



Voice of the Mountains

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

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No.32 (2009)



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COVER ILLUSTRATIONS

Front Cover: A lone cattleman on Mount King Billy casts an almost ghostly silhouette against the misty blue peaks of the Great Dividing Range. Once almost a part of the High Country: as hardy as the surrounding snowgums, and as rugged as the rocks below, this mountain cattleman was photographed by Nicole Emanuel.
Inset Back Cover: Passing on our heritage, one of the judges of the whipcracking takes time to instruct a beginner at Junction Plain 2008 photographed by Frances Westbury.

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President's Message 2009

CHRISTA TREASURE



*MCAV President Christa Treasure with
State Parliamentarians
Phil Davis (Gippsland Rovince),
Andrew McIntosh (Kew) and
Bill Tilley (Benambra) at
Junction Plain, 2008*

Welcome to our 35th Get-Together here at Buttercup Road, Merrijig, which is being hosted exceptionally well by the Mansfield Cattlemen.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you – each and every one of you – for showing your support and making the effort to be at the Get-Together. It's your support that keeps the Mountain Cattlemen's Get-Together – and the Association - going. This is one of the greatest events to celebrate such Australian traditions and heritage.

The Mountain Cattlemen are internationally recognised as Australian icons and one of the most important symbols representing us is our huts. One of the most recognised, and more recently controversial, is Craig's Hut – thanks to the movie we're celebrating this weekend – Craig's Hut was burnt down in the 2006/2007 fires and was rebuilt sometime later.

There are plenty of lesser known huts and the Bluff Hut on the old Stoney family run is one of them and I would like to congratulate them for leading the way in rebuilding it.

So much history went up in flames when so many of our huts were reduced to ashes in the 2003 and 2006-2007 fires. But we are resilient and determined and Ropers Hut on the Bogong will also be re-opened later this month.

However, I find it ironic and a ridiculous situation that Parks Victoria see fit to rebuild cattlemen's huts to encourage tourism but they don't want the cattlemen or their cattle on the mountains, even when science proves the benefits of alpine and bush grazing,... yet they are happy to use our history to chase the tourism dollar.

On the positive side Parks Victoria have invited us to supply text for an information board along the Wallace's Hut walking track – we have to put our history out there otherwise in ten years time the bush walkers will have no idea of the grazing history that has been before them but at least I suppose they'll have good new huts to stay in.

Speaking of bushfires, we have an ally in Professor Mark Adams who is conducting an independent study into water production in alpine areas. He maintains that cattle grazing and low intensity fires help to increase water production in the catchments. The cattlemen

see his work as vital to our cause and we have pledged \$10,000 this year. It is important work for all Australians. But he needs \$500,000 a year to continue his long term study - if anyone would like to donate to this fund please contact our secretary.

The Barmah Forest Cattlemen have shown what you can do with community support - they raised more than \$100,00 and bought cattle which were driven into the Barmah Forest. That's a great community effort which showed how united they are.

They say "Nero fiddled while Rome burned", well the Victorian Government is fiddling and the high country will burn again – you need only look to the dead wood still standing from the last fires to be afraid of the hot fires to come.

Everybody knows that cattle grazing is a management tool for reducing hot wildfires. The Inquiry into the Impact of Public Land Management Practices on Bushfires in Victoria confirmed this, but didn't recommend this to the Government. Why? So, we are a State run by a minority group of greens, funded by taxpayers money. Your money!

In other matters there is a State Election in November 2010 – we have to keep letting our parliamentary members know how unworkable the boundaries of the grazing licences and the alpine national park are and remind them how unfair the situation is.

Many of our members have been reduced to unviable grazing numbers in the state forest areas which has basically made their activities more like a hobby. We have to lobby our parliamentarians and find out who understands our situation and who's with us so we can work towards getting cattle back in the National Park.

This - getting cattle back in the Alpine National Park - is of course this Association's long-term goal.

Just recently there has been a furore regarding the renaming of Mount Niggerhead near the Bogong High Plains. Jack Hicks told me that mountain was named by two stockmen in the mid 1800s and I feel the renaming is just another way Australians are losing part of the cattlemen's history.

The MCAV is in desperate need of your email addresses – both members' and associates' – along with anyone else who is interested in the Association. We would like to keep everyone in the loop about what's happening within the Association and email are the perfect way for us to do that.

Our very nature is not to accept change and stick with the tried and true methods but by necessity the cattlemen have become more technologically *au fait*. We have a new and improved website at mcav.com.au, and we now also have cowpad.info which is in answer to cowpaddock.com.au, a VNPA site which serves only to condemn alpine grazing.

Thankyou to Bruce McCormack and his Get Together committee for the hard work and preparation that has been done here at Buttercup for the 2009 Get Together. Initially there wasn't enthusiasm for holding a Get-Together on this side of the mountains because of the members low morale after being kicked out from the Alpine National Park and then the wild fire caused by mismanagement by government departments. But a few strong characters took it on and look at what they have achieved. This strength and attitude are the factors that will see us grazing our cattle back in the National Parks.

Our merchandise team, Susan Noble and Erica Kirk, have done a terrific job in their first year, adding new items to their catalogue and I encourage you to visit them in the Marketing tent. Thank you everyone, for just by being here (or reading this) you are contributing to the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria.

Regards,
Christa Treasure,
President,
Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria
January 2009

Mansfield Cattlemen return to their Runs

STEVE KELLY

Reprinted from "The Mansfield Courier"



Adam, Jaxon (7th generation cattleman) and Bruce McCormack headed to the high country with 100 head of stock.

Local cattlemen have been permitted to graze larger numbers in the high country this summer. Restrictions on the number of cattle local graziers could take into state forest areas were in place last summer following the 2006/07 bushfires.

Merrijig farmer Bruce McCormack was one cattleman who took 100 head of cattle into the high country near the head of the King River on the weekend. Cattlemen have been restricted since the fires and Mr McCormack could only take 30 head through last summer.

"This year the Department of Sustainability assessed the situation again and allowed us to take our full allocation of 100 head," Mr McCormack said. "The country has recovered enough from the fires with a lot more ground cover to sustain the cattle."

Mr McCormack said the ability to graze the full number of cattle according to his grazing licence, relieved pressure on the feed resources at his farm.

"After the fires the grass height has been growing rapidly because the tree canopy has disappeared in the state forest," he said.

"The influence of the cattle in the high country is going to reduce potential fuel in the area and help the whole environment."

Other graziers to get assessed were Steve Purcell, Graeme Stoney and Charlie Lovick.

Cattle of the “High Plains” Country

RICHARD D. PIESSE

Reprinted from “The Walkabout”, Australian Geographical Magazine, Vol. 21 No. 11, 1st November 1955

In last years edition of *Voice of the Mountains* we featured a 1936 article from “The Walkabout” which created much interest. This year we are fortunate to reprint another article from the same magazine from 1955 in which the conflict between the cattlemen and government authorities was an issue to be resolved.

Most Australians know little of the mountainous regions which adjoin the coastal and riverine plains of the south-east of Australia, where most of the population lives; nor were they much interested in them until the post-war publicity given projects such as the Snowy Mountains and Kiewa hydro-electricity schemes. It is probably true to say that for many people the thought that this part of Australia evoked only a warm feeling for a national favourite – “The Man from Snowy River”, the gripping yarn of a cattlemen who

“... hails from Snowy River, up by Kosciusko’s side,
where the hills are twice as steep and twice as rough;
where a horse’s hoofs strike firelight
from the flint stones every stride,
the man that holds his own is good enough.”

In a land lacking an inheritance of folk-lore, few legends have gained such wide recognition by Australians as this ballad and “Waltzing Matilda”, both by A.B. (“Banjo”) Paterson. Whereas the tale of the swagman, like much of the prose and verse of Paterson’s contemporary Henry Lawson, has an “out-back” setting in the plains of the interior, “The Man from Snowy River” is probably unique in that it is derived from the snow-country of the Australian Alps.

As is well known, Paterson wrote it with a certain Upper Murray cattleman, Riley, in mind. It is with such men as Riley and his ancestors, working full lives in a tough environment, that this account of the mountain-bred cattle industry deals.

Stretching from Riley’s own country – the deep-dissected flanks of the Snowy Mountains



Mustering on the Dargo High Plains, Victoria.

– in the north, and the edge of the undulating plains of the Monaro Plateau in the east, the Eastern Highlands sweep westward into Victoria as a tangle of ranges and spurs for nearly two hundred miles until they die away at the Kilmore Gap, north of Melbourne.

Known in the highest section as the “Australian Alps” (a name quite unsuited to their prevailing plateau-like character) they are marked, oftentimes very imperceptibly, by a dividing range which forms the watershed of streams flowing inland to linger in the Murray River system, and of those tumbling briefly south to Bass Strait. This “Great Dividing Range” of our maps, or simply “The Divide”, in some places consists of a single ridge of regular direction and considerable height, as in the Cobberas Mountains (6000 feet) of the New South Wales-Victorian borderland; more commonly, however, it is to be found (or lost!) on a succession off undulating “high plains”. These are plateau areas covered in mountain

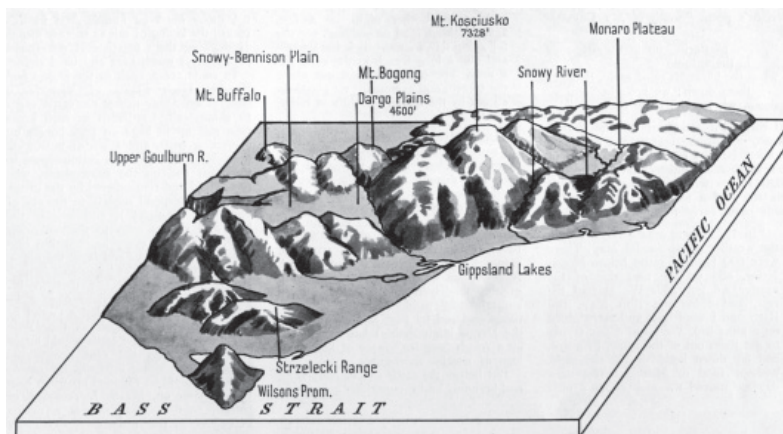


Diagram illustrating "high plain" areas in south-eastern Australia.

meadows which are divided of from each other by belts of timber. In Victoria, particularly, they often stretch for many miles north or south of the actual water divide.

