



# Voice of the Mountains

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

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No.28 (2005)



# Voice of the Mountains

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

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## CONTENTS

Office Bearers 2004/2005 .....	2
President's Message 2005	
A word from Simon Turner .....	3
Cattlemen's Call <i>Jim Brown</i> .....	5
Grazing, science, fire and management	
in the High Country of Victoria <i>Peter Attiwill</i> .....	7
A further note on science and alpine grazing .....	10
Tributes	
Alf Smith .....	12
Ken Terry .....	13
John Faithfull .....	13
Open letter from Ken Terry .....	14
On the road with marketing in 2003/2004 .....	15
The Anzac on the Wall <i>Jim Brown</i> .....	17
At the Station <i>Laurence Webb</i> .....	20
Tassie experience for Victorian members <i>Kathy Junor</i> .....	21
Commonsense <i>Pauline Connley</i> .....	24
On the Bookshelf .....	26
The Trail Ride Romeo <i>Laurie Webb</i> .....	30
"Kilbride" at Dargo 2004 .....	32
The Geebung Polo Boys <i>David Olsson</i> .....	36
The Green Inferno -	
the politics of bushfires and conservation <i>Phil Cheney</i> .....	37
Victorian High Country Huts Association .....	42
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2004 .....	43
Back Issues .....	56
Acknowledgements .....	56

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### COVER

Horsehair Hut, rebuilt after the 2003 fires. Photograph by David Oldfield.  
Bringing them home after being 'up top'. Photograph by Libby Price.

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# President's Message

## 2005

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*A word from Simon Turner*

It seems that each year, I start by saying, this has been another difficult and challenging year.

Again we had to cope with the continuing drought, post fire reconstruction, loss of access to burnt licence areas. How would our opponents feel if their incomes were cut in half and parts of their properties destroyed by fire. We had hoped for a bit more compassion during these battles but instead the fires have been used as a launching pad for a renewed and bitter attack on alpine grazing. Where we might have expected an apology about the fires we got evictions instead. In city terms, this is like torching the front and backyard and then telling the occupant of the house to get out because the building has disturbed the natural environment.

Additionally, during this year we have had the licence renewal campaign. The campaign has moved around all over the place during the course of the year. Our opponents have changed their arguments from mossbeds to lizards and back to fire again. Our paper that catalogues all the arguments and responses now covers about thirty separate issues.

However we have had some positive encouragement during the year.

- . We had a good tour of the Bogong High Plains with the Alpine Grazing Taskforce.
- . Our management plan has been finalised and submitted.
- . Our licences are provided for in legislation.
- . Scientists have supported and strengthened our case.
- . Successive Labor Environment Ministers, including Mr. Thwaites, have promised that our licences will be renewed.
- . At the start of the snow season we saw Ministers Thwaites and Delahunty embrace the imagery of the cattlemen.
- . Qantas produced an advertisement using Wallace's hut.
- . People virtually ignored a protest held by our opponents.
- . We got strong tangible support from the Federal Coalition and subsequently from the Australian Government.
- . The Terrick Terrick National Park management plan provides for continued sheep grazing so this knocked flat our opponents' argument that grazing is inconsistent with national park management. This park is just west of Echuca.

As difficult as the task of being President of the MCAV is, I am continually buoyed by the expressions of support and gratitude from members, associates and the community generally. I want to pay particular tribute to Tim Barker for his tireless efforts as association secretary, to Harry Ryder and Jack Hicks who have hosted politicians, journalists and scientists on tours to the Bogong High Plains.

Other Bogong High Plains cattlemen like Ron Briggs and Stuart Hicks have also stepped up to additional demands and responsibilities. Cattlemen in other areas have also put in days of touring, presenting, measuring and discussing. All the while we have a strong supporter base with the likes of Pauline Venn and Debbie Squires putting in long hours for the benefit of mountain cattlemen.

The pioneering, tenacious and unyielding work of our forefathers have a special place in the history of Australia. We are privileged to be able to add to the cultural, historic and heritage values of this iconic activity.

There are not many people in our community whose family histories have such a prominent and well publicised place in the history of our nation. This gives us a favoured place but it also imposes daunting responsibilities. We have an obligation to our predecessors, and our current supporters in our local and wider communities, and a responsibility to future generations, to maintain and strengthen the values of alpine grazing. We must not let our iconic activity of alpine grazing fade from dynamic reality to the dusty pages of history books and pale exhibits in museums. Our past, present and future are part of the spirit of our place and nation. We need to tend it well, it is valued and valuable. Our fights, debates and arguments will be chronicled well into the future and we need to ensure we give good account.

*Simon Turner*  
President  
Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria  
January 2005

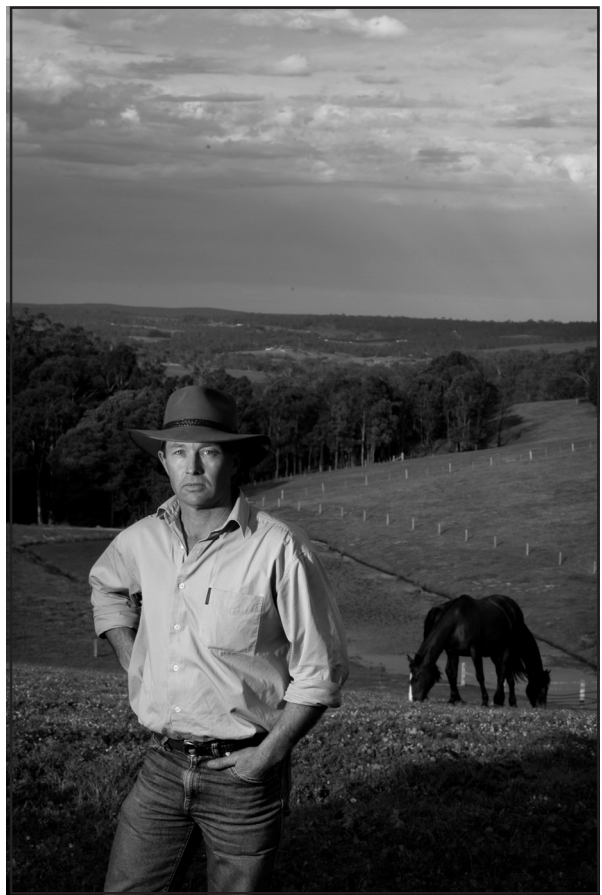


Photo: Heath Misson

# Cattlemen's Call

---

*Jim Brown*

Well here we are again old friends and glad to be alive  
to see what's on the track ahead in 2005.  
We all know how cattlemen fought so hard in the past  
to hammer out agreements that we really thought would last.  
Grazing leases signed for seven years and as of right renewed  
a binding peaceful settlement to end a bitter feud.

They all expire in August - but - will they be renewed?  
And that's the crucial question as these leases are reviewed  
by Maxfield, Lindell, Lupton, Mitchell - the review committee,  
will these names earn our respect, or go down in infamy?  
Government set up this committee of review  
Will it be used to rubber stamp what they intend to do?

The Greenies seem to have their ear with science much over rated,  
they're back like termites - yes the ones we thought exterminated.  
We're going round in circles, covering the same old ground,  
greenies versus cattlemen now how long's that been round?  
They cry "Cattle does such damage, cause all of nature's linked!"  
Well, we can show you wildflowers you said we'd make extinct.

And Sphagnum moss is doing fine and this might you amaze  
we'll show where it's doing best - that's where our cattle graze.  
Our case is there's really only one thing under stress,  
that's cattlemen's survival, cause our future's in a mess.  
Once more we have no choice but to leap to our defence  
of those things cattlemen regard as merely common sense.

Like taking cattle up onto the magic alpine plain  
and lighting several cool burns when we bring them down again.  
Indigenous Australians taught us to reduce the fuel  
that feeds the summer bushfires, and it's a lesson cruel.  
To survey the recent havoc just like scenes from war,  
fires worse than '39 which the cattlemen foresaw.

It will take generations to heal this landscape blight,  
our pleas fell on deaf ears but we knew we were right.  
Our knowledge is tradition, and what we've seen ourselves,  
our wisdom doesn't come from text books stacked upon the shelves.  
Won't you greenies face the truth, can't you understand  
the best experts you don't respect are those close to the land.

We respect the pioneers who helped to shape this nation,  
the Man from Snow River - yes - it's still our inspiration,  
that tribute to a cattleman still makes our hearts beat proud  
and what joy it always is to hear it read out loud.

We snigger when you use our image anytime you want,  
like opening Olympic games or an alpine restaurant.  
We take heart from Federal Government - they've come out on our side  
they respect our place in history - and we thank them with pride.  
To State Government we've got to get this message through somehow  
just sign those alpine leases, and for God's sake sign them now.  
We're only seeking justice, and you must realise  
we've drawn a clear line in the sand - no more compromise.

And we must win for Aussies who detest the nanny state  
where political correctness only stifles true debate.  
Where bureaucrats ban this and that - it seems their sole desire  
to force us all to wallow in a regulated quagmire.  
You blokes and sheilas listening now - if we have to make a stand  
to pledge you'll stay the distance, all you do is raise your hand.

# Grazing, science, fire and management in the High Country of Victoria

---

*Peter Attiwill*

## **Grazing, science and management**

There has been an impressive amount of research on the effects of grazing on the composition of plant communities in the High Country. This research provides a sound framework on which to manage grazing in a sustainable way.

Much of the research is based on comparisons between fenced and grazed plots on land that has not burned since 1939. There is now (as a result of barring of the land by fire) increasing evidence of thousands of years of occupation of the High Plains by Aborigines, and it is safe to assume that fire has been a natural feature of the ecology of the High Plains, as it has been for most of Australia. The undisturbed state of the vegetation of the High Plains, protected from fire, is therefore most unlikely to be a natural state and therefore not an entirely appropriate reference.

It is now critical that Parks Victoria clearly define goals for management of biodiversity. A critical goal for future management is the definition of appropriate burning regimes. The question should not be one of grazing or no grazing. The critical question is: what are our goals for management of ecological diversity and of fire?

The critics of alpine grazing use science to support the basic tenet that grazing is incompatible with use of the land as a national park, as encapsulated in the slogan 'National Park or Cow Paddock?'. The slogan is totally misleading. A cow paddock, once abandoned, will never return to the ecosystem that was destroyed to create it.

In contrast, there is no evidence that cattle grazing in the High Country has eliminated rare and threatened species, nor has species composition or diversity been irrevocably altered. Indeed, 170 years of controlled cattle-grazing has left by far the greater part of the High Country in excellent condition. Clearly, at the long-term and landscape levels, cattle grazing over some part of the High Country can be accommodated within management plans to achieve specific goals without an irreversible deterioration in biodiversity.

There is no doubt that the opponents of grazing use science to achieve their end of stopping grazing completely (just as the opponents of timber harvesting in native forests will continue to pursue their aim until there is no harvesting in native forests). That is, there is no point of compromise, despite the fact that both the intensity and extent of cattle grazing has reduced dramatically over the years.

## **Fire and management**

The alpine fires of 2003 were the greatest ecological disaster to strike Victoria within recorded history. Some 1 million hectares of national park and state forests – public land, OUR land – were burned at high intensity. At least some ecosystems in the High Country will take 1000 years or more to recover. Sediment loads increased up to 150 times above normal, and Environment Minister Thwaites stated that rivers and water catchments across the north of Victoria face a 'serious threat'.

It is a curious fact that, while the predominantly city-based push to end grazing in the High Country continues unabated, the unimaginable disaster of the 2003 fires has disappeared from our civic radar screen as though it had never occurred.

However, the Stretton Group has pursued the issue doggedly, and is now seeking a court ruling to identify government agencies responsible for the size and severity of the fires.

The Stretton Group has received enormous support from country Victoria; the alpine fires should never have happened, and once started, they should have been controlled rather than burning for 2 months.

It is unfortunate that our meeting in the north-east coincided with the inaugural Stretton Oration by Phil Cheney (CSIRO, Canberra): 'The Green Inferno: The Politics of Bushfires and Conservation'.

Successive governments have declared increasing areas of national parks without providing adequate levels of investment and resources to manage them.

Most critically, fuel loads have been allowed to build up to the point where unplanned, or feral fires become devastating. Prescribed burning, together with ecological burning to meet biodiversity goals as well as to reduce fuel loads, have fallen well short (perhaps an understatement – appallingly short?) of departmental goals over the past decade (as recognized in the Auditor General's report), and worse still, departmental goals fall well short of what is needed.

No wonder country Victoria is worried. Will it take a threat to Melbourne's forested water catchments to make city people wake up and be worried too?



## Grazing, fire and management

The current problems of fire management have been recognized Australia-wide (the Esplin Report in Victoria, the Auditor General's Report in WA [October 2004], and most probably in the report of the Coronial Inquiry in the ACT, yet to be concluded). But even the most organized fire-fighting capability will be puny in the face of excessive fuel loads. Developing fire-fighting capability without proper management of our resources is not the answer.

It is clear that the government does not have the people on the ground to do the job. Only by decentralizing and using the experience, skills and knowledge of mountain cattlemen and landowners will ecological and fuel-management burning be established on a successful basis. The grazing or no-grazing decision should not be made in isolation from the overarching problems of management of national parks, and especially the management of fire.

## Grazing and people

The basis for a decision is not science alone. There is no fundamental or self-evident reason why an activity must be banned from National Parks other than a majority opinion that it should be banned.

In the end, environmental campaigns rest on the notion that another person's concept of outdoor enjoyment would interfere with the campaigners' idea of the correct outdoor experience. We note here that a study at Charles Sturt University of community attitudes to alpine grazing found that public opinion is far more interested in 'heritage' as defined by the activities of people than in the protection of plants.

The Federal Government supports both the continuation of grazing and the national heritage significance of the mountain cattlemen. Furthermore, the Federal Government is funding in a major way, through the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre, research on interactions between grazing and fire in the High Country of Victoria. Both of these issues were clearly defined by the Federal Government before the recent election.

Thus in terms both of protecting and managing our alpine areas, and of continuing the proud heritage of the mountain cattlemen that has become so much a symbol of the Australian spirit, cattle grazing in the High Country of Victoria should continue on a restricted, planned and managed basis.

The way in which this can happen in a planned and scientific way is presented in the Alpine Grazing Management Plan of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria (MCAV).

## The Alpine Grazing Management Plan

The Alpine Grazing Management Plan of the MCAV sets out a collaborative and consultative approach to grazing, retaining the present seven-year licence terms. Some of the key points are:

- Parks Victoria and MCAV will form a Joint Management Committee, thereby ending a situation that is increasingly adversarial;
- The first 7 years will be used as an objective assessment of the effects of cattle grazing, using the experience of cattlemen as well as scientific data. Research by the Bushfire CRC, funded by the Federal Government, will provide major inputs to this assessment (for example, there is at present no unequivocal resolution to the 'grazing reduces blazing' argument);
- Cattlemen will play a major role in land management – weed control, control of feral animals, monitoring of activities;
- Cattlemen will be involved in controlled fires aimed at fuel reduction, and in management and suppression of wildfires;
- Cattlemen will be involved in quantitative assessment of herbage mass, and in managing sustainable grazing through (for example) rotational, targeted and strategic grazing;
- Outputs from research and observation will be shared and openly reviewed, again putting an end to the sort of senseless, acrimonious and adversarial debate that so often surrounds environmental issues.

## Conclusion

Cattle-grazing in the Alpine National Park now covers less than 15% of the area. Let us now stop quibbling and taking the high moral ground offered by this or that bit of science. The record stands for itself – the quality of the ecosystems of the High Country has not been destroyed by grazing over the past 150 years, and the cattlemen are hallowed within the image and folklore of Australia.

MCAV is a proud organization. Its members have managed much of the High Country in a sustainable way for generations with success – it would not be in their interests (nor in their philosophy) to do otherwise! MCAV has prepared a conservative and collaborative management plan, and its endorsement will be greeted with approval especially by country Victoria, now gradually recovering after years of hardship, drought and fire.



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# MAZDA

# A further note on science and alpine grazing

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*Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria - 1 December, 2004*

At first glance, there appears to be a wide range of scientific evidence stacked against alpine grazing.

Some of the scientific papers presented as submissions to the Alpine Grazing Taskforce have a long list of references. The list is less impressive when the repetitive nature of the work and the authors is taken into account.

In 2000, an independent panel established by the former Department of Natural Resources and Environment heard evidence from one of the more prolific contributors to the scientific literature. The Panel found that it needed to take a "guarded" view of his evidence. The Panel put it this way.

"Though we have accepted various parts of Dr. Williams' evidence as is set out above and further we accept that Dr. Williams has impressive qualifications and has written widely in the field, nevertheless, the Panel does take a guarded view of his evidence bearing in mind his expressed opinion that the presence of domestic livestock is inconsistent with the basic objectives of national park management." (T.58). (Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Independent Panel on Alpine Grazing Licences, Mr Tony Graham QC, Chairman, Mr Neville Walsh, Mr Jim McColl, 2000.)

A submission opposing alpine grazing might appear impressive, but it needs to be considered whether it has been written specifically to undermine grazing in Alpine areas. The same arguments could be put against any land use in high altitude areas such as skiing, lodge construction, roads and walking tracks.

One submission, prepared by the Australian Academy of Science used a report on the condition of the high mountain catchments of New South Wales and Victoria that was prepared in 1957 and said that the "issues, in terms of ecology ... have not changed". The fact is that a lot has changed since those days and we are not even looking at the high mountain catchments of NSW. There have been significant changes in management, stocking rates and areas grazed. Furthermore, there has been a recognition of the need for environmental sustainability and the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria is now proposing a cattle management plan. It is nonsense to rely on a report written almost 50 years ago and to suggest it covers conditions today.

The cattlemen think the views of some ecologists suffer from selective observation. You will always find an adverse impact if you look hard enough. An objective assessment would involve looking across the whole landscape, assessing damage and alteration and determining the cause. This assessment would include

roads, tracks and carparks. The full picture is rarely discussed when issues like the adverse impact of ski resorts has been resolved simply by removing these sites from the Park.

The alpine ecology is a fertile place for myths. The myth about mossbeds highlights the discrepancy between what is promoted as science, and what is actually happening on the ground.

