

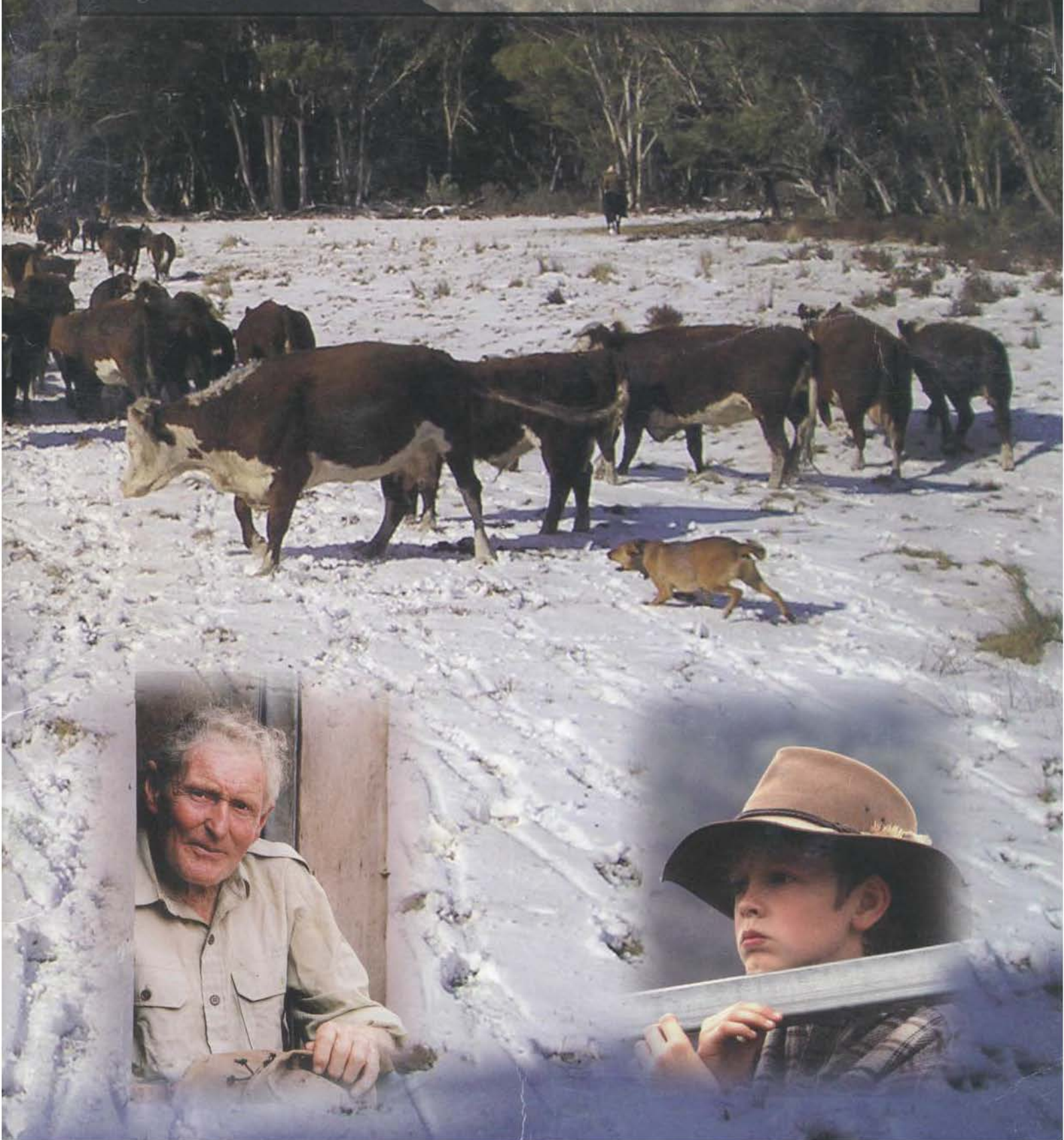


Voice of the Mountains

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

caring since 1835

No.31 (2008)



Voice of the Mountains

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

No. 31 (2008)

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COVER ILLUSTRATIONS

The background photograph of Cobungra Herefords in snow was taken by Tim Dyson while working the mob in winter 2006. Inset on the left is Frank Rayn, one of our senior cattlemen who died this year.

He was photographed by Sue Davis at the old house on the main farm at Cheshunt.

On the right is young Jack Mitchell, representing the future of the cattlemen, the railing in front of him symbolic of cattlemen being barred from the high country. Jack is the son of Tom and Alison Mitchell of Bairnsdale and grandson of Patchy Mitchell of Ensay. He was photographed by Frances Westbury at last year's get together. On the back cover is a self portrait that Tim took while out looking for stock in winter last year. His sunglasses haven't moved off his hat, and can be seen under the snow, resting against the crown. Tim has been at Cobungra since 2003.

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President's Message 2008

CHRISTA TREASURE

HAPPY NEW YEAR to everyone, may it bring you health, happiness and be full of commonsense- much grazing and winter fires only.

The MCAV has had a restructure of office bearers in 2007 and continues to show its strength. The resignation of Tim Barker as Secretary/Treasurer has seen Debbie Ray of Sale come in as Acting Secretary and Anne Faithfull as Acting Treasurer. Tim has done the bulk of the work for the MCAV for the last five years, making him a tough act to follow. Thank you Tim for being our Secretary and carrying out the job with such professionalism. Members have now taken on some of the jobs Tim has previously done, which is strengthening the camaraderie within the association. Unfortunately Pauline Venn, our Merchandise Officer, is also resigning at the end of the financial year. Pauline has been doing this job for twelve years. A heart felt thankyou Pauline for all the time and effort you have mustered for this position.

Chris and Jeanette Commins and Simon Turner organised a field day on Nunniong in November 2007. The main aim of the day was to establish some lines of communication at ground level between the MCAV and DSE staff. It is hoped that the successful liaison that was strengthened on this day will continue in the future. There were about fifteen MCAV members with an equal number of DSE employees in attendance. Chris' "to the point" opening speech is in this issue of *Voice of the Mountains* for others to read.

A Parliamentary Inquiry into Bushfires held a hearing at Omeo after field trips to Connors Plain with Simon and Rowena Turner, and Howqua Hills with Bruce McCormack and Wendy and Graeme Stoney. The outcome of this enquiry will hopefully be known later this year.

Richard and Anne Faithfull applied for a new grazing area, and after an inspection with Department staff, this was granted to them. Congratulations Richard and Anne. This is a most satisfying outcome after they had been ousted from their Bogong grazing area because of the National Park ruling.

In Tasmania, Parks actually welcome cattle to graze in certain areas within Cradle Mountain and the sensitive areas of the West. In each area, Parks are guided by local consultative groups, these groups are invited to have input to management committees for the land. On the committee are nominees for graziers, Aborigines, conservation groups and a member of the management authority. By placing decision making and responsibility for the land back into local community groups, many positive actions have resulted on the ground. The cattlemen advise Parks on areas suitable for grazing and where capital needs to be spent on maintenance.

Tasmania is renowned for its environmental awareness; it leaves us wondering why Victoria is so far behind.

The People's Review of Bushfires has released its paper on the 06/07 bushfire. They spent weeks looking at burnt areas, (taken around by locals) and many hours putting their report together. As stated by Tim Barker: "The People's Review has tapped into attitudes, opinions and concerns within the community that people feel have not been adequately embraced and resolved". It duly criticises the government departments for the "lock it up" approach to public land management. I have read it and advise you all to do so too. It can be read (or downloaded to your own computer) from the home page of the MCAV website.

Congratulations to the People's Review of Bushfires; this paper will surely become a reference for all involved in bushfires.

In other news the Australian Deer Association has been sold out by the Government according to the *Weekly Times* (December 5, 2007), "The ADA is gobsmacked by the Victorian Government's decision to list the Sambar deer as a threat to biodiversity. Environment Minister Gavin Jennings last week accepted the advice of the government's Scientific Advisory Committee to list the species a threat under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act." The ADA has been lobbying the Government furiously for years, Tim Barker has written many submissions on their behalf, but they too have been shafted, picked off. There is strength in numbers, united we stand

We've had politicians support us in the past - before the State Elections. We need to build on those relationships to strengthen our position to have cattle grazing re-instated in the National Parks. Like minded people must fight together. We need scientific evidence to back us (ie. Professor Mark Adams) and a strong political position.

We also need to build solid relationships with the next generation and one way this can be achieved is through making class kits available to the schools. Australian History and Environmental Studies are very much part of the next generation's education. It is our duty to make sure they get an accurate for our perspective. Developing a kit for teachers and students to use is a must. Future generations are our strength.

If you have any thoughts on how we can raise our profile in the wider community talk to us. We are always open to suggestions and offers of help.

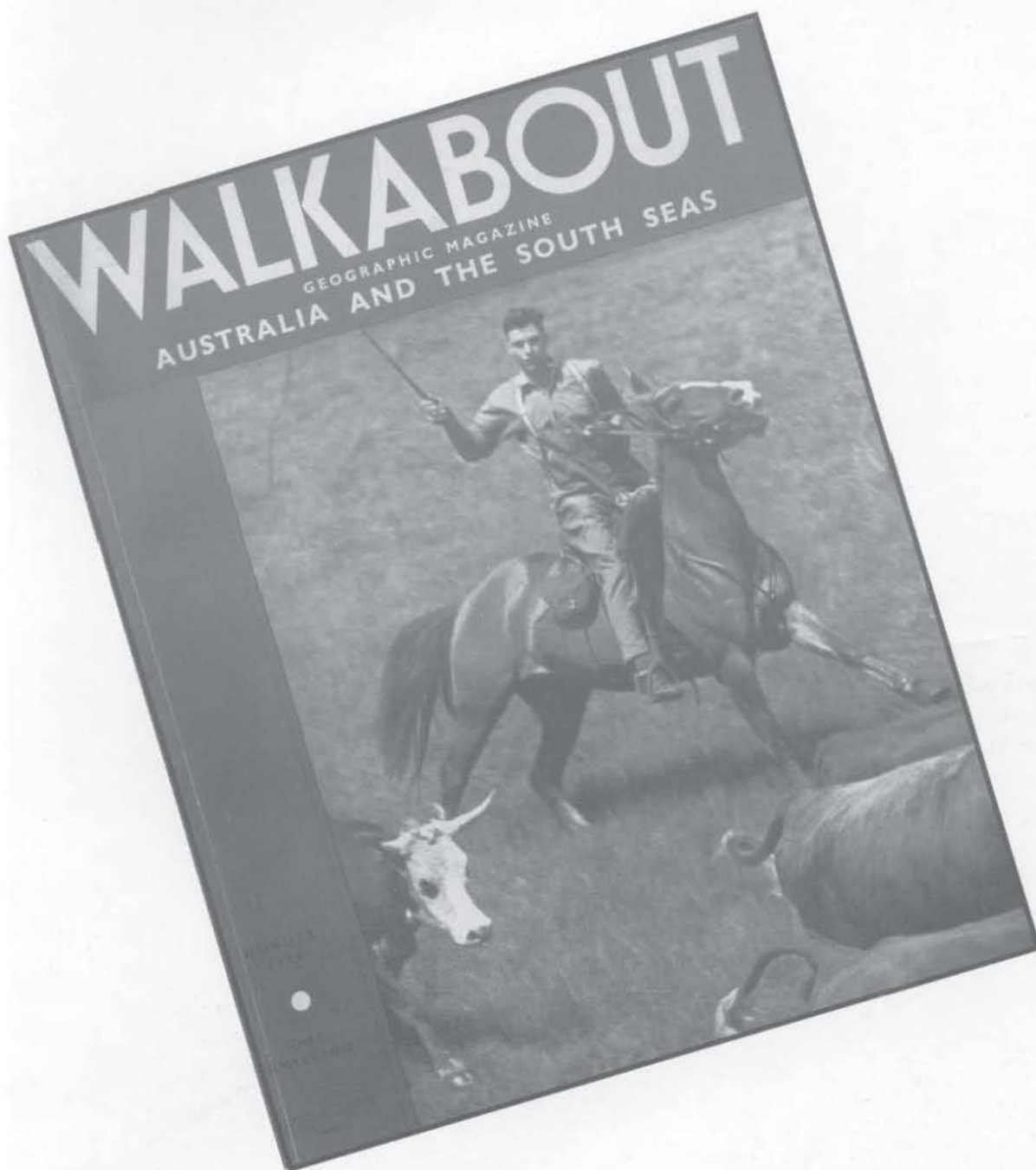
And finally, thank you to John Cook and your Get Together Committee for the work and preparation that has been done here at Junction Plain for the 2008 Get Together and thank you to all who contribute to MCAV - we have the right and the might to uphold our ideals.

Regards

Christa Treasure
President
Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria
January 2008



Junction Plain, Cobungra Station under snow, Winter 2007 - the site of the 2008 Get Together.



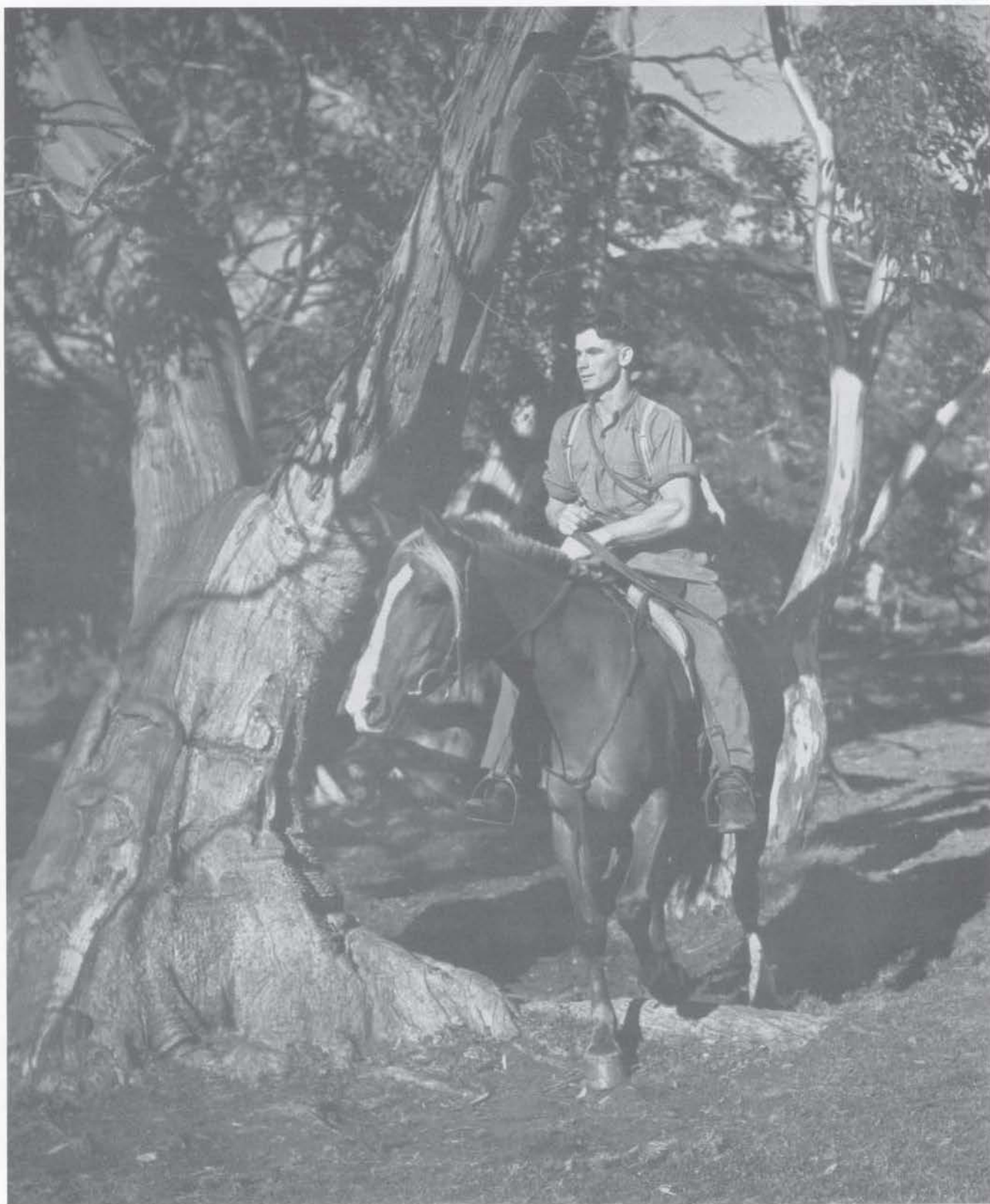
On 1 August 1936, "Walkabout" magazine featured the mountain cattlemen. This magazine was published by the National Travel Association of Australia every month. In an age when travel and the tourist industry were in their infancy, many learnt of the region through what they read.

In this article the writer talks mainly of his adventure with 'Ben', thought to be Ben Cooper, around the Bogong High Plains, but the photographs feature heavily from the Dargo High Plains and the Treasure family.

In *Voice of the Mountains* No. 7, a similar group of photographs appeared. In these, for example, the photographs here on page 5 and 6 are identified as Jim Treasure at Salt Camp Plain, and the group of riders on page twelve include Jim, Jack and Harry Treasure, Tom Bibby and Carl Wraith.

The sole rider following the mob is also believed to be Tom Bibby.

Another article about the mountain cattlemen appeared in a 1950s issue of *Walkabout* and we hope to bring that to you next year.



A STOCKMAN ON THE DARGO HIGH PLAINS, NORTH-EASTERN VICTORIA.