Chief of these plains are the Monaro Plateau (2,500 to 4,000 feet) of far south-east New South Wales; the Kosciusko Plateau (5,500 to 7,000 feet), the Benambra High Plains, the Bogong High Plains (5,000 to 6,000 feet), the Dargo High Plains (4,500 feet) and the Mount Wellington-Snowy Plains (4,500 feet), the latter two in north Gippsland. Attached to each of these are considerable areas of snow-leases (or licences from the Crown to depasture stock). In Victoria some 5,000,000 acres, mainly hilly country, were thus leased to graziers in 1934.

In general, they support a cover of native grasses, the chief of which are snow grass and various tuft grasses, as well as a specialized sub-alpine flora including mosses and lichens and snow gums (*Eucalyptus pauciflora*). The snow gum grows vigorously in sheltered hollows and in belts adjoining the snow grass plains, but becomes gnarled and stunted in positions exposed to the strong winds of these heights.

Each year about May the first snow falls, remaining as a mantle across the high plains until September or October (or even later according to the nature of the season and aspect of the snow "drift"). After the thaw, a brown carpet of snow grass emerges and rapidly takes

on the vigorous growth of spring. Its greenness becomes heightened as the tide of summer rises by a profusion of flowers ranging from mountain daises and dandelions, "pin-cushions" and everlastings, to the less striking blooms of alpine shrubs.

Then "the plains" appear as gay fairways in which hundreds of cattle, driven up from surrounding valleys where they have spent the winter, bask in the warm sunshine and fatten through the long months.¹ Not until the following March or April is their idyllic existence disturbed by horsemen, although an inspection trip or two of their leases may be made by some owners in December or February.

With the coming of autumn in the mountains, distinguished by misty mornings, an earlier chill in the afternoons and the shortening hours of light, mustering begins in earnest. The hills echo all day to the cracking of stockwhips, the pounding of horses' hooves and barking of cattle-dogs as muster follows muster, and the bellowing of calves as branding proceeds. The rounding-up process may take a month or six weeks, depending on the terrain and location therein of the mobs. And always, as the shadows lengthen day by day, the cattleman holds in mind the threat of a possible cold snap suddenly interrupting the work, or even the memory - echoed by Old Dan in Judith Wright's poem "South of My Days" - of

“... mustering up in the Bogongs in the autumn
when the blizzards came early. Brought them
down we brought them
down, what aren't there yet ...”

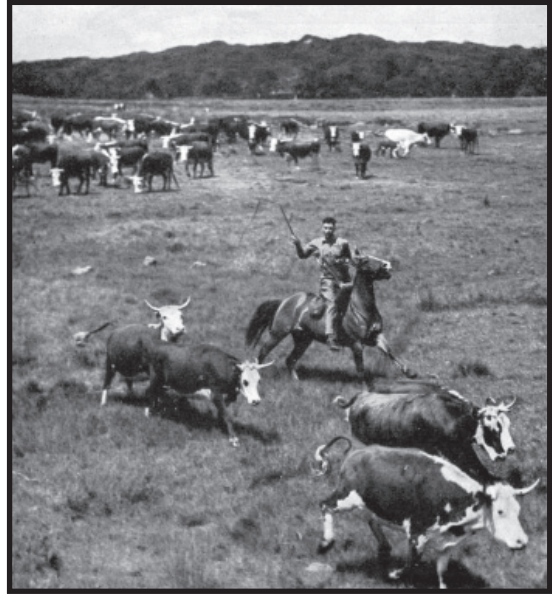
George Fitzgerald, of “Shannonvale”, Omeo, one of the best-known cattlemen in Victoria, who in his time was present at seventy cattle musters on the Bogong High Plains with only one break, tells this story of a muster “when the blizzard came early”:

“In 1923, there was a big break in the weather about the 1st May. There were 600 head of cattle below Mount Nelse, and on the first day of the muster we got 500. We shifted the rest, and about the 10th May, Bill Batty and I went back and saw sixteen on a moss-bed. We spent a day trying to get them out of the snow, lit a fire, and lay down beside it for the night without food or blankets. The next day we moved the mob about a mile and spent another night by a fire, again without food or bedding. On the following day we went back for shovels and dug a long trench in the snow for a mile. The cattle followed out along the trench, and eventually we got them all out by the 28th June without losing one!”

Mustering has changed little, if at all, since the earliest round-ups over 90 years ago. There is still the action, the near and distant sounds, the touch of “Wild West” excitement as when Riley mustered on the Snowy River Station.

The centre of operations is commonly a wide, flat, relatively clear valley or basin, reasonably central to the run, across which a fence has been erected. Against this fence the main mobs are eventually driven and drafted into a large holding paddock, which is sometimes enclosed by post and wire (as on the Dargo High Plains) but more often by a rough “dog-leg” fence of limbs and logs of nearby snow-gums.

But before the cattle can be paddocked and branding and ear-marking commence, the mobs must be found. And in this regard the



“Mustering is strenuous work ... the horse must be able to manoeuvre into position quickly, to baulk, prop and break away ...”

laying of salt as an easy means of drawing them together at convenient points saves much time and hard riding.

In some areas, such as the Dargo and Bogong High Plains of Victoria, a mineral deficiency makes the cattle eager to obtain salt. Cattlemen in such areas take salt up in bags on pack-horses on inspection trips, and again at mustering time. It is distributed at certain spots in the bush and on the snow-plains, well recognized and remembered by the cattle. The cattle respond eagerly to the cry of “Salt!” (“So-o-oh!”), and quickly the hills and valleys echo to the bellowing calls. In no time every beast within earshot knows the news and is on the move.

Mr L.C. Rogers, of Swan Reach, near Bruthen, Victoria, recalls that in his days in the Wulgulmerang district he and his fellows used to lay a cupful or two of salt in the bush as they rode around their run. The cattle would linger for days around the spot licking the ground and waiting hungrily for more; thus they could be rounded up when convenient later on. Mr S.J. Treasure, of Dargo, confirms that salt is a means of quietening the cattle.

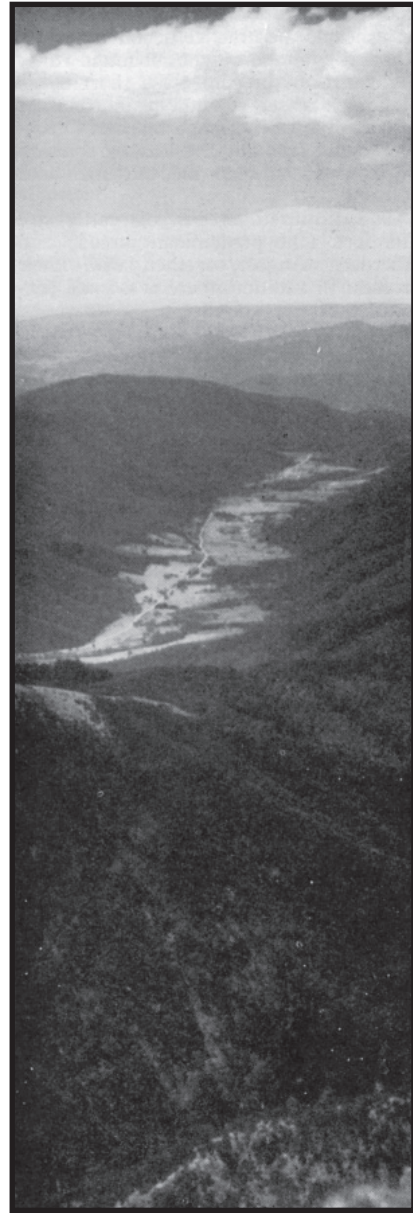
However, in other districts such as the Big Plain on Mount Wellington, north of Maffra, natural salt apparently is present in sufficient proportion to render the use of salt ineffectual. In order to overcome the difficulty of finding the beasts in thickets of scrub or “lying-low” in sheltered valleys, a proportion of them are belled so that they betray their presence whenever they make a move.

Mustering is strenuous work, going on from dawn to dark in all weathers. Brilliant riding is not a feature, but rather skilled horsemanship and endurance are needed, the latter by both rider and mount. The horse must be able to manoeuvre into position quickly, to baulk, prop and break away from a slow walk into a short dash to head off an escaping cow and calf. The cattleman also depends very largely on his dogs to race into the scrub and head back beasts breaking from the mob, and generally to move the mob along at the rear by yapping and snapping at the heels of the laggards.

It would be easier if all the cattle were on the snow-plains; but as the mustering proceeds, long descents into the scrub must be made over rocks and logs to bring out the animals which cannot be seen, so often as *heard*, crashing ahead in the bush. Then must the rider know his horse and his terrain perfectly; he must urge the last ounce of work each day out of his horse whilst nursing it wherever possible, as on the prolonged climbs back to the tops.

Back in the paddock near the cattlemen’s hut, which is usually known by the name of the man who built it, however many years ago, there is a preliminary “cutting out” process to separate beasts of various classes, including those to be marketed. “Strays” bearing the brand of other owners are taken across to adjoining runs if there is time and if handy, or else returned later on.