Opponents to alpine grazing have launched a classic tactic of the ecological lobby groups. They mythologise a facet of the natural environment and then characterise any recreation or commercial activity as trashing this newly elevated aspect. This has been a highly successful component in the forest debate which has mythologised old growth forests. This is spin and hype, not environmental science. In fact the mossbeds form an extremely small part of the Alpine area.

In any event the mossbeds are flourishing after 170 years of alpine grazing. Cattle do have an impact where they cross a stream or visit it to drink. But, if 170 years of grazing impacted so adversely on sphagnum mossbeds, surely they would not be as abundant as they now are.

There are many mossbeds on private land, below the snowline, which are also flourishing and they are in paddocks grazed by cattle for the whole year.

Alpine grazing opponents give the impression that there must be hundreds of acres of sphagnum mossbeds scattered across the high plains.

The Research Section of a Latrobe University publication (page 7, August 2004) reported that, "The Alps are an important water catchment, providing up to eighty percent of stream flow in the Murray-Murrumbidgee catchment in drought years, and all this water passes through bogs."

Mossbeds are quite common across the high country both in the grazed high country and in the other 85% of the Alpine National Park that is not grazed by cattle. However they have always been found in small patches adding to much less than 1% of the total area. Simple observation shows that much of the rain that falls in the high country enters streams without being filtered through a mossbed.

Alpine grazing opponents seem to think that mossbeds have some sort of pre-ordained role in filtering and steadily releasing water to sustain lowland catchments. First, mossbeds are just plants. They have no role pre-ordained by some superior being. Sphagnum mossbeds colonise around springs discharging water where the flow rate is no more than a trickle and are usually found within the first twenty to thirty metres



*The Alpine Grazing Taskforce and cattlemen at Mount Fainter; Simon Turner and Taskforce Chairman Ian Maxfield, MP, in burnt out mossbed; old and new at Tawonga Huts; Burnt out mossbed in ungrazed area near Hollands Knob.*

downstream of the spring. Once the flow rate increases in the little streams the sphagnum will not establish and is never found along the beds of bigger streams. This is a very important point as it means that the majority of rainfall that falls in the mountains is never going to be filtered through any sphagnum moss. This would have been the case prior to European settlement.

Following the 2003 Alpine National Park bushfires, the mossbeds in the ungrazed areas fared immensely worse than those where cattle had kept the surrounding vegetation trimmed short, thus offering the only form of protection available. Mossbeds in the ungrazed areas that were inevitably surrounded by a dry thatch of dead material ensured the fire was led right into the heart of the mossbeds.

This example of mythologising the mossbeds highlights the manner in which a thin veneer of observation is massaged to support a philosophical belief that is held with a significant degree of obsession.

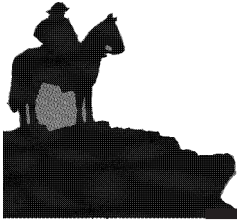
The aftermath of the 2003 fires also illustrates that conventional Government sponsored science is not the sole source of reasonable analysis. The Stretton Group of highly qualified scientists has come up with alternative

analysis, causes, impacts and solutions. One side is not 100% correct and the other side not 100% wrong. There is legitimate dispute and an intelligent response is to resolve these differences. Our inability to do this probably stems from the now obsolete belief that science, being objective, is always correct. These days, science is just another input, it is not the supreme authority.

Nevertheless, the case presented by the cattlemen has been supported by scientists including Professor Peter Attiwill. It is noticeable that the work done by Harm Van Rees, Roger Oxley and Alan Wilson is never quoted by the opponents to alpine grazing because it does not support their views.

In many respects, the ecology of the high country is too complex to be explained by narrowly defined observation. It takes generations of experience to understand the various interactions and whether movements and changes are long or short term.

To have a valid opinion of the ecology of the high plains really requires the combined minds of scientists and cattlemen. While there is disagreement between the two, the only obvious conclusion is uncertainty, and the only obvious recommendation is a combination of minds.



**Alfred Marwood (Alf) Smith**  
30 September 1923 - 27 February 2004

Alf Smith was born at Omeo, the son of Harry Smith and Ellen Rose *nee* Faithfull, on 30 September 1933 and spent a lifetime devoted to the land. This was apart from the short time he served with the AIF.

Alf married Lynda Payne in September 1948 and they had two children Alan and Cheryl. Alf and Lynda developed the property "Innisfail", north of Omeo.

As recalled by his son Alan he was a tough, hard and very determined man but underneath he was very caring, loving and thoughtful. He loved a good laugh and a cold beer. His cattle, sheep, horse, dogs and farm were his joy, love and life.

Alf will be remembered for his shorthorn cattle that were his pride and joy and also for his merino sheep. The Autumn calf sale day in Omeo

was the highlight of his year with the "Innisfail" steers often being the top pen for the sale.

Alan and his wife Noleen took over the running of "Innisfail" which continues in the Smith family name despite the fires of 2003. It is perhaps fortunate that Alf at this point did not understand the havoc the fire was to wreak upon his beloved "Innisfail" with the loss of almost everything - livestock, shedding and fencing - except the family home.

In his earlier years he spent some time shearing sheep and travelling the country in pursuit of his passion for woodchopping.

Hi wife Lynda predeceased him twelve years ago and he was buried at the Omeo Cemetery on 3 March 2004.



**Ken Terry**  
1923 - 2004

Ken Terry was born in Canterbury, Melbourne in 1923 and at 17 joined the Army and did his initial training at Wilsons Promontory and Bendigo eventually joining a commando unit and serving in New Guinea, Bornea and East Timor.

After he was discharged he was accepted into a rural training course at Dookie College and obtained a Diploma of Agriculture. It was also at this time that he met his Valerie who was to become his wife.

In the 1940s the State Government established the Soil Conservation Board which later became the Soil Conservation Authority. Its charter was to work closely with landholders and government authorities advising them on land uses that matched land capabilities. In 1983 the Soil Conservation Authority was amalgamated into the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands.

It is to this background that Ken Terry became known to the cattlemen and vice versa. Over a period of forty years, Ken built up a relationship of mutual respect and by the time of his retirement, Ken had developed a passion for preserving the high country and the traditions of the mountain cattlemen. Ken was not an upfront man - although he was often to the fore in many discussions and arguments - Ken actively supported the continuation of grazing in the bush and alpine regions.

Ken was a gregarious man and friendship was all important to him. When Ken became your friend, so did all your family (including the horse and the dog!). He possessed the wonderful attribute of genuine and personal interest in the well being of all his friends.

The cattlemen lost a strong and determined supporter when the "white ants finally took control". Ken is survived by his wife Valerie and children Ian, Ann and Geoff.

He can be best summarised as one of a kind, a bloke who lived until he died on 9 February 2004.

*Compiled from eulogy and testaments by Geoff Terry, Hon. Bill Sykes and Phillip Messenger.*



*Ken Terry, Wally Ryder, Mick Walsh  
Noel Schultz, Allan Brewer and Ken Connors outside the  
Birdsville Hotel : S. Ryder photo*

## **John Faithfull**

*Voice of the Mountains* also acknowledges the death of John (Jacko) Faithfull of Omeo. Jacko died at Omeo on 22 January 2004 and his contribution of poetry to *Voice* will be sorely missed. He could always be relied upon to help out at the last moment with *Voice*.

Jacko spent much of his adult life away from his high country home performing and entertaining on cruise ships and on the pub circuits but had returned home in his later years.

*Before Ken Terry died he wrote this open letter to all cattlemen.*

To the Cattlemen of Victoria,

I am concerned about the actions of bureaucrats and pseudo politicians who have designed the various so-called management plans for the resources of our high country.

These bureaucrats claim their plans are for vegetative protection and aesthetic beauty. However, they have overlooked the very real economic issues that are related to this area, such as beef production and family livelihoods. These bureaucrats should be reminded very clearly that mountain cattlemen have cared for and maintained this high country for generations without the interference of Collins Street cockies. Throughout all these years an excellent job was done.

It is true that tourism and natural resource protection are essential priorities for Victoria, but this cannot be at the cost of families and their traditional means of earning incomes.

It should not be an all or nothing issue, but should be one of co-habitation, consideration and co-ordination of everybody's needs.

Let's not see politics dominate and that communities be reliably informed in an open transparent, objective and ongoing manner.

In conclusion I would like to congratulate the mountain cattlemen's association on their consistent manner in keeping this critical issue in the public eye and minds.

I send my regards and thoughts to you all, particularly those in the valleys that are still fighting - keep it up.

My best wishes and regards to all.

Ken Terry

# On the road with marketing in 2003/2004....

---

*Pauline Venn*

The MCAV merchandise was displayed at two country venues and also interstate during 2004. Generous sales were recorded on all three occasions.

In November 2003 the *Great Victorian Bike Ride* commenced at Mt Hotham and made Omeo its first stop. Omeo opened its arms to the bike riders and their support crews under a clear high country sky and turned on a display of the town's attractions. Many mountain cattlemen and their families call this area home and so the MCAV was represented by myself, Rusty Connley, Simon Turner and children.

As well as merchandise we had an historic leather pack saddle and a photographic display of some of the characters that forged the mountain cattlemen's image, both past and present.

We were in attendance for five hours and in that time gave many factual accounts of the current difficulties the mountain cattlemen face today. The support was overwhelming, as was the people's generosity by making a purchase from the merchandise range.

In February 2004, the Mountains Cattlemen's Association of Tasmania extended an invitation to the Victorian mountain cattlemen to join and compete against them at their annual get together. A group consisting of Bruce, Debbie and Adam McCormack; Adam's girlfriend Rhyll, Rusty Connley, myself, bush poet Laurence Webb and Anne Rubin attended. Doug Treasure and family were in Tassie checking stock and also joined in the fun.

The location was the Cluan Homestead in Westbury, with camping facilities. The Tasmanians run things rather differently to our get togethers, one of the features being a family trail ride of 4hrs. This event attracted over 200 participants and ran like clock work despite the size.

Some horse events were held in portable cattle yards that give the spectator an even view no matter where you stand. The home crowd became rather concerned when our lad, Adam McCormack cleaned up on two events and was up there on the leaders board. The title had never gone interstate. Other Victorians, Ken Connley



The mobile marketing table at the Great Victorian Bike Ride.





Simon Turner and Jim Brown after Jim's presentation of his poem "The Anzac on the Wall".

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# The Anzac on the Wall

---

*This is a poem about letters written during the First World War. They reveal the sacrifice of diggers at war and the suffering of those waiting at home- but the Australian spirit in these letters lives longer than those who wrote them.*

*Jim Brown*

I wandered thru' a country town 'cos I had time to spare;  
and went into an antique shop to see what was in there.  
Old Bikes and pumps and kero lamps, but hidden by it all,  
a photo of a soldier boy - an Anzac on the Wall.  
"Does the Anzac have a name?" I asked. The old man answered "No,  
the ones who could have told me mate have passed on long ago."  
The old man kept on talking and, according to his tale,  
the photo was unwanted junk bought from a clearance sale.  
"I asked around," the old man said, "but no one knows his face,  
he's been on that wall twenty years, deserves a better place.  
For some one must have loved him so, it seems a shame somehow."  
I nodded in agreement and then said, "I'll take him now."

My nameless digger's photo, well it was a sorry sight,  
a cracked glass pane and a broken frame - I had to make it right.  
To prise the photo from its frame I took great care just in case,  
for only sticky paper held the cardboard back in place.  
I peeled away the faded screed and much to my surprise,  
two letters and a telegram appeared before my eyes.  
The first reveals my Anzac's name, and regiment of course  
John Matthew Francis Stewart - Australia's own Light Horse.  
This letter written to his mum, my interest now was keen  
This note was dated August seventh 1917.

"Dear Mum, I'm at Khalasa Springs not far from the Red Sea  
they say it's in the Bible - looks like Billabong to me.  
My Kathy wrote and said how she is still my bride to be  
I just cant wait to see you both you're all the world to me.  
Now Mum you'll soon meet Bluey, last month they shipped him out  
I told him to call on you when he's up and about.  
That Bluey is a larrikin, we all thought it funny  
he lobbed a Turkish hand grenade in the C.O.'s dunny.  
I told you how he dragged me wounded in from no man's land,  
he stopped the bleeding, closed the wound with only his bare hand.



Then he copped it at the front from some stray shrapnel blast,  
it was my turn to drag him in and I thought he wouldn't last.  
He woke up in hospital, and nearly lost his mind  
cause out there on the battlefield he'd left one leg behind.  
He's been in a bad way, because he knows he'll ride no more,  
like me he loves a horse's back, he was a champ before.  
Please Mum can you take him in, he's been like my brother,  
raised in a Queensland orphanage, he's never known a mother.

But struth, I miss Australia mum, and in my dreams each day  
I am a mountain cattleman on high plains far away.  
I'm mustering whitefaced Herefords, no camel's hump in sight  
and I waltz my Matilda by a campfire every night.  
I wonder who rides Billy, is it true the pub burnt down?  
You know I'll always love you - say hooroo to all in town."

The second letter I could see was in a lady's hand  
an answer to her soldier son there in a foreign land.  
Her copperplate was perfect, the pages neat and clean,  
it bore the date November 3rd 1917.  
"T'was hard enough to lose your Dad, without you at the war  
I'd hoped you would be home by now - each day I miss you more.  
Kathy calls round a lot since you have been away  
to share with me her hopes and dreams about your wedding day.

Bluey has arrived and what a godsend he has been  
we talked and laughed for days about the things you've done and seen.  
He really is a comfort, works hard around the farm,  
I read the same hope in his eyes that you won't come to harm.

McConnell's kids rode Billy, but suddenly that changed.  
we had a violent lightning storm, and it was really strange.  
Last Wednesday just on midnight, and not a cloud in sight,  
it went on for several minutes, and it gave us all a fright.  
It really spooked your Billy - he screamed and bucked and reared  
then he rushed the sliprail fence, which by a foot he cleared.  
They brought him back next afternoon, but something's changed I fear  
it's like the day you brought him home, cause no one can get near.  
You calmed that big black brumby with his long and flowing mane  
Now horsebreakers fear the beast that only you can tame.

That's why we need you home son" - the flow of ink went dry-  
this letter was unfinished, and I couldn't work out why.  
Until I started reading the letter number three  
a yellow telegram delivering news of tragedy.  
Her son killed in action - oh what pain that must have been  
same date as her letter - 03, 11, 17.  
So this letter never sent to John she placed it one of three  
all sealed behind the photo's face - the face she longed to see.

And John's home town's old timers - children when he went to war  
would say no greater cattleman had left the town before.  
They knew his widowed mother well - and with respect did tell  
how when she lost her only boy she lost her mind as well.  
She could not face the awful truth, and to strangers she would speak  
"My Johnny's at the war you know, but he's coming home next week."

They all remembered Bluey how he stayed on to the end,  
a younger man with wooden leg became her closest friend.  
And he would go and find her when she wandered old and weak  
and always softly say "Yes dear- John will be home next week."  
When she died Bluey moved on, to Queensland some did say  
I tried to find out where he went, but don't know to this day.  
And Kathy - well she never wed - a spinster some found odd  
she wouldn't step inside a church - she'd turned her back on God.  
John's mother left no will I learned on my detective trail  
this explains my photo's journey to that clearance sale.

I continued digging, cause I wanted to know more  
I found John's name with thousands in the records of the war.  
His last ride was a sacrifice you will all acclaim,  
the Light Horse charge at Beersheba of everlasting fame  
that last day in October back in 1917,  
at 4pm our brave boy fell - that sad fact I did glean.  
That's when John's life was snuffed out - the record's crystal clear  
But 4pm in Beersheba is midnight over here.

So as John's gallant spirit rose to cross the great divide  
were lightning bolts back home a signal from the other side?  
Is that why Billy bolted and was screaming as in pain?  
He knew he'd never feel his master on his back again?  
Was it just coincidence? Same time same day same date?  
Some proof of numerology, or just a quirk of fate?  
Somehow, I think it's more than that as I've heard wiser men,  
Acknowledge there are many things that go beyond our ken.

Where craggy peaks guard secrets, with dark skies torn asunder  
where hoofbeats are companions to the rolling waves of thunder,  
where lightning cracks like .303s and ricochets again  
where howling moaning gusts of wind sound just like dying men.  
Some mountain cattlemen have sworn on lonely alpine track  
they've glimpsed a huge black stallion - a Light Horseman on his back.  
Skeptics say a swirling cloud could form that apparition  
oh no, my friend you can't dismiss all this as superstition.  
The desert of Beersheba - or windswept Aussie range,  
John Stewart rides forever - now I don't find that strange.

When people see this photo, and they will often question me  
and I tell them a small white lie, and say he's family.  
"You must be proud of him," they say, I tell them, one and all,  
that's why he takes the pride of place - my Anzac on the Wall.

# At The Station

---

*Laurie Webb – for Annie*

At the station where I met her nigh on twenty years ago,  
There's a peaceful hush that settles with the dusk.  
The breaking yards are quiet, men and horses part their ways,  
And a clearness comes with settling of the dust.

It's that clearness I see now but still I search for something else,  
As my stockhorse clears the final rocky wall.  
For I've come back on a mission since that letter from me mate,  
Which he wrote before he took his final fall.

We'd both been mountain riders from as soon as we could walk,  
And at fifteen done a muster on our own.  
We thought we knew it all when we became the station breakers,  
And me the one what bought the wild mob home.

But it was Annie taught us manners, how to dance and how to read,  
And she tamed our wild young spirits with her grace.  
But she couldn't stop us showing off as rivals for her hand,  
And then the stallion threw me lifeless on me face.

It was me mate who dragged me out between those flailing angry hooves,  
To hospital, a long and lonely stay.  
So I even missed his wedding when I feigned my illness worse,  
And when they returned I'd ridden far away.

But now I'm back from Queensland to the hills round Corryong,  
This time I won't let down me mate.  
For he's left behind five children and a widow at the station,  
My God – that's her – she's standing at the gate.



# Tassie Experience for Victorian Members

---

*Kathy Junor*

A dozen members of the Mountain Cattleman's Association of Victoria rolled up their swags and crossed Bass Strait for a February weekend of competition and festivities in Tasmania.