WALKABOUT



The title has an "age-old" background and signifies a racial characteristic of the Australian aboriginal who is always on the move. And so, month by month, through the medium of pen and picture, this journal will take you on a great "walkabout" through a new and fascinating world below the Equator.

Vol. 2

AUGUST 1st, 1936

No. 10



ATTEMPTING A BREAK-AWAY, DARGO HIGH PLAINS.

Hoof-Beats on Bogong

By LORENZO ROBERTSON

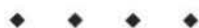
The first white omen of winter had gleamingly capped the bald summit of the mighty Bogong when the cattlemen in the adjacent valleys decided that it was time for their big round-up. All spring and summer the herds of cattle, Herefords numbered in their thousands, had roamed in primitive freedom upon the High Plains; from November to March they had cropped lush grass and drunk from clear streams far above the snow-line, begetting their calves and strengthening to a fine lustihood in the crisp mountain air, untended by keepers. But now the time has come for the drovers to make the journey to the Plains, muster their beasts, and drive them down the steep slopes to winter pasturage in the lowlands.

Used as a summer grazing ground for 10,000 cattle, the basaltic plateau that goes by the name of the Bogong High Plains is compassed about by the loftiest peaks of the Victorian Alps, well off the beaten traffic-routes in the north-eastern corner of the State. Mt Bogong, lifting its craggy sides and bare, rounded summit blue in air to 6,508 feet, is their sentinel. Mt Fainter, hardly less lofty, is in close attendance; Buffalo, Buller, Cobbler, Howitt, and a ramparted array of other giants are within an eagle's swoop.

The Plains themselves, too, well merit the appellation "high", for their general level is much over 5,000 feet; though "plains" is a term not perhaps exactly descriptive. Rather is the plateau

a rolling upland of rocky outcrops, swelling sometime into high hills, treeless except for the hardy snow-gum, but cut by shallow and some deep valleys, and opening out in parts to abundantly-grassed, saucer-like tracts, some of them of vast extent.

The first sign of autumn in the valleys signifies the beginning of the snow season among the Alps – and time for cattle-mustering on the High Plains.



There were some days of waiting while a pall of massed clouds hung thick far down the mountain slopes, but came the morning when they rolled away, revealing the newly-whitened tops of Bogong and Fainter and Feathertop austere radiant against blue sky.

"This fine spell should last," agreed the cattlemen at Tawonga. "We'll start tomorrow."

And on the morrow there is an early start. A posse of horsemen, coiled stockwhips at their shoulders, rides out of the township, while morning mist hangs above the river, towards the head of the valley and the foothills of Fainter, up which our track lies. Each man leads a laden pack-horse, and a bevy of cattle-dogs tags alongside, scenting the ground like a huntsman's pack.

Once we are out of the valley, there follow hours of slow pace and steep ascent; we climb and climb, first through messmate timber, and then in colder air through woolly-butt, past Bogong Jack's hut, into snow-gums. At last, near sun down, comes the bare, rocky gradient leading to the very summit of Fainter – and here is the roof of Victoria.

There is little twilight among the Alps; the westering sun slopes to a high horizon, hovers a moment as a white-gold ball, then drops – and soon it is night. The posse rides on in the gathering gloom, over the undulating terrain piebald with patches of snow. Sparks fly in the darkness from the horses' shoes when they strike upon flints. And then the rough slab hut ... candle-light ... fire roaring on the big stone hearth ... the tea-billy bubbling Home!



Thenceforward it is boot and saddle early each morning for the work of mustering. We separate into pairs with a dog or two apiece. The job of each couple is to comb a definite area and drove the mob collected back to the stockyard at nightfall. The stockmen have their own names for the topographical features of the plains – intriguing names like Rocky Valley, the Frying Pan, Ruined Castle, the Cemetery and they include these in their talk much as city-dwellers mention streets and suburbs.

Away off on the side of the knoll, companion Ben points out some whitish dots. To the novice, lacking the telescopic power of eye gained from habitual gazing into far distances, they might be rocks or small patches of snow, except that they slowly move.

"Cattle!" he says. "We'll have a look at them."

We ride on towards them, and at our approach they lift their heads from steadfast cropping to stare, with a surprised, startled expression on their white-and-brown, curly-haired faces. Roaming free and secluded, perhaps they have seen no man for months. An old bull bellows defiance and younger beasts start to move away; but the dogs, darting off uncommanded, barking at their heads, turn them back into the mob.

"So-o-ho-so! ... So-o-ho-so!" Ben is strangely and sonorously calling.

Now, there are some cattle districts where mustering is aided by the hanging of bells around the necks of the beasts in the vanguard. But on the Bogong another lure is employed. On the High Plains there is a deficiency of salt in the herbage. Several times in the summer, while the cattle are pasturing, it is necessary for the drovers to "salt" them. When their long-drawn, trumpeting call of "So-o-ho-so, So-o-ho-so" echoes across the open spaces and along the boulder-strewn valleys where the cattle are grazing, the older beasts know that it signifies the satisfaction of a craving they feel in their blood. Salt sets the cattle bellowing and

moving towards the callers. From over the rises and from behind clumps of rock they come, the young cattle following in the lead of the old-stagers; and, when they have licked their fill, they slake prodigious thirsts at the nearest stream. And so, when mustering is proceeding, the same call of "So-o-ho-so" saves much riding and pursuit.

Ben's leather-lunged call pacifies the cattle. They stand jostling and bunched together, stupidly undecided, bold yet timid, uncertain whether to stand or bolt away.

"Four, nine, twelve, fourteen," he counts. His eyes are running over the beasts, appraising their condition, noting which cows have calved, how many belonging to himself are among the mob. "That heifer of Ryder's has come on.

There's that old cow of mine; I didn't think she'd live." He seems to know them individually where all to the uninitiated look as much alike as peas from the same pod.

"We'll put them into that valley. They'll keep going on down there, and we can pick them up on our way home."

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

So in varying fashion does mustering proceed throughout the day. Small herds are found grazing along the banks of little streams in secluded valleys; others are scattered about the sides of hills; some are routed out of a clump of snow-gums with a great barking of dogs and cracking of stockwhips. Instinctively the cattleman seems to know where the beasts will be found.



"FLUNG OUT TO THE RIM OF THE SKYLINE IS THE FOREST-GARBED PANORAMA, GREEN WITH VALLEYS, BLUE WITH HILLS. . . "

For most of the time while mustering, the stockmen can keep to the horses, but there are some paces, particularly in the deep ravines under Mt McKay, where the scrub between the woolly-butt is so dense that the musterers are compelled to descend on foot, armed with their indispensable stockwhips and accompanied by their invaluable dogs. "Footwork" they call this, and it is the least enjoyable part of the task. Scratched faces and ripped clothes are common, and so tangled are some of the gullies that the cattle have literally to be poked out with the handle of the stockwhip.

Footwork, indeed, is foreign to the very nature of these stock men, who spend most of their waking hours in the saddle and who ride like Clancy of the Overflow and the Man from Snowy River. Moving at a hand-gallop in places that would horrify the dilettante equestrian, swinging at right angles in and out of wombat-holes by a miracle, they seldom suffer a "buster" and a buster even in such country is regarded as evidence that they still have something to learn about horsemanship. It's really grand to see those mountain horsemen ride!

And their stock-horses! They are hard and tough and wiry. A touch of spur, and they will leap from a walk into a gallop. To use a stockman's phrase, they will turn on a three penny bit, and they will pursue a sturdy young "outlaw" until the beast collapses into a beaten walk.

And then the cattlemen's dogs. Carefully bred and more carefully trained from puppyhood, a drover's dog has a high price set upon it by its owner. At mustering time, one dog is easily worth two extra men, and, like the stock-horses, they are seen to best advantage at work amongst scrub and timber.

A handful of cattle will break away from the main mob strung out along the narrow track on a hillside, and crash away through the undergrowth. "Git away out there, Nipper, Toy!" calls a drover, and Nipper and Toy, intelligence dancing in their eyes, scramble up and over a fallen tree and are off like swift shadows after

the runaways. Five minutes, ten minutes pass; and their excited barking is far down the gully. But presently the cattle come galloping up through the trees to seek security amidst the mob from the barking black demons at their heels. And Nipper and Toy, panting, their tongues lolling, come to the rear and trot quietly along side their master's horse.

There is the breed of dog that barks vehemently and persistently, and there is the "heeler" that barks seldom but steals up behind a truant and gives a darting nip at shins low down – a sly, clever, effective breed. These have none of the pet dogs' fastidiousness about diet; they will eat anything from dead cow to crusts of toast; a rabbit roasted on the fire's red coals and allowed to cool is a delicacy to be fought over, though they will work well on nothing but a few handfuls a day of pollard mash.

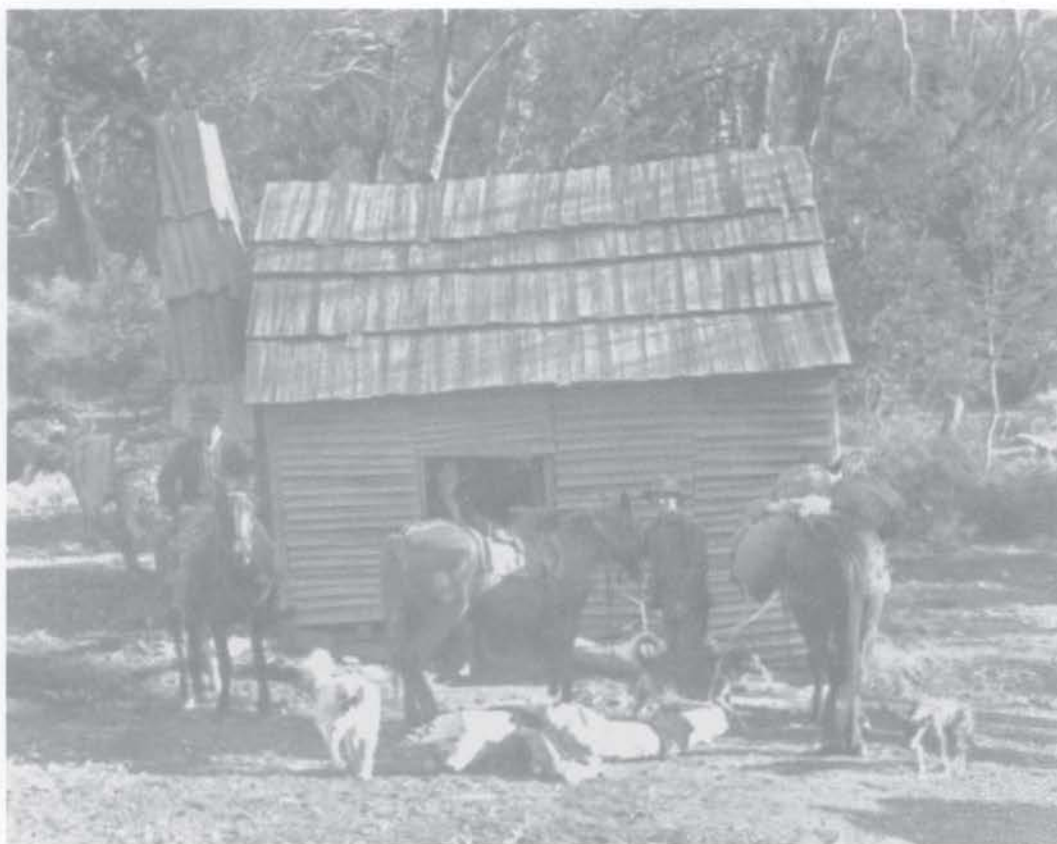
Only a cow, with a timid, frightened calf snuggling to her side, will sometimes, actuated by the protective maternal instinct, defy their efforts as she turns and makes savage thrusts at them with her horns. A stockwhip, curling and exploding above the cow's back, then comes to the dogs' aid. Their horses, their dogs, and their long, marvellously-wielded stockwhips – these are the musterers' tools of trade.

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

As the day wears on, and when our appointed area of the Plains is combed, we turn the horses' heads homewards. The small herds noted on the outward ride are found afresh, and the mob we are droving grows steadily larger. We keep the cattle moving slowly, down little valleys alive with the sound of unseen running water, over the boulder-strewn rises, a dog barking, a whip cracking, a bullock's long-drawn bellowing, an occasional call of "So-o-ho-so," on towards the stockyard.

At the hut there is friendly rivalry among the men over the results of their day's work.

"We brought in fifty-four. How many did you fellows get?"



BOGONG JACK'S HUT, NEAR THE SUMMIT OF MOUNT FAINTER.

"Fifty-four! 'Struth, were you out on a (crimson) picnic ride? We put eighty-one in the yard. Now you shirking cowhands can put the (purple) spuds on while we workers roll a smoke."

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

At night, the evening meal over and the horses fed and rugged against the cold, there is ease for the stockmen inside the hut before a leaping fire of snow-gum billets. Seated on the soft couch that bags of chaff make, with leggings put off and boots unlaced, their talk runs upon cattle, through reminiscences of droving, to strange tales of men and the locality, and back again to cattle. Always the talk comes back to cattle, for cattle mean their life and livelihood.

"Dogs!" says Ben. "I once had a real bonzer. I never knew anything to beat it. Clever! Why, I once found him with a bullock jammed in a fork of a tree, lickin' mud off the brand to see if he'd got the right one."

"Tell that yarn at the salt camp next summer, Ben! But I'll tell you chaps I once saw an old mare up with her ears and, without a rider on her back, go after an outlaw and turn it back into the mob. She just couldn't forget the old habit – and that one's fair dinkum!"

"This Bogong Jack," asks the stranger among them, "who was he?"

"Just a common horse-duffer," replies the old hand, "back in the early mining days. He'd pinch a horse over Omeo way, fatten it on the Plains up here, then sell it down in Bright or Tawonga. On his way back he'd lift the best beast he could lay hands on in the valley and sell it down in Omeo. That went on for years; he'd beat the troopers every time, knowing the mountains better and having his own secret tracks. He's supposed to have lost himself in a fog at last, though his bones were never found. Fog is our enemy up here."

"Wally and me got caught in Rocky Valley once," says Jack. "It was so thick



ON THEIR WAY TO THE MUSTER.

we couldn't see our hands stretched arms' length. We went round the same hill four times – couldn't get away from it; and we'd have sworn one creek was running uphill!"

"You young bucks talking about fog!" scoffs Ben. "Wait till you're trapped in a howling blizzard when you're taking two thousand head off; wait till you lose your way and half the mob over a cliff in fog so thick you can't see your horse's head, and live on 'suction' in snow and sleet for three days, not knowing where the blazes you are – as happened to us in '23. Then you can talk about weather!"

And so the talk goes, till yawning becomes infectious, and one by one the men rise and stretch, take a swig of the cold tea in the billy, and roll themselves in their blankets on the long bunk.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

As the Plains are a community grazing-ground for many owners, so mustering is a community undertaking. On any other terms it would be impossible, for, roaming untrammelled as

they do, the herds mingle indiscriminately. Every musterer brings in the cattle as found, irrespective of ownership, and they are "cut out," or separated later. Usually this is done in the stockyards, which are acres in extent, large enough to contain thousands of head, roughly but strongly fenced with intertwined snow-gum branches.

Cutting out is a bit of real Australia. Imagine a mob of ferocious-looking beasts milling around in the yard, churning the ground to dust if it is dry or to ankle-deep mud if it is wet. Into the heart of the mob rides a stockman, his whip cracking like rifle-shots as he concentrates his attention on a particular animal. Keeping on its very heels as it bucks and plunges and seeks wildly to elude pursuit among its excited mates, following every twist and turn and headlong charge, at last he forces it out of the mob to another part of the yard. Dogs barking, men shouting, cattle bellowing lustily!

Hard, skilful riding is essential, and the stock-horses, snorting their delight,

are superb. Often they stumble on the rough ground, and tosses for the men are frequent; but the work goes on furiously till the big mob is separated into smaller mobs according to brands and earmarks. By an unwritten law among the stockmen, ownership of calves is established from the cow they are following; and, for convenience only, because disputes rarely occur, branding or earmarking is often done on the spot.

Mustering the cattle from their feeding-grounds, cutting them out, droving small mobs across from one yard to another – so passed near a week of full days. Our stockyard was holding a content of many hundred beasts; but the loaves of bread, the pots of jam, the cold mutton, the bag of “spuds,” the chaff and oats, had dwindled magically under appetites sharpened by alpine air. And there was something to be watched more closely than the ration boxes – the weather.

“It’s warm,” said Jack. “It’s not natural.”

“I don’t like the look of the sky,” said Ben. “I saw lightning as I rode in to-night, too. It’s working up for snow, I think. We’d best take this mob off to-morrow.”

Max was “billy-man” next morning. It was his turn to rise first and kindle the fire. Grumbling at the cold, he took the billy to draw water from the creek, opened the door, and – “Snowing hard!” he called.

“And just listen to those bellowing brutes!” cried Ben, throwing back his blankets and jumping down from the bunk. “Turn out, you sleepy loafers, if you want to find any of ‘em left in the yard. Rescue the perishing, care for the dying! Turn out!”

There was need for hurry. The white, feathery flakes, silently fluttering down, were momentarily augmenting the soft-fallen mask already upon the ground, and the cattle, judging by the din of bellowing, were becoming restive. Indeed, it seemed that every beast in the stockyard was giving full throat. Unlike horses and sheep, that will always work higher up into snow, cattle fear it and will try to get down and away from it. There was a possibility

that, urged by some herd-instinct at self-preservation, they might gather into an irresistible wedge, breach the fence in once concerted rush, and scatter far and wide. Hence the bustle to saddle up, to load the pack-horses, and to vacate the hut.

