim Commins that the Honorarium for the Secretary/Treasurer shall be \$20,000 plus expenses. *Carried.*

Moved Buff Rogers seconded Ross Brown that the Honorarium for the Marketing Officer shall be \$1,000. *Carried.*

It was agreed that there be no Honorarium for the position of Chairman.

ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS

Doug Treasure stated that he would not be standing for election to any position in the Association in the coming year due to the pressure of other business, and he retained the chair for the election of office bearers. The Chairman declared all positions vacant.

President: Harry Ryder nominated by Allan Brewer was elected.

Mary Goldsworthy nominated by Peter Monds declined.

Vice President: Mark Coleman was nominated by Mary Goldsworthy.

Chris Stoney nominated by Mark Coleman declined.

Stuart Hicks was nominated by Rhonda Treasure.

The Chairman took a vote on the position of Vice President and Mark Coleman was elected.

Executive Officer: Chris Stoney nominated by Mark Coleman declined.

Stuart Hicks nominated by Frank Ryan was elected.

Special Projects Officer: Jim Commins nominated by Buff Rogers was elected.

Doug Treasure nominated by Ross Brown declined.

Rhonda Treasure nominated by Allan Brewer declined.

It was agreed that no **Marketing Officer** be appointed for the coming year, and that if during the year it was found necessary Central Council would appoint somebody suitable. It was agreed there needed to be a Marketing Officer in charge at the Get Together. Mary Goldsworthy nominated by Harry Ryder for that position declined. There was no Get Together marketing officer appointed.

Chairman: Mark Coleman nominated by Allan Brewer was elected.

Secretary/Treasurer: Sue Silvers nominated by Peter McCormack was elected.

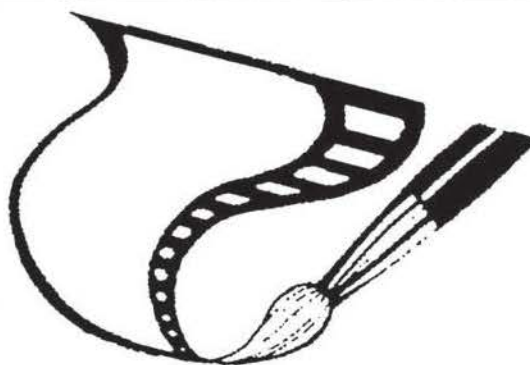
APPOINTMENT OF AUDITOR:

Mr W.G. Crump was appointed Auditor of the Association for the coming year.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Allan Brewer spoke of the workload Mary Goldsworthy had carried over the past year and noted that Bill Goldsworthy had also shared a part of this. He asked that the Association write to Bill Goldsworthy thanking him for his forbearance over the past three years.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 12.45 pm.



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Seven Year Bush Grazing Licences:

Will it take 7 years for Government to issue a 7 year licence?

On 4 May 1989, during the passage of the National Parks Bill through the Victorian Parliament, the Labor Government of the day promised Mountain Cattlemen that it would issue 7 year Bush Grazing Licences as well as the 7 year Alpine Licences. The Alpine Licences were granted, after lengthy negotiation, in 1991. It was expected that the Bush Grazing Licences would issue shortly afterwards. This did not happen.

In 1993, and with a new Liberal Government in power, the Association again pressed for the 7 year Bush Grazing Licences. The Minister of the day acknowledged that Government was committed to issuing the licences and promised the Association by letter, that this commitment would be honoured, and that the licences should issue 'no later than the 1994/5 grazing season'. This didn't happen either.

MCAV wrote repeatedly to the Minister for Conservation and Environment, and after long delays, was advised that the licences were held up in a general review of all agricultural tenure.

In 1995 the Association was granted a meeting with the Crown Lands and Assets Section of the Department. It was obvious that officers of that Department were embarrassed at the delay, and promised that the licences would be issued by 1 October 1995. This date came and went, and still nothing happened.

During 1996, after repeated requests, and with obvious frustration, the Association was advised to commence negotiations with the Forest Section of the Department. The sticking point in the negotiations is that the Forest Section require a common special clause in the licences which would mean the removal of cattle from any regeneration area for a period of up to three years. The Association strongly disagrees with this proposed clause.