Then begins the slow, dusty and noisome business of branding and earmarking. At one end of the holding paddock is a smaller enclosure with stout posts and high walls of strong saplings built like a corral, and into this



The Ovens Valley, from Mount Feathertop, north-eastern Victoria.

the calves are drafted. Then one by one they are “cut out” from their fellows with the aid of a long pole, and forced into a small pen at the other end of the enclosure where they are roped, speedily thrown off their feet by a combination “trip-tackle” and held to the ground while ear marked and branded on the flank. One needs to be determined, agile and dexterous to work in a pen for hours with bucking and twisting calves weighing 300lb. or so each!

As the season draws to a close, the final stage is the driving down off the tops of the mobs. In the absence of roads leading on to most of the high plains, the routes follow a number of long spurs such as Hannel's Spur off the Main Range of Kosciusko into the Murray, the Eskdale Spur off Mount Bogong into the Mitta Mitta, Riggall's Spur off the Big Plain of Mount Wellington, and the Bennison Spur off the Bennison Plains. The bi-annual passing of the mobs, often numbering three to four hundred beasts, tends to keep the scrub open on these spurs. It is a great relief to the cattleman when not only is the muster safely over and the cattle are "down", but also the sales are completed successfully.

The first exploration and settlement of the highland areas I have mentioned came after 1823, in which year Major Evans and Captain Currie discovered the Monaro Plains of New South Wales (called by the blacks "Maneroo"). By the latter part of the twenties cattle were being run over most of the Monaro. Not until the mid thirties did the first "overlanders", following across the Murray in the wake of Major Mitchell's journeys in western and northern Victoria, reach the Port Phillip district. There they took up grasslands rather than attempt to penetrate the forests lying in the eastern section of the colony.

In 1834, however, George McKillop and a party which included Livingstone and James McFarlane explored the country west of the Monaro, and after crossing the Snowy River several times, reached Omeo in June 1835.

I once stood on the tops of the Cobberas Mountains, which are 6,000 feet above sea level, and looked east down into a sea of ranges and gullies drained by large tributaries of the Snowy. What a journey McKillop's party must have had of it, I reflected, as they forced their way week by week through the hills! Perhaps we give too little recognition these days to the sheer physical difficulties of the topography which confronted such route-finding pioneers.

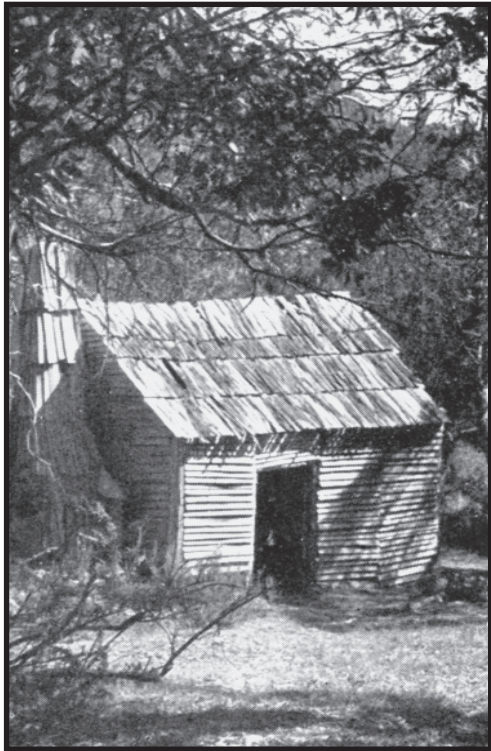
Later in 1835, James McFarlane returned. He took up a run known as "Omeo B", about where the township of Benambra now stands. A little while after Gippsland's second settler, John Pendergast, took up a run later shown on maps as "Omeo A"; his descendants are still in that district, as well as on Western Monaro, today.

The real fillip to the settlement of northern and eastern Gippsland came in the form of a prolonged drought on the Monaro, beginning in 1838-39, and lasting over much of New South Wales to 1842. New and extensive grasslands for sheep and cattle became an urgent need; McKillop's "Omeo Road" route from the Monaro - down the Snowy from the Jacobs River to the Pinch River, over the Pinch Pass to the Ingegoodbee River and thence westerly via the Playground just south of the Cobberas to Limestone Creek and eventually the Benambra district - was again used by pastoralists. About 1838 Edward O'Rourke took up "Suggan Buggan", and Edward Bayliss and John Wilkinson in the following year settled on the "Gelantipy" and "Bukkin" (Buchan) runs respectively. The route in these cases continued on down the Snowy from the present site of Ingebyra before swinging through "Suggan Buggan" to gain the southward-leading ridge at Wulgulmerang (see map).

In addition to the "Omeo Road", another route from the Monaro was found by Thomas Mathew Moore, of Burinma, who took up the Tubbut Station on the Deddick River.

By 1839 settlement had spread south from the Omeo district into the Tambo Valley, where Patrick Coady Buckley established his Tongiomungie Station and Angus McMillan (sent by Captain Lachlan Macalister of Camden) took up Numbla-Munjie. In the following year McMillan set out on the famous journey which took him to the Gippsland Plains and many important new rivers.

The year 1842 saw a great influx of settlers to this new land of promise. Most of them came with their bullock drays via the so-called "Omeo



Bogong Jack's Hut.

A number of cattlemen's huts such as this provide shelter at mustering time.

Road", but with the discovery of Port Albert (1841) an easier access than the border route was available and used extensively. It was from Port Albert, moreover, that the first shipment of fifty bullocks, on account of James McFarlane (of "Omeo B"), was made in March 1842 by the tiny 100-ton schooner "Waterwitch" to New Zealand.

In north-eastern Victoria, Bonegilla was taken up for cattle in 1835, and the Corryong run in 1838. It is likely that Khancoban, on the Geehi (Upper Murray Valley) and the Mitta-Mitta and Kiewa Valley runs were all occupied in the early 'forties.

The structure of the industry in south-east Australia is rather complex, especially in regard to the way in which adjoining and widely-separated cattle-raising regions have functions complementary to each other.

As in tropical Australia, there are recognized

breeding, store² cattle and fattening areas, the positions and extent of each are chiefly dictated by the physical environment as it affects cattle-raising.

But whereas in the north many hundreds of miles separate the main store cattle areas in the Northern Territory from the principal fattening districts in eastern Queensland, the south-east corner is a relatively small, compact pocket. In the north the majority of cattle are fattened for killing at a meatworks, whence the carcasses are shipped interstate or overseas; but in the south-east practically all the beasts turned-off are trucked "on the hoof" by rail or road for slaughter at one or other of the big urban centres.

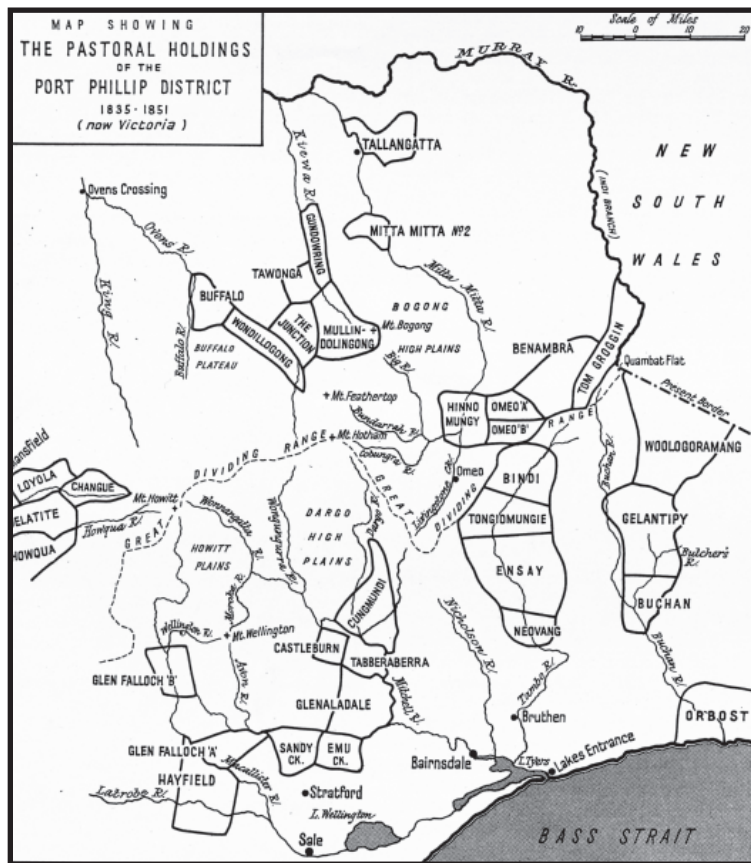
Moreover, the industry in the south-east shows many other contrasts in matters such as the practice of moving cattle seasonally on and off the mountain runs; the control of breeding; the short terms of Crown leases of snow-plain country; the rapidly-growing importance of "baby-beef"; and last, but not the least, a collision of interests between the cattleman and authority.

The favoured breeds of cattle are Hereford (the predominant breed) and Aberdeen Angus, together with their crosses. In addition, there is a small percentage of Black Polls.

In the earlier days most of these cattle were bred and reared on Crown leaseholds called "bush runs". Not until they were at least three, and sometimes up to five, years old were they sold for fattening and finally butchered at, say, five years and a thousand pounds weight.

However, the last twenty-five or thirty years, have been marked by a general deterioration of the bush runs, so that the old practice has been gradually replaced by a system of breeding and rearing mainly on the open or improved country, more and more calves being sold as stores at from nine to twelve months of age.