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

And this is how the drovers brought the cattle off the High Plains.

The white-and-brown of the Herefords, with here and there the glossy jet-black of a poley cow, makes splashes of bright colour upon the snow-mantled ground as the head of the mob goes over the top of the first rise. One man is up with the lead, and others are stationed at intervals among the scattered string of beasts. Along the trails, deeply worn into parallel furrows by years of usage, the long procession moves on at a funeral gait. The dogs are frantically busy rounding in breakaways and keeping up the stragglers.

A flurry of snow comes down, and the soft flakes gather in the men’s hat-brims and settle in the folds of their oil-skin coats. The powdered flanks of the cattle steam. The fall changes to a spitting rain that melts the snow and makes runnels of water among the stones and boulders; now it becomes a stinging sleet, small as sago, that sets the mob bellowing. Again comes on the snow ...

In a little dip under Fainter the cattle are allowed to rest and graze for an hour, while the horsemen turn backs to the weather, beat numbed arms to and fro, and dangle cold-deadened feet from stirrup-irons. Cracking whips draw echoes from reverberating hills, and the mob moves again, upwards towards the summit of the mount.

Now is the supreme spectacle of the whole mustering – the crossing of the Fainter. Hundreds of cattle, sometimes thousands, slowly wend their way in single file around the summit of a soaring mountain-peak, picking their steps with infinite care among the rubble of small, loose stones that make the track. A slip or slide, an over-balance by any one of them, and there is nothing but boulders



DRAFTING CALVES FOR BRANDING, ON THE DARGO HIGH PLAINS.

on the bare slope to stop a roll for a thousand feet down to the tree-line. Compassed near about are the other giants of the Alps, capped or collared with clouds, while, far below, cloud streamers float along the profound abysses of their neighbouring ravines. Flung out to the rim of the skyline is the forest-garbed panorama, green with valleys, blue with hills The traverse of Fainter by a big mob of cattle is something that should draw movie-news-reelmen from afar to shoot a scene unique in the world..

We lie the night at Bogong Jack's, in the hut on the camp-site of that old-time rustler, with the mob corralled close by. The thin snow keeps them bellowing the night through. On the morrow there is the long descent into the distant pleasance of the Kiewa Valley. Mustering would not yet be finished; other parties of horsemen would toil up the immense buttresses of the mountains to gather the cattle that still remained on top. A few beasts hiding

away in inaccessible fastnesses would unavoidably be missed, to perish miserably of starvation and cold.

And then the High Plains would be abandoned by herds and herdsmen to months of white winter, until the sun's recurring warmth should change them from a wilderness into a wonderland, until November should bring in the rainbow-hued, giant alpine daisies and yellow-bright buttercups, and the Christmas bush and heath be aflame with blossom, until the tender green of the snow-grass should shoot afresh from thawed roots and the melting snows swell to spate countless streams in pebbly channels, until there should be pearly mists on the mountain in the morning – abandoned till the spring-time of the year, when the cattle, returned once more to their lofty pastures, should crop and wander, crop and wander

The Alpine Custodians

The Summer is over and Autumn is here,
it is time to muster alpine cattle now
as the fierce and snowy Winter nears.
The strong, trusty packhorses are loaded to the hilt
and the ride up through the mountains
was the best that life could bring.

The flicker of the hut's open fire
is where comradeship and yarns begin,
that was the best of everything.

The muster has begun,
the mountain men all riding to their runs.
Their call "Salt Ho, Salt Ho"
rings out across those harsh and rugged plains,
it brings the cattle in a hurry
from near and far away.
They come from spur and gully
and across those pristine snow grass plains.

By day's end the mountain men
ride back to camp with many cattle mustered,
and as the days go by,
the old log snow gum cattle yards are filled.

Now it is time for the long day's cull,
all the cattle from North, South, East and West
head for the cut-out ground of Pretty Valley
for those open plains, the best.

The horses all a-lather,
do their jobs with pride,
the whips are fairly crackling,
the dogs are working well.
The trained and keen, experienced eye
of those famous rugged mountain men
knew all the brands and earmarks then.

The cull was now complete,
the lead cows know their way,
and head toward their camps that day.
The team of man, horse and dog
feel freedom to work yet another day,
as the long drove down the mountains
is not very far away.

Sunrise will be the signal
to those lead cows that never stray.
The valleys beckon far below
as the snow clouds start rolling in.
The gloom is ominous now.
The stockmen don their Driza-Bones
to keep that ill chill out.

The last drove down the mountain,
is but a memory now.
Hearts lie heavy
remembering those treasured heritage years.
But the pioneer descendants
are a tough and rugged lot,
they will stand together,
afraid of a fight they are not.

Allan Mull

Allan Mull was mustering with his uncle, Ben Cooper, when sixteen years old. Although he never had a run of his own, he continues to support the mountain cattlemen wherever possible. This poem was the winning entry in the Bush Laureate section of the Don Kneebone Heritage Award 2006.

Cattle munch hole in Government pipeline plan

JAN BEER AND BOB RICHARDSON

An advertisement by a country water authority for expressions of interest in grazing cattle in the bed of Lake Eildon has called into question the viability of the Brumby government's plans to pump water from the Goulburn River to Melbourne. Goulburn Murray Water has called for expressions of interest for farmers to graze cattle on dry sections of the lake to reduce the summer fire hazard from dry grass growing in the lake bed.

Rural groups opposed to the Victorian government's proposed pipeline are pointing to the advertisement as evidence that the Lake is experiencing a long term drying trend which means there will not be enough water to pipe to Melbourne.

"We don't know when the penny will drop with this government," said Yea "Plug The Pipe" spokesperson Jan Beer.

"There is grass and trees growing where there once was water. This is at least the second consecutive year in which grazing has occurred."

"There are launching ramps for boats with no water in sight."

"The government and the media have become caught up in a debate about whether there are sufficient savings from improving irrigation infrastructure to share some of those savings with Melbourne," said Mrs Beer.

"They can't seem to get the simple point that it has to rain to have water to save. This would be so funny if it weren't for the fact that the community is going to spend a billion dollars on a pipeline which will have practically no water to pump."

This issue is extremely relevant to the MCAV because on one hand the government is saying grazing doesn't reduce blazing, while on the other, one of its own authorities is saying cattle are effective in reducing fire hazard.

Further information can be obtained from Jan Beer on 5797 2436 or 0407 144 777.



The bed of Lake Eildon, 18 November 2007. (Bob Richardson)

Mick Dougherty

Mick Dougherty rode the coach from Bright to Omeo.
He laughed and smiled when the sun was warm, he shivered in the snow.
Mick Dougherty rode the coach from Omeo to Bright.
Either way, he stayed at Mt St Bernard's for the night.

At 9am on a Tuesday morn he'd head for Omeo.
At 7am on a Thursday morn back home to Bright he'd go.
In the days when forty shillings a week was all that a man could earn,
it was thirty five shillings to go one way, or sixty shillings return.

Mick Dougherty told a joke as only the Irish can,
and always, if anything seemed to go wrong, it was simply a part of his plan.
With his clear blue eyes, and his fund of yarns, he always took great pains
to maintain his reputation as the driver that entertains!

Mick Dougherty knew that road as well as the back of his hand.
He trained his horses expertly to answer his every command.
He never had an accident, he knew the route so well.
He knew just when to slow right down, and when to race like hell.

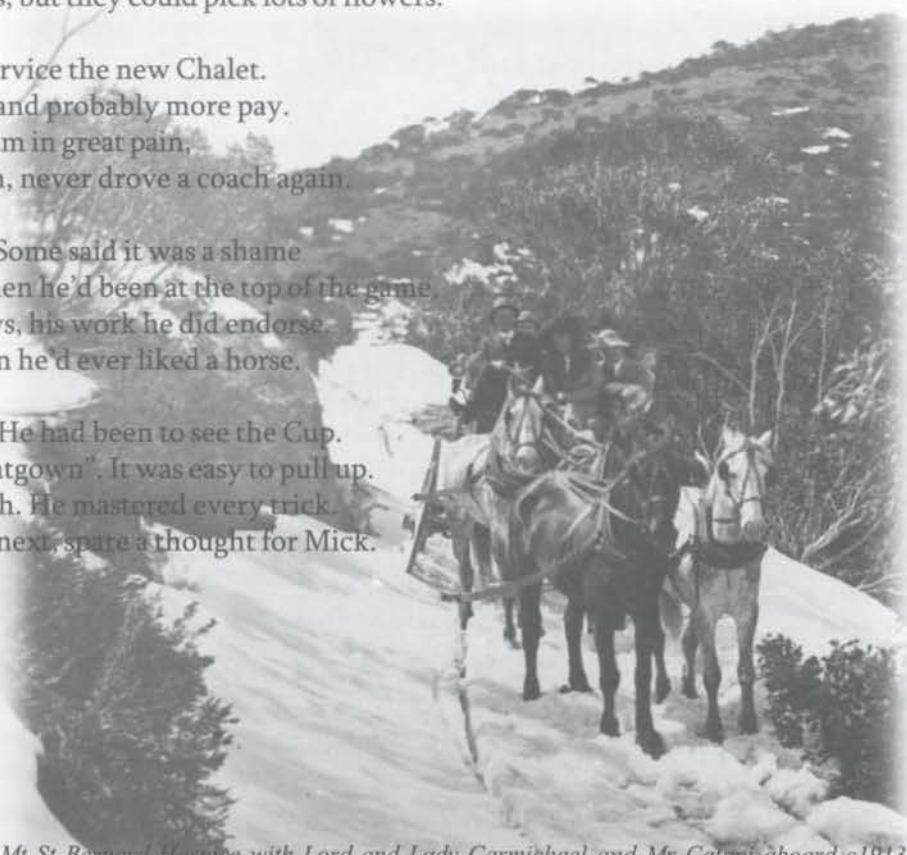
Mick looked after the ladies well. Whenever a bend was tight,
he'd crack a joke, or tell a yarn, to keep them feeling right.
He knew a day inside a coach would test endurance powers,
they couldn't powder their noses, but they could pick lots of flowers.

Mick moved to Mt Buffalo, to service the new Chalet.
It meant a bright new uniform, and probably more pay.
Alas, he broke his ankle. It left him in great pain,
and Mick Dougherty, coachman, never drove a coach again.

Mick looked after the donkeys. Some said it was a shame
to see him peter out like this, when he'd been at the top of the game,
but Dougherty loved the donkeys, his work he did endorse.
He said he liked them better than he'd ever liked a horse.

Mick died down in Melbourne. He had been to see the Cup.
He'd owned a horse called "Nightgown". It was easy to pull up.
Mick Dougherty drove the coach. He mastered every trick.
When you drive past Blowhard next, spare a thought for Mick.

Stephen Whiteside



*Mick Dougherty returning to Mt St Bernard Hospice with Lord and Lady Carmichael and Mr Catani aboard c1913.
(Neil Cox)*

Finding Common Ground

CHRIS COMMINS

On 20 November 2007 a group of cattlemen and Department of Sustainability and Environment staff toured Bentleys Plain and Nunniong in an effort to develop a greater understanding between the two entities.

Perhaps the tone of the meeting can be seen in Chris Commins' welcoming speech.

On behalf of the mountain cattlemen, welcome and thank you for coming. I really appreciate your effort to get here to Bentleys Plain and Nunniong Plateau, in particular a big thankyou to Ryan Incoll for enabling this event to happen.

We feel it is very important that you as Forest Managers have a better understanding of how we as mountain cattlemen operate as stewards of the land, what drives our thinking and why forest gazing is important for the environment, the State and us as producers.

I hope that over the course of the day, between Simon, Jeanette, Vic Jurskis and myself, we can convey that understanding to you.

I think it is important to look at our history because that affects our current and future management.

Firstly - some early local history about this place.

Bentleys Plain was supposedly named after a cattle duffer who used it as a place to hide out from time to time but it is better known today for the hut 'MOSCOW VILLA'. Moscow Villa was built in 1941 by local identity Bill Ah Chow who was a Chinese Australian. Shortly after this hut was built, Bill had a visit from the big wigs from the Forests Commission. With its Socialist connotations they wanted to know why he called the hut 'Moscow Villa'. There used to be three rooms in the hut and Bill adjourned to the bedroom and shortly after returned with a written explanation.

Moscow Villa was an acronym - I think Bill started a fad in the Department. It stood for "My Own Summer Cottage Officially Welcomes Visitors Inside Light Luncheon Available".

Bill was also a digger in the First A.I.F, and a big gouge in his upper arm where he had been wounded had intrigued me as a kid. After the second war a road was punched in from Ensay North to here. With the advent of bulldozers and four wheel

drive vehicles, Bill had no further need for his pack horses Paddy and Billy, so he gave them to my parents. For me, my sister Anne and brother Bruce, they became our mode of transport to school for several years.

When Bill died, in his will he left the walls of Moscow Villa to the Forests Commission and the roof to my father!

My family's involvement with this country began with my grandfather who was a returned soldier from World War I who lived near Ensay. He took up a grazing licence on Nunniong about 1934 that had been held by the McCoy family and whose descendants still live near Omeo. The original run holder was Patrick Cody Buckley back in 1850.

Today the grazing licence is held by my brother Bruce, cousin Bluey and myself. The Murphy family also run on the Nunniong Plateau and Simon and Rowena Turner hold the run on the Nunnett.

The first mountain cattleman in Victoria was James McFarlane in 1835 at what is now known as MacFarlanes Flat. One hundred and seventy years later we are still here, albeit in greatly diminished numbers we may be down, but we are certainly not out and we don't plan to be!

For the last sixty years there has been a concerted campaign to lock up country into Parks and Reserves and remove the cattle - supposedly for environmental reasons.

If the mountain cattlemen and their cattle had done the damage our opponents have claimed, you would expect the area grazed would resemble a moonscape, yet that country was deemed pristine enough to be declared a National park. I think the main reason we were evicted was one of philosophy, rather than conservation.

I was asked some time ago in an interview whether there was a clash of cultures between mountain cattlemen and environmentalists. I

answered that *I could not see how this could happen, as we are the true environmentalists, we are practicing environmentalists.*

I also say we are evolutionists we manage change as best we can. Our fundamentalist green opponents, such as the VNPA [Victorian National Parks Association] are the "flat earthers". They have this idea you can turn the clock back - somehow magically if you lock the environment up it will revert to some mythical pristine status.

How wrong that is.

I hear some people say how fragile this Alpine ecology is how wrong that is! It is much more resilient than man or beast. If you abuse that environment, it will destroy you. Mountain cattlemen have a long earned respect for their environment that is why we have survived in that environment for 170 years ... until the heavy hand of government intervened.

Mountain cattlemen used to practice fire stick farming just as the Aboriginals did, but with the Closer Settlement Act and the creation of the Forests Commission in 1919 those activities were steadily curtailed. This activity has ceased over the last thirty years due to the threat of prosecution.

The Forests Commission had a no burn policy and this was reinforced by two Royal Commissions presided over by Judge Stretton after the 1939 fires. He disregarded evidence by mountain cattlemen that lightning was a major cause of fire the only time Strétton mentioned lightning was in a sentence that "**lightning is a real but rare occurrence**". Not once in his conclusion did he mention lightning. At the top of the list he had mountain cattlemen and other bushmen illegally burning off the country.

The other serious error Stretton made was when mountain cattlemen gave evidence at the 1945 Royal Commission into forest grazing.

Cattlemen said rabbits were the major cause of erosion. Stretton dismissed this with complete and utter contempt by stating rather sarcastically "that brer rabbit might blame brer fox"!

It was not until the 1960s that the Forest Commission acknowledged lightning as a major cause of fire in South East Australia, and it was not until the mid 60s that the Forests Commission embarked on a program of fuel reduction burns.

The two most detrimental impacts on this environment have been rabbits and lack of fire and by that I mean cool burns.

Good management requires **active** management, and we believe good use of fire and grazing go hand in hand with good management. If you take the man out of management, what do you have?? You certainly don't have management.

If a Royal Commissioner got it wrong, what hope did Bruce Esplin have of getting it right?

In his report into the 2003 fires he stated that "there is no scientific evidence that grazing prevents

blazing". A curious statement parroted straight from the VNPA submission on grazing.

We have never ever made that claim. What we do say is that Alpine Grazing **Reduces Blazing** ...grazing mitigates the effects of fire in much the same way as a fuel reduction burn.

There are major benefits in using cattle as an environmental management tool. In short they are **reduced fuel loads, enhanced bio diversity and enhanced water catchment values.**

All activities have an impact ... and the miniscule negative impact of cattle grazing compared to virtually all other activities has been given unrealistic weight by our opponents. In fact the positive impacts of grazing cattle in the high country are a compelling reason for their return in greater numbers - not less.



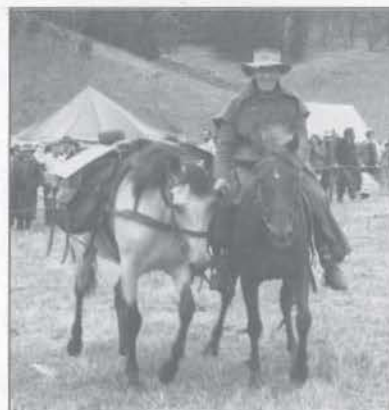
The Annual Get-Together

Year, Branch and Site *Voice No.* *Port Edition featuring*

Voice of the Mountains No. 1 (1972), No. 2 (1973) and No. 3 (1974)

were published before the first of the Get-Together's as they are now known was held.