The occasion was the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Get-Together of the Tasmanian Mountain Cattlemen's Association, held at Cluan Homestead, Westbury (30 km west of Launceston).

While most of the mainlanders went for the fun, there was a serious side to the visit for Adam McCormack and his girlfriend Rhyll, who were active competitors in many of the events during the two-day program.

Not content to risk their fate on borrowed local horses, Adam and Rhyll shipped their own equine partners over from the mainland, hoping their talents would rival the locals. The horses were transported on a 10-hour journey aboard a cargo boat, while Adam and Rhyll joined their family (Bruce McCormack, Laurence Webb, Debra McCormack, Dave Jones and Anne Roubin) on the passenger ferry. Rusty Connley and Pauline Venn from Gippsland also came by ferry, while a further four Gippsland representatives including Doug Treasure arrived by plane.

Attendance at the annual event, held the first weekend in February was estimated at over 3,000. According to local members they were very pleased with the weekend, both from a social and financial perspective.

The weekend started out with the traditional trail ride, departing from the Get Together site. TMCA President Ross Jones, led the party of 394 riders on a four-hour trek through the foothills of the Great Western Tiers. Upon the ride's return to Cluan Homestead, other events began, including billy can races (where competitors race to buckets of water where they dismount, fill their billy, remount and attempt to gallop back over the finish line with minimal spillage).

A feature of the weekend was three demonstrations by horse trainer Steve Brady and his performing horses Beau and Nikki. Many Tasmanian members made the most of Steve's visit

by booking places at one of his teaching clinics during the week following the Get-Together.

The major event of the Get-Together remained the staging of the TMCA Championship. This prestigious competition has a senior and junior section, both with three phases.

Competitors in the TMCA Championship compete in three events to test their horsemanship, cattle handling and racing abilities. Each phase of the competition is scored, with the winner being the one with the highest combined score.

**Handy stock horse** - A time-limited event where competitors ride, carrying a "calf" (stuffed hessian), cross a bridge, hobble the horse, open the gate and stand cracking a whip.

**Cattle handling** – Two minutes are given to work a beast in the yard before directing the animal through 2 gates in the arena.

**Stock horse race** – A 2-km race over undulating terrain with logs and water obstacles. Competitors begin the race unmounted, lead their horse, put on an oilskin coat, mount, race to "calves", dismount, pick up "calf", mount and complete the race.

Unfortunately Adam McCormack was unsuccessful in his attempt to steal the Championship trophy from its island home. He was narrowly beaten by local Westbury competitor Geoff Harvey, who clocked up his fourth consecutive win, to equal the event record.

But according to Geoff, the Victorians had him worried. He is quoted in *The Examiner* (Launceston) as saying: "We thought the trophy might be going back to Victoria. We wanted to keep it in the State so I trained harder than I ever had".

Other novelty events that kept the crowds entertained were the barrel races (including one performed bareback, where competitors must mount and then negotiate the course) and walking races. Whip cracking competitions included a stockman's event conducted on horseback to test

competitor's accuracy at cutting twelve paper targets in a horseshoe shaped course. Adam McCormack won this event riding Missy and took out second place on his horse Kip.

One of the most popular events with the crowds was the teams' relay race involving four competitors. After two fairly conventional race legs, the third rider negotiated a section of the course bareback with his simulated "calf", before the last rider scrambled aboard to be double-dinked across the finish line. Many multicoloured kid's ponies crossed the finish line without passengers, while others were reined to such a sudden halt that kids and parents were seen sliding ungraciously to the ground.

Two great days of horse and skills events, together with some good Saturday night musical entertainment, provided a weekend to remember.

**Many thanks to the TMCA for their hospitality during our stay.**

*The Tasmanian Mountain Cattlemen's Association was formed in 1986 by members of three families who have summer grazing runs in the Upper Mersey Valley towards Cradle Mountain, in the State's North West. Its formation was prompted by the closure of large areas of grazing land in the 1970s and encouragement by the Victorian association. The TMCA has unified the mountain families into a strong, cohesive organisation, able to voice the experience and needs of its traditional land users. Current president, Ross Jones, was one of the founding members. The TMCA annual Get Together is held in the first full weekend of February each year at changing venues. TMCA hold a number of trail rides each year in the high country, for members and associate members, as well as walks for any non-riders. The Tasmanian Mountain Cattlemen's Association Inc. can be contacted at: PO Box 139, Deloraine 7304, Tasmania.*



**Left:** Doug Treasure - one of the honorary timekeepers.

**Below:** The line up for the Junior Walking Race.

**Opposite page**

**Top:** The McCormack contingent at the Tassie Cattlemen's Get-Together.

**Bottom right:** Adam McCormack and his girlfriend Rhyll actively competed in many events with their horses, Kip and Missy.





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# Commonsense

---

*Pauline Connley*

It was early in January 2003,  
when that dreaded lightning struck many a tree.  
The bush erupted in flames of fire,  
with the dense undergrowth that could not be drier.

So we gathered for meetings to hear what would unfold,  
these wildfires were big and way out of control.  
We were told how to prepare and what we should do,  
while we waited for the fire, that one day would come through.

Bulldozers and graders made fire breaks galore,  
trying to protect everyone, they could not have done more.  
We prepared our homes and cleaned up around,  
farmers moved stock to where they hoped was safer ground.  
Many children left home for a safer place to be,  
and our local hospital evacuated the elderly.

Fire trucks and slip-ons made a wonderful show,  
while lining the streets all ready to go.  
The population of Benambra grew over night,  
with bus loads of people who helped with our plight.

Then came January 26<sup>th</sup>, yes it was Australia Day,  
when that wildfire came through in the cruellest possible way.  
The wind played havoc, a hurricane out of control,  
the fire exploded making fire balls roll.  
Visibility near nil with many colours of smoke,  
spot fires everywhere, we tried hard to cope.

Fire trucks and slip-ons answered many ports of call,  
blasting through their UHFs keeping contact with all.  
And our local pilot bombed the fire where he could,  
while flying through smoke would not have been real good.

In the communications van we had a fantastic crew  
who used commonsense and knew what to do.  
No time for instructions and bureaucratic law,  
our town would have gone and very much more.

The women of Benambra gathered at the hall,  
we did a lot of cooking and there we fed them all.  
And a gentle shoulder massage didn't go astray,  
to soothe the tension and the stress of the day.

We received a community award when the catering job was done,  
and there was many a thank you from all who had come.  
But the least we could do was make sure they were fed,  
while the dear Salvos made sure they all had a bed.

To the people who came and helped us in our time of strife,  
we appreciate and thank you, you are our friends for life.  
And the locals of our community all gave a helping hand,  
worked together and did their best to help save our land.

The loss of homes and sheds and what they had inside,  
sentimental memories no one could ever hide.  
The dead and suffering stock that could not escape the inferno of the fire  
were laid to rest and at peace with the sound of shot gun fire.  
The creeks and dams were filled with ash from the burnt pasture and many bales of hay,  
the yards and fences to rebuild will take forever and a day.

The devastation in the bush would break your heart in two,  
mountain cattlemen's huts now in ashes, have sheltered quite a few.  
The flora and its beauty, yes all that went as well,  
birds and wildlife burnt and perished, they must have gone through hell.

This poem tells of heartache and of despair,  
of livelihoods lost which all were unfair.  
The stress of the fire will linger for years,  
memories of disaster will always shed tears.

IT takes years of planning and hard work to make a livelihood,  
then the fire comes and takes it all, you'd wonder how it could.  
But this battle will not beat us, what else could we do?  
To the aftermath volunteers who came and helped us, we thank you, everyone of you.  
It will take years to repair the damage this fire has done,  
but we will rebuild our livelihoods for the generations to come.

This tells of Benambra and many other towns too,  
all affected by this fire that should not have come through.  
We all love the bush, its vast beauty and nature galore,  
but a wild fire like this we don't want to see "never no more".

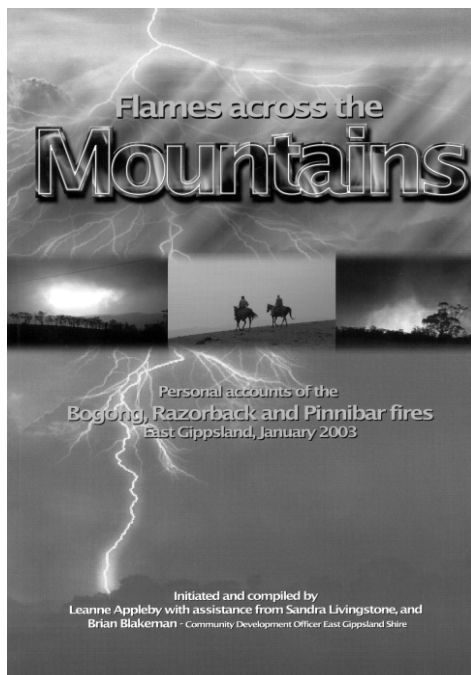
So to all the authorities who make the laws,  
please use "commonsense", you know the cause!  
Lets work together, to keep the bush floor clean,  
and avoid another disaster like we all have seen.

## On the Bookshelf

---

### *Flames across the Mountains: Personal accounts of the Bogong, Razorback and Pinnibar fires, East Gippsland, January 2003.*

Compiled by Leanne Appleby with assistance from Sandra Livingstone and Brian Blakeman.



Obviously this book would not exist had it not been for the 2003 fires that ravaged a large area of the East Gippsland Shire.

Initially, this collection was a cathartic exercise for the residents of the area and became a 206 page book which they are proud to have made a contribution.

Some accounts take the form of a series of letters to members of the family away from the area, some felt urged to put their feelings in prose (like Pauline Connley's poem in this issue of *Voice*), some are diary extracts some are straight written accounts or images. Every contributor is acknowledged and they come from the wide area of Benambra, Bundarra, Omeo, Dinner Plain, Swifts Creek, Bindi, Tubbut, Bendoc, Buchan, Wulgulmerang, Suggan Buggan and Ensay. It also includes contributions from locals protecting their homes, land and community and from volunteers who "trucked in" to help these isolated communities.

It records the incidents and feelings that didn't make the front page of the newspapers.

Buff Rogers recalls how -

*At one point one of the sheds had become engulfed in flame, this shed happened to house Chris's ammunition storage facility. As you can imagine, ammo and fire don't mix - Joanne, ducking and weaving the firing bullets, shouted at Chris "Bloodyhell Copper, I'm here to fight a fire, not to be shot!"*

And Mark Reeves, firefighter at Dinner Plain on Australia Day -

*The flames ripped about us. Tornadoes of fire looped and danced. Several times our truck was engulfed in absolute darkness, darker than a moonless night. It was soot, ash, embers and earth, instantaneously baked dry and hard and blown away. Our truck shuddered and shook in the hurricane of ash, ember and soot, burning branches, fire and any other moveable and burning debris in the conflagration. DSE gear that had been removed from the back of the pigs erupted in flames metres away where it had been thrown only minutes earlier. I watched what I thought was bare earth flame under us, the adjacent tankers and truck. Many times, Jan Sully radioed us and we each reported a "welfare check". We were all okay! Hot, but okay."*

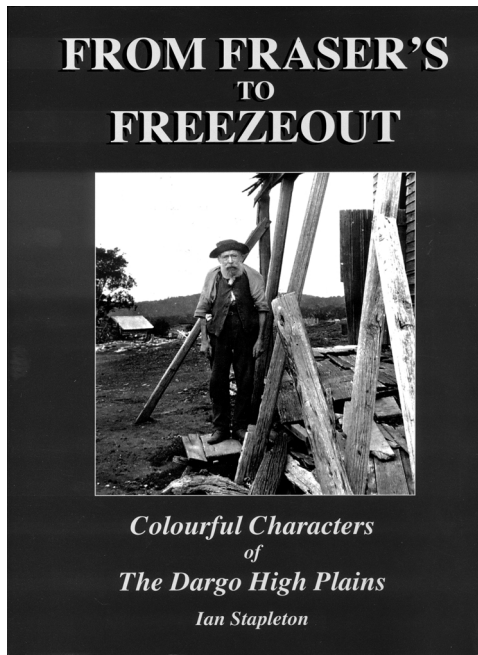
Most of the photographs included are those taken by locals and therefore are not those likely to have been seen in the media reports of the time and show a very different look at the fire as it came through the community.

The initial print run of 1,000 copies of the book sold out within a week of them being launched, however a reprint will be available in mid January.

Contact Leanne Appleby, 'Springvale', Corryong Road, Benambra for availability details. RRP \$39.95

## *From Fraser's to Freezeout: Colourful characters of the Dargo High Plains*

by Ian Stapleton



Ian Stapleton has spent most of his working life amongst the mountains and their people. His writing started when he compiled *Something Small* the story of Mittagundi, a youth camp he established at Glen Valley. But his 6'x4' trailer load of "history boxes" wouldn't be ignored and more books were to follow before he started on this current series. The first of these *Hairy-Chested History: Colourful characters of Hotham and Harrierville* is regrettably sold out for those of us who don't have a copy. This book is the second in a planned series of four, with the third covering the characters of the Bogong High Plains.

*From Fraser's to Freezeout: Colourful characters of the Dargo High Plains* explores the fascinating lives of many of the colourful characters who have called the Victorian High Country "home" over the past 150 years.

Their stories are told mainly through the memories, recollections and writings of the older mountainpeople who knew, or knew of, the various characters in one way or another. Ian has drawn upon material that has been collected and interviews recorded over nearly thirty years.

The Dargo High Plains have long been the home of generations of the Treasure family and so much of the book does revolve around them, however there are many other characters that are also documented.

The title is taken from Fraser who operated a rough accommodation shanty at the southern end of the Plains while "Mother Freezeout" ran an even rougher one on the snowy slopes of Mt Freezeout at the northern end. In between Fraser's and Freezeout lay the remote and "mystical" Dargo High Plains.

The contents include John Gamel and the Crooked River diggings; The Treasures move into the mountains; The Dargo High Plains before the Treasures; The story of George and Emily Treasure; The story of Harry and Clare Treasure; The bushfires of 1939 and the family of Harry and Clare Treasure.

The historian in me laments the lack of an index to this valuable book - and it is a valuable book contributing much to the history of the Dargo High Plains, the people who lived there and the cattlemen. Thumbing through the text there is Vince Phelan, Watty Ives, old Parsons, Mick Murphy, John and Rebecca Wilson, Mrs Fraser, James Seely, Jos Whitton and many more who appear as cameo characters throughout the book.

Gold miners, shop keepers, newspaper men, hotel keepers, cattlemen - everyone from the last 150 years or so from this 'community' seems to be in here somewhere.

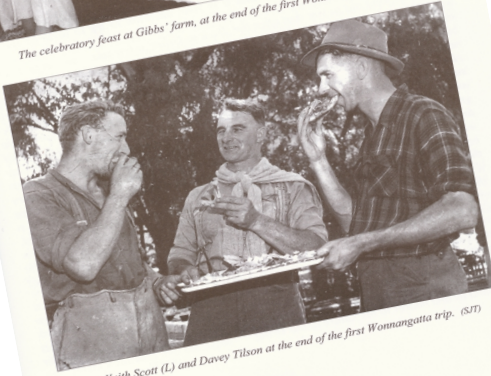
The text is refreshing and well researched - a testament to the trailer load of 'history boxes' that Ian carted around for years. A simple but informative map at the start 'places' the area for the unfamiliar reader.

It is a beautifully produced hardcover book of 273 pages with many photographs, some that have not seen the light of day for many a year. It represents excellent value for an Australian produced book of this quality.

The book retails for around \$40 and is available from Ian at: Feathertop Track,  
Harrierville 3741.



The celebratory feast at Gibbs' farm, at the end of the first Womangatta trip. (SJT)



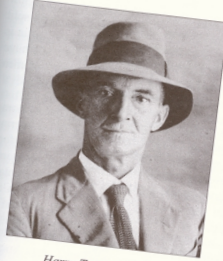
With Keith Scott (L) and Davey Tilson at the end of the first Womangatta trip. (SJT)

251

## CHAPTER FIVE

### HARRY & CLARE TREASURE

#### Pioneers in Their Own Time



Harry Treasure. (HR)



Clare Treasure. (RT)

1903, soon after Harry returned from Kalgoorlie, he and Clare were married at the St Bernard's Church opposite the Melbourne University. The wedding was catered for by Harry's brother Ruben, a professional chef, and the grand occasion went very well. Not long after the trip back up to the remote High Plains, with the bride and groom perched up on an old dray loaded down with all the beautiful wedding presents, heading home. It had been for the dray to take all the gifts up to St Bernard's Hospice, from where they would all be packed, bit by bit, out to the Dargo High Plains, whenever an opportunity arose. But the rock-strewn road combined with the heavy load on the dray was a bit too much for the ageing harness gear. It broke on a rocky, steep uphill climb, causing the dray to tip up backwards, spilling all the fragile presents onto the ground, shattering many prized pieces.

Almost everything was broken, even the cabinet on the new treadle sewing machine was smashed. It was a great blow to 22 year-old Clare, as she headed up into the mountains to establish her new home.

"Never mind! At least we are all well," she is said to have commented.

119

Examples from Ian Stapleton's book  
*From Fraser's to Freezeout* released late in 2004.

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# The Trail Ride Romeo

---

*Laurie Webb*

Through mountains where the brumbies roam, and snows sleep into spring,  
The voice of Cash, the trail ride boss, would make the ranges ring.  
As he led the city riders out from the Bluff to Omeo,  
There rose a legend of a man, the trail ride Romeo.

He'd try his luck with any girl, with honey voice or cackle,  
He wasn't much to look at, but he was famed for his riding tackle.  
And if he suggests a private ride one thing you need to know,  
Don't be deceived; it's the mating call of the trail ride Romeo!

Before he took you for a ride some things he'd need to know,  
To match your nature to a horse that's slow or hot to go.  
Do you like a ride that's hard and fast, or soft and easy, say?  
Can you grip tight and pull back hard, and can you go all day?