The breeding herd today is in the majority of cases confined to fenced paddocks and not



(Part of a map compiled by A.S. Kenyon, Historical Society of Victoria, 1932.)

allowed on the runs. One reason for this is the risk of being missed in the autumn muster, as a cow rearing a calf or in calf would most likely perish when the snow came, or, if she did get “off the tops”, it would be into country too rough to sustain her. Another point in keeping the breeders paddocked is that a bigger percentage of calves results.

The calves are weaned in the autumn and taken to paddocks in the foothills till the following spring, when they are driven up on to the tops and turned out on the runs. From then till sold they spend both summer and winter in the mountains, being turned off the tops in late autumn into the rivers to rough it till the snow melts. They are then mustered again and taken once more above the snowline. In a bad winter there are losses in the young cattle in

the bush – cattle rising two years old and losing their teeth, whose gums become very sore and who find difficulty in feeding on the rough feed, which is mainly herbage and edible scrub.

To prevent such losses, in some areas such as Bennison Plains owners not only muster the saleable beasts in the autumn but also young cattle ranging from twelve to eighteen months to just under three years, which are brought below the snowline for the winter. These latter cattle, together with replacements bought at East Gippsland sales, are later driven back for the summer grass.

Of the principal breeding areas today (see map) those of the Monaro and far east Gippsland produce large numbers of stores. These are driven southward along the same routes, such as the “Omeo Road” and the Snowy stock track

via Suggan Buggan and Wulgulmerang, as the early pastoralists discovered, and which have been used for more than one hundred years past by mobs of sheep, cattle and horses coming through to Gippsland.

While many cattle sold at centres such as Bairnsdale are bred locally and not necessarily in mountain areas, the majority (at least two-thirds) are bred on, and driven southward from, the Monaro High Plains, the Omeo-Benambrabra Plains, and the Buchan-Gelantipy-Wulgulmerang district. Variations in the general southward flow of stores provide a cause of the fluctuation in the numbers of cattle sold, for instance, in the Bairnsdale municipal yards:

1949-50	24,714
1950-51	23,848
1951-52	32,263
1952-53	28,479
1953-54	44,352 ³

Moreover, the “Resources Survey of the East Gippsland Region” estimates that “of the total number of stores sold within the Region, more than half leave it for fattening”.

Thus, in addition to producing and fattening (see below) considerable numbers of cattle, centres such as Bairnsdale and Heyfield act, as it were, as a channel of communication between the breeding areas to the north and east, and the fattening areas of the rest of the State. Similar functions are discharged by Myrtleford and Tallangatta in north-east Victoria in regard to the districts south and south-east of themselves, Corryong for the Upper Murray, and Tumut for the northern end of the Snowy Mountains.

Noteworthy fattening areas are the Kiewa and Mitta-Mitta valleys. In Gippsland the principal fattening areas are: the Orbost district, where the river flats along the Snowy are very important, turning off for the Melbourne market over 4,000 fat cattle annually (mostly purchased as stores from the Monaro, whence they have been driven via Nimmitabel); the

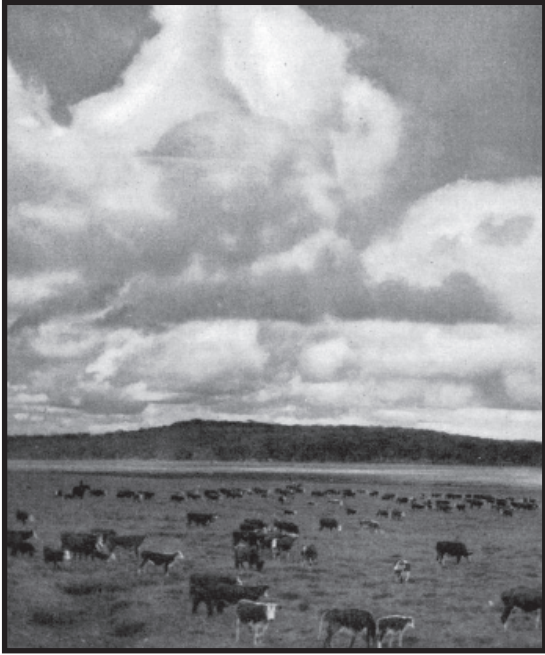
Swan Reach-Bruthen-Lindenow districts and scattered areas between the latter and Sale; and a tract west of Sale including Maffra, Newry, Heyfield and Glengarry.

Down-country fatteners from these areas each year stock up with young mountain cattle to fatten them for the Melbourne market. Taking Gelantipy as an example, some of the best lines of calves of the 800 to 1,000 beasts bought at the annual sales in April are fattened in south Gippsland, and even farther afield, and are ready for market by the following January at the age of about seventeen months, when they give an average dressed weight of 550lb.

The increasing demand for “baby beef”, itself due to the preference for smaller joints of meat, has changed the pattern of these sales. The calves, freshly weaned from their mothers, and presented in the yards to the buyers with the bloom that only milk can put on them, are in great demand, bringing up to £30 a head this season. Thus a new class of cattle sale, the “poddy sales”, has over the last few years become a feature not only at Bairnsdale, but at centres such as Gelantipy, Omeo, Benambrabra, Tallangatta and Myrtleford. It is well known by such fatteners that cattle bred on “cold country” thrive particularly well when taken to the bush fattening paddocks and warmer pastures of the lowland river flats.

Pasture improvements on river flat country have resulted in the fattening by hand-feeding of younger cattle much more quickly than formerly; moreover, being able to be grazed and fattened on smaller areas, they can be handled by regular fatteners as well as by dairy farmers, who are producing well-finished “baby beef” as a profitable sideline.

One of the chief mountain cattle regions in the south-east corner of New South Wales is the *Kosciusko Plateau*, a crustal block or horst formed by uplift along roughly parallel fault lines, with a general level of five or six thousand feet (Mount Kosciusko, 7,342 feet). The region includes the Toolong and Munyang Ranges, and



Some 2,500 cattle graze each summer on the Dargo High Plains.

extends south along the Snowy Mountains to the Ingegoodbee River and the Victorian border.

The Kosciusko State Park, which occupies much of the Plateau, is a very important area for pasturing cattle and sheep, particularly the latter. In mid-summer its sheltered eastern slopes are usually covered with a number of snow drifts, some two hundred yards long and about four feet deep, all of which disappear in autumn. The tree line reaches a height of about 5,500 feet, above which level are morasses and boggy plains.

Within the Kosciusko State Park at higher altitudes are 197 snow leases totalling about 633,000 acres, while at lower levels there are 37 permissive occupancies covering about 400,000 acres. These leases and occupancies are for terms up to a maximum of seven years, most being for four-year periods. The Park is leased as relief grazing country chiefly by pastoralists with properties in the surrounding western Monaro, Australian Capital Territory, and the Upper Murray. During the 1954-55 season 12,549 cattle and 156,539 sheep were reported to be in the snow belt. Those on snow leases are allowed

to remain there only from 1st December to 31st May each year.

By which routes are these stock travelled on and off this “roof of Australia”? Stock from snow leases on the northern part of the Munyang and Toolong Ranges travel north and west either via the Monaro Highway No. 4 to Talbingo and Tumut, or via the “Broken Cart” stock route to Tumut; from Kiandra (once Australia’s highest town) they go down across the Maragle Range to Tooma and Tumbarumba; and from the Tumut Ponds area via a stock route and recently formed road to Khancoban, on the Murray. The southern end of Kosciusko and Victorian border runs are reached on the “western fall” from Geehi on the Swampy Plains River, or from Tom Groggin via the Indi River (both streams forming the main headwaters of the Murray); and on the east, the Snowy River valley provides access from the rich Jindabyne district. In addition an average of nearly 2,000 cattle bred on western Monaro (largely the Kosciusko area) are travelled south over the mountains to Bairnsdale markets, a distance of some 150 miles.

The *Bogong High Plains* lie at an average elevation of 5,500 feet, and consist generally of broad, open, saucer-like valleys separated by low, flat-topped divides with prominent rocky outcrops. In all, this basaltic plateau comprises several hundred square miles in area. Farther to the east, at a considerably lower elevation, are the Benambra High Plains. These are neither as extensive nor open in character as the Bogong country, to which they are linked, however, by the saleyard centres of Omeo and Benambra.

A pre-war estimate was that about 10,000 cattle grazed on the Plains each summer, but the number is now much less, due to restrictions on leases since the Kiewa hydro-electricity scheme began. Apart from Omeo, the main centres through which these mountain cattle are marketed are Myrtleford, serving cattlemen with properties in the Ovens and Kiewa valleys, and Tallangatta, serving the Mitta Mitta valley, on the east side of the High Plains. For example,

this year about 2,500 head of cattle, mostly from the Bogong region and many of them yearlings, passed through the Myrtleford yards.

The *Dargo High Plains* – Linked inextricably with the history of cattle in north Gippsland is the famous “E.T.” brand of the Treasure family, who have been running cattle on the 4,000-5,000 feet high basaltic Dargo High Plains for over seventy-five years. The grandfather of the present representative, Mr H.L. Treasure, started to raise cattle on the Plains in the days of the Dargo gold-mining “rush” when mountain townships sprang up overnight, only to disappear almost as quickly. About 1878 he started a small business selling cheese and butter to miners. Gradually the herd increased in numbers, and later, with the introduction of good quality bulls, in standard. Over the years the average number of cattle running on the Plains each summer is about 2,500. The Treasures, who have carried out a considerable amount of fencing and other improvements unusual in mountain grazing areas, market most of their cattle as calves at Bairnsdale and over the Divide at Myrtleford.