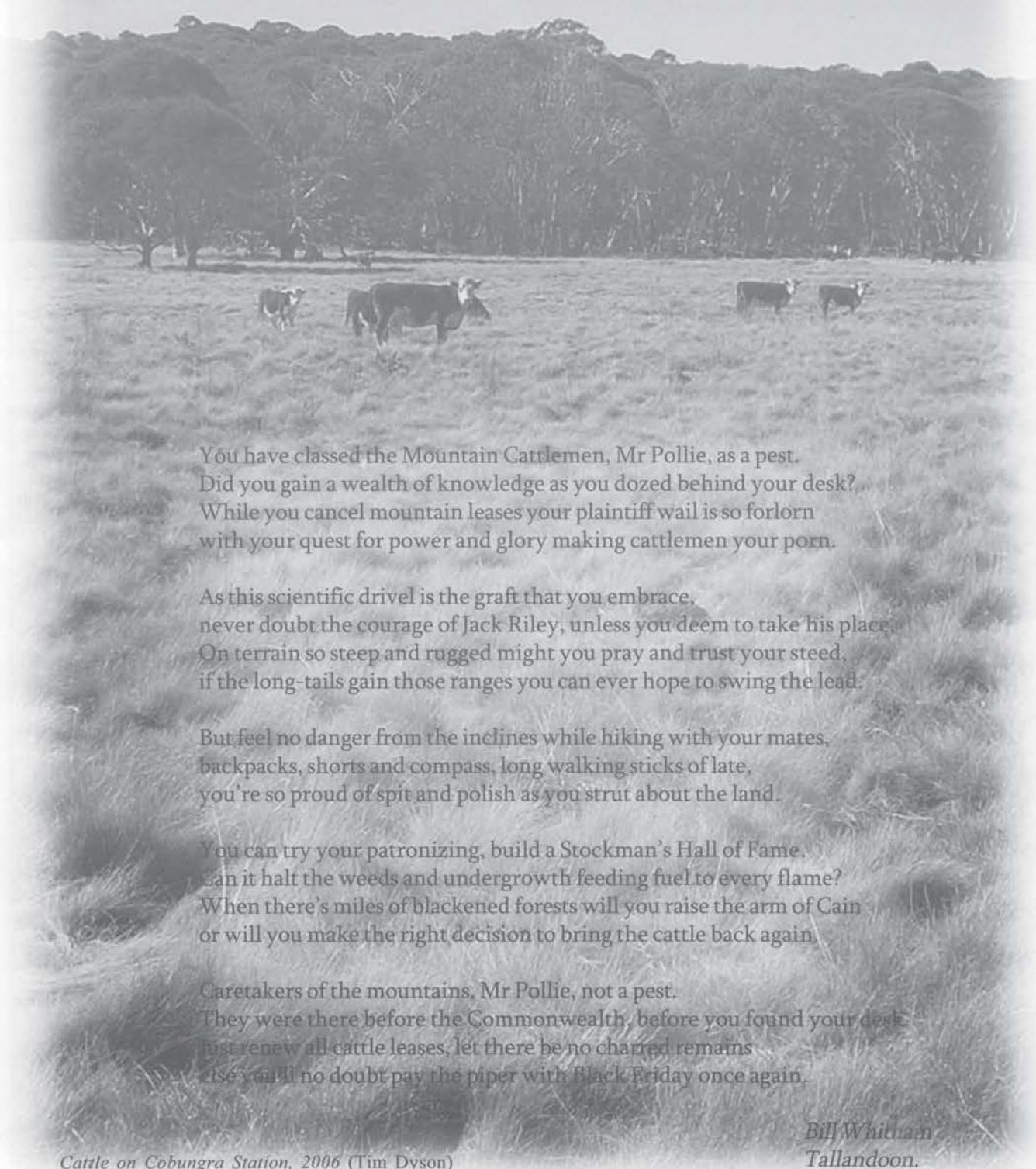
1975	Gippsland	Dargo		
1976	Omeo	Nunniong		
1977	North East	Rose River		
1978	Mansfield	Merimah		
1979	Gippsland	Native Dog	4	
1980	Gippsland	Holmes Plain	5	
1981	Omeo	Shannonvale	6	
1982	North East	Pretty Valley	7	
1983	Mansfield	Sheepyard Flat		
1984	Gippsland	Holmes Plain	8	
1985	Omeo	Junction Plain	9	1 Cattleman with horse jumping
1986	North East	Catherine Station	10	2 Cattleman with horse drinking
1987	Mansfield	Sheepyard Flat		3 Cattleman with horse galloping
1988	Gippsland	Castleburn	11	4 Three cattlemen racing
1989	Omeo	Gibbo Park	12	5 R.M. Williams Heritage Award
1990	North East	Bowmans Forest	13	6 Cattleman pursuing stock
1991	Mansfield	Sheep Yard Flat	14	7 Higgins Hut at Bennison 1913
1992	Gippsland	Killbride	15	8 Ropers Hut
1993	Omeo	Kellys	16	9 Davies Plain Hut
1994	North East	Bowmans Forest	17	10 Blairs Hut
1995	Mansfield	Mountain Bay	18	11 Jamiesons Hut
1996	Gippsland	Killbride	19	12 Moroka Hut
1997	Omeo	Gibbo Park	20	13 Fitzgeralds Hut
1998	North East	Rose River	21	14 Ross Blair
1999	Mansfield	Sheepyard Flat	22	15 Fry's Hut
2000	Gippsland	Bennison Plain	23	16 Higgins Hut
2001	Omeo	Junction Plain	24	17 Buckwong Hut
2002	North East	Rose River	25	18 Centenary of Federation
2003	Manfield	Sheepyard Flat	26	19 Lovicks Hut
2004	Gippsland	Killbride	27	20 Guys Hut
2005	Omeo	Junction Plain	28	21 Horsehair Hut
2006	North East	Rose River	29	22 Westons Hut
2007	Gippsland	Glenfalloch Station	30	23 Howitt Hut
2008	Omeo	Junction Plain	31	24 Commins Hut



Frank Ryan
at Castleburn
1988

A request was received this year as to when and where each of the Get Togethers had been held and how they related to *Voice of the Mountains* and the Cattlemen's Port. To the best of our knowledge - this is it. The Get Together started when cattlemen would "get together" once a year "up top" to discuss the year's activities. Then helpers and supporters also started to go, the *Man from Snowy River* films were released and "seven year leases" and National Parks became an issue and the rest, as they say, is history.

Bring the cattle back again



You have classed the Mountain Cattlemen, Mr Pollie, as a pest.
Did you gain a wealth of knowledge as you dozed behind your desk?
While you cancel mountain leases your plaintiff wail is so forlorn
with your quest for power and glory making cattlemen your porn.

As this scientific drivell is the graft that you embrace,
never doubt the courage of Jack Riley, unless you deem to take his place.
On terrain so steep and rugged might you pray and trust your steed,
if the long-tails gain those ranges you can ever hope to swing the lead.

But feel no danger from the inclines while hiking with your mates,
backpacks, shorts and compass, long walking sticks of late,
you're so proud of spit and polish as you strut about the land.

You can try your patronizing, build a Stockman's Hall of Fame.
Can it halt the weeds and undergrowth feeding fuel to every flame?
When there's miles of blackened forests will you raise the arm of Cain
or will you make the right decision to bring the cattle back again.

Caretakers of the mountains, Mr Pollie, not a pest.
They were there before the Commonwealth, before you found your desk.
Just renew all cattle leases, let there be no charred remains
else you'll no doubt pay the piper with Black Friday once again.

*Bill Whitham
Tallandoon.*

Cattle on Cobungra Station, 2006 (Tim Dyson)

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The consequent impact of bushfires on the June/July 2007 Gippsland Flood

ATHOL HODGSON

There is incontrovertible evidence that when the canopy of a eucalypt forest is killed or defoliated by a very intense fire, soil on the site is exposed and the quantity and quality of water flowing into watercourses from post-fire rain events are seriously affected.

Some of the evidence is presented in Appendix 1.3.4 of our publication "The Facts Behind the Fire" a scientific and technical review of the circumstances surrounding the 2003 Alpine fires published in 2005 (ISBNs: 9780980314908 (pbk); 9780980314915 (CD-ROM); 9780980314922 (web)).

Forest Fire Vic has not yet been able to assess accurately how much of the "treed" forest in Gippsland catchments burnt in the 2006/07 Great Divide fires was burnt by fire intense enough to severely scorch all the trees or burn their crowns right off. Our preliminary estimate is between 200,000 and 300,000 ha.

A small (3,500ha) unnamed catchment that drains through Licola was burnt on 14 December 2006. About half the catchment was forested and heat and flames defoliated all the trees. On 23 February 2007 24.6mm of rain was recorded at Licola and at about 6PM floodwater impacted the town. Some of the damage is recorded in a photograph taken the following morning. (Figure 1). A larger catchment immediately to the north of Licola (Target Creek, approx. 16,500 ha.) that is approx. 55% forested was also burnt severely on 14 December 2006. On 23 February 2007 42 mm of rain was recorded



1. Flood damage at Licola and in the Target Ck catchment (Photo R. Barraclough)

within the catchment in two separate storms. Damage that occurred about 6PM during a flash flood is recorded in a photograph taken soon after. (Figure 2.)

These events were the harbingers of worse to come – the June/July 2007 Gippsland flood.



2. Flood damage at Licola and in the Target Crk catchment (Photo R. Barraclough)

Impacts of the 2006 Fire on the Gippsland floods

It is noteworthy that around 28 June 2007 heavy rainfall in the catchments of the Thomson and Macalister and other Gippsland Rivers were responsible for widespread flooding in Gippsland. Of particular interest was the extremely rapid filling of Lake Glenmaggie. The peak inflow into this was estimated by the West Gippsland catchment Management Authority at 147,000 ML/day (their "major flood" level is defined as 35,000 ML/day). Although the dam owner, Southern Rural Water, has made no comment it is believed that this was a peak flow for the dam. The extremely turbid nature of the discharge gives some idea of the sediment movement involved (Figure 3). The flows were powerful enough to severely damage a 3.8 MW hydroelectric station (constructed in 1993 at the foot of the dam (Figure 4).

Reputedly because of malfunctions of equipment and procedures, there was no warning given of the extremely large discharge of water and this led to surprise flooding of downstream towns such as Newry. The resultant sediment plume and discolouration of the

Gippsland Lakes was quite visible on satellite images (Figure 5).

No "official" reconstruction of the flood rainfall or the flows is available, but perusal of the web-sites documenting rainfall indicates that that storm was certainly of a large magnitude (typically 150-200 mm daily rainfall over substantial areas, with some areas possibly approaching 300 mm within a few days). The peak rainfall areas appear to have been associated with the Macalister catchment, with lesser rainfalls both to the east and west of the area. However the flood generated appears disproportionately large relative to the rainfall. A somewhat similar event on a smaller scale in the Upper Buckland River led to the death of a fire-fighter by drowning after the 2003 fires. This begs the question of the role of large fires such as those of 2003 and 2006 in flooding of downstream catchments.

In examining the impacts of the fires on flooding we can discern a number of interlinked "threads". Firstly, it is likely that the death of foliage in the fires leads to a loss of "evaporation cooling" of catchments. This, in turn, probably exacerbates normal thermal processes and my well help generate more intense thunderstorms than might be expected. The role of trees in cooling the earth's surface has only been appreciated relatively recently. The advent of the "MODIS" satellites has demonstrated clear lowering of surface temperatures of the earth's surface under healthy tree cover (e.g. Mildrexler, Zhao, and Running 2006). This reflects that evapo-transpiration requires considerable energy, and this cools the soil in

the same way that evaporative cooling is used in refrigerators. This effect is lost when the leaf canopy is destroyed. With our current technology it is difficult to "prove" or "disprove" such an impact on the frequency of large, intense thunderstorms but it is consistent with anecdotal evidence of increased flooding immediately after burning. Related to this is the blackening of the catchment surface by charcoal, leading to much greater surface heating

updrafts – a process commonly appreciated by glider pilots and large birds. We contend that the process of burning a catchment may well lead to far more intense thunderstorms than would otherwise be encountered by these thermal effects.

The second effect of burning is the loss of the buffering capacity of trees and shrubs in protecting the catchment soil from the hammering impact of large drops. Soil drop splash detaches soil particles which then flow downslope with the raindrop splash. These can block infiltration pathways into the soil. The soil disturbance is associated with rilling and stream pollution by detached soil and ash.

The third effect is the development of hydrophobicity (*i.e.* water repellency of the soil). Thus, in a "normal" forest soil the water is more or less able to infiltrate into the soil matrix. After a fire

however the soil will actually repel water, and this increases erodibility. A good examination of this is in the papers by Sheridan, Lane, and Noske (2007) and Lane, Sheridan, and Noske (2006) which examined the impact of this on runoff in the East Kiewa Catchment burnt in the 2003 fires. They found that the burning led to flow increases in the range of 50-100% and increased sediment loads by factors of 8-9. Although they did note



3 & 4: Glenmaggie Dam discharging floodwaters.
The colour of the water gives some idea of the
fire-induced loss of nutrients and soil to the catchments.
The power station (in the process of being severely damaged)
can be seen on the lower photograph.
(Photographs courtesy of ABC website)

development of hydrophobicity, the large number of infiltration sites on the slopes limited the impact of this. However when stream sides were burnt (as in much of the areas associated with Gippsland fires) then inter-rill processes would carry sediment into the stream. It should also be noted that the fires give a wide area of disturbance compared to human-induced disturbance.

Finally, there is the loss of nutrients and soil from the catchment. Sheridan *et al.* (2004) used a large program of water sampling to estimate changes in stream exports of sediment, phosphorus, and nitrogen following the 2003 bushfires in Eastern Victoria. They found the response was variable, depending on the intensity of burning and other factors. Increases in total phosphorus ranged from no change to 400 times the natural level, and for total nitrogen from no change to 94 times. Total suspended sediments showed a substantial variability but increased by a factor of 1400 times for the Tambo River. Clearly this effect is causing the extremely poor quality of the floodwaters shown in Figures 3 & 4.

Although there may be some room for argument as to the exact magnitude of the above impacts in a specific fire, there is little disagreement concerning the erosion impacts on the catchment and the direct impacts of this including reduction of in-stream habitat, siltation and sediment deposition. In many cases (particularly where the river is already "unstable" – e.g. the Avon River) – the sediment deposition may initiate a chain of river instability, leading to changes in the course of the river. In the case of major assets such as Glenmaggie Weir the sediment reduces the utility of the structure by reducing the storage capacity. The high turbidity of the water also markedly reduces the value of the water both in human and ecological terms. Such impacts manifested themselves in many other areas – washed out roads and bridges, paddocks covered in silt, and filling of small dams with sediments. We believe that the cost of the fire should include a component for the loss of storage capacity of the large Glenmaggie Dam and the cost of rehabilitation works on the flood plain.

In conclusion, the association of the fires with damaged catchment values is inarguable. When considering the combined effects of:

- loss of leaf canopy which may lead to generating more intense thunderstorms impacting on bared catchment;
- loss of the buffering capacity of trees and shrubs and plant litter in protecting the catchment soil from high intensity rainfall; and
- development of water repellency of the soil reducing infiltration rates, thus greatly accelerating run-off



5. The resultant sediment plume and discolouration of the Gippsland Lakes.

it follows that the probability of greatly accelerated and higher than usual run-off is very significantly increased. This runoff leads to severe catchment damage that can be measured in both economic and ecological terms both on the burnt area and downstream. The loss on the burnt area includes loss of biological productivity, whilst downstream losses include flood-caused damage and reduction in the life of dams and

water management assets.

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This article has been extracted from Forest Fire Victoria Inc website and was part of the second submission to the ENR Committee Inquiry into Impact of Public Land Management on Bushfires in Victoria. The submission is posted on the Parliamentary Committee website and is a public document. Athol Hodgson is the President of Forest Fire Victoria Inc.

Open eyes peer through a smoke screen

Last year, 80 year old Ruth Franklin, whose family has had a generational connection with the high country in New South Wales, visited the Kosciuszko region. Before the visit she had been aware of a National Parks and Wildlife Service campaign to "remove" brumbies. She was appalled at what she saw and, on returning home, wrote this letter.

Sir,

During the weekend of the 8/ 9 December, 2007, I had the occasion to travel by four wheel drive through parts of northern KNP. I had believed that I was prepared to see wholesale neglect, but I was sickened by what I did see. There were tragic scenes of blackberries overwhelming native vegetation, impenetrable scrub wherever these gross weeds were absent, and then in stark contrast, other areas still showing the devastation of the 2003 wildfire. The deeply eroded hillsides and the recovery of so many fewer species than had existed before the fire, and especially so many ground cover plants that have disappeared with the precious and ancient top soils, has brought a new but much less diverse and attractive landscape.

These scenes were nothing like the lovely bush that I remember. At so many Christmas times when friends and relatives came to these mountains we called home, we enjoyed picnics and camping trips into the bush using our horses to take us there. We relaxed by the ferny, crystal clear creeks and fed the little minos and tadpoles with breadcrumbs, gathered the prolific wildflowers, and organised horse events for the children on the alpine flats so that they could compete and enjoy their riding skills. Not any more. The beautiful clear creeks that abounded with life, as well as the little alpine flats, are now completely smothered by blackberries and scrub. There is nowhere for animals to graze, or birds to feed. Only the deathly silence of neglect.