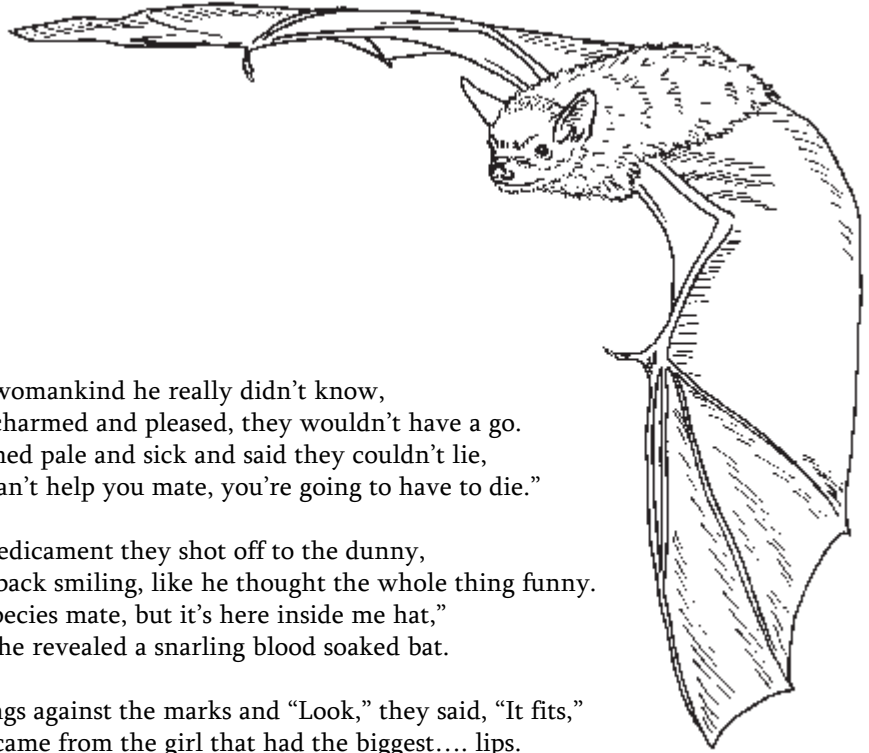
He'd ask you, "if your seat was good?", and "Could you prove your worth?"  
And, to see if you've experience, "Would you like to feel me girth?"  
And though he'd check your stirrup length and never make a pass,  
You knew, as you rose from your seat, he's checking out your... class.

All day they'd ride the mountains till they made camp at the Bluff,  
And scudding clouds brushed tangled gums by stockyards worn and rough.  
Round the old bush hut and campfire they'd roll out sleeping swags,  
And horses munched in quiet calm when he looped on their nose-bags.

With dinner done, the bottle passed around the fire's warm glow,  
And he told them tales and poetry above the soft winds blow.  
Then when the girls were snuggled up and listening to the snores,  
He'd come and say, "I've lost my swag, so can I please share yours?"

Rebuffed and beat he made his way to the dunny by the shed,  
And gazed in drunken stupor at the bright stars overhead.  
When all at once he gave a scream, "Oh Lord, now help me please,"  
And tore down to the campfire with his trousers round his knees.

"I'm bit!" He wailed, "You'll find a snake beneath that dunny rock,"  
And sure enough two bite marks oozed at the base of his trembling... manhood.  
"No antivenene and the nearest town's a four hour ride, about,  
The only way to save my life is - suck the poison out!"



Now here's a side of womankind he really didn't know,  
For all the girls he'd charmed and pleased, they wouldn't have a go.  
And all his mates turned pale and sick and said they couldn't lie,  
"If those sweet girls can't help you mate, you're going to have to die."

To hide from their predicament they shot off to the dunny,  
And one bloke came back smiling, like he thought the whole thing funny.  
"I can't tell you the species mate, but it's here inside me hat,"  
And with calm panache revealed a snarling blood soaked bat.

They matched the fangs against the marks and "Look," they said, "It fits,"  
And the biggest sigh came from the girl that had the biggest.... lips.  
His mate turned green and said, "You'll live but at terrible cost,  
The bat's disease will turn it black and the whole damn thing drop off."

"But wait," Said Jed, "There's worse to come, that's a Vampire bat all right,  
And when it drops off it'll stay un-dead and prowl around at night."  
So in grim pain he rode next day his saddle cut down the middle,  
And they asked if he felt bat wings grow last time he took a piddle.

And even now his closest mates don't know his terrible fate,  
The truth is worse than horror films you may have seen of late.  
So when you're camping out at night and feel the evening chills,  
Remember there's a part of Cash still roaming in these hills.

So zip your swags, lock up your daughters, close the windows shut,  
For there's a flickering shape against the lonely cattlemen's hut.  
And coming at you though the trees, a sight to make you sick,  
It ain't no Vampire, it's a flying bat-winged bloodsucking p..p..piece of Cash!

**Note:**

Laurie is adamant that this is a true story (apart from the bit about the bat) but refuses to name the parties involved!



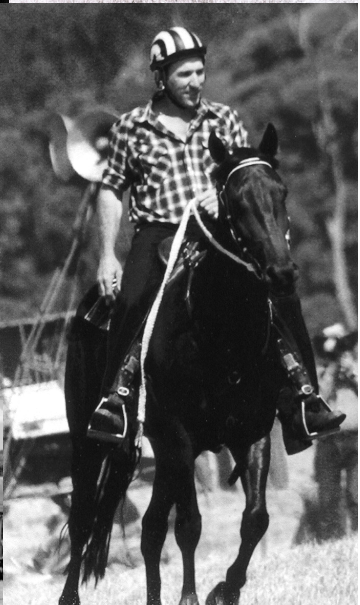
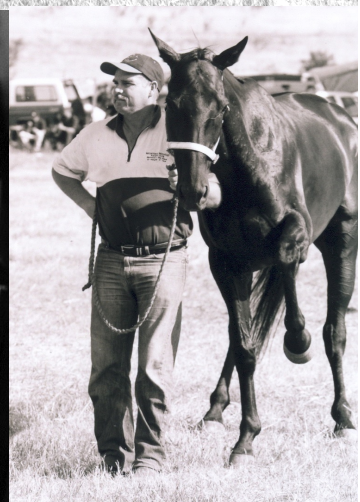
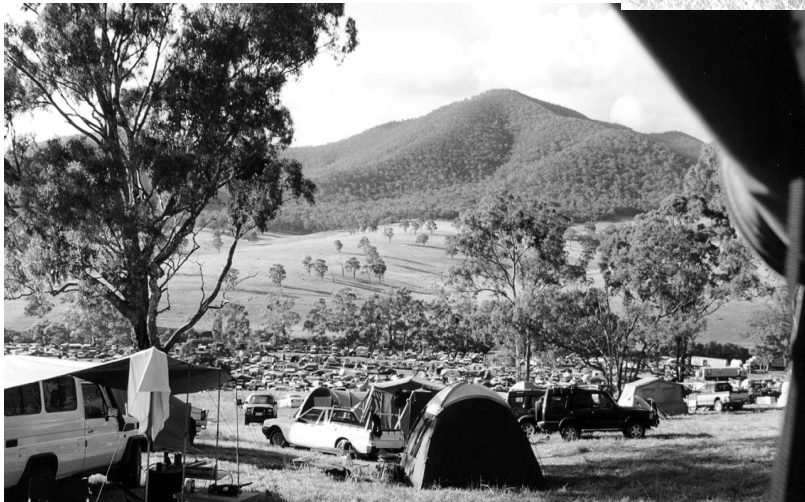
# “Kilbride” Dargo 2004

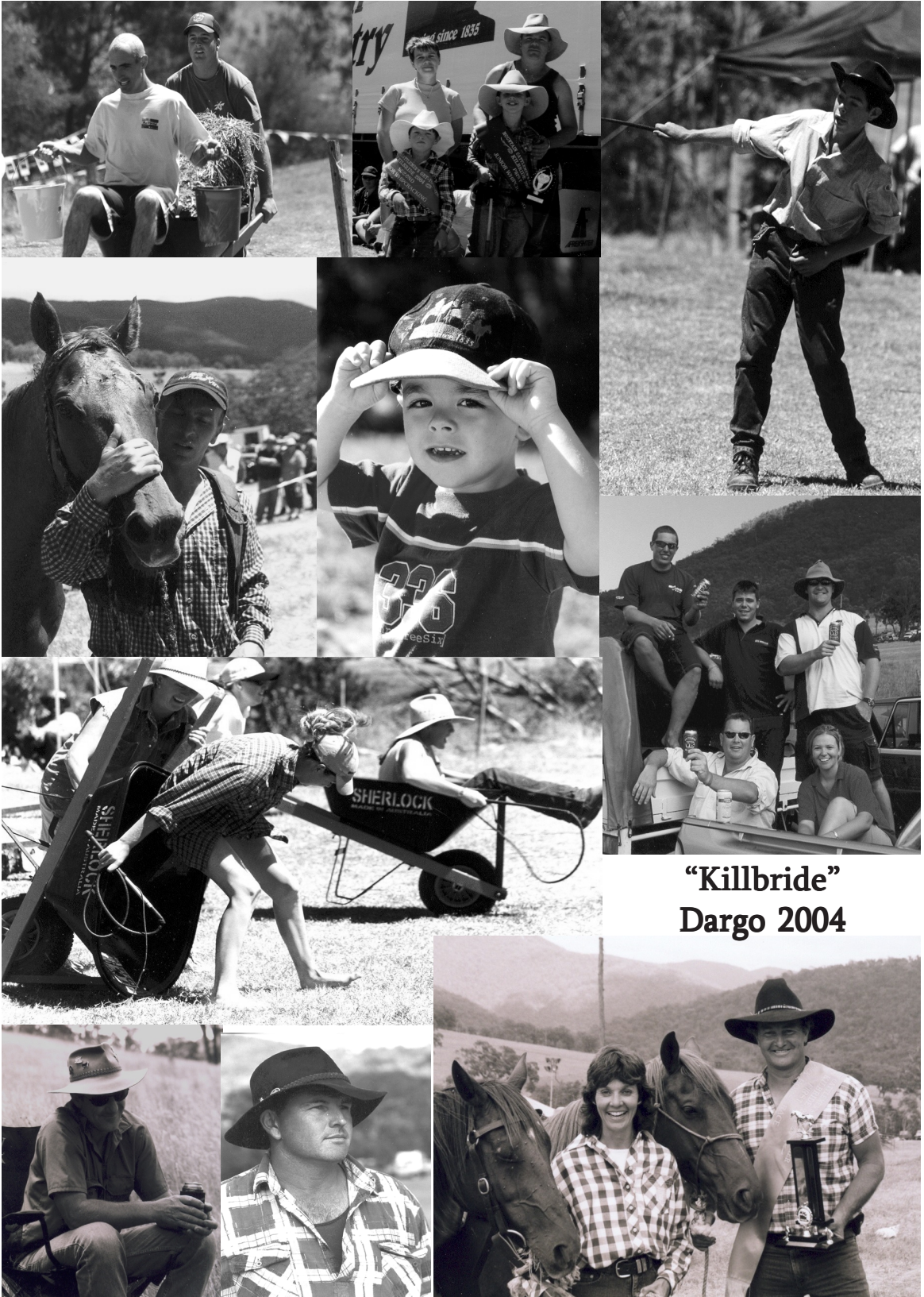
It was hot and dusty and a large crowd gathered on the banks of the Dargo River at “Kilbride” in January 2004.

Good food, good fun, good entertainment and a good time was had by all.

Congratulations to all the winners of the events - a communications error has meant your names were unavailable to be published here - and if you are competing again this year - good luck!

Thanks to Frances Westburym Tim Barker, Colleen Hurley, Charlie Guru and Shellie Jones for the photographs that make up these pages.



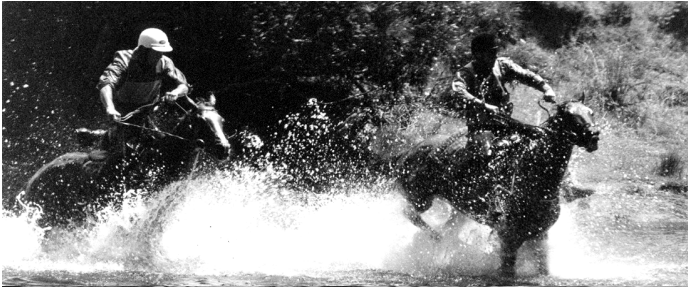


**"Killbride"  
Dargo 2004**



**'Kilbride'**  
**Dargo 2004**





**'Kilbride' Dargo 2004**



# The Geebung Polo Boys

---

*David Olsson*

There is a game of polo, played every Easter Sunday morn.  
It was way back in the eighties, that the idea was first born.  
The country versed the city upon the snowgrass lawn?  
The players displayed their finest skills, and the ladies hearts were torn.

The Cuff 'n' Collar boys, were tough and keen and mean.  
There was Jim Castricum, Jeremy Bayard, and Jim Noan on the scene.  
With Rob and Greg as captain, the boys played as a team,  
adding Craig, Geoff and Bryce, it just added to the cream.

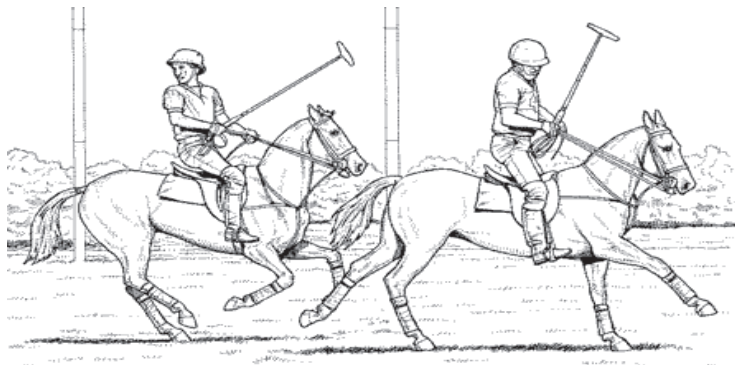
The Geebung boys were cunning, but upon the field did flow.  
They matched their rivals with bushmen tricks and gave the crowd a show.  
With Mad Jack and Hat and Catty, and Rusty, Scoof anf Joe,  
Jock, Dean, Craig and Backman, even Olsson had a go.

Ken, the Man from Snowy River, came down to lend a hand.  
He also liked to sing a song and never needed a band.  
Old Ace was there and Husky, when the first few games were run.  
A lot of people tried to catch him but his race was always won.

Rusty and his grey horse were the quickest on the field,  
and when the band struck up at night old Rusty wouldn't yield.  
He would dance the girls till daylight, if they could last that long.  
He must have had good leather soles for he never missed a song.

Matched on the ground as equals, Rode Pretty Bog Craig and Joe.  
And after the game was over, they continued to put on a show.  
In the evening lamp light, full of beer and scotch and coke,  
they tried to woe the girls over, just to see who'd get a stroke.

By now the game will be over and we will know who's won and lost.  
I would like to toast the players, on their winning and their loss.  
May the game be played for years to come, through the good times and the bad,  
and we all continue playing as though we're just a lad!



# The Green Inferno – The Politics of Bushfires and Conservation

*Do we really want to minimise Disaster fires?*

---

*Phil Cheney*

*This paper was first delivered in Melbourne on Thursday 25 November 2004 to the Stretton Group as their Inaugural Oration.*

*Mr Phil Cheney of CSIRO is one of Australia's foremost bushfire experts. Mr Cheney enjoys wide international recognition for his research into environmental management, bushfire studies and their interaction with the urban lifestyle. He is currently an expert witness into the ACT Coronial Inquiry into the 2003 Bushfire Crisis in the Australian Capital Territory.*

I see I've been given the title "The Green Inferno - The politics of Bushfires and Conservation". What I really want to talk about is the responsibility of governments and their agencies to manage their land and thereby play a leading role in protecting the community from bushfire. Perhaps it will turn out to be the same thing.

There are many technical reasons why land management agencies have a responsibility, both in law and in practice, to undertake fire management including prevention, hazard reduction, suppression, and education of the community.

Quite simply, if you are in the business of land management in this country, fire and its consequences are part and parcel of that management. However, in recent years managers of both public and private land have become increasingly reluctant to accept his responsibility and face up to the considerable costs.

The problem is by no means new. And since this is the Stretton Group I will quote Judge Stretton, writing in the report of the Royal Commission to inquire into the 1939 bushfires –

*There is one fundamental policy of fire prevention and of protection against fire. There is only one basis upon which that policy can safely rest, namely, the full recognition by each person or department who has dominion over the right to enter the forests of the paramount duty to safeguard the property and the rights of others. No person or department can be allowed to use the forest in such a way as to create a state of danger to others.*

*If conformity to this rule cannot be brought about, the offender must be put out of the forest, or, in the case of a public department its authority curtailed, or enlarged so that the rule may be enforced, or voluntarily observed as the case may require."*

This may seem as though Stretton was having an each way bet. He wasn't! The managers of forest land, be they government or private, have a clear responsibility

to protect the community from fire emerging from their land. If they cannot do this, they must either be replaced by someone who can, or be given sufficient funding to do the job properly.

Stretton went on to point out that government agencies should not rely on the bushfire brigades to put out the fire because their activities only started after the fire had started and they had no authority to carry out any pre-emptive action. The land manager on the other hand had many options available to him.

Nor is the problem limited to Australia – it is worldwide. Even the remote territory of Yukon, Canada is facing similar problems in that land owners/managers are becoming more reliant on the government suppression agencies and are not contributing to the protection of the wider community.

I will come later to the problems that have arisen out of the rapid expansion of conservation reserves in the last 25 years. However, this is a problem that is far wider, and "land management agencies" actually includes anybody that manages land including private citizens, forestry companies, agricultural companies, catchment authorities, absentee landholders and government forestry and Park authorities. Each has a core business and fire affects that business in different ways.

The basic thesis is simple enough – if you own the fuel you own the fire.

Fire is not the rampant "red steer" of poets and legal precedent.

Fire needs fuel. And fuel determines how far and fast it will travel; how difficult it will be to round up and stop; and how much havoc and destruction will be wrought if the beast enters your property. So it is not just the landholder on whose property the fire starts that is responsible for the damage. All landholders affected contribute to both the spread and damage by the way they manage the fuel on their land.