At a meeting in Mansfield in December 1996 between the Association and the Forest Section, a senior forester, when asked what percentage success rate was generally achieved in regeneration, replied that it was usually 90%. He was then asked, of the 10% failure rate, what proportion could be attributed to cattle. The reply was that it was minimal, and had never been quantified.

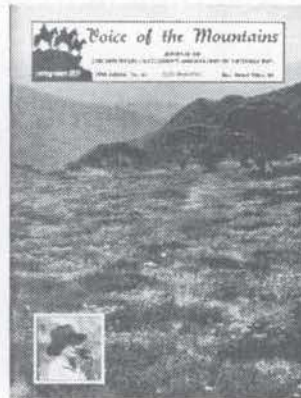
It seems odd, therefore, to expect that cattle ought to be removed from regeneration areas. Interesting as well, that the so-called damage cattle are supposed to do to regeneration areas, has never been quantified.

It is all very frustrating. Negotiations will continue with the Department, but the Association has now set a deadline of 31 March 1997 for the issue of these 7 year Bush Grazing Licences. The Department is on notice that the Association will not accept any further delays after that date, at which time, if the licences have not been issued, the Association will be forced to consider what options are open to it to force the Department to honour its acknowledged obligation.

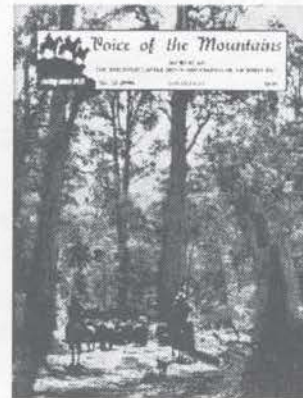
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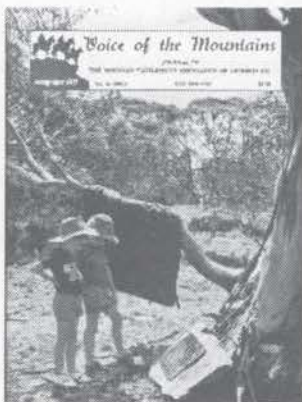
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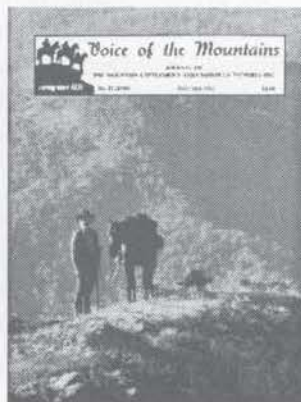
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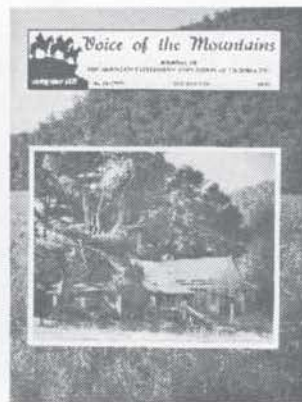
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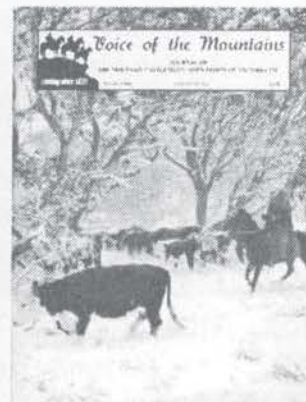
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The Committee of *Voice of the Mountains* would like to thank everyone for the wonderful support received this year, including Mary Goldsworthy, Sue Ryder and Betty Fitzgerald, who went out of their way to help us fill the pages. We also appreciate the timely assistance of Dorothy Watt and Marion Hair.

Poems, stories and photographs of activities in the high country are always welcome.

Voice is grateful to the 'Anapaks', without whom this issue would not have made it to the Get Together.

E-Gee Printers have yet again coped magnificently with our absolutely impossible deadlines, and we thank them for their professionalism and seemingly endless patience.