The irony hit me forcibly after being bombarded recently by the NPWS and the media with pictures of the "damage" done by brumbies. As we drove last weekend, we saw little evidence of wildlife, and saw an occasional mound of manure where a wild stallion had marked his territory. Brumbies like him would do well to find a suitable place to drink in creeks entangled and dark, and

little creatures like corroboree frogs would find no place where a moth or grasshopper would settle to become their meal.

The plains and bushland north of the Snowy Mountains Highway must be one of the few areas where our mountain brumbies can roam. Why don't those setting the agenda for the caring of our national parks admit their policies are out of kilter, and concentrate the same determination to control the likes of the blackberries and wild dogs, both representative of the real vandals of our mountains? Such symbolic and endangered species as the corroboree frog and other less famous small and large creatures might survive in a restored habitat, but in my mind's eye I can see only repeated severe burnings of the unnatural scrub and weed dominated areas I saw. The reality of my recent excursion was that the only abundant wildlife I saw was on private land where families of animals, like red wallabies, who had survived the holocaust of 2003, have found their haven on pasture improved land. Never in the over 60 years of my knowing these places have I seen so many shy bush animals living away from their usual bush habitat. I am, and remain, astonished and despairing that our beautiful and treasured bush places are so devastated by management policies that seem to be saturated by the unscientific and emotional jargon peddled by extreme conservation groups like the Colong Foundation.

Why won't those who are appointed to manage our national parks admit that their "brumby control" is merely diversionary propaganda, and that some determination for the control of weeds like blackberries and truly destructive animals like wild dogs, would be more to their credit and more in keeping with the unequivocal mandate represented by local public opinion.

Yours faithfully,
Ruth Franklin

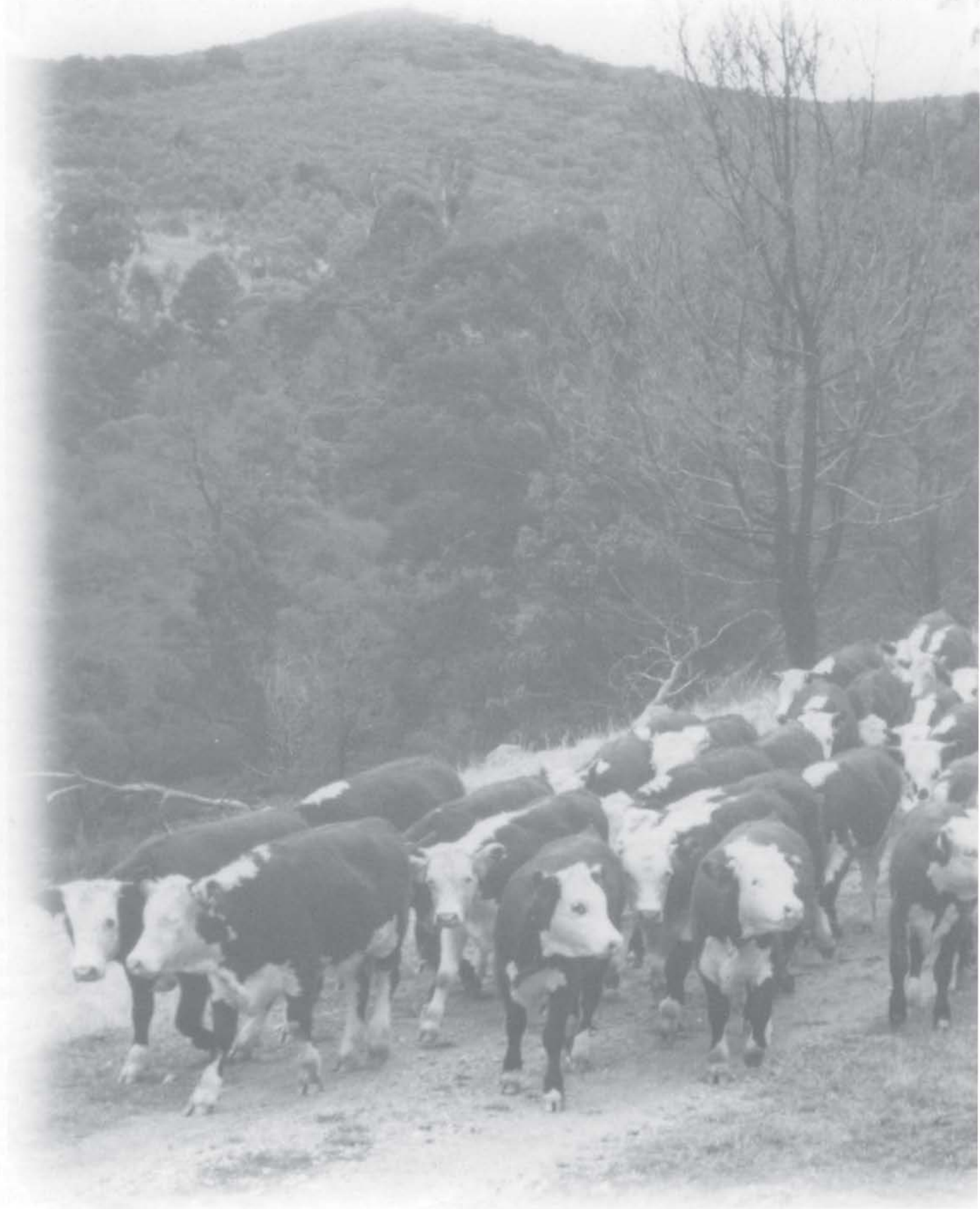
A Friend in the Mountains

The clinking of the hobbles as they rattle on the pack,
tells you someone else is up here, someone coming down the track.
When you're riding 'cross the mountains far from road or four wheel drive,
when the wind is driving in your face and you know that you're alive,
the blokes you meet are special, and they've bushmen's skills you'd pride,
to get their horse up here alone, you know that they can really ride.
It's a three day trek from Sheeppard Flat, it takes a special breed,
and if you'd meet up with Trevor, he'd have a packhorse on the lead.

There's some you nod and pass on by and some you have a yarn
some you're glad to leave alone but none that'd cause you harm.
You learn a lot about the bush from those that love it too,
for the ones that pack the Howitt Spur are very, very few.
When his grown up children join him to roll their swags beneath the star,
a man will know he's passed a love to them that nothing else can mar.
Of those you welcome to your campfire, those who never make a boast,
it's fair to say that I remember Trevor like that the most.

When the camp is made in snowgums and the horses settle down,
when the fire is smoking dinner and sunset wears its purple gown,
when misty tendrils float the stream and birdsong calls the evening chills,
there's a magic for the very few that ride across these hills.
When you're fixing broken stirrups with some string and rusty wire,
then you think about the bushmen who you'd like to share your fire.
If my stockhorse pricks its ears then maybe someone's riding late, and
if I hear hobbles clinking down the track, I'll be looking for you, mate.

Laurence Webb





Richard and Anne Faithfull have taken up a new run in the Limestone Creek area in one of the few good-news stories about high country grazing.

The couple went over maps at the Department of Primary Industries office in Swifts Creek and applied for the run which happens to be adjacent to John Cook's run.

"You've got to ask and be proactive, it's like anything, they don't come around asking if you'd like it," Anne said.

They gained the run on 1 October 2006. It is 1476.8 hectares and is known as the Reserve Forest in the Enano area.

"It's overgrown after the fires, you can't see cattle twenty yards away for the regrowth," Richard said.

The Faithfulls have a 150-head allocation whereas on their Bogong run they had a 500-head allocation.

"The scrub is out of control and needs a good fire to kill the regrowth," Richard said.

The cattle went on the run in October 2006 and were due to be off the run in May 2007 – six head are still out there somewhere and we hope to muster them in May 2008 when the cattle are due off the run again. "It's that bad we're still missing half a dozen head. There's a lot of work in getting them back."

Admittedly the cattle are in a new area, but Richard said they had to go out mustering nearly every day for a month.

"We never missed them on Bogong. It only ever took us about a week to muster the open country there."

The run joins the national park and Richard very much doubts the department is planning to burn the area.

Who is looking after the possums and wildflowers now we have gone?

NOELINE FRANKLIN



The three generations of the Hicks family have taken cattle up to the Bogong High Plains in Victoria for nearly one hundred years, part of their civic duty to secure a food and water supply to the nation, secure the pristine water catchments' values and conservation icon of the high country. While shepherding their cattle, they have maintained a fresh vibrant, naturally fire retardant grazed green – a biologically diverse vegetation where they also controlled vermin and weeds. Jim Commins was typical of the community of high country stockmen. He displayed a commitment and ingenuity setting up a weed spray unit for his packhorse to access those areas today considered perhaps too remote! Everyone looked after the fire risk, weeds and pest animals, and maintained the huts and access tracks.

As Jack Hicks said, "All season every season you'd be doing something for the mountains. We'd drop off salt on our rounds with a packhorse. Put it up out of the wet and throw an old horse rug over it. When you'd come back at the end of the season to retrieve your salt the pygmy possums would have claimed it as home and made a nest for their little ones. We'd make alternative accommodation for the possums and take our salt. The possums were resident around our huts where they had a fire safe haven, shelter, warmth, food and security from predators."

"In 2003 the massive fire came over the mountains through country not grazed or cool fired for decades. It was just cruel to see the vastness of intense canopy burn. Fitzgerald's and Kelly's old runs on Mt Nelse were destocked in 1991 and the fire burnt into the ungrazed vegetation and burnt out rank dried out sphagnum bogs. Flames higher than the trees in the scrub country that it burnt through and a two to three metre high continuous wall of flames raced across the dead ungrazed grasslands. Ancient snow gums, hundreds of years old, out in the middle of the snow plains were even burnt and killed - ring barked by the build up of dry grass and candle bark. Possums, wallabies, lizards, frogs, insects, seed, soil had nowhere safe, no chance of getting away and didn't."

"Once the 2003 fires hit the grazed green cattle runs they went to little meandering superficial flames, the front broken in the fresh moist grasslands. Wallabies could hop back onto burnt cool ground. You could walk through the fire and around it. Wildlife could get away. The fire went out itself in many areas too green to burn. The grazed bogs were wet and fire safe. Green wet sphagnum does not burn. You cannot get green grass and wildflowers to burn."

"The scrub lands did not fare as well but fared better than lands not grazed at all. Stock just walking through it helps to reduce fire intensity. Beneficial burns singe the surface dead grass, not burn into the top soil humus as the intense burns did with big fuel build ups in ungrazed areas. In 1991 we had our cattle numbers cut back by public authorities from 1400 head to 500 and this number of cattle could not give protection to the scrub country as would 1400 grazing in and around keeping the spaces open between the trees and the burnable ground fuel to a minimum. Taking that number of stock away set the lower country up for failure. Fewer cattle just kept to the grasslands. Our runs were only superficially burnt singeing the dead grass off the live green tussock underneath and we finished the season with plenty to eat and so did the possums and wildlife."

The wildflowers enjoyed the potash. Stockmen have not been allowed to burn off since 1944."

"There was a lightning lit fire on our runs in the mid 1980s and for ten years we always had cattle hang on that sweet area where the grass was greener and healthier and the cattle would eat the scrub towards the end of the season. The experts come up to do their research in the middle of summer when the weather is nice and they miss all that information and observation. Cattle do eat and control scrub keeping it pruned and fresh, flowering and healthy. A little cool fire helps recycle the nutrients and sweetens the soil. Wildflowers and grass love it. Now there is no grazing and no little fires, only monster burns that blow all the soil nutrients and seed off as smoke. They make the creeks and rivers run soot and silt, washing sheet erosion into the water reservoirs. Grazing and cool fire prevent big fires. Graze and tidy up with a little fire every few years is ideal, burn among the grazing where stock graze and walk prepare for a meandering singe. Cool burning is harder to achieve in litter not trampled down."

"In the ungrazed areas the wildlife and possums had rank dead grass and stale scrub for sometimes decades before the 2003 fire. Not much food, few if any flowers, insects or seeds. After the massive fire in 2003 in the ungrazed runs there would have been nothing to eat for any wildlife that may have survived the impossible. Nothing grew for months if not an entire year or more before flowers seed set, grass grew and some insects blew in from areas not cooked. Some bare seedlings incinerated severely still exist and don't look like healing up."

"Fortunately for the possums many moved over prior to the fires to avoid the stagnant ungrazed areas to our grazed runs living in the big old ancient trees made fire safe by the grazing. Families of

possums lived for generations under the huts and in the rafters. We looked out for them and looked after them."

"After the 2003 grazing season finished we were not allowed back in, in 2004, 2005 or 2006. After the fires and the long grazing history the grass and feed was the best and sweetest for a long time responding to the potash. There wasn't enough wildlife left to deal with it all and keep it fresh. Wildlife and wildflowers need large animals to keep the habitat fresh. This country thrives on the choice and combination of grazing and cool fire. The flowers were thick and as big as the palm of your hand. Three bumper growing seasons without grazing and in 2006-07 it was right to burn hot and hard with a wall of two to three metre flame heights! How could they do it? The ancient solitary trees full of possums that had survived in 2003 were burnt and ring barked in 2006-07. The Alpine ash regrowth from

2003 fires on Mt Beauty was burnt and killed in 2006-07. That forest now is dead for all time. No one knows how that fire got over the fire breaks in benign weather and burnt our old runs to make them look like the rest of the area incinerated around us in 2003."

"We don't know who is going to look after the possums and wildflowers now we have gone."



As a bushman's daughter, I ask, "Those beautiful runs of Fitzgeralds and Kellys, once cherished, covered in wildflowers, green sphagnum bogs and clean sweet water were fried in 2003."

Did they have to make Hicks' runs look the same in 2006-7?"

Noeline Franklin lives at Brindabella NSW.

With thanks to Jack Hicks, Bogong High Plains.





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Snowy River Challenge '95'

There was action around the traps, for a whisper was the sound,
a challenge would be held at the Nariel Festival ground.
It attracted noted riders from Victoria, states, near and far,
but as usual the experts would gather and pontificate at the public bar.
Twentieth and twenty first of October would decide the Modern Snowy River Man,
or perhaps a women would be crowned as the best in the land.
The men and women of the high country would be there in force,
Dianna Torrens, the Patons and the Connelly family of course.
Damien Curr from Dagworth station Queensland, came down to try the best,
and one bought horse and dog, travelled the Nullabor from the West.
Gerald Egan, Bill Willoughby, they'd worked on the movie and were there to show their skill,
the Day twins from Junee came primed and would be there at the kill.

There would be eight gruelling tests to sort the wheat from the chaff,
the efforts of some would cause the drinkers, to say, I told you so and laugh.
Friday started with a gear and vet check to make sure the horse was fit,
the press boys were there with microphones, cameras and their kit.
The day had six more events a fitting test for man and horse,
courage and stamina were needed for a long tough cross-country course.

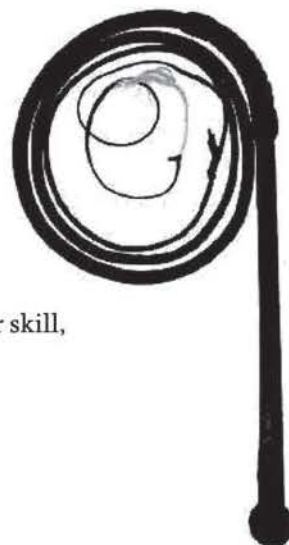
Rivers to cross, hills to climb, big timber and forky trees to jump,
more than one contestant would sleep this night, covered with bruise and bump.
Riding bareback, packing horses and cracking Clancys whip,
some riders were still sore and dented from a bad cross-country slip.
Show your shoeing skills, competent placement of a shoe front and hind,
six nails per shoe, the judges give you fourteen, return the spares they still wont pay no mind.
A Stockhorse trial, four jumps, a tyre maze, numerous obstacles and more,
there's a time limit for every thing, overtime deducts hard earned points from your score.

During the day rain blew up giving many a wet camp,
continued through the night so Saturday dawned cold and damp.
Onto Corryong camp draft ground for the Stock Handling trial,
for one, disaster struck, a lame horse, wiped away a West Australian smile.
Seemed his horse had over-reached, his pastern was swollen, cut and sore,
"Looks like my challenge is over, curse my luck." the West Australian swore.
Fourth highest score overall in the Stockhorse Trial and a perfect score with the pack,
"I haven't finished what I came for, have this Challenge again next year, I guarantee I'll be back."

When the Stock Handling was over, the chaff was well and truly sorted from the wheat,
ten riders were left for the Brumby catch, once again the clock to beat.
The weather Gods were relentless, the rain wasn't easing up,
the Rodeo was postponed, a delay, before the winner could hold the cup.
Sunday the Rodeo was abandoned but the Stock Saddle Buckjump ride would stand,
to see those riders bucking out in oil-skins, cracking whips, by gee they did look grand.

It was still raining, when Bill Willoughby was announced winner, only a few points clear,
from his mate Gerald Egan, but they'll shake hands and share a beer.
As for me the West Australian, I can only dream of what might have been,
if I had slowed my horse, and been more careful, at that last mountain stream.
And to all who pontificate, criticise and say what should be done,
At least I had a go mate, how come you didn't, when you're such a 'BLOODY GUN'.

Corin Linch



Macalister Flood Risk

L. RALPH BARRACLOUGH

Crown and public land management promoted by Government has gone from where hundreds of people could have been at risk from fires to where it was sheer luck hundreds were not drowned from floodwaters.