You own the fuel – you own the fire!

But in reality it's not that simple – because depending on both the fuel and the weather there comes a point when no matter what has been done, fire will be uncontrollable and will be spread and do damage beyond the land tenure on which it originated. This then brings in the concept of reasonableness.

I don't think anybody can argue with the common law proposition that the landholders should take "all reasonable steps" to prevent fire starting on their property escaping and doing damage to others. This proposition has in it, inherently, the concept that under certain conditions fire will burn and spread in a way that nothing can be done about it. And it rolls off the tongue easily doesn't it, "take all reasonable steps".

But what are "reasonable steps"? They obviously differ between land managers and their capacity to invest in systems to protect their asset, and incidentally, their capacity to pay for the damage done to others.

Reasonable steps for a grazier might be to put in firebreaks, purchase his own fire unit and join up with a rural fire brigade for mutual co-operation. But what about the hobby farmer who owns a 5, 50 or 100 hectare block? Is it good enough for him simply to pay a fee to the rural fire brigade and rely on the people at home or who work in the area to do the fire fighting for him? After all, he has a job and he's in the city and it is unreasonable to be on call to respond whenever fire might happen to break out – or is it?

And what about the absentee landholder who has thousands of hectares of land set aside as an investment, and living far away or even overseas? What are his responsibilities to manage fire on his land and take all reasonable steps? Both of the latter groups do not earn a living from the land and therefore wildfire does not constitute a threat to their income. The worst they can lose are their assets and these can be insured and relatively easily replaced. Perhaps it is reasonable for the absentee owner to compartment his property and make it available for local brigades to undertake hot fire training in prescribed burning and suppression.

"Reasonable steps" for the government land managers of native forest in the past were to establish a network of roads and fire trails, install detection and communication systems, train and equip firefighters to undertake rapid initial attack, and develop management systems to coordinate the control of large wildfires. These were all in place before the Australian Interagency Incident Management system was introduced to effect efficient coordination between agencies.

Most State forestry departments accepted the responsibility for fire suppression as part of their business even though this responsibility was, in some States, not binding on the crown. They understood the role that fire played as a threat to their business and pioneered both

the research and the operational management that was required to minimise this threat.

They at least recognised that in many areas, fuel management was a "reasonable step" that could be integrated within their business.

They took heed of Stretton's words and recognised that fire in the forests was a threat to the wider community and depending on location and the resources available, classified the land as receiving intensive or extensive protection. They also recognised that there was land of low value to forestry, where resources were too sparse or too distant to be effective, and classified the land as unprotected. Suppression was undertaken when it threatened assets of value. However, being classified unprotected land this enabled the neighbour, who had assets to protect, to undertake burning-off and take suppression action himself whenever he saw fit.

Fire protection is expensive, and forestry agencies with limited budgets attempted to provide a cost-effective balance between preparation and suppression with the introduction of fuel management by prescribed burning. By and large they were not given credit by government for protection of the wider community and were criticized when expenditure on fire protection extended beyond the forest boundary.

They were also not given credit for managing land for multiple uses by which the money earned from timber production contributed to management for conservation, water production and recreation. What an anathema for the economic rationalist.

Forestry has been a convenient whipping boy for governments attracted by the votes of the green revolution. The land grab for conservation reserves provided the opportunity to place management over much of the formerly "unprotected land" but it was not accompanied by the funding needed to implement management. Instead government took the opportunity to reduce expenditure on fire protection by their land management agencies.

Politically it was far more attractive to foster the emergency service industry, demonize fire, and ignore its role as a natural factor of our environment and bathe in the public relations kudos of new red trucks and large helicopters.

Then when the shit hit the fan, as it inevitably would, the politicians and their executives could hide behind the tabards and the tunics of the volunteers.

Production forestry has been placed into government run business corporations, even though timber production was only one of the objectives under multiple use management, or sold off to private enterprise. Now expenditure of money on aspects of forest protection that primarily concern protecting the community is no longer seen as part of the forestry business.

Today we see forestry companies not including the full cost of fire management as part of the business. As one manager of a Tasmanian forestry company with international assets told me: *We are not going to spend money on fire management, and particularly fuel management, because if management in this country is too expensive we will simply acquire our timber offshore.* As in other businesses they could take advantage of operating in other countries where the labour costs are lower, and more importantly the fire climate is benign, and ignore their obligations to the Australian community.

Even worse, today we have the rise of the forest investment companies planting huge areas of blue gums with almost no capacity for undertaking effective suppression. Far more cost-effective to hire a friendly consultant to say that blue gums don't burn and don't pose any threat to the community, and provide only a token effort to the rural fire services by providing industry brigades. When they do sustain major losses, and they will, they can always say that weather conditions were well beyond anything that allowed safe and effective firefighting and bad luck for the investors – it was after all a speculative investment.

I have no problem with the proposition that fuel management by prescribed burning or other means cannot be totally applied to an industrial forest enterprise or any other enterprise for that matter. However, if the company is to fulfil its obligation to the community then it is the responsibility of that business enterprise to provide a suppression force which is equipped and capable of effective fire fighting in the fuels they have fostered when conditions are less than extreme. They should not be allowed to bludge on the Government's emergency funding, volunteers and the wider community to do their job for them.

Much is known about fire behaviour in different fuel types and of our capacity for suppression. Basic firefighting principles have not changed:

- Forest fire must be controlled by a bare-earth fire line, burned-out, mopped-up and patrolled for at least three days before the onset of extreme fire weather.
- Fire is easiest to suppress when it is small by fast concentrated initial attack.
- Initial attack will have a better chance of succeeding if it is undertaken by people who have been trained and are skilled in techniques that are appropriate to the fuel being burnt.
- Fuel reduction makes firefighting safer and easier and extends the window of weather conditions under which effective firefighting can be conducted.
- Heavy earth moving equipment is essential for direct firefighting in forest fuel if the fire exceeds a few hectares.

Much is also known about the nature of fire and its impact on the biota. To our native plants and animals fire is not just a destructive force that kills but is an ecological process that influences flowering and regeneration, habitat, and has shaped the flora and fauna of this country. The requirements of different communities range from needing fire every year through almost every combination of frequency and intensity to no fire at all.

However in managing fire for conservation it is important to realise that fire doesn't care what it burns. The ecology doesn't care! Whatever the regime, some suite of plants and animals will thrive in it.

We should care and government agencies should care. If we are to truly manage for biodiversity we need to be able to apply the regimes that are required to create the environment that will achieve our objectives. Priorities will need to be set that align conservation with other objectives including optimising our water resources, recreation and protection of the wider community.

This is why fire management and suppression must be the responsibility of the land manager. They, and only they, are in the position to know the hazards of their fuels, the fuel reduction strategies needed to protect their assets, both built and natural, the suppression techniques that will be most effective, and how to implement these techniques.

Fire management of conservation areas may be more complex than for production forestry, but this only means that fire management and fire suppression skills have to be more sophisticated. Management for biodiversity in the future will need to involve intervention and manipulation. It will need to use fire, and will require more sophisticated burning prescriptions than those currently in use.

These prescriptions will need to be developed from both fundamental and operations research. They will not come from the Cooperative Research Centre. Don't get me wrong. As someone who has battled for research dollars for thirty years I do welcome this initiative but there are no magic bullets and, anyway, 99% of all research is incremental.

Most land management agencies don't have the resources to apply the knowledge we have today. Government needs to invest in fire management so that the agencies can employ fire scientists trained in the CRC, train them in fire management and fire suppression and then develop the operational procedures that are applicable to specific fuel types in their area.

To fulfil their responsibilities to the community, the land management agencies will need to establish just how difficult fire suppression is in different fuel types and develop the skills in fuel management to reduce the risk of high intensity fire both to their own firefighters and to the wider community.



They need to demonstrate what “all reasonable steps” are.

The first step is for the chief executive of each land management agency to take full responsibility for fire on their land.

The next step is to remove the layers of bureaucracy between the chief executive and the fire management staff. We must remove all conflict that arises because of divided responsibility for policy, fire suppression and fuel management. We must remove those advisory bodies that have no responsibility for fire control but whose influence can make fire management particularly onerous or even unworkable.

By all means seek advice and expertise from all areas including the bearded bush-walker and the coffee-table conservationist. However, as has been demonstrated in fire suppression, real progress in fire management is made when the executives of the organisation accept the responsibility to set an objective and put in place an expert team to ensure the knowledge is available to achieve that objective.

And of course there will be need for co-operation with emergency service organisations to control some fires. But if volunteer firefighters are expected to work in heavy or unfamiliar forest fuels, the agency has a duty of care to those volunteers to train them in the appropriate firefighting techniques for those fuels. Otherwise, the manager has to accept the techniques that the volunteer is familiar with, which in some cases may be retiring to the grassland interface and burning out all the intervening country.

Today I believe that our capacity for fire management in forest land is going backwards. We need land management agencies to set a clear direction and develop the fire management systems that are needed for the future without fear or favour. Above all, we must be honest about our capacity to deal with fire and work with the community to ensure that everybody has taken “all reasonable steps” to reduce the impact of wildfires on their property.

The 2003 fire season demonstrated just where we are placed with fire management. Governments, State, Territorial and Federal did not address the problems they had created for land managers but rather they accepted the convenient deception that the conditions were so bad that nothing could be done about it.

True, some States set up enquiries, but none of these included people with experience with fire management on forested land. Rather, they were conducted by people with a background in emergency services and academics in ecology but with no experience in applying fire for ecological purposes. Not one senior land management executive was called to explain why they had adopted policies that limited their resources so that they were incapable of suppressing even small fires over ten days of benign weather.

The one judicial enquiry that was established is currently in limbo because the government does not like the evidence presented by the experts selected to advise the coroner. This must indicate perceived bias on the part of the coronial team – even though not one expert in forest fire management has been called to challenge their opinions.

On this note let me finish with one final quote on dealing with government:

*The truth was hard to find. Accordingly, it was sometimes sought in other places as I am entitled to do. Much of the evidence was coloured. Much of it was quite false. Little of it was wholly truthful. Some people were afraid that if they gave evidence they would not be given future employment. Departmental officers were, in the main, youngish men of very good character who were afraid that if they were too outspoken, their future advancement in the department's employ would be endangered.”*

Not a recent quote, but again from Leonard B. Stretton, 65 years ago, which has a contemporary and decidedly unhealthy ring about it.

## Reference

Stretton, L.B. (1939) *The report of the Royal Commission to inquire into the causes of and measures taken to prevent the bushfires of January, 1939, and to protect life and property.* Government Printer, Melbourne, 36pp.

The Stretton Group is an apolitical, not-for-profit group established in December 2003 following the disastrous south east Australian bushfire crisis in 2002/3. The Stretton Group comprises a disparate association of volunteers who support the protection of the natural environment though greater transparency of the public sector processes involved. Named after the respected Royal Commissioner into the 1939 Victorian Bushfires, Justice Leonard Stretton, the group proposes that government managed national parks and forests should be provided with a balance sheet value which encapsulates the environmental, cultural and economic value of these assets.

The Stretton Group is committed to ensuring that our intergenerational responsibility is met by Governments committing appropriate funding to the maintenance of this public property – commensurate with its asset value. The Group advocates the preparation and publication of performance indicators which enable the public to assess the quality of the management being provided to the natural environment. This would bring publicly owned wilderness into line with reporting required for hospitals, schools and other public institutions. The Stretton Group is committed to ensuring that the public debate about conversation is conducted on a balanced and informed basis – which may often disturb political myths or common preconceptions about the present quality of environmental preservation.

### Members of the Stretton Group:

**Simon Paton** is a 5<sup>th</sup> generation farmer and cattle breeder from Callaghans Creek, Mitta Mitta and owns and operates the Bogong Ski-Hire centre at Mt Beauty. Simon has been a major spokesman for NE Victorian communities affected by the bushfires and is campaigner for community involvement, conservation and forest management.

**Peter Attiwill**, PhD, BScFor, AssocDipFor, is Principal Fellow in Botany, and Senior Fellow, The Australian Centre, The University of Melbourne. He has researched in eucalypt ecology over 40 years, with a concentration on soils and nutrient cycles, and on bushfire and ecosystem recovery. He has published extensively in the international journals, and his latest book is *Ecology: An Australian Perspective* (co-editor BA Wilson, Oxford University Press 2003)

**Athol Hodgson**, BScFor, AssocDipFor, has more than 50 years experience in fire management and forest fire research in Australia, USA, Canada, France and Spain. He was a Member of the Board of the Country Fire Authority and a Member of the State Disaster Committee and is a graduate from the National Advanced Fire Behaviour School, Marana, Arizona.

**Bill Middleton**, OAM, DipFor, has some 50 years experience in management of forests, of nurseries and of vegetation habitat in rural areas and he is an Honorary Life Member of Birds Australia. He was Supervisor of the innovative Pottter Farmland Plan for ecologically-sustainable agriculture, and a Board Associate for the Trust for Nature.

**David Packham**, OAM, MAppSci, worked for 40 years in bushfire research with CSIRO, Monash University and the Australian Emergency Management Institute. He was responsible

for fire-weather services in the Bureau of Meteorology. His extensive research concentrated on the physics of bushfires, and he applied this research to practical issues including the development of aerial prescribed burning, non-evacuation of properties, modelling of fire behaviour, and forensics.

**Stewart Macarthur**, MA Cantab, has been the Federal Member for Corangamite since 1984 and was previously a farmer and company director. He was an active member of the all-party House of Representatives Select Committee Inquiry into the 2003 Australian Bushfires whose report *A Nation Charred: Inquiry into the Recent Australian Bushfires* was tabled on Wednesday 5 November 2003.

**Tony Cutcliffe**, MCommLaw, is a Director of the community forum and consultancy, The Eureka Project. He authored the 2002 report on regional Victoria entitled *A Listening Act* and in 2003 he wrote *A Case of Burning Neglect* regarding the performance of public sector agencies during the 2003 bushfire crisis. Tony was a member of the current Victorian Premier's Infrastructure Planning Council and a PhD candidate in Social Science at RMIT.

### Further Reading:

"Some Burning Questions" in *Voice of the Mountains* No. 11 (1988), Neil Barraclough, pp. 21-23

Chris Commins, Rusty Connley and Pauline Venn attended the oration on behalf of the MCAV.



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ADChp0017

# Victorian High Country Huts Association

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It has been a huge year for the committee of the VHCHA, endeavouring to get everything in place so that they can start on the ground. David Oldfield, their secretary needs to be commended for his tireless work in getting insurances, their constitution and other requirements in order. Thanks also go to Barry Hazeldine, for coordinating the hut maintenance officers, and to these officers who have done multiple hut assessments.

When the VHCHA first formed, they had no idea to the extent of administration work that would be required to get things in place. The rules and regulations with which they would need to abide. The entire committee needs to be commended for their dedication, persistence and efforts.

The building of the Roughriders, followed by McNamara's are now monuments of achievements of the VHCHA volunteers. The installation of Federation and Michelle Huts by Parks Vic, is also another great achievement. To know that these two huts will be in place to the forthcoming winter is a blessing. These huts were supposed to be installed by last winter, however early snow hampered operations.

Two working bees have been held over the last month, and with the assistance of Parks Victoria, both proved to be very successful.

The rezoning of the areas is well underway, and those who attended the VHCHA annual meeting at Mansfield saw the draft proposal. The association is still in need of a couple of huts maintenance officers - the main one being the North East of Omeo. To ensure we have all areas and huts covered, we need to appoint an officer to these areas.

If you are interested in helping, please contact Barry Hazeldine BARRY.G.H@bigpond.com or Dianne Carroll at info@vhcha.org.au. The association will be unable to do work in these areas without appointments. If you would like further details, please contact the VHCHA.

Work proposals have been submitted to Parks Victoria and Department of Sustainability and Environment and they are awaiting approval to commence new works. It is hoped that they will commence in the new year.

The association is also placing interpretation boards at some huts which are near completion and should be installed in the new year. Additional information can be found at the associations website [www.vhcha.org.au](http://www.vhcha.org.au) or by contacting the President, Dianne Carroll, at P.O.Box 230, Holbrook 2644 Ph: (02) 60363949 or email: [dianne@vhcha.org.au](mailto:dianne@vhcha.org.au)

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**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Mountain Cattlemen's  
Association of Victoria Incorporated held on Thursday 21 October 2004  
in the boardroom of the  
Victorian Farmers Federation, Farrer House,  
24 Collins Street, Melbourne commencing at 10.30 a.m.**

***Present***

Harry Ryder, Anne Paterson, Chris Commins, Neville Wright, Steve Ware, Cora Davey, Charlie Lovick, David Oldfield, Frank Ryan, Ron Briggs, Colin Reynolds, Sue Reynolds, David Treasure, Clive Hodge, Ross Brown, Doug Treasure, Simon Turner and Tim Barker.

***Apologies***

The Hon. John Thwaites, Minister for Environment, Judy Gunter, John Rogers, James Cooper, Bruce Commins, John Cook, Brian Higgins, John Lovick, Rusty Connley, Pauline Venn, Philip Commins.

***Minutes***

Harry Ryder/ Chris Commins

“That the Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting held on Friday 21 November 2003 as circulated in *Voice of the Mountains* No. 27 be accepted.”

CARRIED

***Annual Report***

The President and Secretary presented the Annual Report. The President, Simon Turner thanked Tim Barker for his work during the year.

***1 Introduction***

2003-04 has been another difficult year for the mountain cattlemen. Access to runs in the high country was severely curtailed due to the 2003 bushfires, the Government announced a review of all licences in the Alpine National Park prior to the 2005 renewal date, and seasonal conditions continued to be dry.

Despite these adverse circumstances the spirit is as strong as ever and many are even more determined to maintain their access to their traditional high country runs. Also, the support given by associate members and the public generally has strengthened the resolve to continue the high country grazing tradition. Particularly gratifying was the high level of support from the community generally when the Alpine Grazing Taskforce called for submissions. It seems that well over 2000 submissions were presented to the Taskforce supporting our case.