Snowy-Bennison Plains. – There are extensive snow-leases on the tops and Gippsland-fall of the Great Dividing Range enclosed in a triangle bounded by Mount Useful in the west, Mount Howitt and the Wonnangatta Valley in the north, and Mount Wellington in the south. This area includes the headwaters of the Macalister, Avon and Mitchell rivers and their tributaries. The biggest proportion of the cattle here are run on an area of good sandstone plateau country, an offshoot of the Divide which it leaves at Mount Howitt and which extends to Mount Wellington, some sixty miles to the south. Known as the Howitt Plains in the far north, and successively (coming south) as Bryce’s Plain, Snowy Plains, Bennison Plain and the Big Plain of Wellington, they comprise a series of open and well-grassed snow plains separated by belts of snow-gums and dissected on their flanks by tributaries of the Macalister and the Wonnangatta.

The Snowy-Bennison Plains, for example, cover some 150 square miles at an altitude of about 5,000 feet above sea-level, and from them 1,000 head of mountain cattle were offered for sale at Heyfield in 1953.

Two main seasonal sales are held at Heyfield, in the autumn and in the spring. Some 3,000 head are offered in the autumn. The yarding is usually made up of equal numbers of bullocks and spayed heifers, mainly 2½ and 3½ year olds, and of course the percentage of older cattle missed in previous musters.

A big percentage of the spayed cows and heifers are fat when mustered, but after the three or four weeks’ turmoil of mustering, and droving in big mobs over steep and rough mountain tracks as well as many river crossings, they become rather jaded and take as many weeks again of rest and good feed to revive and freshen in condition. They thrive in the warmer winter of the lower levels, and are saleable in the period when beef is scarce and the market at its best.

In the spring, another 4,000 to 5,000 head are offered at Heyfield in three sales – August, September and October or early November. These are cattle which have wintered in the foothills under the snowline at properties such as Glenfalloch, Licola and on the Upper Avon, or else have grazed with sheep on lowland country not sufficiently improved to be used for fattening or dairying. The condition of those yarded in the early spring is, of course, not as good as those offered in the autumn, and in most cases the “bush” cattle are in light store condition.

Howitt Plains-Upper Wonnangatta. – Foremost in numbers, age and breeding at the autumn sales are the bullocks and spayed heifers from “Wonnangatta” Station under the shadow of Mount Howitt, in the heart of the Divide. “Wonnangatta”, which cannot be reached by a wheeled vehicle, is the property of Messrs Alex Guy and Sons, of Crooked River, a downstream tributary of the Wonnangatta River. The Guy family has been associated with the Crooked

River district for over eighty years, and this part of Victoria could almost be called “the Guy country”. Arthur and Jack Guy lease about 100,000 acres of country which includes Howitt Plains and extends as far west as Mount Howitt (5,600 feet) and The Bluff, and annually draft between 300 to 400 Aberdeen Angus-Hereford cross cattle.

Mainly bred by the owners on “Wonnangatta”, they are remarkable beasts. When the white markings of the Hereford cross disappear, the Guys buy a fresh lot of East Gippsland Hereford yearling heifers, which are grown and acclimatized on the run for a year, joining with the Aberdeen Angus bulls as two-year-olds. The Wonnangatta turn-off is considered second to none of any store cattle in Australia.

The outstanding changes in the mountain bred cattle industry have been due to two main factors. First, there has been a rising demand, particularly since the end of World War II, for cattle that are well-grown and fat at two years or under (“baby beef”). Secondly, there has been a steady decline in the condition and relative importance of the bush runs, which are overgrown, thus resulting in coarse, rank, poor quality feed, increased difficulty of mustering, and consequent losses of valuable beasts.

Everything indicates an expansion in the production of early-maturing, farm-reared calves and steers. In regard to the second factor, some cattlemen maintain that the undergrowth problem on the bush “runs” or Crown leases could be overcome by the old practice of burning (still allowed in New South Wales under a permit within certain “safe” periods). Despite the insertion of a clause in Victorian leases providing that they be forfeited, or their renewal refused, on the ground that the holder or applicant has been convicted of willfully causing a fire on his lease, a number of isolated fires occurred simultaneously last summer in the mountains of far east Gippsland.

The objections to burning the bush are obvious enough when such fires spread into adjoining forest country at lower altitudes, and in any case the practice was an important contributory factor in increasing soil erosion and river siltation.

Some people, including forestry officers, contend that the present thick undergrowth is a natural transition stage in the re-development of the open forest-grassland type vegetation which made these mountain leases so valuable for cattle. Burning only aggravates the situation, since the process has to be repeated. On this theory, the “rest” which many runs are having today is ultimately an advantage to cattlemen.

However, the decline of bush raising of cattle seems inevitable to a certain extent for other reasons. The post-war period has seen the construction of large schemes for water storage and hydro-electric power generation, together with settlements and access roads, in areas once considered useful only for summer pasturing of stock. Forestry and electricity authorities now administer very strict policies in regard to grazing in areas under their control. These and similar developments have resulted in a gradual diminution in the numbers of leases granted, control of numbers of stock depastured (so as to reduce the risk of soil erosion) and similar restrictions. The nation has a tremendous stake in the preservation and development of these watershed areas, and few people would not agree that such interest must over-ride all other considerations.

Inevitably one thinks of Riley rounding up a mob of five-year-old bullocks up on Kosciusko’s side, making

*“ . . . the ranges ring
with the stockwhip, as he met them
face to face.”*

What would he think, if suddenly he was alive today, of the changes attendant on hydro-electricity schemes, the decline of the “bush runs”, and so on?



Thirsty cattle moving towards water which they can smell, Kosciusko State Park.

“Baby beef?” one hears him say. “Never ‘eard of it, mate. We raise real CATTLE up in these parts.”

NOTES

1. This practice is called by geographers “transhumance” – the seasonal transference of stock from lowland pastures (which become poor in summer) to plateau and mountain areas (where growth is rapid after the melting of the snow cover), and back again as winter approaches and temperatures drop. It is a very ancient practice, carried on not only in the Old World (e.g. by the Swiss and the pastoral nomads of Central Asia) but also in the New World, such as in the Rocky Mountain States of U.S.A.

2. “Stores” are cattle not yet ready for marketing, but which in a year or two reach such a stage.

3. Includes about 6,000 Bobby calves, viz. one to four weeks’ old from local dairy farms.

Fires and Water in the High Country

MARK ADAMS

Professor and Dean, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Sydney

Introduction

My research group has been working intensively in the high country since 2002 and I started my research career with studies that included Alpine Ash (*Eucalyptus delegatensis*) forests at Mt Buller and Snowgum (*E. pauciflora*) forests at Mt Skene, back in 1979. My studies then focused on carbon and nutrients and included the effects of the 1983 fires in forests closer to Melbourne. In the intervening period, we devoted our time to researching the ecological effects of fires in natural ecosystems around Australia and developing our knowledge of the 'water balance' of eucalypt forests and woodlands. Water, carbon and nutrients have been the mainstays of our work.

The water balance of the high country is mostly what it says – the balance of inputs and outputs. Inputs are either rain or snow. Outputs are the more confusing part of the equation. The most obvious output is the amount of water that becomes drainage and streamflow. However perhaps the most crucial understanding is that streamflow is what is 'left over' after the demands of other output processes have been met. These other outputs are: the water that goes back to the atmosphere via evaporation from (1) soil and (2) wet leaf surfaces after rain. But the biggest output is (3) the amount of water taken up by the vegetation and 'transpired' via the microscopic pores called stomata in leaves, back to the atmosphere. Transpiration consumes the largest share of the input water.

In effect, the amount of water available to become streamflow is heavily and negatively 'geared' to transpiration. This is because plants have access to the water before it can become drainage and plants use most of the rainfall, at least they do so in southern Australia. Think of it this way. Let's assume there is 100 points of rainfall. Losses to the atmosphere account for 80 points, the other 20 can become streamflow. If the loss to the atmosphere (evaporation, transpiration) increases by another 8 points (ie a 10 % increase) then the amount that can become stream flow is now only 12 points – a whopping 40% reduction! Those little stomata have

a lot to answer for! This is a simplification of the water balance but it serves to illustrate the point that plant leaves are crucial. The more leaves, the more stomata and the greater the water loss to the atmosphere.

So what is the point in relation to fire? The major problem is that bushfires tend to encourage wholesale regeneration of eucalypts. Dense regrowth after fires could mean massive increases in the number and area of leaves, and thus in the number of stomata. The output side of water balance would then be dominated even more by transpiration.

Current studies

So much for theory. We have been studying the actual water (and carbon) balances of the eucalypt woodlands and forests in the high country in Victoria, the ACT and NSW since the 2003 and 2006/7 fires. Our study sites in Victoria include the Dargo High Plains (Treasures), the upper Kiewa around Howman's Gap, Raspberry Hill on the Omeo approach to the Bogong High Plains, Wallace's Hut, and Mt McKay. In NSW we are working on the Snowy Plains and surrounds. In the ACT we have a range of sites in the upper areas of the Cotter Catchment.

In addition, we have established the only replicated, long-term experiment of the interactive effects of prescribed burning and grazing (Fig. 1). We are testing how effective these might be in reducing fuel loads and fire risks, as well as

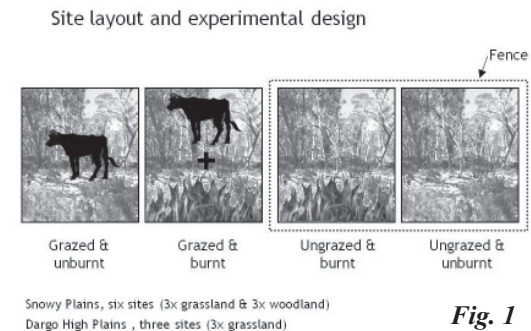


Fig. 1



assessing their effects on biodiversity and the water and carbon balance. It is important to note that previous studies, including the long-term grazing trials on the Bogong High Plains and in Kosciusko, have never properly examined the *interactive* effects of cattle grazing and fire. This was recognised by the review of previous research, conducted by Dr Richard Groves of CSIRO, on behalf of Parks Victoria.