The severity of the June 2007 flood down the Macalister River was totally unnatural and caused by what appeared to be at least double the run-off at a faster rate. A trail of destruction can be followed up the river into the Alpine National Park. There have been two floods of this nature down the Macalister, the first followed the Black Friday fires of 1939. This June flood was far worse because there was more than double the fuel of 1939, with more of the catchment burnt hotter. Before the 1939 flood there was virtually no erosion along the entire length of the upper Macalister, now there is an environmental disaster of mammoth proportions.

The June flood peaked at the rate of 315,000 ML/day running into Lake Glenmaggie, with the spillway built to withstand an outflow at the rate of

only 200,000 ML/day. It was an outstanding effort by the gate keepers to reduce the impact over the wall to a rate of just 148,000 ML/day. A major flood downstream of Glenmaggie is above the rate of 35,000 ML/day. The people in the towns of Newry, Tinamba and parts of Maffra and the city of Sale are now at risk of a flood with the magnitude to breach the dam wall. Hundreds of people risk losing houses, livestock, equipment, entire farms and being drowned by a dam failure.

The Macalister headwaters where the June flood came from were mostly burnt by a fire starting on 1 December 2006 from a lightning strike on the Butcher Country Spur in the Alpine National Park. The DSE ground crews were pulled out leaving it to just burn. Crew members going through Licola were scathing in their criticism of senior management for being frustrated and not let put the fire out. The people spoken to at Licola believed they could have had this fire contained well before they were withdrawn, had they been allowed. With so much money flowing with little

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accountability there is little incentive for the DSE to put fires out.

In many parts of South Eastern Australia the Federation Drought in the early 1900s was more serious than anything experienced now, with no fire fighting agencies, no government land management and no large fires in the mountains

The small community of Licola has had homes and farms lost from fires coming from the repeated failure of Parks/DSE to address the appalling fuel build up on Crown and public land. This community repeatedly warned an arrogant uncaring government of the risks. Another six houses were lost from flash flooding and mud flows following storms on bare burnt ground. As well as this, infrastructure like roads and bridges, has been destroyed by unnatural floods from a denuded landscape caused by fires that were too hot. This has cut Licola off from the rest of the world twice. The environmental

damage has been so severe our local timber industry has been wrecked and they cannot even keep tourist roads into the National Park open for visitors; this is seriously impacting local business. Huge areas of Crown and public land have almost no insects, reptiles or birds. Biodiversity appears to be almost non existent with Biodiversity Officers looking for other issues, - like harassing cattle grazing.

There is little sign of an improvement in land management. In a letter to a holder of a Grazing License, from Mr Grange Jephcott, Manager Forest Stewardship and Biodiversity – Gippsland, states: *The preliminary assessment is that your licence is not suitable for grazing during 2007/08 season. This assessment is based on your licence type and the percentage of your licence that has been burnt.*

This grazing licence covered Spring Hill to the north west of Licola with a mass of grass in places up to 1.4 metres high. Through much of this grass, candle bark trees abound. This bark is capable of throwing

spot fires into the agricultural land around Licola. When the appalling mess in the Melbourne water catchments is inevitably burnt out, the fire would likely penetrate into Spring Hill. Following the removal of grazing from areas burnt in the 1998 Caledonia fire, it took only two summers for a massive growth of grass to pose a far worse fire risk than what fuelled the original fire.

So serious was the fuel build up in the Alpine National Park in Dec 2006 following the removal of grazing, that the DSE was not game to go near the place to even protect their own camp from the approaching fire. Landholders got no assistance to save properties on the Bennison Plains. So serious

were the concerns of the Licola people at the risk of banning grazing on Spring Hill a blockade was put in place on the road leading into Licola to stop DSE Biodiversity Officers until common sense prevailed. They went home over Mt Useful to avoid the blockade. Cattle grazing returned four days later after the publicity.



The DSE is now going down the track of Parks Victoria and installing plots to monitor trampling on the regeneration of young eucalypts. The massive grass build up in the Carey State Forest following the removal of grazing after the Caledonia fire of 1998 choked large areas of eucalypt recovery.

The Labor Government came to power on a platform of caring for all Victorians. This has not even extended women and children likely to be burnt, drowned, or made homeless from ongoing failed land management. Trying to hide behind global warming as a blame for recent disasters is similar to a terrorist blaming his actions on the will of Allah. If any terrorist group posed a fraction of the threat coming from government land management they would be appropriately hunted down and rounded up.

If you would like to comment on this article or talk to Ralph further about land management issues he can be contacted by email at ralph@maxi.net.au or by phone on (03) 5148 8792

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Who Will Be Taking Our Place?

Close attention I gave, to the weed covered graves
faded names bringing mist to old eyes,
fleeting visions from such, camped in Stringy Bark hut
mustering cattle beneath threatening skies.
Maybe wild in those days, reckless riding displayed,
lack of care in the heat of the chase.
Mingling ghosts rode around, with the best to be found
how I envy those taking our place.

Fast ridings no fun, on a wild Dargo run,
sheer mountains that clutch at the sky.
Crooked River proved rough, but the long tails more tough
where only the brave gallop by.
Weary weeks on the job, getting together a mob
bang-tailing, then starting on down.
Wind and rain taking turn, around Castleburn
much relief when we yarded in town.

Fixing a pack, on a steep twisting track,
baldy bullocks string close to the wall.
Neath the dark thrones of Gods, waits the grave of a dog
Bogong-rearing up high over all.
Most mountain men ride, where the fleet brumbies hide
kings of domain and the pace,
the high country horse, does it best on the course
no other is taking it's place.

Stars and fire burning bright, on a clear frosty night,
low sounds from the mob settling down.
Moonlight forlorn, flash wild eye and horn
scents from the bush all around.
Quick passing years, giving way to our fears
embracing crude times face to face,
Will I count on that list of not being missed
I wonder whose taking our place.

Where gorges rise high, against faint dawning sky,
distant tinkle of bells down the creek.
Ashamed to be idle, like whip, spur and bridle
nostalgia so strong I can't speak.
Girthing of saddle, bellowing cattle,
I awake feeling tears down my face.
Old age with its blunder, I stand here and wonder
is there anyone taking our place?

As I turn for the gates, I whisper old mates
God willing, best luck and good grace,
while our mountains remain, we'll muster again,
no matter whose taking our place.

*Bill Whitham
Tallandoon*





Frank Ryan

18 January 1925 - 15 July 2007

Frank Ryan was an 'old' man before he was old. His lined face with that happy smile and twinkling eyes peering out from under an old weather beaten Akubra, is an image that all who knew him will never forget.

He was born in Ascot Vale, Melbourne on 18 January 1925, the second of three children to Con and Mary Ryan. He grew up on a farm at Cookardinnia (NSW) where he started his schooling at six. It was four miles there and back and Frank rode his pony each day – a skill that was to remain with him for the rest of his life.

In 1932 the family moved to Meadow Creek and shortly after on to a dairy farm his parents purchased at Greta West. He continued his schooling until 1938 but like all farm children, learnt and practised the skills of farming from his early days. Frank's passion was the horses. He kept a team of draft horses using them for hay cutting and pressing, ploughing and sowing and all the other work that a tractor would do on a farm. Frank was apparently the last person in the upper King Valley to buy a tractor!

Shortly before World War II broke out, Frank moved to Melbourne to work at the Newport Railway Workshops. He soon found himself manufacturing parts – not for trains – but for wartime equipment.

In the early 1940s Frank returned to the King Valley where the family had purchased the Slater family farm at Cheshunt. This was to be his home for the rest of his life. In 1966 after the longest courtship known to the people of the King Valley, Frank married Barbara Wylie and they were blessed with two lovely children, Rosalea and Leonard.

As a young man, Frank had joined with Alan Bennie and Ian McKay in running cattle in the bush in the Dandongadale River/ Little Dandongadale River area as well as holding a lease between the Rose River and the Wabonga Plateau in the Stockyard Creek area. This latter area complemented the former Soldier Settlement block on Wabonga Plateau that Frank had purchased in 1957. Along with clearing the one square mile block, Frank also completed the construction of the partly built double storey log hut. This iconic hut known to many people was needlessly destroyed by bushfires in 2006.



It was the grazing lease adjoining the Wabonga Plateau title that led Frank to join the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria. His licence was one of the first victims of the Land Conservation Council's recommendations to declare large tracts of the alpine area as National Parks.

In order to raise public awareness of the cattlemen's plight, a number of protest rides and rallies were held. As an avid member and supporter of the MCAV, Frank, accompanied by Leonard, attended every one of these events. At the time of his death, Frank was still a Central Council delegate for the North East branch.

Although Frank lost the Wabonga Plateau licence, he still held the Dandongadale area licence. After the 2003 fires and the subsequent withdrawal of all grazing licences in the Alpine National Park, the southern end of the licence was resumed but the northern part, as State Forest, still remains as a grazing licence and is held by his son, Leonard.

Cattle grazing was an integral part of Frank's life and for many years Frank enjoyed helping his friends, the late Don Kneebone and Max Blair move their mobs to and from the Black Range and Bogong High Plains, respectively.

Even though Frank had lost part of his bush runs, he never lost his love of the bush. Frank liked nothing more than to take off into the bush with his riding horse and packhorses, sometimes on his own but more often than not accompanied by family and friends. He was a great teacher and mentor to the younger generation.

Frank rarely failed to make the trek to the Get-together – no matter where it was. He was known to take up to a month riding to and from the venue!

It was his skill in packing a horse that many people will associate with Frank. He not only won the Packhorse Championship in 1989 he also collected numerous awards for the Neatest Pack at the Get-togethers. In later years he was called upon to judge the Packhorse Race.

Not many people knew of Frank as a practical joker, but his dry wit and laconic way belied his sense of humour. Just ask those north-east cattlemen about the 'port wine shandy' or how Leonard and the Bendigo Cemetery met. Snakes featured in a number of stories. They were apparently put to good use – dead ones under people's swags or live ones used to scare stock agents!

Frank had many talents and interests outside farming. He attended the local 'sports days' competing in the horse events. He was also described as a very handy sportsman in his younger days playing grade tennis, football and cricket for Cheshunt and Whitfield. He loved to listen to international cricket on the 'wireless' and was a Hawthorn supporter. And he didn't mind a bit of fishing – tickling trout in the local rivers was obviously the easiest way to catch them.

On 1 March 1956 Frank joined the local fire brigade. When the Cheshunt CFA was formed in 1965, Frank already had nine years experience and he was a logical choice for Captain. He also held other office bearer positions for well over 25 years. He was still a member at the time of his death thus serving his community for a massive fifty one years.

The CFA wasn't the only recipient of Frank's generosity. He served on the Cheshunt Hall Committee and was a member of the local Vermin and Noxious Weeds Destruction Board.

Frank was a quiet, private and unrecognized philanthropist as some people will testify to his goodwill and kind ways.

Frank died in Wangaratta on 15 July 2007 after a very short stay in hospital. He is survived by his wife Barbara, children Rosalea and Leonard, brother Dan and sister Peg O'Brien.

Frank Ryan was a loving and caring gentleman – the likes of which will not be seen again.

Information supplied by the family, Frank's nephew Chris Ryan, brother-in-law 'Nug' Wyllie and Harry Ryder.



Bob Elliott was born in Cobden, the son of John and Hannah Elliott. He came to the Gippsland region in the late 1940s as a young surveyor with the Country Roads Board. His job was to survey the a road into Spring Hill for timber extraction. This took about eighteen months to complete, but it was long enough for him to fall in love with the high country and also with June Reeves, whose uncle Bill Reeves, got Bob a job with the Forest Commission. He was with them for some time before going dingo trapping. Bob was a competent trapper and is remembered for getting eighteen dogs in one month.

In 1947, he and June married and a family of six were born including Judith, John, Robert, William, Greg and Jean.

Bob continued working in the bush for various families including the Dunsmuirs, Kelly and Higgins families. Mrs Reeves snr had selected land west of Glencairn at Rimes, so Bob and June purchased 1,000 acres that ran from the Glencairn bridge across to the Macalister River. They shifted up to Glencoe where he ran cattle, sheep and a few pigs. Bob then started running stock in the bush out around the head of the Barkly River around the Knobs and Mt McDonald for a number of years.

It was also at this time that Norm Reeves, June's brother, and Bob went up onto Spring Hill cutting timber for twelve months for the Walker Brothers, using a peg and rake saw.



John Robert "Bob" Elliott

22 December 1926 - 27 October 2006

The Reeves family made the decision to sell and move down to Boisdale and started dairy farming, where Bob, Jean and family joined them. Bob was a "bushie from way back" and his regular attendance at the Get Togethers will be missed.

Remembering Alex

On the weekend of 12/13 May 2007, Catherine Noble and other friends of the late Alex Traill gathered at Wonnangatta Station to remember him. Alex died suddenly 26 February 2007, aged 74. He had spent a lot of his working life on the Station and surrounding cattle runs, with Arthur and Jack Guy.

The weekend was organized by Alex's daughter, Cassie, her husband Damien and their daughter Makayla.

On the Sunday morning, we all gathered together, near a spot where a memorial plaque is to be placed in the near future. Some people shared their memories of Alex. A lot of the first hand knowledge of the history and working of the former cattle run has now passed from us all.

Rest in Peace Alex, a great friend to many and a great cattleman and bushman.



Clarice Marcia Treasure

4 March 1916 - 29 October 2007

Clarice Marcia Treasure was born on the 4 March 1916, at Mosman Hospital, N.S.W. At the age of sixteen she contracted scarlet fever and nearly died, but she had the strength to pull through and after six months convalescing she was able to finish her schooling.

When Marcia left school she worked in her father's accounting firm for twelve years before she met and married Jack Treasure.

Marcia was well travelled. One of trips included travelling with her two aunts and mother on a world tour for six months covering many countries. Later on in life she had other adventures including a trip to Tasmania and a bus tour through the centre of Australia up to Darwin.

Marcia was brought up in the city and had all the mod-cons that city living of the time brought with it. When she married Jack and they moved to the Dargo High Plains, it was in the middle of winter

to a house that was unlined and very cold. She had to learn how to cook on a wood stove, light an open fire, use a copper for washing, learn to bake bread and how to carve a steak from a beast hung from a tree limb in the snow.

Through all this she never lost her ability to be a lady. She was a real lady.

Jack and Marcia owned a property in the North East of Victoria at Whorouly South and for a period of seven years travelling from there to the high plains for the Summer. They sold that property to buy at Dargo. While they were building the house at Dargo, the whole family lived in the Treasure family droving hut for about twelve months. This small hut accommodated the family of six - Jack, Marcia and their four young children.

The hut had one small bedroom, a lean-to and a small living area with only an open fire to cook on. There was no shower so the family washed in a large tin dish. Despite all this, Marcia seemed to manage and when the new house was completed the family was eager to move in.

Marcia was a committed community worker. She was a member of the Red Cross, C.W.A., Bush Nursing committee, the Hall committee and the School Council. She also enjoyed her sport and was an avid tennis player and later on in life she also played carpet bowls and enjoyed participating in planned activity group luncheons.

Marcia was also a staunch member of the Anglican church.

She thought the world of her family - her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Marcia spent the last eighteen months of her life in care at Sale where she was well looked after. She enjoyed family visits and she and Iris enjoyed many a game of cards or chatting about old times. Up until the end of her life, Marcia maintained her pride, dignity and lady like manner.

Marcia was a gentle, genteel, welcoming lady with a mind and a will of her own.

The information in this obituary comes from the eulogy prepared by the family for Marcia's funeral.

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the
Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria held on
Thursday 27 September 2007 in the office of the
Victorian Farmers Federation, 24 Collins Street, Melbourne
commencing at 10.30am.**

Present

Harry Ryder, Chris Commins, Anne Patterson, Judy Gunter, Christa Treasure, Ron Anderson, Jack Hicks, Neville Wright, John Dowdle, Ron Briggs, Simon Turner, Bruce McCormack, Sue Reynolds, Graeme Stoney, Chris Hodge, Chris Cooper, Doug Treasure, Tim Barker.

Apologies

Keith and Annie Whittam, Buff Rogers, Brian Higgins, Clive Hodge, Janine Cooper, Ross Brown, Sue Briggs, David Treasure, Charlie Lovick, Bruce Commins and Stewart Hicks.

Minutes

It was moved by Chris Commins and seconded by Neville Wright, "That the meeting confirm the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 21 April at Glenfalloch Station and attached to the agenda." *Carried.*

Annual Report

The Secretary presented the Annual Report which was provided to the meeting as a separate document. The President, Doug Treasure, thanked Tim Barker for his work as Secretary over the past year.

Financial Report

The Secretary presented the financial report and some amendments to the figures as presented. It was moved Sue Reynolds and seconded by Graeme Stoney, "That the meeting ratify the financial report as amended." *Carried.*

Marketing Report

Pauline Venn reported on marketing activities for the year and commented in particular on some stock outstanding. The President, Doug Treasure, thanked Pauline for her work as Marketing Officer.

John Dowdle

The President invited John Dowdle to report on some of his fund raising activities. John apologised for using an MCAV officer title during his activities and reported on trailers, flags and donations to the flood victims.

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.

It was moved by Simon Turner and seconded by Graeme Stoney, "That the membership subscription levels remain the same". *Carried.*

Associates Single \$30, Family \$40

It was moved by Sue Reynolds and seconded by Neville Wright, "That the Associate membership subscription levels remain the same." *Carried.*

Fixing Honorariums

President \$6,000

It was moved by Graeme Stoney and seconded by Chris Commins, "That the President's honorarium remain the same." *Carried.*

Vice President \$2,500

It was moved by Graeme Stoney and seconded by Sue Reynolds, "That the Vice President's honorarium be suspended." The resolution was withdrawn with the permission of the seconder.