During the year, some members spent a considerable amount of their time taking a seemingly endless flow of scientists, politicians and bureaucrats on tours of the high country and Bogong High Plains in particular. Other Association members are grateful for the work that has been undertaken on their behalf.

The two main issues, access following the fires and the licence renewal campaign, dominate this report for 2003 2004.

***2 2004 Get-Together at Kilbride on the Wonnangatta River***

The highly successful 2004 Telstra Country Wide Gippsland Mountain Cattlemen's Association Get-Together was held at Kilbride on the Wonnangatta River

Before the Get-Together, Branch president, David Treasure, said that now more than ever before the cattlemen needed the support of the general public.

“Huge areas of mountains are to be excluded from grazing this year leaving many families in an extremely difficult position,” said Mr Treasure.

A feature of the Get-Together was the return of horse events which were ruled out last year due to insurance difficulties. These events again proved a highlight and were strongly supported by the public.

MCAV Gippsland secretary, Rosemary Faithfull put in a tremendous amount of work to ensure the success of the event and was well supported by other enthusiastic branch members. Entertainment on the Saturday night included Golden Guitar winning Travis Sinclair, and the popular band “Sovereign”. High profile and popular musicians encouraged a large number of people to attend and this feature will be repeated with even better entertainment for the 2005 get-together.

The Gippsland Branch and Rosemary Faithfull and David Treasure are to be congratulated on this highly successful event which has reaffirmed our faith in using the Get-Together as a major fundraiser for the Association. The organisation of the Get-Togethers is a long and arduous task and the Gippsland Branch has certainly raised the bar in terms of interest, organisation and financial success.

***3 Accessing grazing runs in burnt areas***

A major issue during 2003 was negotiations surrounding accessing licence areas following the bushfires.

***3.1 Announcement by Minister Thwaites***

In November 2003, Minister Thwaites announced that alpine grazing would be restricted to allow post-fire recovery. He said, “Cattle grazing in the Victorian High Country will be severely restricted for the next two years to allow Alpine areas badly burnt in last summer's bushfires to recover.

“The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) and Parks Victoria plan to implement the restrictions on the basis of scientific advice about the burnt area’s rehabilitation.

“The restrictions relate to nearly half a million hectares of Alpine country burnt in last summer’s fires,” Mr Thwaites said.

“The Government accepts the decision of Parks Victoria and the DSE to restrict grazing in these areas to allow them time to recover from the effects of the fire.”

“Under the proposed restrictions, 135 out of a total 176 licence holders affected (ie whose grazing licences cover Alpine areas burnt in the fires) will be subject to a complete ban on grazing their cattle in those areas.

“The total ban is proposed in areas that were 80 per cent or more burnt. One third of Alpine National Park licences were not burnt and will not be affected.

“Licence holders in areas burnt less than 80 per cent would be subject to reductions in the number of cattle they may graze and to requirements such as fencing off delicate areas, depending on the severity of burning in the area covered by their licences.

### **3.2 MCAV responds to restriction advice**

Responding to the Minister’s announcement, MCAV President, Simon Turner said, it was disappointing but expected.

Mr. Turner said, “We have been first to acknowledge that there are some runs which should not be grazed this year as this could have an adverse impact on conservation values.

“The loss of forest and alpine leases will have a serious impact on the economic viability of some licence holders. We will be looking to the government for assistance in this area and seeing what can be done at all levels to assist our colleagues.

“Parks Victoria and the Department of Sustainability and Environment have indicated that they are prepared to listen to further discussion about the lease areas. We are assessing all the runs and there are some that we consider could be used this year. We will be discussing the situation regarding these marginal runs with Parks Victoria and DSE. We are pleased to have this further opportunity for more negotiations. However, we need a commitment from Parks Victoria and DSE to undertake all the necessary on-ground inspections.”

Mr. Turner said, “It needs to be noted that there are a number of leases particularly on the Mansfield side of the alpine area which are unaffected by fire and will be grazed by cattle as normal.

“We are convinced that seasonal forest and alpine grazing has a future. It is one of the few remaining links that Australia has with its pioneering past and its continuation is strongly supported by the Bracks Government’s commitment to its triple bottom line policy. This triple bottom line policy requires that government decisions take into account economic and social factors as well as the environmental. We also maintain that cattle grazing assists in the reduction of fire fuel. This is an important issue considering the recent bushfires and the various inquiries’ calls for increased fire fuel reduction.”

Mr. Turner said, “Let’s remember that all this is due to fire. Prior to the 2003 alpine fires, local cattlemen warned local authorities such as the old Natural Resources and Environment Department, Parks Victoria and the CFA about the need for fuel reduction burning and the potential for major fire. These warnings were itemised in the MCAV’s fire submission. They were

generally ignored. To now have a bunch of scientists tell them about how cattle might damage the environment is a bit rich.”

### **3.3 Parks Victoria asked to review cattle grazing licence areas**

In December 2003, the MCAV requested Parks Victoria to review some licence areas for grazing in 2003/04

The MCAV said several matters required some further consideration and that these included:

- The seasonal conditions had supported excellent recovery and growth.
- The areas that suffered what would generally be regarded as a cool burn had regenerated extremely well.
- Some MCAV members regarded PV maps of burnt areas to be highly inaccurate and these deficiencies needed to be sorted out.

### **3.4 Accessing areas managed by DSE**

In December the MCAV also wrote to the Secretary of DSE, Professor Lyndsay Neilson about his letter to licence holders regarding grazing in Summer 2003/04 in the eastern highlands.

We made the following points:

- There are concerns about the accuracy of the information being used by DSE. Some members regard the maps of burnt areas to be highly inaccurate and these deficiencies need to be sorted out. We are aware of cases where the fire impact is less than that suggested by DSE.
- In many cases the intensity of fire was low, creating a mosaic style pattern consistent with a light burn.
- There are licence areas where there are no identified values that need protection.
- The lower altitude and the excellent rate of recovery on many licence areas combined with large areas of cool burn lead us to the conclusion that grazing opportunities will be available this grazing season. Indeed many members believe these runs need to be grazed to ensure that fire fuel does not build up to dangerous levels. Grazing of grassland encourages plant root development which assists soil stability as well as suppressing the development of dominant species such as Poas, allowing other less dominate species to compete for light and space.
- Large areas of these licence areas have been burnt in fuel reductions in the past and subsequent grazing has never been raised as a detrimental process. Fire has been part of the management process and is considered a normal and regular event. To now, after more than 150 years of grazing and fire, highlight grazing as a detrimental activity in most situations is unnecessary and severely disadvantaging many licensees. In fact most licensees increased stocking rates post fire to cope with the rapid regeneration process.
- The Scientific Advisory Panel report noted that.. “Grazing of unburnt and lightly burnt areas within the fire boundary in the alpine, subalpine and montane sections also poses a risk, as cattle will move into adjacent burnt areas to preferentially graze regenerating plants”. This finding indicated that grazing would be permissible on lightly burnt areas.

We also noted that cattle will be reluctant to graze heavily burnt areas as the grazable vegetation simply won't be there.

### **3.5 The situation at the time of the January 2004 Get-Together**

At the 2004 Get-Together, President Simon Turner said that mountain cattlemen are becoming increasingly concerned about gaining access to high country grazing licences.

He said, "We have been pleased and surprised by the rapid recovery of the land following the fires. It is now clear that earlier suggestions of moratoriums on grazing were excessive. Many areas that were burnt have recovered sufficiently to be grazed this year.

"There have been some inspections of licence areas at lower altitudes which have recovered amazingly well.

"The Government's Scientific Advisory Panel tried to establish how much grass is enough for grazing to commence. Initial estimates of 4 tonnes of dry matter to the hectare as the "starting minimum herbage" were discussed but assessments on the ground have shown this to be excessive. Importantly, however, there is now a more objective measurement of cattle feed. Assessments are now focussing on this criteria. The Mountain Cattlemens Association of Victoria will be continuing to assess licence areas that, so far, the Government has put off limits.

"We are concerned however, that Parks Victoria and Department of Sustainability and Environment are not acknowledging the extent of the recovery. Also, there are concerns about the accuracy of the information being used by DSE. Some members regard the maps of burnt areas to be highly inaccurate and these deficiencies need to be sorted out. We are aware of cases where the fire impact is less than that suggested by DSE.

"In many cases the intensity of fire was low, creating a mosaic style pattern consistent with a light burn.

"Indeed many members believe these runs need to be grazed to ensure that fire fuel does not build up to dangerous levels.

"Large parts of these licence areas have been burnt in fuel reductions in the past and subsequent grazing has never been raised as a detrimental process. Fire has been part of the management process and is considered a normal and regular event. To now, after more than 150 years of grazing and fire, highlight grazing as a detrimental activity is unnecessary and severely disadvantaging to many licensees. In fact most licensees increased stocking rates post fire to cope with the rapid regeneration process.

"Many cattlemen want to have the opportunity to further consider their grazing options and we hope the government agencies don't turn a blind eye to these possibilities."

A considerable amount of time and money was devoted to assessing licence areas in both Parks Victoria and DSE land. The Association purchased an electronic herbage meter to be able to objectively assess the amount of herbage per hectare. Many trips were undertaken to licence areas in the company of supporting scientists and bureaucrats.

Of particular concern were the areas in the Alpine National Park which showed excellent growth of grass, which was in some cases up to the shoulders and even over the heads of those people assessing the areas. Growth in nearby steeper and treed areas was not so prolific and Parks Victoria used these areas to substantiate its insistence that these areas not be grazed. Even when it was argued that cattle would have stayed on regrowth

areas and would not have ventured into the steeper country, where there was no grass anyway, Parks Victoria stuck to its original decisions.

### **3.6 DSE response on access requests**

In January 2004, DSE provided the following response:

"... the Department's maps provide a good basis for identifying the fire boundary. However, in some specific areas licensees have advised that the fire boundary is somewhat different to that shown on the DSE maps. Where differences are confirmed, the Department is prepared to modify the grazing arrangements. I understand that such modifications have been required in only a few instances. The process of working with graziers with licences covering lower elevation areas to assess recovery is well under way and it seems likely that recovery has been sufficient in several instances to allow a return of grazing this year. In these cases, the forest is deemed to have recovered sufficiently from the fires to the extent that stock can return to the area.

The Department is ensuring that individual licensee circumstances are being taken into account in this process, while ensuring forest ecosystem recovery in the fire affected area.

### **3.7 Appeal to Minister Thwaites**

In February 2004, we again appealed to Minister Thwaites for his support for the reassessment of some licences for cattle grazing. We said, "MCAV representatives met with Parks Victoria and made this request on January 20, and we understand this issue is now before you. Time is moving on and our members are pressing for a decision to be made as soon as possible."

### **3.8 The Parks Victoria decisions**

Ultimately, the Parks Victoria decisions regarding post fire access to runs were, for the respective levels of burning,

#### *Licence area is more than 80% burnt*

As your licence area is more than 80% burnt, I intend that grazing will not be permitted on your licence area for at least the next two seasons until December 2005.

I recognise however, that recovery is more advanced in parts of the lower elevation forests of some licence areas where fire intensity has been lower and good follow up rain has occurred. I am prepared to carefully consider conditional return to these areas if a case can be made that recovery is sufficient and environmental and cultural values identified as affected by the fire are adequately protected. Any return of grazing will be subject to a review of the stocking rate on your licence area. I invite you therefore to put that case for your licence area if it meets the above criteria.

#### *Licence area is less than 80% burnt*

As your licence area is less than 80% burnt, I am prepared to consider return of grazing subject to reaching agreement with you about an effective strategy to contain cattle to the unburnt sections of the area of the Alpine National Park covered by your licence and appropriate protection of environmental and cultural values at risk. This will include a review of the stocking rate on your licence area.

#### *Significant proportion of unburnt grazing licence area*

As your licence area is part of a group of licences that includes a significant proportion of unburnt grazing licence area at or adjacent to Pretty Valley, I am prepared to consider return of grazing subject to agreement on a reduced stocking rate, an

effective strategy to contain cattle to unburnt parts of your licence area and appropriate protection of environmental and cultural values. I therefore invite a proposal from you to demonstrate how cattle can be effectively contained to unburnt areas.

#### **4 The licence renewal campaign**

The seven year licences in the Alpine National Park are up for renewal in August 2005 and the Government started early with a complete review which has not yet (October 2004) been finalised.

##### **4.1 Environment Minister's announcement of the Alpine Grazing Taskforce**

On May 11, 2004, the Minister for Environment, John Thwaites announced the formation of a Caucus Taskforce on Cattle Grazing. His statement read: "We need to investigate the current and potential benefits and impacts of cattle grazing in the Park, .... The Member for Narracan, Ian Maxfield, will chair the taskforce that will report to the Minister in July 2004."

Mr Maxfield said the taskforce was now calling for public submissions to its investigation, with submissions closing on Friday June 18.

"I encourage current licensees, stakeholders and the community to make submissions and respond to newspaper advertisements calling for input," Mr Maxfield said.

Terms of reference for the taskforce are:

- Investigate the current and potential benefits and impacts of cattle grazing in the Alpine National Park.
- Consider the implications of renewal or non-renewal of cattle grazing licences for local communities and their economic and social viability; for the cost of management services for the Alpine National Park; for the security of natural resource values; and for the viability of the park.
- Based on these considerations, examine possible options for the future of cattle grazing in the Alpine National Park.
- Within each viable option, identify opportunities for maximising natural, economic, social and cultural values.
- Identify any further available evidence that will be useful to the Minister in making his decision on whether to renew licences that expire in August 2005, and in determining what conditions may be required in relation to any renewed licences.

On several occasions we urged members to be part of a great campaign to keep the mountain cattlemen's tradition alive. Many responded with submissions to the Taskforce reviewing alpine grazing, lobbying local politicians and letters to the key politicians including the Environment Minister.

We said, "The Government's decision to review alpine grazing by a Caucus Taskforce gives every member, every associate and every supporter an opportunity to drive home your opinions and thoughts about taking cattle to the high plains of Victoria. Soon after the deadline for submissions the Caucus Taskforce will be meeting probably in Bright and Bairnsdale, where you will have the opportunity to present your views in person.

We must make an emphatic impact with this campaign.

The future of the great tradition of taking cattle to the high plains depends critically on what we do now and over the next few weeks.

You have the opportunity to become part of the legend itself as we fight once again to maintain access to the high country leases and to continue the tradition of our forefathers and predecessors.

We must not let down the great names of the past such as Jim Treasure, Don Kneebone, Jack Lovick and Jim Commins.

As you write your submissions and letters, imagine that these giants of the legend are looking over your shoulder, guiding your hand and urging you not to let this marvellous heritage slip away into oblivion.

These great men, mountain cattlemen, bush poets and keen conservationists have done their bit to create, nurture and build the legend. The reins have fallen to our hands. The horse stands ready. The saddle is empty. It is our turn, it is our responsibility, it is our heritage. Let no one take it away from you."

##### **4.2 In our March Newsletter we asked, "How angry are you?"**

We asked our readers, are you angry that

- a 170 year old tradition of taking cattle up to the high country is likely be wiped out to satisfy a political expediency?
- our politicians are willing to be led by the nose by a strident minority green agenda instead of, for once, standing up to their never-ending demands?
- our politicians are spending so much time and money on an issue like alpine grazing instead of focussing attention on the really important environmental issues facing Victoria?
- the strident green minority is turning a few beds of moss into some sort of mythical symbol, so they can paint any impact of cattle in the worst possible light?
- although the alpine area was good enough, with cattle grazing, to be proclaimed as national park, now the strident minority green agenda wants them out?
- if anyone has anything against cattle, the immediate answer is the termination of licences instead of looking at how to properly manage the cattle?

##### **4.3 Campaign components**

The campaign to ensure the renewal of Alpine National Park licences has been long and difficult and is by no means over. During this campaign,

- We produced a comprehensive 45 page submission which was circulated widely and posted on our web site.
- We met with the Alpine Grazing Taskforce where the Association was represented by the President Simon Turner, Jack Hicks, Harry Ryder, Professor Peter Attiwill and Secretary Tim Barker.
- Local branch representatives did a magnificent job of encouraging local people to sign form letters and make submissions to the Alpine Grazing Taskforce.
- We put advertisements in local newspapers around the alpine area requesting support and submissions to the task force.
- We produced a 30 minute video on the issues and

showed this to the taskforce and the Liberal Party in Melbourne. The video was then converted into a Video Compact Disc (VCD) and this has been circulated to all politicians in the State. Large numbers of these VCDs were also circulated into the community.

- We co-operated extensively with the economic consultant URS which has been quantifying the economic and social impacts of alpine grazing.
- Bruce McCormack and Mansfield colleagues showed Minister Thwaites' adviser, Ilsa Coulson, the high country.
- Jack Hicks, Harry Ryder and Simon Turner, and some other cattlemen from time to time, hosted numerous tours of the high country and arranged inspections for visiting politicians and bureaucrats.
- Numerous media statements were released and President Simon Turner represented the Association on a large number of radio and television interviews. On the eve of World Environment Day Simon Turner said, "Rural Victorians are becoming fired up about this issue which they see as a litmus test of the Government's concern and interest in rural Victoria. Any decision against the cattlemen will be seen as the high water mark in recent decisions that have been adverse to rural Victoria. "The community has made it abundantly clear what it wants, what it supports and what will attract voter support. This is illustrated by scientific research, the government's own surveys and other expressions of community support. The community unequivocally supports the continuation of alpine grazing."
- We were delighted to see Minister Thwaites launch a café at Mt Buller and Minister Delahunty launch the Drover's Dream chairlift at Falls Creek at the snow season opening. The Minister embraced the cattlemen's heritage when he officially opened a new restaurant, called Cattlemans's Café on Mount Buller. The naming of this café and its launch by the Minister again highlighted the importance to the tourism industry of the iconic Australian imagery provided by cattlemen taking their cattle to the high plains during summer.
- Our legal representatives are looking at options available to us.
- Rural newspaper Stock & Land ran an eight-page wrap around and a front page story. We got 200 copies of the newspaper and sent the "wrap-around" to all State politicians.
- We sent a list of scientists to the taskforce to strengthen this area of our submission.
- We spent considerable time talking to journalists, particularly from "The Age".
- We have requested a meeting with the Country Caucus. This is the Country MPs in the Government.
- We sent extracts from supporting scientists' submissions to all politicians.
- Former Association Secretary Sue Reynolds is back in the fray and proposed representations by wives and mothers.
- Throughout the campaign, senior Association officeholders have met with politicians and

bureaucrats on many occasions to press the Association viewpoint. One significant meeting was with the chairman of Alpine Grazing Taskforce at his electorate office in Warragul where various opportunities and possibilities were discussed.