Results

The 2003 fires produced massive regeneration in many areas, albeit that regeneration also failed in others. Amongst our study sites, the Upper Kiewa and parts of the Bogong High Plains are now densely packed with seedlings and sprouts, (See the before and after photographs in Figures 2-5), not only of the eucalypts but also acacias and a range of peas and other shrubs. While the dense seedling regeneration by Alpine Ash was expected, a similar pattern of Snowgum seedlings and sprouts in some areas was not. Research sites in the Cotter Catchment too are now heavily vegetated as a result of regeneration since the fires. A new issue is the slow collapse of

the trees killed by the fires. As they come crashing down they reduce access and add a new dimension to fire risks.

Our work on water balance is starting to bear fruit. The leaves of the regenerating eucalypts transpire (= stomatal conductance) much more water than the leaves of the mature trees they replaced (Fig. 6). Surprisingly, we have noticed that Alpine Ash also continues transpiring at night-time. This phenomenon is reasonably new to science since for many years scientists assumed that night-time transpiration was close to zero. Unfortunately for the water balance, this means that even less water is available to become streamflow.

Our studies of the interaction of grazing and deliberate, fuel-reduction burning have really only just begun. The photographic sequence (Figs 7-9) illustrates the reduced fuel load after the prescribed fire and the switch to an understorey dominated by herbaceous species. However it is clear we will need to monitor the effects for some years.



Fig. 7

March 2007 - pre-burn



Fig. 8

March 2007 - One week post-burn



Fig. 9

May 2008 - 14 months post-burn

Stomatal conductance of mature and regrowth Alpine Ash, Howmans Gap, Vic

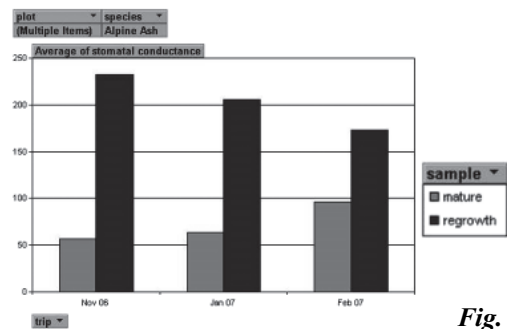


Fig. 6

Comment

Regeneration from the bushfires of 2003 and 2006/7 is having a major effect on water balances of stands of trees throughout the high country. If this continues, and it looks likely that it will, then water yield from the high country will be less, a whole lot less, than it has been for the past 20-30 years. The reduction in yield could easily be 20-30% of the long-term pre-fire yield.

The 2003 fires also released hundreds of millions of tonnes of CO₂ and other greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere (but that is another story).

Our studies of grazing alone and in combination with deliberate (prescribed) burning have shown initially that deliberate use of (cool) fire can produce the sort of outcomes we predicted. Shrubs have been replaced by herbaceous species. However this is unlikely to last very long without a follow-up fire. The changes in diversity amongst the plant community are also predictable. The key here is that this is a long-term experiment and will not yield definitive results for quite a while yet. Further experimental fires will be required.

Acknowledgements

The work described here requires the efforts of many people. The scientific team includes Tarryn Turnbull, Tom Buckley, Maria Taranto and Stephen Roxburgh, ably supported by Mike Kemp and Julie Carolane (from Whitlands) and Neil Murdoch (Cooma). Landowners Barry Aitchison, Darval Dixon and the Treasure family are warmly thanked for access to land on which we work. Funding for our studies has been primarily through the Bushfire CRC, especially via the funding provided as a result of the House of Representatives Inquiry into the 2003 fires. More recently, an ARC Linkage Grant with ACTEW as our industry partner is providing funding for the Cotter and Kiewa catchment studies. Our long-term studies of prescribed fire and grazing currently have no external support. Oh well, there is always the school holidays!

The Battler

He's seen many years of change
since he came from o'er the sea,
to settle in this unforgiving land.
He's seen fire, drought and flood
and not once did he give up,
symbolic of the pioneering man.

He fought for Aussie in World War II
and he stuck and saw it through,
prepared to die for country and his home.
He lay many a mate to final rest
and one and all, they gave their best,
many dying in the landings' bloody foam.

Well his wife, she passed away -
droving cattle he was that day,
and left him with one young, hungry boy.
Forty years have passed real quick
since the day the wife got sick,
but the lad has given many years of joy.

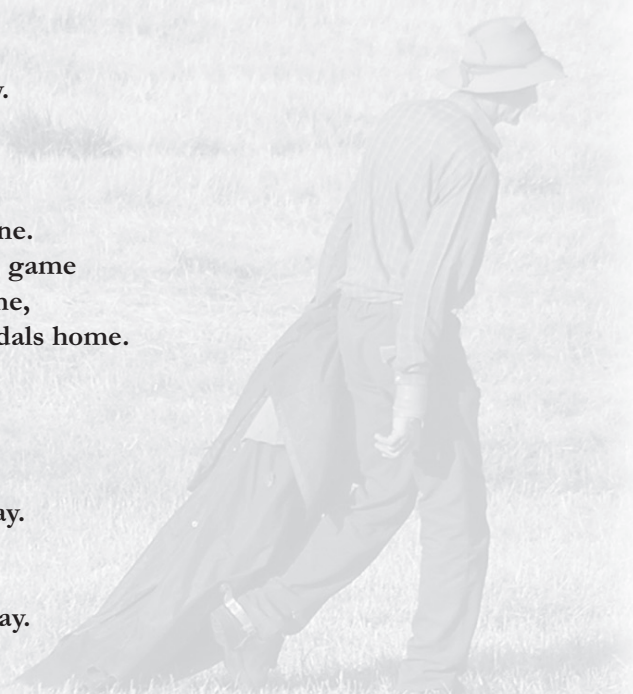
Well he went to war, in sixty four
just like his dad the time before,
while at home his father carried on alone.
Flying choppers was the young bloke's game
and he made real proud the family name,
until the day that he could take his medals home.

But sadly the boy's no longer here
he was taken by a wild eyed steer,
that broke out of the yards the other day.
Too old now to work a restless mob
or do much of any kind of job,
the old fella's been forced to town to stay.

His work hardened hand wipes back tears,
as he sits listening to the auctioneers
selling off the last of his breeding stock.
No more will he hear a stock whip crack
or move a mob along a dusty track,
for today he moves to a busy, city block.

I not only speak though of one old man,
for his kind exist throughout our land.
From the mountains to that desolate outback sun.
Bludging just was not their way,
like so many that are around today.
So thanks old timer to me you're "No. 1."

Billy Ruth



Billy's poem The Battler was the winner of the Don Kneebone Heritage Award at Junction Plain 2008

Our Huts - Our Heritage

The New Bluff Hut

THE SPEECH MADE BY GRAEME STONEY AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING



“When the fires came in 2006 they were everywhere and no-one really knew where they were because there were so many of them. It was Charlie Lovick that said to me that we had better go and have a look around the huts and have a bit of a clean-up at the same time.

So we did - with two vehicles and some mates, including Bob Richardson. We came up through the fires but there were none around the huts. It was green and short up here, so we secured the huts and cleaned up. I was pretty confident that our hut would be O.K.

But it wasn't and we got news that it had gone. My sons, Chris and Dave, Wendy and myself together with Trevor and John Pinder immediately ran the fire to investigate for ourselves. We were pretty much devastated with the scene when we arrived here. A smoking ruin - it was gone.

After we returned home we announced, almost immediately, that Bluff Hut would be rebuilt. Then the phone started ringing.

That first call we received was from ARB - can we help with cash, no strings attached? (Could they what?). Then Silcar Communications and David Muir rang, again with major cheques, to help rebuild and a truck load of timber arrived from Chum Creek

Sawmills. I know I shouldn't mention names but the offers just kept coming.

Once the fires were no longer of concern we started to get down to the nuts and bolts of rebuilding the hut. One of the things that irked us was that we could not utilise the burnt trees from the Park around the hut. To my practical mind that was hard to understand but we located some snowgum and ash on the Thomson Dam fireline.

Mal Warnock and the boys from The Springs Pastoral Company grabbed some beautiful stuff that was actually in heaps being burnt. (Sometimes you have to wonder if the world hasn't gone mad!). You can imagine the cost to retrieve this timber, load it and transport it up to the site, but that's what happened.

I can't begin to describe the goodwill that was behind the offers of help and it came in many forms. People like David Yencken (nothing was a trouble to ease our costs); Jed Culican, Alan Rice and all his mates (too numerous to mention), John Dowdle (who organised many sponsors for the building trailers); Gavan Powell (leading the High Country Huts Association - what a crew); and the caterers led by Wendy, with Cathy and Pop.

Photographs by David Oldfield



Then there was this quiet red-headed bloke who turned up for the first working bee. Then he turned up regularly. Then he turned up in a Parks uniform (I thought, bloody hell, they're everywhere!) Chris Clarke likes to remain anonymous, but he can't escape now. Chris has put in 200% into this project and deserves public acknowledgement of that. And I wish to thank Parks. After we got over the initial red-tape they have been good. So when you go to Bluff Hut and see those narrow things in the hut - they are officially benches - not beds! And after meaningful discussions we have a water tank also. Thank you especially to Andrew Marwick for where the buck stopped. While thanking people I should also mention Dannica and Tamara for the photo display and their genuine interest. Many, many people helped us get Bluff Hut rebuilt and everyone of those contributions is deeply acknowledged. The hut now belongs to the community and those people who helped all have a special connection to it."

In a day of celebrations, Bluff Hut was officially "re-opened" on 16 November 2008 but there was a serious undertone to the day and one question that was continually asked. Graeme responded to that also.