Then following some discussion it was moved by Graeme Stoney and seconded by Jack Hicks, "That the Vice President's honorarium by \$2,500." *Carried.*

Marketing Officer \$2,000

It was moved by Neville Wright and seconded by Bruce McCormack, "That the Marketing Officer's remuneration remain the same." *Carried.*

Secretary \$27,000

It was moved by Jack Hicks, "That an administration secretary be paid \$5,000 per year." The motion lapsed for the want of a seconder.

It was moved by Sue Reynolds and seconded by Jack Hicks, "That the remuneration for the Secretary be established by the Council at the time of appointment of a new Secretary and that a pro rata amount of the current remuneration be paid to the current Secretary." *Carried.*

Election of Office Bearers

The President, Doug Treasure invited Sue Reynolds to take the chair for the election of office bearers. Sue Reynolds took the chair and called for nominations to the position of President.

President

The nomination of Christa Treasure was moved by Doug Treasure and seconded by Chris Commins. There being no other nominations, Christa Treasure was declared elected.

Vice President

The nomination of Chris Commins was moved by Graeme Stoney and seconded by Jack Hicks. There being no other nominations, Chris Commins was declared elected.

Secretary

The nomination of Tim Barker as acting Secretary until the next Secretary is appointed was moved by Jack Hicks and seconded by Chris Hodge. There being no other nominations, Tim Barker was declared elected for a period that was expected to be six to eight weeks.

Treasurer

The nomination of Graeme Stoney was moved by Bruce McCormack and seconded by Neville Wright. There being no other nominations, Graeme Stoney was declared elected.

Marketing Officer

The nomination of Pauline Venn was moved by Bruce McCormack and seconded by Doug Treasure.

There being no other nominations, Pauline Venn was declared elected.

Doug Treasure

Graeme Stoney thanked Doug Treasure for his work for the Association.

Tim Barker

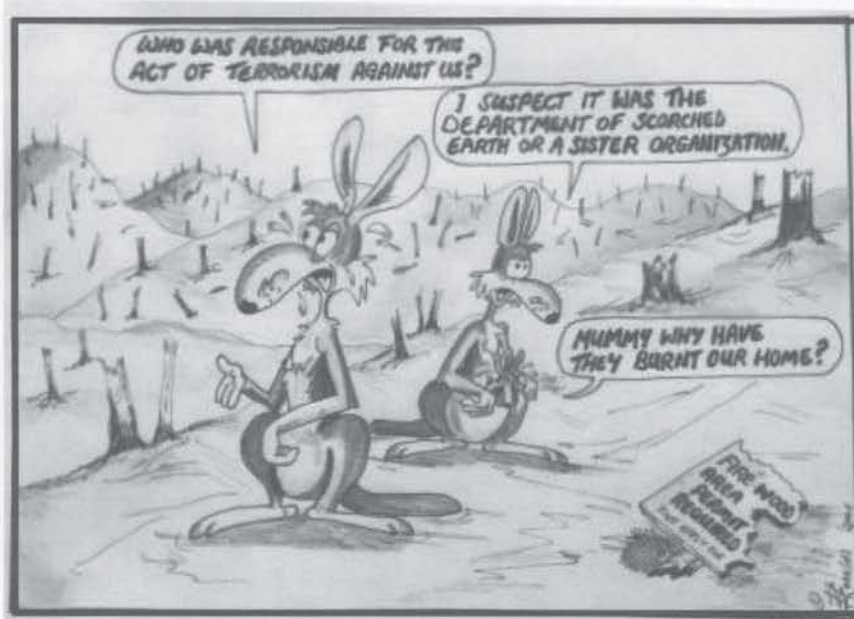
Simon Turner thanked Tim Barker for his work for the Association.

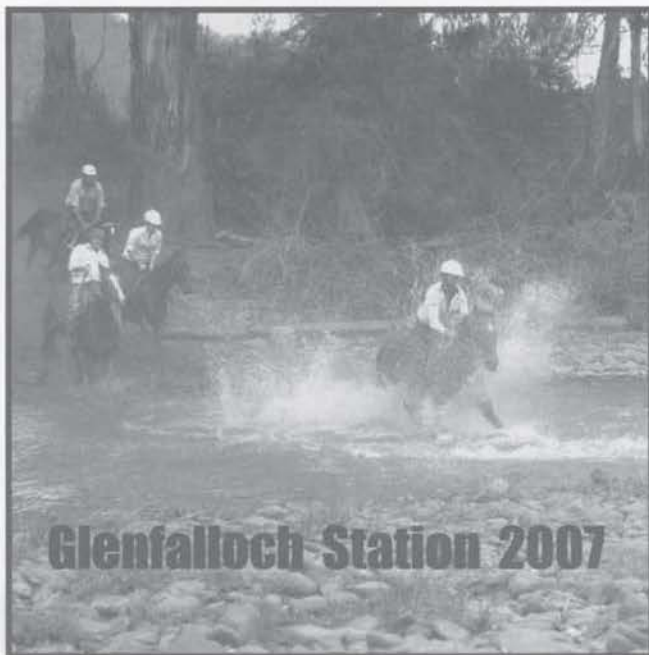
Closure

The meeting closed at 12.06 pm



John Dowdle (turned toward camera) with Charlie Lovick, John and Graeme Stoney on the boat trip around the Melbourne docks that John arranged as a thankyou for the donators/sponsors of goods for the flood victims.





After being postponed due to fires and the subsequent floods, the 2007 Get Together eventually got underway at Hickeys Creek on Glenfalloch Station.

Unusually there was rain, but in between there were fun times had by all. The kids were well entertained with many fun events and the expected haystacking, whip cracking and horse events kept the crowd well entertained. Col Milligan had everyone smiling, and Molly Coleman gave a memorable performance. Twelve year old Molly stole the show when she won the Don Kneebone Heritage Award. Molly is fifth generation high plains and her words in *The Mountain Cattlemen*, partly presented in song to music specially written by Eugenie Teychenne, were well received. Rumour has it - she is returning this year and taking on the adults in the Minstrel category.

Congratulations to all the winners of the events and good luck for this year!

Mountain Cattlemen's Cup

- 1st Lincoln Adams
- 2nd Graeme Rozynski
- 3rd Dean Pendergast
- 4th David Olsson

Junior Cattlemen's Cup

- 1st Chris Connley
- 2nd Mitchell Ward
- 3rd Cassie Malady
- 4th Grant Ward

Wally Ryder Walking Race

- 1st Bill Pendergast
- 2nd Ann-Maree Forge
- 3rd Dean Pendergast

Men's Packhorse Race

- 1st Brett Lancaster
- 2nd David Olsson
- 3rd Dean Pendergast
- 4th Graham Forge