- Association representatives held regular telephone conference calls to hear reports on the campaign and to discuss future action. Considerable thought has always been given to opportunities for a march or rally but to date, these options have been held in reserve. It has however, been made quite clear to representatives of the government that an adverse decision could provoke a strong and emotional public response.
- The cattle management plan which was a cornerstone of the Association's submission has been further developed following various discussions and now represents a solid program on which to base the future of alpine grazing.



Simon Turner and "the herbmeter" during the Nuniong grass inspection. Photo: Kathy Jumor

#### 4.4 Extension of time sought

We sent this letter to Minister Thwaites seeking an extension of time in the review.

"Naturally in this issue it is extremely important to inspect conditions on the ground. We understand that our opponent group, the Victorian National Parks Association, had the opportunity to take members of the taskforce, other politicians, your adviser and other relevant personnel to locations on the Bogong High Plains to inspect areas where they allege damage has been caused by cattle. We stress the critical importance of these inspections and the manner in which, if left unanswered, they colour perceptions of those involved in the tours.

Despite our immediate insistence on accompanying the taskforce to inspect the situation on the Bogong High Plains, and



the willing acceptance of the taskforce chairman to accommodate this request, we have been unable to do so because of the onset of winter and snow.

In mid-May a hastily put together tour initially organised by the Member for Benalla and the Alpine Conservation and Access Group did proceed. One person on the tour, Mr Jack Hicks, is a member of the MCAV but, we understand, his voice was one of many on a wide range of issues.

The fact remains that on the critical issue of an on-ground inspection, the MCAV has not had the opportunity to tour the Bogong High Plains with the taskforce. This is an area of great significance and is widely acknowledged as the area most important to our opponents.

With regard to the urgency of the taskforce process, it is apparently working towards a deadline of August 2004. We understand that this date of August 2004 arises from a 1991 finding of an "independent panel" comprising Dr Philip Opas QC, Professor Peter Cullen and Dr Peter McInnes. This panel noted that "if any changes are contemplated to reduce allocations, these should be the subject of discussions with the graziers and the Mountain Cattlemen's Association at least 12 months before the current licences expire."

The MCAV recognises that the Government has abided by this principle. Discussions have commenced. We note that there is no requirement for a decision to be made 12 months before current licences expire. The Government should not feel impelled to make a decision before the end of August 2004. In any event the Association would be pleased to provide a written assurance waiving any requirement for 12 months' notice.

The MCAV stresses the need to undertake an inspection of the Bogong High Plains. If this were not to occur the Association would probably consider the legal ramifications of not being able to present the evidence it considers necessary to counter the arguments of its opponents.

We again stress how critically important it is to us for this tour to be undertaken. It is abundantly clear to us that opponents have made serious allegations in conjunction with on-site inspections that this Association has not had the opportunity to answer. The taskforce might want to continue with its current timetable but we suggest that its report not be presented to you until there has been an opportunity for it to tour the Bogong High Plains with representatives of this Association, after the snow has melted and a tour is possible.

We urge you to delay proceedings so that we can present information crucially important to our case. This information can only be presented during an on-ground inspection of the Bogong High Plains. Again we note that we are willing to waive any 12 months' notice of possible change."

#### **4.5 Alpine Taskforce report delayed at our request**

The Minister acceded to our request and the report of the Alpine Grazing Taskforce was delayed to allow us to take the members on a Spring tour of the high country and Bogong High Plains in particular. In announcing the delay, the Minister for Environment, John Thwaites, said, "The Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria requested more time so the Taskforce could inspect the Bogong High Plains - one of the most contentious areas in the Alpine grazing debate - after the snow melts in Spring. ... I consider this request reasonable, and have asked the Taskforce to delay its report to me until as soon as practicable after this visit."

#### **4.6 And finally ...**

The battle to retain our 170 year tradition and heritage of taking cattle to the high country continues and the result is still at risk.

Despite good and sensible discussions with the Alpine Taskforce and other politicians and a feeling that some momentum is swinging our way, we still have a horrible feeling that the 170-year-old tradition of taking cattle up to the high country could be swept away in a flurry of political expediency.

#### **4.7 An unsolicited submission from a bushwalker**

I am sending this submission as a regular pack carrying bushwalker for over 25 years (since I was 13) who undertakes extended hikes throughout the Victorian high country. I am also the Walks Secretary of the ... Club, although this is a personal submission and I have not discussed it with the club committee.

Over the years I have seen grazing withdrawn from the more sensitive parts of the mountains and I would agree that some of the places I saw grazing, such as Mt Bogong, were sensitive and it may have been right to withdraw grazing from these places. But I also see cattle and the cattlemen in a very positive light.

In my time as a bushwalker, I have seen many trackless, but fairly easy routes used by walkers become overgrown by scrub after cattle have been withdrawn. In one case this turned a route described in a guidebook as lasting one day, into a difficult three day scrub bash. Apart from making bushwalking less pleasant, the growth of this scrub after the withdrawal of grazing also seems to have led to the area being especially badly burnt in the 2003 fires.

I have also enjoyed chats with cattlemen who know their lease like the back of their hand. The experience of bushwalking has been greatly improved by friendly and useful advice from cattlemen pointing out good routes in untracked areas and features such as relatively unknown waterfalls.

Almost everyone I have walked with on extended hikes has also been caught up by the continuing tradition of the grazing families and this is one of the few surviving aspects of traditional Australia. It would be a shame to see it wiped out or restricted to a few families.

I was moved to write this submission by the systematic and apparently well funded campaign of the Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs (Vic Walk). A two page flyer was sent with their monthly newsletter urging all walkers to send submissions opposing grazing without any attempt at balance by providing arguments for its continuance or even references to web sites and publications that might argue the cattlemen's case.

I and many of my bushwalking friends are strong supporters of alpine grazing and do not wish to see it further restricted. I wish to emphasise that many walkers disagree with the VicWalk policy. The truth.

#### **5 The complete MCAV position on licence renewal**

It is important for the Association to place on a permanent record why the Alpine National Park cattle grazing licences should be renewed for a further seven years. This section of the report sets out these reasons.

The Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria (MCAV) has recommended to the Alpine Grazing Taskforce that cattle grazing be continued in conjunction with a positive cattle and environment management plan which assures the conservation of natural values and biodiversity and enhances the cultural traditions. The plan was initially partly developed with Parks Victoria.

Importantly, this issue also has strong relevance to urban residents and voters who have shown strong empathy for the cattlemen and want to see this tradition continue.

### **5.1 Core legislated promise**

Alpine grazing is a core legislated promise and supporters will be extremely disappointed to see it raised again. The Environment Minister, the Hon. John Thwaites has said: "Alpine grazing is a licensed activity and will continue as a licensed activity." (Hansard, 6.11.2003 Page 1616) A decision against the mountain cattlemen will resound throughout rural Victoria and disturb many of the thousands of supporters. These supporters - urban and rural - generally do not write letters or submissions but they do vote.

### **5.2 The cattlemen provide critically important cultural links from the past to the future**

It is becoming increasingly apparent that the community places high value on its cultural links to the past. If we don't have a connection to the past, we think the page we are on is the whole story and fail to comprehend that the current page is but one of many in the book - past and future. These links to the past are critical because they provide navigation points to the future. It is time to recognise the past, embrace its iconic images and give our community breadth of vision. When we find that one of the icons of past is still alive and flourishing, like the traditional practices of the mountain cattlemen, we should support them as we would a national treasure. The continuing interest in, and utilisation of, the high country imagery was recently highlighted by the opening of the Cattleman's Café at Mount Buller by the Minister for the Environment, the Hon. John Thwaites and the Drover's Dream Chairlift, by the Minister for Planning, the Hon. Mary Delahunty on 12 June 2004. The Planning Minister arrived on horseback resplendent in a Driza-bone coat and put on a cattleman's hat after dismounting!

### **5.3 Local knowledge and experience**

The experience of cattlemen has been drawn upon many times in rescues and fire fighting. During the 2003 bushfires the cattlemen's knowledge of the bush and fire behaviour was constantly used and appreciated by the control bodies. The value of the local knowledge of mountain cattlemen in resolving emergencies is irreplaceable and has assisted in saving many lives.

High country cattle grazing is part of the total community livelihood in the alpine and surrounding areas. It is a vital part of the economy which sustains communities and puts players on football fields, contributors in CWA meetings and volunteers on fire trucks.

### **5.4 Alpine grazing would support a nomination for World Heritage listing.**

The inclusion of the traditions of the mountain cattlemen would enhance a World Heritage nomination. They would assist in ensuring a nomination covers the World Heritage mission statement in relation to encouraging participation of the local

population in the preservation of their cultural and natural heritage.

### **5.5 The whole policy mosaic**

If you view the whole policy mosaic, including community, economic, social, heritage and historic issues, the cattlemen win hands-down and support the Government's triple bottom line policy

The Government has a policy that requires decisions to be balanced with environmental, social and economic considerations. This government articulates this policy as triple bottom line but most previous governments have had a similar view. On the environment issue alone the score might be MCAV: 2, VNPA: 1, but at full time, when we add in the community, economic, social, heritage and historic issues, the final score will be MCAV:7, VNPA:1. When the full mosaic of the policy is considered, the cattlemen come out way in front.

### **5.6 The beating up of the alpine grazing issues takes attention and money away from the real issues**

The major environmental issues facing Victoria are salinity, pollution, greenhouse gasses, water, genetic modification of crops, and the brown issues of the city. Then there are the social issues like toxic dumps, wind power and whether grass will ever grow in Telstra Dome. In comparison, alpine grazing is infinitesimally small. The only reason alpine grazing is an issue is because the hierarchy of the VNPA has decided that it should be an issue. We should never lose sight of the real environmental issues and the votes available to whichever political party tackles them with sound and creative policies.

### **5.7 The land was good enough, with alpine grazing, to be proclaimed as a national park**

The high plains have been grazed, at various times by sheep, horses and cattle for 170 years. Only cattle are grazed now and at record low stocking rates. After all this grazing, the area has been regarded as being in sufficiently good condition to be proclaimed as a national park.

### **5.8 Mossbeds**

The opponents of alpine grazing have sought to elevate the status of mossbeds to be like the old growth forests that struck such a chord in the community during the anti-logging debate. After mythologising the mossbeds the opponents then seek to portray the cattle as trampling and trashing this newly established temple. This is spin and hype, not environmental science. In fact the mossbeds form an extremely small part of the Alpine area. In any event they are flourishing after 170 years of alpine grazing. There are many mossbeds on private land, below the snowline, which are also flourishing and they are in paddocks grazed by cattle, for the whole year.

### **5.9 The presence of cattlemen**

The presence of cattlemen provide a strong force to monitor pest plants and animals, adverse human behaviour and fire fuel conditions

Cattlemen are on a constant look out for fresh outbreaks of weeds. Cattlemen are "on the spot" and able to immediately control new outbreaks and prevent them from becoming major infestations. They have also assisted in the control of pest animals. The cattlemen also provide assistance in the monitoring and prevention of adverse human behaviour. They also provide

information through their links with fire control agencies on fire fuel conditions.

### **5.10 Cattle reduce the fuel for fires**

Respected bush fire experts consider that the Esplin report was incorrect in relation to the impact of cattle grazing on fire fuel. The simplicity of this issue is that cattle reduce the amount of fuel available for fire and therefore must have an impact in the reduction in the intensity of fire.

### **5.11 Cost of managing alpine grazing**

Our opponents keep on saying that the State is collecting an income of \$30,000 from the licenses, but it is costing at least \$500,000 a year to manage. The cattlemen have never asked Parks Victoria to spend this sort of money. In any event, some cattlemen state that their only contact with Parks Victoria about alpine grazing is two letters a year stating an entry and exit date. The MCAV's plan proposes some self-regulation which would substantially reduce the costs.

### **5.12 The main opponent of the cattlemen, the VNPA has consistently supported alpine grazing.**

In the 1950s, 60s and 70s the VNPA consistently supported alpine grazing. The VNPA's newsletters and journal contain consistently supportive statements about alpine grazing and regarded other developments, such as ski resorts, as much more damaging activities.

The cattlemen's opponents talk about 60 years of scientific research which has allegedly shown that cattle grazing on the high plains is having an adverse impact. If there has been 60 years of scientific research in incriminating cattle grazing, this research has been around since the mid 1940s. It is only in the last 25 years that the VNPA has turned against alpine grazing. This means that for 35 years the VNPA supported alpine grazing while it was fully aware of this scientific research.

### **5.13 The community accepts cattle grazing in the context of a national park**

This issue is not about science and the impacts of cattle - it is about what is acceptable in a national park. Several Government surveys indicate that the general public are happy to see cattle grazing in the Alpine National Park.

### **5.14 Government has no mandate to terminate licences**

The 2002 ALP pre-election policy said nothing about alpine grazing. Therefore it must be that, for the 2002 election, the now Government supported the status quo as outlined in the National Parks Act. The Government has no mandate to abandon the mountain cattlemen.

### **5.15 Today's compromise is the starting point for tomorrow's campaigns by the ecological lobby groups.**

There is talk of a compromise but history shows that any such decision is used by the ecological lobby groups as the starting point for their next campaign. The ink is hardly dry on agreements before the ecological lobby groups are off on the next campaign. For the ecological lobby groups, a win today is the starting point for tomorrow's campaign.

The incremental nature of ecological lobby groups' policies is highlighted in these statements from the VNPA's own

publication, Parkwatch. In June 1978, the VNPA stated, "The VNPA is not opposed to cattle grazing within the Alpine National Park save in a relatively few locations including wilderness zones." (VNPA, Parkwatch, June 1978) However, by the 1990s the VNPA was stating - "Degrading activities such as grazing,... are totally incompatible with Park philosophy." (VNPA, Parkwatch, December 1990) What changed in the meantime? The cattle grazed the same areas. The same cattlemen families were involved. The only thing to change was the attitude of a small number of people in the ecological lobby groups.

### **5.16 Ecological lobby groups are beginning to lose favour in the community because they are picking the wrong issues.**

A Reader's Digest survey recently found that three of the five least trusted charities are ecological lobby groups - Greenpeace, Australian Conservation Foundation and The Wilderness Society. The survey was of 1500 Reader's Digest readers and the results were weighted to represent the general population. The article, in the June 2004 issue noted, "'These organisations started with a great deal of compassion, and at some point they became political, aligning with issues with which you may not agree,' suggests Tim Fenech, a senior lecturer in marketing at Griffith University."

### **5.17 Some of the licences are now held by new entrants to farming.**

Some opponents argue that cattle grazing licences are based upon "hereditary privilege" and that it is almost "impossible for an outsider to get a licence". On the one hand, cattlemen are criticised because some licences are held by businessmen but on the other hand are criticised because it is impossible for other people to obtain a licence. The fact is that new entrants are able to obtain licences and with the high cost of freehold land, only people with other successful business interests have sufficient money to buy these properties. The cattlemen welcome new entrants to alpine grazing. The cross-fertilisation of farming and financing ideas that flows from new neighbours is always viewed as a positive.

### **5.18 A few cattle are trucked to licence areas rather than walked in the traditional manner**

Whether cattle are trucked or driven to licence areas seems to be immaterial to the question of whether alpine grazing has any adverse impacts on the environment and whether it is an appropriate continuing activity. In any event, we estimate that just 5% of cattle grazed in the Alpine National Park are trucked to the runs. Additionally, in some cases Council by-laws have made it difficult to walk cattle to the licensed areas.

### **5.19 Win-win outcome**

In today's politics we hear all about "win-win decisions." A decision to support the cattlemen would, uniquely, be a win-win-win-win decision. The wins would be:

The Government will win. The Association, its members and many supporters of the mountain cattlemen will applaud this decision. Many people will think more highly of the Government if, for just once, it stands up to the unacceptable demands of the now strident ecological lobby groups

Rural people will win. Many rural groups will see this as recognition that the Government is concerned about their issues.

Melbourne communities will win. There will be satisfaction in simply knowing that a tradition and history are

still alive - the mountain cattlemen are still taking cattle up to the high plains. Just as conservationists have argued that you don't have to go to wilderness areas to derive some satisfaction from knowing they exist, so too do people like to know the mountain cattlemen's tradition continues.

Whole country communities would win. The cattlemen have a critically important role in their local communities. They are part of the fabric of the local community and give substance to the romance of taking cattle onto high plains during summer.

Economic activity, such as tourism, latched onto the cattlemen branding would win.

Future generations will win. The link to the past will provide part of the signposts to the future.

## 5.20 Conclusion

The implementation of the strong and positive cattle and environment management plan would support the continuation of alpine grazing and ensure the enhancement of conservation values

The cattlemen had been concerned for sometime about the absence of a positive and proactive management plan upon which grazing in the alpine area can be based. The MCAV did commence work with Parks Victoria on a Memorandum of Cooperation and a draft document was prepared. However the 2003 fires intervened and no further work has been done on this Memorandum. The Association had hoped that this Memorandum would provide the basis for a sensible management plan.

The proposed management plan acknowledges the scientific framework surrounding alpine grazing, utilises the cattlemen's knowledge of animal husbandry, fully embraces the need to protect the conservation values of the area and presents the cattlemen's activities in a positive manner that adds to the so-called triple bottom line of the government.

## 6 The licence renewal campaign - the current situation

This is the text of a letter sent to all politicians and it rounds off our feelings about the campaign as it stood in October 2004.

This issue started off being about science and heritage but it seems to be emerging as something much larger and symptomatic of wider issues. It is becoming more about leadership in the changing political landscape.