"Why would we (the Stoney family) set out to rebuild the hut when we have lost our grazing licence and it really isn't "ours"? When we had



lost our connection to this wonderful place known as the "Bluff"?

It is not understood by the "general masses", "greens" or "government departments" how the mountain cattlemen have an intergenerational affinity to their leases and the focus of that affinity and connection is "their" hut.

The loss of our leases has caused great grief and depression among many of these families and this has largely been ignored by the authorities and families have been left, and told, to "just get over it". Well we're not going to "get over it"! As families are moved off their runs that special knowledge about each of the runs will be, and is being, lost.

Who will know where the water runs uphill on the Bluff run? Who will know where Barclay's old yards are? Will they even know who Barclay was? Who will know where Charlie Lovick nearly fell off his horse? This is why we have taken the initiative to rebuild this hut and reclaim our heritage. That's why my son David led the rebuild - it was for Conner and all my other grandchildren so that there will be able to go up there and still have some connection with the land - no matter however slight or remote.

And we will show them the place where the water runs uphill."



Where the Water Runs Uphill

It lies among the snowgums in a lee beneath the Bluff,
its posts aren't smooth and polished; they are freshly sawn and rough,
yet it sits the quiet clearing with a presence old and sure,
for fifty years the traveller's given thanks to reach its door.

Before the hut, their shelter was a windbreak built with stones,
Where centuries older campfires are marked with shards of bones.
Its building, a trial of manhood for a lad of just fifteen,
Taking tin by packhorse, five thousand feet above the stream.

This hut held many stories, some you wouldn't want to know,
and every year it mustered stockmen, sometimes horses, from the snow.
It marks a deep connection with this place, as strong as blood and tears,
that spans the generations, and the ravages of years.

The fire consumed the Bluff hut as they fought in smoke below,
a final blackened epitaph; a tough year's final blow.
Yet it didn't consume their spirit, friends came forth to help them on,
but why rebuild your cattlemen's hut when your cattle lease is gone?

One families' driving passion risen, rekindled from the ground,
one son's creative spirit, and a drive inside him found,
one store of family knowledge and the will to pass it on
to teach a modern dreamtime story to the growing grandchildren.

Man's connection with this land is an ancient cultural dream,
passed down through generations as the secrets of hill and stream.
The early stockmen caught it from the drifting tribes and tales,
which helped them find the pastures, and the winding mountain trails.

Our annual cattle muster to the high plains in the spring perhaps was not much different from a far, far older thing. It's ironic we can't own the mountains just like those before, and our leases, like their freedom, were removed by government law.

Spring flowers are framed by timber rails, where the packhorse still can pass, and the children's falls are cushioned by the waving mountain grass, for they're bequeathed our spirit and we can show them still, that special glade beneath the Bluff, where the water runs uphill.

Laurie Webb 2009



World Heritage means little when the Living Heritage is banned

The Australian Alpine National Park has received World Heritage Listing in recent months but one has to ask does this mean anything when the actual living heritage of the cattlemen has been removed from the Park.

The value of the cattlemen was recognized in the actual application for classification.

“In Criterion G - Social Value The AANP is widely recognised by Australians as the ‘high country’ and many community groups have a special association with the AANP for social and cultural reasons.

The pioneering history of the high country is valued as an important part of the construction of the Australian identity featuring in myths, legends and literature. The ballad of The Man from Snowy River epitomises horsemanship undertaken historically in the rugged landscape. The stories,

legends and myths of the mountains and mountain lifestyles have been romanticised in books, films, songs, and television series and many such as the Elyne Mitchell’s Silver Brumby novels are part of Australia’s national identity.

The mountain huts of the AANP constructed for grazing, mining and recreation are valued by communities as a physical expression of the cultural history of the region. They have special associations with many groups, such as mountain cattlemen, skiers and bushwalkers but particularly with huts associations that have been maintaining mountain huts and associated vernacular building skills for over 30 years.

Criterion: H Significant People Through his ballad The Man from Snowy River, Andrew Barton ‘Banjo’ Paterson captured the imagination of the Australian people, stimulating a passion for



The Alpine National Park photographed one hundred years ago.

the High Country and the way of life associated with the mountains. His iconic ballad has had a lasting influence on Australians.

The writer Elyne Mitchell and poet David Campbell lived near the mountains and their strong association with the place is expressed in much of their nationally important literary works.

As President Christa Treasure said at the opening of the Bluff Hut, “we Australians adore our culture and heritage and future generations will be more passionate about our history. This is surely reflected in the increasing number of our young people who make the pilgrimage to Gallipoli for Anzac Day and each November for Armistice Day. We have a duty to tell our history. It is unique. I understand why the Stoneys led this rebuild. Huts are the integral base, the core of the operation, and as such are part of the cattlemen’s family spirit. It is at the huts that we would discuss strategies for mustering; remembering similar seasons and where the straggler cattle were found. It was in huts that the handing over of information of the springs and soaks that never dried up in a dry season; where a musterer was most likely to find the last little mobs at the end of the grazing season, was “passed on”.

Cattlemen are a living history.

At our last Annual General Meeting we decided to commemorate this history by having a plaque placed in each grazing run area with all the names of all the previous run holders and the dates they managed their area. We can do this in collaboration with Parks and DSE and do it we will.

It will give Australians more knowledge of our history, allowing them to understand the heritage and tradition of the families who live and work in these bush and mountain areas.

Our forbears were hard working. They produced fine cattle for the community while cutting out a living for their families.

We owe it to future generations to put our history out there, where those future generations walk, where they can feel the stinging bitter cold wind, enjoy the sunny north slopes, as people have here for nearly two centuries.”

Initially the World Heritage listing of our culture seems ironic. It seems all a bit like closing the stable door after the horse has bolted when the cattlemen are no longer a part of the “living heritage” of the Alps. For too long the cattlemen have been used “when convenient” to bring out the iconic image, to enthuse when required. We are almost treated like “icons on demand” that can be shelved and put away until the next time we are required.

The listing recognises the importance of our image and culture to the general Australian but the listing will probably do little to help us get back what we have lost. As another MCAV supporter said, “but it makes it a damn site harder [for them] to take any more away from us, now that it is recognised.”

So we won’t get back into the Alps purely on this listing coming in but it does help guarantee our huts and recognizes the value of High Country Grazing as a part of the National Estate.

Wouldn’t it be wonderful if all levels of government looked at this as an opportunity to endear Australia to the world by re-instating the cattlemen as a “living heritage.” If the world heritage classification was worthy of persuading surely it is worthy of maintaining (and were possible) reinstating the culture that it is striving to protect.

The full listing (all multiple volumes the size of telephone books) can be read at:

http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/ahdb/search.pl?mode=place_detail;place_id=105891



The Brands

The Licola High Plains Brands on the Hickeys Creek Bar 2007

KH

Kevin Higgins
(Glencourt)

GUY

Guy Family
(Wonnangatta)

CW

Chesterfield Pty Ltd

H

Higgins Family
(Licola-Glenmaggie)

R

Reeves

MH

Michael Higgins

C

Coleman Family
(Primrose Gap)

R

Monds

JRG

Jeff Gell

X

Gilder
(Glenfalloch Station)



Bidding on the branded bars has always been a hotly contested event, though

s on the Bar

The Bogong High Plains Brands on the Junction Plain Bar 2008

BH

Barry Hicks

SH

Stuart Hicks

TK

Kelly

D

Darcy Fitzgerald

JH

Jack Hicks

F

Faithfull

W

Weston

2S

Cobungra Station

8

Maddison

RB

Ron Briggs

US

Brenny Fitzgerald

TM

MacNamara



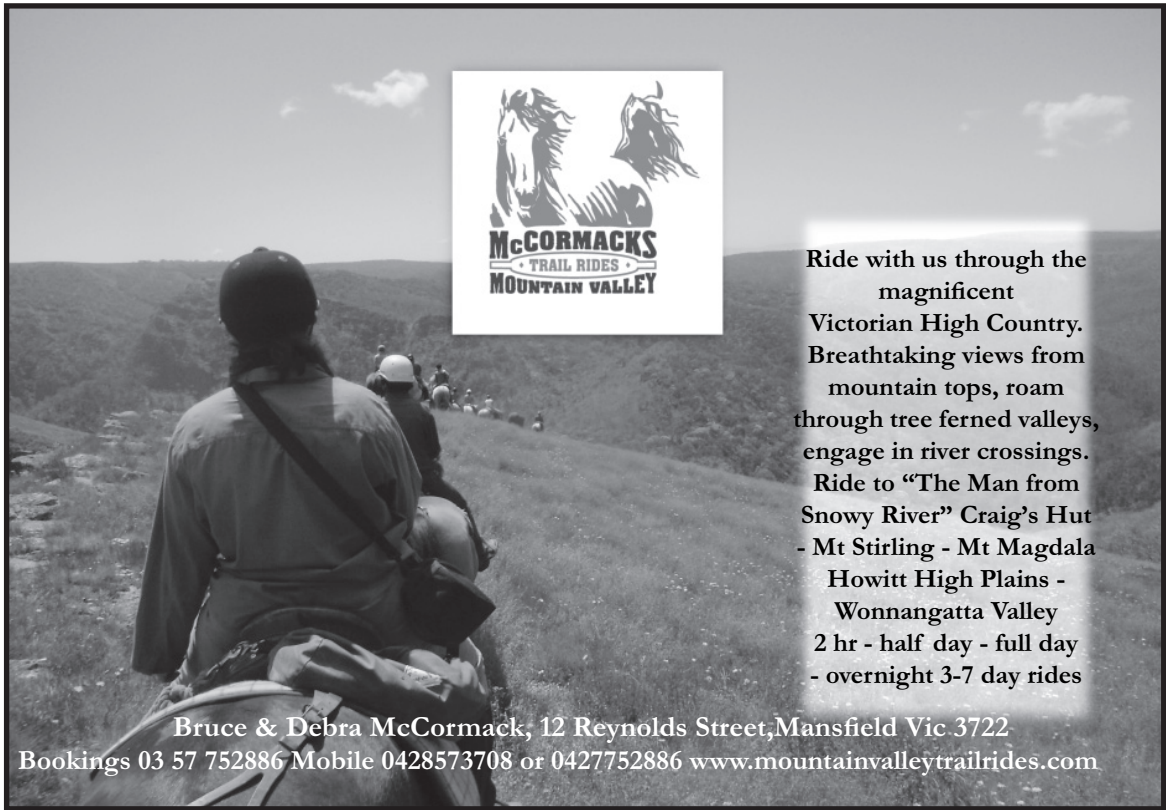
R

Ryder

♥

Blair

“inflated” bids from women have previously attracted the attention of the law.