Ladies Packhorse Race

- 1st Ann-Maree Forge
- 2nd Aliesha Sievers
- 3rd Bonnie Newton

Men's Haystacking

- 1st Chris and Don
- 2nd Rick and Moon
- 3rd Murray and Bill

Ladies Haystacking

- 1st Annette and Katherine
- 2nd Rosey and Wendy
- 3rd Lynn and Kate

Junior Whipcracking

- 1st Tahnee Olsson
- 2nd Tommy Mitchell
- 3rd Jack Mitchell

Juvenile Whipcracking

- 1st Jenelle Kiely
- 2nd Emma Higgins
- 3rd Ben Powell

Ladies Whipcracking

- 1st Diana Hurley
- 2nd Aliesha Sievers
- 3rd Jenelle Kiely
- 4th Emma Higgins

Open Whipcracking

- 1st Aliesha Sievers
- 2nd Diana Hurley
- 3rd Brian Campbell

Men's Bushmans Challenge

- 1st Cane
- 2nd Tom and Lloyd
- 3rd Graeme and Shane

Ladies Bushmans Challenge

- 1st Moira and Nola
- 2nd Diana and Aliesha
- 3rd Irene and Kelle

Tug of War Challenge - Men

Gippsland Gropers

Tug of War Challenge - Ladies

Dargo

Dog High Jump

"Aussie" and Barry Horsburgh

Don Kneebone Heritage Award

Molly Coleman

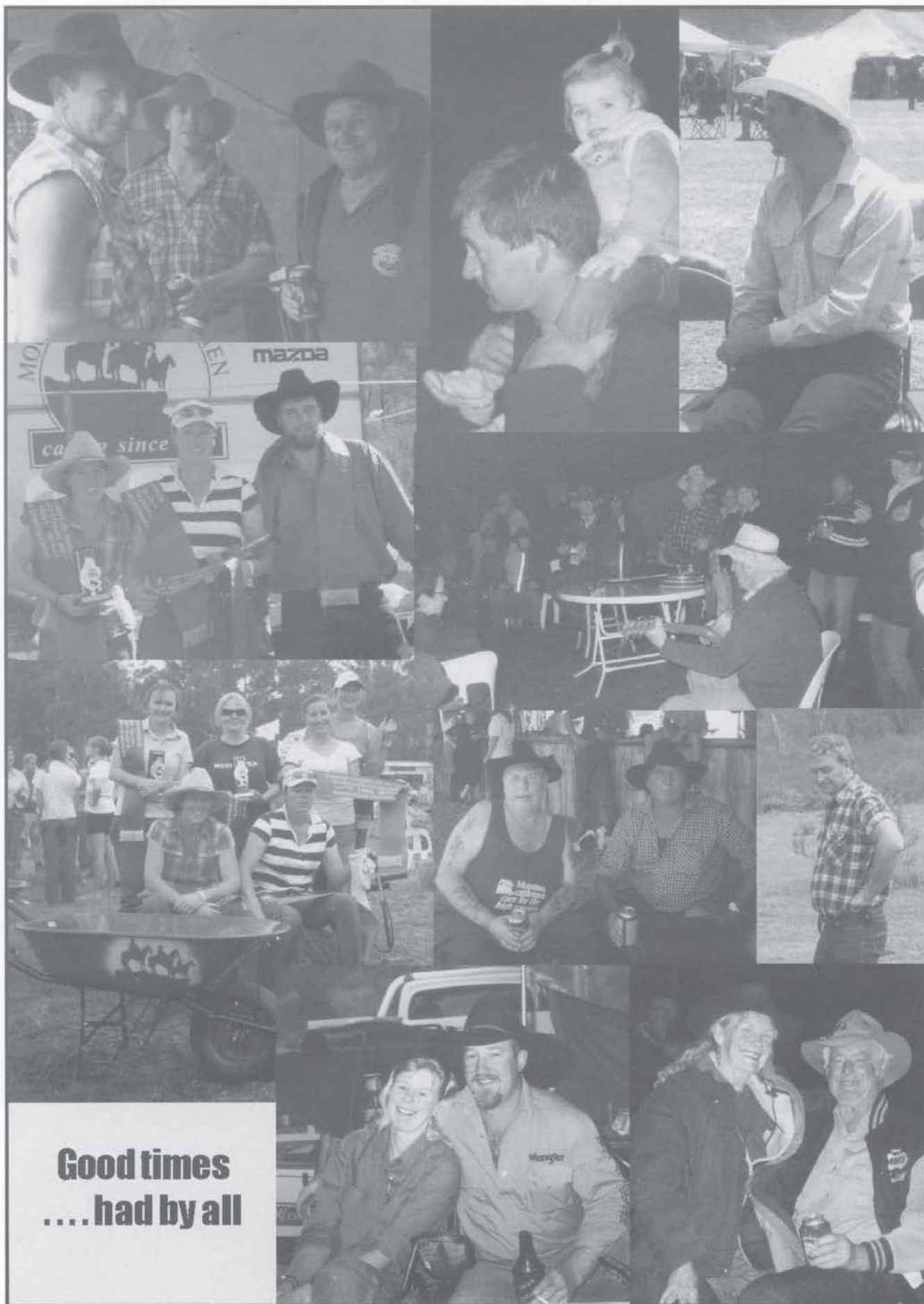
Bush Minstrel Award

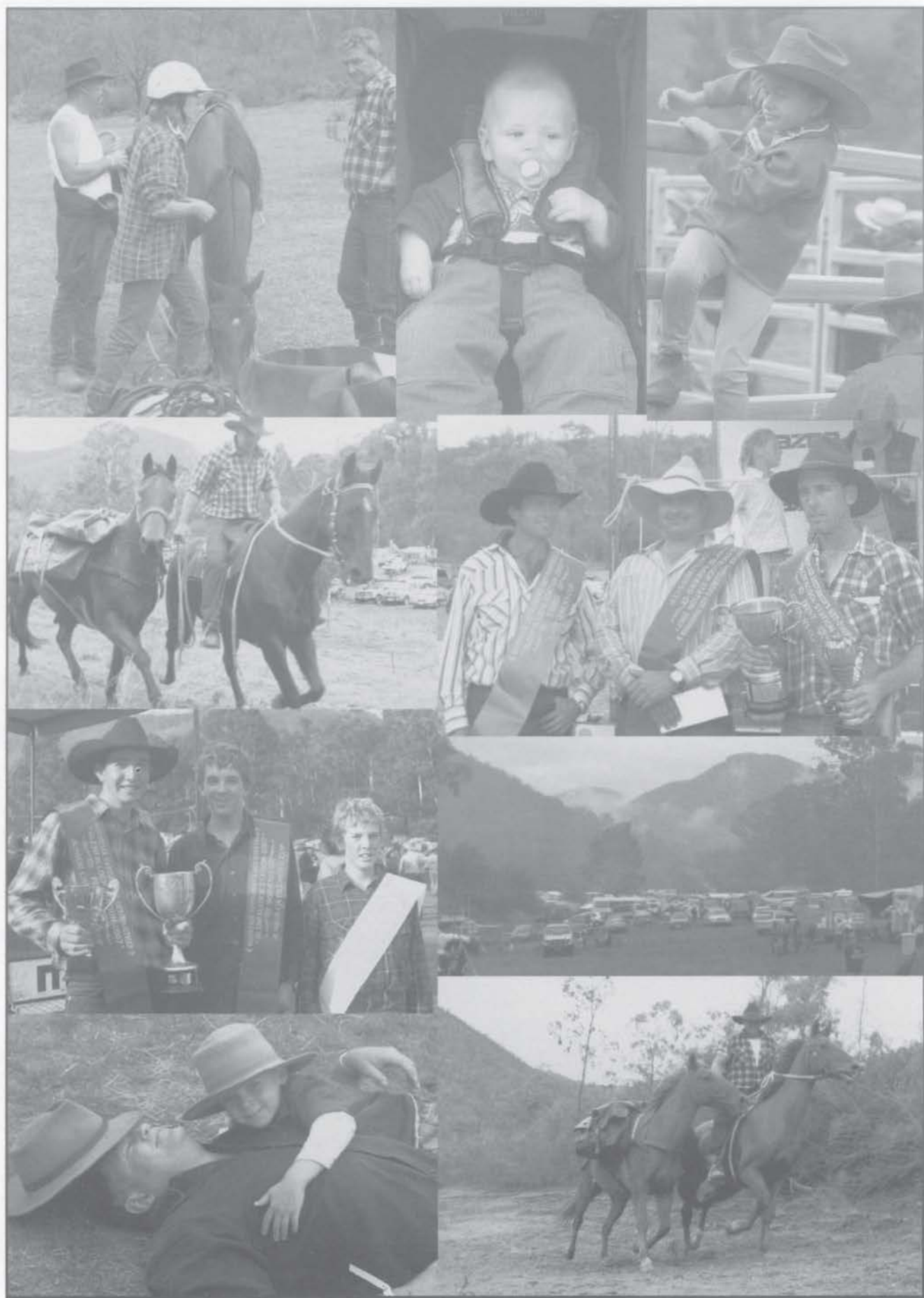
Ricky Hodge

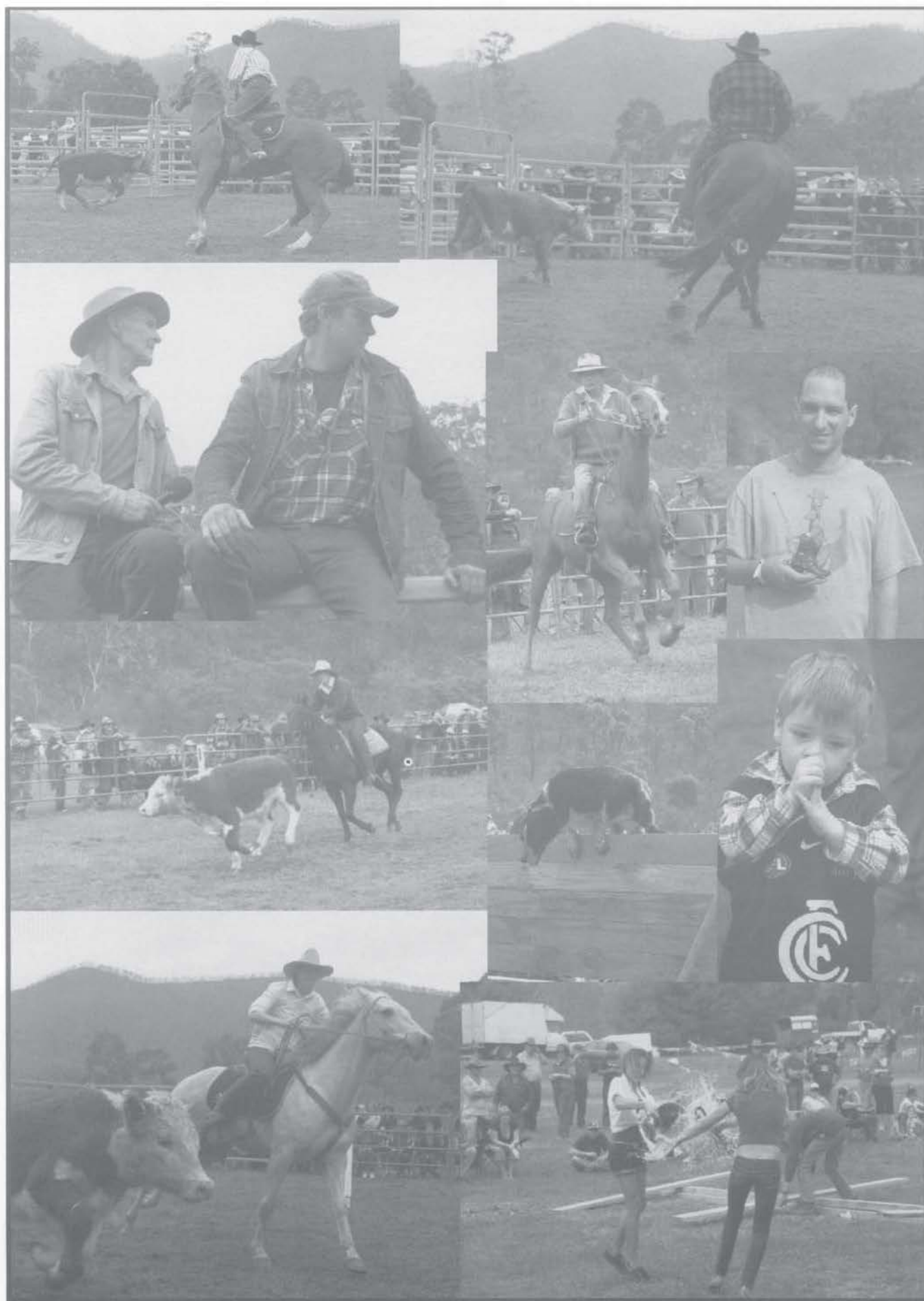
Bush Laureate Award

Laurence Webb



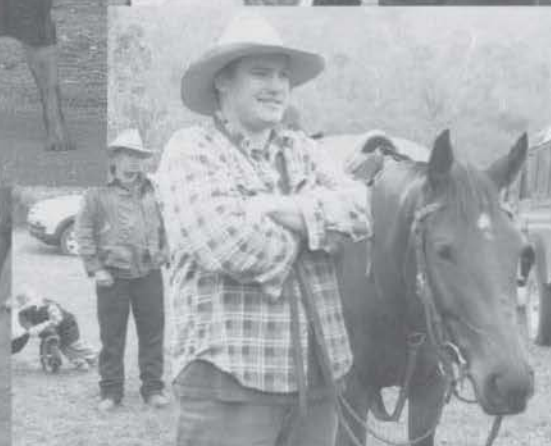


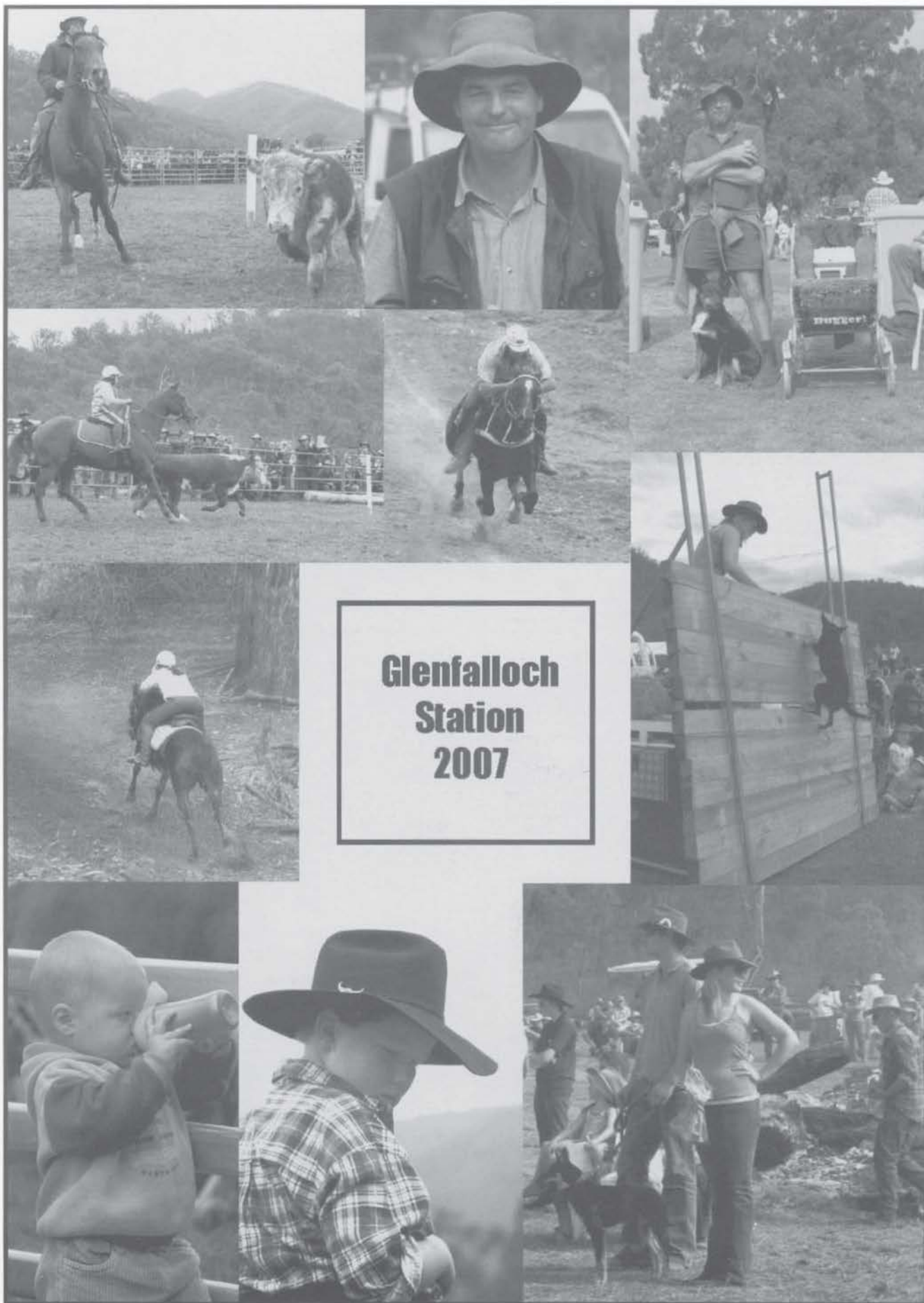






Glenfalloch Station 2007

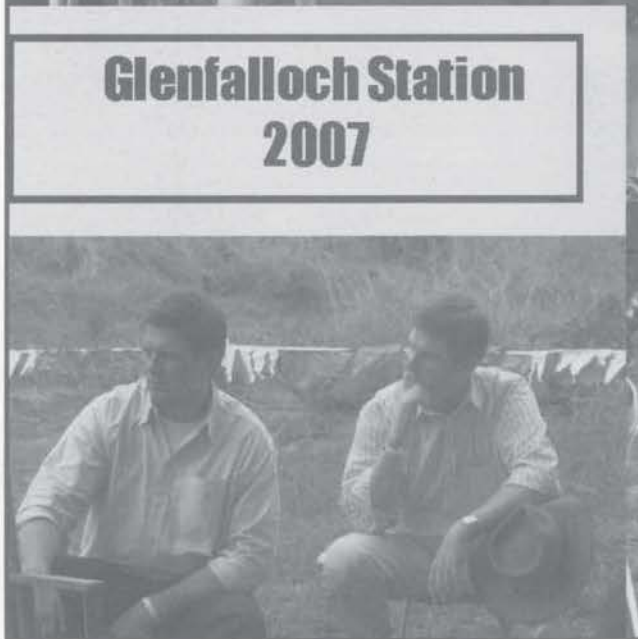




**Glenfalloch
Station
2007**



Glenfalloch Station 2007





Glenfalloch Station 2007



GREAT VICTORIAN HORSE RIDE

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BE PART OF HISTORY AND HAVE FUN IN THE
SADDLE.

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THIS INAUGURAL RIDE IS A FUND RAISER FOR
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SPEND 5 DAYS AND 6 NIGHTS OF
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IN AID OF "PUSH FOR THE BUSH-THE RURAL ISSUE LOBBY GROUP.
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LAND AND MANY OTHER ISSUES.

MCAV/PFTB Building Trailers in Full Use

WENDY JUBB STONEY

The MCAV/ PFTB building trailers which were on display at the last Get Together are in full use this summer, rebuilding Alpine huts lost in the Bushfires. The trailers and donated building tools were organised by John Dowdle and many sponsors donated the trailers and the tools.

One trailer was firstly used by the Wangaratta SES and is presently on site to rebuild Stoney's Bluff Hut and then Lovicks Hut. The other trailer has been loaned on a semi permanent basis to the Victorian High Country Huts Association for use on several projects.

At the Bluff, three working bees in December installed the snowgum posts and one half of the mountain ash beams. This timber was sourced from near Matlock after being salvaged from the construction of the Thomson Dam Catchment Fire line.

It is expected that after Christmas work will continue and the poles for the roof and the chimney rock work will be completed. Then the appropriate galvanised iron roof and walls will be next.

Building supervisor for the job is David Stoney and the volunteers are all connected to the Hut in some way or are friends of the Stoney family.

The Stoney family organised the building of the original Bluff Hut in 1956 and mustered their cattle from the hut until 2005 when cattle grazing in the National Park was banned. For many years the Bluff

Hut was also used as a base to run Stoney's cross country ski tours and horse trail rides.

The Stoney family is organising and co-ordinating the rebuild operation, assisted by the Victorian High Country Huts Association, the sponsors and volunteers.

Graeme Stoney has announced that the new hut will not be a replica of the original hut but just a genuine bush hut which will provide safety in a remote area and one that people will enjoy visiting.

It is known that over the years the original hut saved several lives and was regarded as an important safety facility. The weather at the Bluff can be treacherous and it can turn from being a lovely day to a situation that is life threatening, in an hour.

At the moment the site is off limits to the public because of the building and safety requirements but soon the Bluff Hut will once again be an interesting destination for four wheel drive enthusiasts, horse riders and hikers.

The Stoney family has expressed their thanks to the many major sponsors, including ARB, Silcar, Mr David Muir and Chum Creek Sawmills. There are many other sponsors too numerous to mention. A special thanks to the volunteers for their ongoing support for this important community and historic project.



President of Push for the Bush, Wendy Jubb Stoney, handing over one of the trailers to VHCHA representative Chris Clarke.



David and Graeme Stoney with Jed Culican putting the last post in place.

The Mob from Yackandandah

Across the stony ridges,
across the rolling plains,
the mob from Yackandandah
are riding home again

And well their horses bear them,
though bugged as can be
and stoutly their ole packhorses
are trotting by their knee.

Up Mansfield way at the cattleman's,
they've travelled regions vast
and many days have vanished
since home folk saw them last.

They hum the song of someone
they hope to be with soon,
while hobble chains and camp ware
are jingling to the tune.

T'was Gary and Geoff that took them
with Dallas in the lead,
and Les and Mel just dreaming
of their next decent feed.

For grub was scant on this trip
and that just wasn't fun
and Gary made the major blue
not packing enough rum!

An extra nip of rum, or two
wouldn't go astray,
for many an adventure
befell them on their way.

They nearly lost the grey horse,
the best one of the lot,
but thanks to these three men
who wrenched her from the spot.

She's travelling home quite well now
with pack bags on her back
following the tired riders
along the lonely track.

She'd fallen beneath her rider
and rolled right down the hill,
if they hadn't acted swiftly
she'd blooming be there still.

"A miracle a miracle
that's what we bloody need",
cried Dallas as he strained himself
pulling at the lead.

"She's right" said Geoff, "we'll roll her,
roll her over on her back
then we'll try and slide her
down between that rocky crack."

And, oh it was a miracle,
for yes she blooming slid
and landed at the bottom
stood up she finally did.

She looked around and whinnied
and had a piece of grass,
but woe betide her poor backside
there'd been rocks right up her arse.

Now blood stained bruised and weary
she follows rock and tree,
with hobble chains and camp ware
all jingling soothingly.

With tyres flat and petrol low
their troubles never ceased,
they made it home eventually
their experience increased.

Now below the rocky ranges
neath mountain ash so tall,
they thank their bloody lucky stars
they made it home at all

Lesley Britten

Every year this group of riders gather at
Yackandandah and ride up to the Get Together.
The trip to Sheeppyard Flat in 2003 was
more eventful than they had planned.

The Association is indebted to the following businesses and organisations for their ongoing and loyal support of the mountain cattlemen. This year we say thank Mark Suhr, the owner of Cobungra Station for the use of the property at Junction Plain for the Get-Together. Thank you all.

Marty Smith

**3TR 3GV and 3NE
Radio**

**Landmark Kyle Obst
Bairnsdale**

Dyers Transport

WIN TV

**Landmark
Sale**

O'Connor's Transport

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Just Loos - Geoff Owens

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Bairnsdale Horse Centre

AML Risk

Here's Hardwood

**Goodman's Seeds
Bairnsdale**

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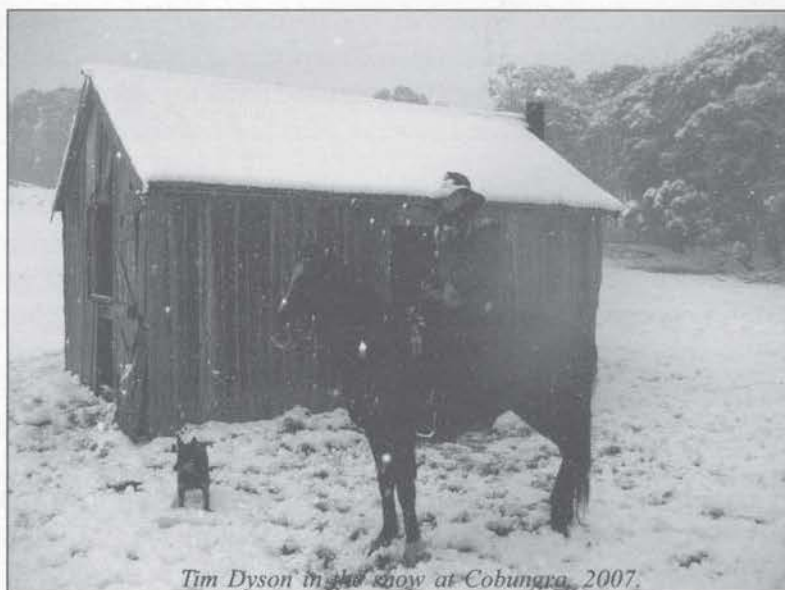
**Gippsland Times and
Gippsland Farmer**

**and all the Get Together
workers who attended
working bees and spent
untold hours
"getting things ready"**

**Rob Barton
Veterinary Services**

**Aussie Disposals
Bairnsdale**

East Gippsland Shire



Tim Dyson in the snow at Cobungra, 2007.

Back Issues and Acknowledgments



Limited numbers of previous issues of *Voice of the Mountains* are available at \$5 a copy. They are:

No. 10, 11, 13, 17 - 22 @ \$5

Volume 26 @ \$6.00

Volume 27 - 30 @ \$8.00

All other volumes are sold out and unavailable.

Limited numbers are at the Get Together or they are available by post from the
MCAV, P.O. Box 376, Sale 3850

I would like to thank all who have helped and given assistance in the production of *Voice of the Mountains* this year. Ever year there is frantic activity to locate material before we publish *Voice* and this year was no different, but we utilised the email system which saw a number of articles come in.

To all those who responded, thank you all. I was very glad to see poems and stories coming in, so much so, that some have been held over to next year (but don't let that stop you from contributing!).

This year the lucky recipients of the pushy phone calls and emails were: Doug Treasure, Christa Treasure, Graeme Stoney, Colleen Hurley, Cath Noble, Clive Hodge, Debbie Ray, Janine Cooper, Lyric Anderson, Allan Mull, Laurie Webb, Ann Ware, Simon Turner, Brad Semmens, Norm Reeves and Bob Richardson and I know others were asked to respond quickly to requests from Christa on my behalf so thank you one and all.

Again Frances Westbury has documented the Get Together with her photographs and I thank her for doing this for the Association, and Colleen Hurley for her efforts and searching also.

Tim Dyson (who works on Cobungra) has supplied some wonderful images and

I thank him too - all I need now is a great poem about a dog!

Three people deserve special thanks. Each year Stephen Baggs, (my employer) puts up with me being totally absorbed with the production of *Voice* and continues to give me *carte blanche* time, computer facilities, internet, phone and e-mail access to complete *Voice*. Any other boss would tell me "enough is enough, give it away", but he doesn't, so thank you Stephen.

This year I was ably assisted by Neil Cox and Leanne Dyson who have gone beyond the call of any proof readers. They have read copy and plied me with coffee until 3am on consecutive nights in an effort to find all my "typos" and still fronted up to help to get *Voice* finished. Thank you.

Finally, E-Gee Printers continue to support the Association by getting the ink on the pages and *Voice* finished for the Get Together in record time. This year it was four days. That is no mean effort, and it is appreciated.

With the help of these people there continues to be a *Voice of the Mountains*.