Alpine grazing is being caught up in the issue of the credibility and believability of politicians. This is increasingly becoming an issue in elections. We point to the fact that continued alpine grazing is a core legislated promise. Just ten months ago, the Environment Minister, the Hon. John Thwaites said: "Alpine grazing is a licensed activity and will continue as a licensed activity." (Hansard, 6.11.2003 Page 1616) When people are critical of politicians for breaking promises, the alpine grazing case is being quoted as an example.

So, we see the alpine grazing issues becoming a litmus test of the State Government's concern and interest in rural Victoria. We believe that this issue also has strong relevance to urban residents and voters who have shown strong empathy for the cattlemen and want to see this tradition continue.

In the immediate past, politicians from all sides have tried to "curry favour" with the greens to obtain their support at election

time. Now, however, the political landscape is about to change with the Victorian Greens likely to enter the State Parliament in the Legislative Council at the next election.

Where once it was taboo to criticise the greens, it might now be OK to more closely scrutinise their policies and even be openly critical. We have asked politicians to look at the views of those opposing alpine grazing without the veil of not being able to criticise the greens.

The ecological lobby group opposed to alpine grazing is using the classic tactic that has resulted in the removal of many recreational and commercial activities from public land. When they want an activity banned, they almost invariably say, "Just ban it from this particular area, we don't mind if it continues elsewhere." In this case they are saying remove it from the Alpine National Park, but we don't mind if it continues in State Forest. Well, bitter experience has shown us that these promises are worthless.

The MCAV submission gave chapter and verse on the broken promises of the ecological lobby groups. As just one example, in June 1978, the Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) stated, "The VNPA is not opposed to cattle grazing within the Alpine National Park save in a relatively few locations including wilderness zones." This is not an isolated quote or taken out of context. Anyone can see the ecological lobby groups' litany of broken promises in our submission which is on our website, [mca.com.au](http://mca.com.au). What changed in the meantime? The cattle graze the same areas. The same cattlemen families were involved. The only thing to change has been the attitude of a small number of people in the ecological lobby groups.

Another aspect to this is the increasing environmental responsibility within the community. The conservation movement taught us invaluable lessons in the 60s, 70s and 80s. Since then, the community has caught up and activities are generally environmentally sustainable and controlled by management plans and codes of practice. However, the ecological lobby groups have not stopped to appreciate that the community has come alongside. Instead they charged on and are still trying to put everything in sight into a national park with all the subsequent restrictions and prohibitions. We believe the electorate is searching for leadership and sound policy that enhances the values of the Victorian community. We are past the need for strident conservationist doctrine. It is time now to strengthen community and value history. It is becoming increasingly apparent that the community places high value on its cultural links to the past. These links to the past are critical because they provide navigation points to the future. It is time to recognise the past, embrace its iconic images and give our community breadth of vision. When we find that one of the icons of past is still alive and flourishing, like the traditional practices of the mountain cattlemen, we should support them as we would a national treasure.

We say let alpine grazing continue within the confines of the management plan proposed in our submission and let the heritage live.

## 7 Watch out for the great mossbed myth

The opponents of alpine grazing are trying to elevate the status of mossbeds to be like the old growth forests.

- After mythologising these mossbeds the opponents to alpine grazing are then seeking to portray cattle as

trampling and trashing them. This is spin and hype, not environmental science. In fact the mossbeds form an extremely small part of the Alpine area.

- In any event they are flourishing after 170 years of alpine grazing. Cattle do have an impact where they cross a stream or visit it to drink. But, if 170 years of grazing impacted so adversely on sphagnum mossbeds, surely they would not be as common as they now are.
- There are many mossbeds on private land, below the snowline, which are also flourishing and they are in paddocks grazed by cattle, for the whole year.
- The Victorian National Parks Association use a diagram of a sphagnum mossbed being degraded by cattle. The diagram shows a cow standing at least four times her own height below the original surface. Virtually no mossbeds are this deep.
- The greens are giving the impression that there must be hundreds of acres of sphagnum mossbeds scattered across the high plains. Mossbeds are quite common across the high country both in the grazed high country and in the other 75% of the Alpine National Park that is not grazed by cattle. However they have always been found in small patches adding to much less than 1% of the total area.
- The greens suggest that mossbeds have a vital role in filtering and steadily releasing water to sustain lowland catchments. First, mossbeds are just plants. They have no role pre-ordained by some superior being. Sphagnum mossbeds colonise around springs discharging water where the flow rate is no more than a trickle as are usually found within the first twenty to thirty metres downstream of the spring. Once the flow rate increases in the little streams the sphagnum will not establish and is never found along the beds of bigger streams. This is a very important point as it means that the majority of rainfall that falls in the mountains is never going to be filtered through any sphagnum moss. This would have been the case prior to European settlement.
- Following the 2003 Alpine National Park bushfires, the mossbeds in the ungrazed areas fared immensely worse than those where cattle had kept the surrounding vegetation trimmed short, thus offering the only form of protection available. Mossbeds in the ungrazed areas that were inevitably surrounded by a dry thatch of dead material ensured the fire was led right into the heart of the mossbeds.
- Sphagnum is an interesting plant but no amount of wishful thinking can make it transform an alpine catchment into something it never was.

The myths about mossbeds have travelled far enough. Stop the mossbed myth

## **8 Alpine Advisory Committee – Amendments to Membership**

The Association has always been represented on the Alpine Advisory Committee but this year the membership was altered from an organisational basis to a skills basis. The same occurred for the National Parks Advisory Council.

The Association was advised by DSE that the changes resulted from a National Competition Policy review of the National Parks Act. The Association was involved in this review. One of the recommendations of the reviews was that “If advisory bodies are still constituted under the Act then membership nominations should be widely invited and the selection criteria should be specified in terms of relevant skills and experiences.”

We noted that there is a strong move towards skills-based committees and that this is the case across all Departments.

We argued that, as long as the alpine grazing position makes it clearer that the person has experience in management of alpine grazing we could see no strong reason to object, particularly in light of the same changes being made to the National Parks Advisory Council.

As at mid-October, the Government is about to call for nominations to the newly structured National Parks Advisory Council. The Association will be encouraging people with significant experience in the management of national parks to nominate for appointment to this important Council.

## **9 Cattlemen supported the Stretton group**

The MCAV strongly supported the Stretton group when it released its report by Melbourne Queen’s Counsel Allan Myers, in July 2004.

Association president Simon Turner said, “People in the alpine area who were critical of the management of the 2003 fires and the subsequent Esplin report will feel vindicated by the recently released work of the Stretton Group.

“The Stretton Group is a mix of farmers and fire professionals with decades of fire experience. They intend using their report by Melbourne Queen’s Counsel Allan Myers, to press for a new inquiry or application to the Supreme Court.

“This will be strongly supported by people in the alpine area who thought they got a raw deal in the Esplin Report. In particular, the Esplin Report was highly critical of the notion that alpine cattle grazing reduces blazing. Our people know that if fire fuel is reduced, the severity of fire is reduced.

“We must utilise this renewal of interest to further improve fire management in Victoria. The fact is that there have been some encouraging improvements emerging on the ground. It appears that local knowledge will be given greater importance and we support the increased prominence being given to fuel reduction burning. We have not seen any magic solutions but we do appear to be moving in the right direction. It is just a great shame that this has only come about after the tragedy of the 2003 fires.

“We note that the Emergency Services Commissioner, Mr. Bruce Esplin has apparently already rejected the work of Queen’s Counsel Allan Myers. We say that this work needs better and more comprehensive review and commitment by the Government to get to the bottom of these issues for the sake of potential victims of future fires. The security of environmental values also depends on proper assessment of this new work.

When fires are burning in Victoria, the community shows great sympathy for its victims. We expect that this sympathy flows on to doing something to ensure that future harm and suffering is minimised. This is not just a matter of bureaucratic ego. It is a matter of life and death.

The Government will do itself a lot of good to come to grips with the views of the Stretton Group and deal with the issues

in a sound and transparent manner. If the Government ignores the Group, the anger and resentment that is building up in the bush will quickly come to a head.”

The Stretton Group is to be congratulated for its persistence. A flurry of encouraging comment reverberated around the high country after the release of this report.

## **10 Increased Funding for Bushfire Research**

In September 2004, the Federal Government announced increased funding for research and some of this will focus on the impact of cattle grazing.

In an accompanying statement (8.09.04), the Federal Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads, Jim Lloyd added that, “I am particularly impressed with the effective practical measures to fund fire trail expansion and maintenance, studies into hazard reduction prescribed burning and the impact of grazing and weed control in reducing the summer fire threats across Australia.”

## **11 Alpine Grazing has a day in the Sun during the Federal election campaign**

One of the last media reports (from Libby Price, ABC, 23.09.04) encapsulates the whole short lived furore:

“... From what we heard yesterday, from the Prime Minister down, the Coalition wants alpine grazing to continue. But as we also heard that stance is a direct contradiction of two Government statements submitted to the Alpine Grazing Taskforce. One was from the Department of Environment, submitted on behalf of the then Environment Minister David Kemp; the other from the Government’s principal advisory body on heritage matters, the Australian Heritage Council. Both have written to the Victorian Alpine Grazing Taskforce, which is currently considering the issue, and both recommended cattle be banned from the national parks. That flies in the face of local Federal Member and Science Minister Peter McGauran, who has publicly given his support to the continuation of alpine grazing. Also we heard from the current Environment Minister Ian Campbell that the letter submitted on behalf of former minister Kemp, was done so without his knowledge, and was not the position of his department, or the Government. You make of it what you will ...”

On September 22, 2004 Nationals Member for Gippsland Peter McGauran released the following statement:

### **“Federal Government Supports Cattle Grazing**

The Federal Government has today reaffirmed its support for cattle grazing in the high country.

Nationals Member for Gippsland Peter McGauran said, “The Coalition Government strongly supports the traditional grazing practices of mountain cattleman.”

Federal Environment Minister Ian Campbell also added his support to the Government’s position saying, “There is no dispute. The Commonwealth Government supports mountain cattlemen grazing in alpine areas.” ... “Cattle grazing significantly minimises the chance of bushfires through reduction in the amount of fuel available to burn. The Howard Government strongly supports the mountain cattlemen and the continuation of grazing in the high country and will continue to pressure the State Labor Government to give grazing licenses back to the mountain cattlemen,” Mr McGauran said.

The Government’s support for cattle grazing follows a letter from the AHC (Australian Heritage Council) to the Victorian Government Alpine Grazing Review Taskforce setting out the Council’s views. Chairman of the AHC Tom Harley agrees that the Council’s views on any issue are not necessarily those of the Environment Minister or the Government.

“The views of the AHC are not that of the Government. Advisory bodies such as the AHC do not make government policy. The Cabinet makes government policy,” Mr McGauran said. Environment Minister, Ian Campbell got into the action on the ABC “PM” program 22.09.04

“... the Australian Government supports grazing in the alpine region, we support the cattlemen, and that has been our policy for eight years. It has not changed and will not change.” “The cabinet policy, the Australian Government policy is to support the high country cattlemen.” “The Australian Government supports grazing in the alpine high country, it supports mountain cattlemen, we believe they are great custodians of that country, that they make a great contribution and that has always been our policy, will continue to be our policy. That is the Australian Government’s position.”

The Federal Election is now over and we are now following up these statements with two questions:

- What action will the Coalition take to repudiate the submissions made by Federal bureaucrats to the Alpine Grazing Taskforce?
- Will the Federal Government make a clear statement to the Alpine Grazing Taskforce on the view of the Australian Government in relation to alpine grazing in the Alpine National Park.

## **12 Conclusion**

The Mountain Cattlemen’s Association of Victoria faces some serious challenges and several of them will need to be met over the next few months.

We expect to meet with the Alpine Grazing Taskforce in November or December to make our last presentation and to argue our points with the Victorian National Parks Association. Some hard decisions need to be made and if they are adverse to our interests, we will need to assess our response and whether it should include an emotional and high profile public showdown.

We also need to continue to work with the agencies on areas of the Alpine National Park and State Forest that can be grazed this coming summer.

Seasonal conditions are an improvement on last year but many of our members are still facing very difficult times.

Another major and continuing issue is the management of fire and fire fuel hazards. The shock and immediate devastation of the 2003 Alpine fires is behind us but many members are determined to see greater and more fundamental changes in fuel reduction processes and fire suppression. It is likely that this will be a long process and will partly depend on the work of the Stretton Group.

We are fortunate to have strong and widely held community support and a strong base of Associate membership. When Associates renew their membership we are touched by comments such as “We are proud to be associated with the mountain cattlemen”. We derive further support from attendances at our Get-Togethers. Also, a considerable number of people assist the Association in a volunteer capacity and provide essential fuel to

stoke the organisation's engine. Foremost among these, are people like Pauline Venn, who manages the marketing function and contributes significantly to the Association's income through the marketing function and Debbie Squires who puts the *Voice of the Mountains* together. The members of the Association are grateful for this assistance and take this opportunity to thank the many supporters for their continuing involvement and encouragement.

The 2005 Get-Together will be at Junction Plain Cobungra and will provide the next opportunity to assess the Association's approach on these issues of fundamental importance to the iconic tradition of alpine grazing.

### ***Financial Report***

Tim Barker reported on finances for the year. The accounts were attached to the agenda.

### ***Marketing Report***

Tim Barker presented the marketing report prepared by MCAV Marketing Officer, Pauline Venn.

### ***Setting membership and associate membership subscription fees***

**Member:** The minimum fee is \$220 (includes GST) and covers the first 100 head. Thereafter an additional \$3.30 (includes GST) should be added for each additional head.

**Associates:** Single \$27.50, Family \$38.50

Doug Treasure/B. McCormack

"That the membership fees remain the same."

CARRIED.

### ***Election of Office Bearers***

**President** - Simon Turner, nominated by D Treasure, declared elected.

**Vice President** - Bruce McCormack nominated by Ross Brown, declared elected.

**Special Projects Officer** - Jack Hicks nominated by Simon Turner, declared elected.

**Special Projects Officer** - Harry Ryder nominated by Jack Hicks, declared elected.

**Special Projects Officer** - Chris Commins nominated by Jack Hicks, declared elected.

**Secretary** - Tim Barker nominated by Simon Turner, declared elected.

**Treasurer** - Doug Treasure nominated by Ross Brown, declared elected.

**Marketing Officer** - Pauline Venn nominated by Ross Brown, declared elected.



*Doug Treasure, Chris Commins, Jack Hicks, Bruce McCormack and Harry Ryder with Simon Turner and Tim Barker - the current executive.*

***Appointment of Auditor***

Doug Treasure / Chris Commins

“That Ormond Partners be appointed as auditors.”

CARRIED.

***Annual General Meeting date***

R Brown / Jack Hicks

“That the Annual General Meeting be held in late September each year.”

CARRIED.

***Marquee***

Ross Brown reported that Gippsland Party Hire was being wound up and that the MCAV should consider purchasing the marquee. AGREED that David Treasure follow this up.

***Get-Together***

Ross Brown commented on the Get-Together and suggested that it be ensured that wrist bands be worn at all times and that all advertising state that alcohol will be sold at “reasonable prices”.

***Conclusion***

The meeting concluded at 12.03pm



*Craig Ingram with cattlemen assessing post fire pasture growth - it was year for assessing grass. Photo: Kathy Junor*

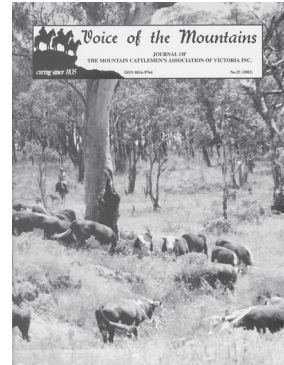
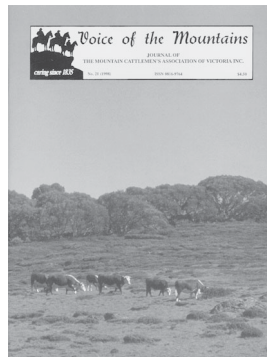
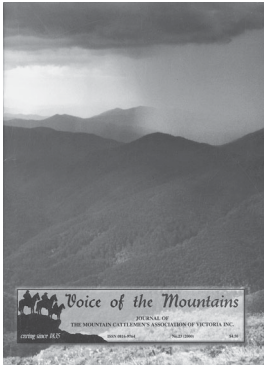


*Secretary Tim Barker, Treasurer Doug Treasure and President Simon Turner at the 2004 Get-Together at “Killbride”, Dargo.*



# Back Issues and Acknowledgements

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A consolidation of back issues of *Voice of the Mountains* has taken place and this is probably the best time to fill the gaps in your collection. We currently have the following available.

Volumes 10 - 11 @ \$4.00  
Volumes 13, 17 - 22 @ \$4.50  
Volume 26 @ \$6.00  
Volume 27 @ \$8.00

All other volumes are sold out and unavailable.

Available by post from the MCAV, P.O. Box 5083, Burnley 3121

I would like to say thank you to all who have helped and given assistance in the production of *Voice of the Mountains* this year. Tim Barker and Laurie Webb have been on the other end of the phone and emails at all odd hours for written material and photographs; the Terry family, David Oldfield, Pauline Venn, Fiona Magnusson, Shellie Jones, Sue Ryder, Libby Price, Jim Brown, Frances Westbury, Kathy Junor, Heath Misson, Pauline Connley, Ian Stapleton, Colleen Hurley, Charlie Guru, Robyn Cook, David Olsson, the Stretton Group and the McCormack family have all contributed articles or photographs, poems or their time. Each of these small contributions helps with the production. Alma Angus and Neil Cox have again assisted "at the last minute (literally)" with invaluable proof reading efforts (but don't blame them if they missed any!) and numerous cups of coffee.

A huge thank you is due to my employer, Stephen Baggs, who by default pays me to produce *Voice of the Mountains* for the MCAV and yet again has given me the time (and open access to computer facilities, the internet and e-mail) to complete *Voice*. Every year we strain the relationship with E-Gee Printers with our ever increasing tight deadline. This year they had just four days to get this from a picture on the computer screen to a book for you to read. Thank you for your tolerance, patience and ability to make the deadline. Had it not been for all of these people - there would be no *Voice of the Mountains*.

If you have something to contribute to the next edition please feel free to send it to me, Debbie Squires, at P.O. Box 816, Bairnsdale 3875.