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The makers of one of the Bar slabs from Junction Plain Get-Together

Buttercup Road, Merrijig

DEB McCORMACK

with additional information from notes written by Bruce's grandmother Frances McCormack.



John McCormack arrived in Victoria from Tipperary, Ireland in 1841 on the *John Knox* with his brothers Nicholas and Patrick. They were the sons of Michael and Bridget (nee Ryan).

In 1866 John moved his family to the Mansfield area taking his wife Frances and children Margaret, Bridget, Catherine and Fanny to Merrijig. The journey from Woodstock to Mansfield via Benalla took them fourteen days to complete by bullock wagon with cattle and horse in tow.

John selected land in the Merrijig area totalling 640 acres. When they moved onto their selection at Merrijig the first thing they had to do was find fresh water. A good spring was located on the northern boundary of the property so they made a camp nearby. The hooded bullock wagon with its precious cargo of supplies was to be their home for some time.

They eventually built their home close by on a hill near the spring, calling the house BallyPatrick.

Their family grew from four daughters on their arrival to six daughters and three sons.

John's wife, Frances (or Fanny as she was called), had a sister Kate living nearby. Kate (Catherine McCoy) had married John Hearn and they had already been in Booroolite for four years.

The two sisters decided to bring their uncle, John Suffern, out from Ireland to educate their children. John had been educated for the priesthood in Ireland but, for health reasons, came to Australia. John would spend three days at Hearn's and two

days at McCormack's. The next week the days would be reversed.

John Suffern died at the age of 75 years and is buried in the McCormack plot at the Mansfield cemetery.

John and Fanny McCormack worked very hard, and with good management, were able to find occupation for their growing family. There was the clearing of the land, cultivation and sowing down and there was the milking to be done. The cows were of Shorthorn cross. Besides being good milkers, they produced fine calves for the market.

Whilst engaged in the clearing of his land John also found work with Mansfield Shire Council. One of his major jobs was a cutting at Osborne's hill on the Mansfield-Merrijig Road for many years known as McCormack's cutting.

The family had lived off the land in many ways, they had an orchard and grew potatoes and onions which were later hung up to dry. They had to make their own bread and they churned their own cream into butter. Sheep would be slaughtered to provide meat with some of it being put into a cask of salt water for preservation. Fowls were kept and the eggs were preserved in a solution in an old kerosene tin.

Towards the end of the century the eldest son, Peter, was running sheep on Cobbler and grazing cattle on Mount Howitt. Cattle were only grazed in the high country in the summer. Jack and Harry Bullock helped Peter with the cattle. The men would be out for four to five weeks trying to keep the cattle on the leasehold. Supplies for the men, horses and dogs went out on packhorses. On record are the following numbers of cattle returning from the bush.

1902 180 head returned

1904 187 head returned

1905 131 head returned

plus 35 belonging to Peter's wife, Mary Theresa.



After Peter died in 1905 it was some time before the McCormack cattle grazed the high country. Frances died on 4 September 1906 and the following notice appeared in the newspaper:

The death is announced of Mrs J. McCormack a resident of Mansfield of 40 years standing, who arrived with her parents in the ship "Manlins" in 1842.

In 1937 Edward McCormack, grandson of John McCormack, purchased Buttercup from his cousin Buttercup Jack for £2000. Eddie and Frances McCormack grazed their Hereford cattle on the runs at the Pinnacle and Mt No. 3 and after Edward died in 1961, his son, Peter, continued to graze cattle in the high country.

Peter was born in Merrijig on 15 September 1933. He was the second son of Eddie and Frances McCormack with an older sister, Phyllis and two younger brothers, Eddie and Cyril. He grew up in the Mansfield district within view of the splendid mountains beyond Buttercup. He went to school at Merrijig and then Xavier College. After that he returned to work on the family farm at Merrijig where he stayed for the rest of his life.

As with all people on the land in the district at that time, his life was largely determined by the recurring cycle of sheep to be drenched and shorn in due season and cattle to be driven to the High Country in the late spring.

Peter met Judy Reardon and they married in June 1957. Peter and Judy had four children and when he died in 2003 the property then passed to his son Bruce and his wife Deb.

Peter was a much valued member of the MCAV always assisting at the Get-Togethers towing the caravan to the venues year after year and his son Bruce has also developed this commitment to the MCAV as is evident in his appointment as Get-Together Co-Ordinator.

Bruce and Deb have three children, Rhonda Cassandra and Adam who are the sixth generation of McCormacks on the Buttercup land. Bruce with his son Adam continues to graze their Black Angus cattle in the head of the King Valley.

We are optimistic that our four grandchildren - Jake, Cobie, Tayla and Jaxon - will be able to continue the tradition and be the seventh generation on the land. We hope you enjoy your stay in the valley.



Written by Bruce's grand mother Frances McCormack

The McCormack family have grazed stock on the high country for over 90 years. The livelihood of the cattlemen is now being threatened urged on by radical conservationists; the state government policy appears to be one which will phase out cattle grazing in the near future. I ask "why"? I believe that there is room for everybody to enjoy the mountains providing they care. I also believe that cattle grazing is imperative for the continued well being of the mountains. The numbers of cattle grazed is worked out on a quota system for the different areas to avoid over- grazing and the cattle control the excessive growth of the grasses and shrubs, reducing the possibility of huge bush fires which can cause devastation to native wildlife and forest alike. Controlled slow burning at the right time and control of noxious weeds and vermin is important for the well- being of the High country. Frances McCormack

Ingram attempts to whip State Government into action

I have advocated for many years for major change in the way our public lands are managed, particularly for major increases in ecological and fuel reduction burning as an essential tool to improve the health of our native forests and reduce the fire risk on communities living in and around forest areas. I fought alongside the Mountain Cattlemen to oppose the banning of grazing in the High Country, which also served as an essential tool in the reduction of fire fuel.

During 2007/2008, I was deputy chair of a Parliamentary Committee which conducted an inquiry into the Impact of Public Land Management Practices on Bushfires in Victoria. The committee handed down its recommendations to the State Government in 2008.

While the State Government's response and commitment to the committee's recommendations could have been stronger — particularly "support in principle" to the area targets — this is in my view another important step forward in changing the culture of fire and public land management.

The test of this governments support will come when the State Budget is released in May. The prescribed burning targets which have historically set at 130,000 hectares per annum needs to be increased to the 385,000 hectares (as recommended by the committee), as well as funding for resources and staff for this major increase in prescribed fire management.

We have already seen evidence through the progress of the inquiry towards a change in the departments' commitment to burning with large areas planed for ecological burning in State Forests and National Parks in far East Gippsland.

I recently wrote to the Victorian Premier encouraging the State Government to fully implement the committee's recommendations, outlining the financial imperative and benefit that the increased investment in prescribed burning will return in a range of areas including improved wildfire management and protection; better forestry management; water and catchment protection; and environmental outcomes.

This report and the governments response to the report is not the end of the critical need to improve and increase the use of fire in public land management

Organisations and individuals who understand the essential need for fire management must continue to advocate ensuring the need for greater fire management remains on the political agenda.

The 02/03 and 06/07 fires not only showed the ecological disaster that came about from decades of mismanagement, lack of investment and staffing of proactive fire and public land management, but also showed the economic folly of cost cutting and penny pinching on fire management. The dollars saved over the decades were chewed up in single days of incident management in addressing the resultant mega fires.

One thing is clear. Not taking serious and sustained action to increase the level of fuel reduction burning will cost more in the long term — both economically, socially and environmentally.

Craig Ingram MP is the Independent Member for Gippsland East and deputy chair of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, Parliament of Victoria.



Craig Ingram during the inspection and negotiation for the Spring Hill and Holmes Plain areas. (Brian Higgins)

Not just a bush fence

This fenced area is an important part of a larger project initiated and funded through the volunteer group, Friends of the Cobberas, who are involved in environmental and conservation projects in the part of the Alpine National Park. The project is also supported by the Alpine Brumby Management Association and Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria. The fences are vegetation monitoring plots which exclude all grazing activity by brumbies (feral horses) and will scientifically measure and monitor the impacts of these animals on sub-alpine flora communities.

The first horses are believed to have arrived in the high country in 1843 when 70 mares and two sires were brought to Black Mountain in Victoria's eastern highlands by O'Rourke. The horses were released and never mustered after he died and the present horse population in the Cobberas region are thought to be descended from these animals. Feral horse populations in Victoria are presently estimated

to be between 1000 to 3000 animals, the majority of which occur within the Cobberas-Tingaringy unit of the Alpine National Park (Dyring, 1990).

Other smaller populations are found in the Bogong, Buenba, Beloka, Davies Plain and Moroka areas of the Alpine National Park, as well as throughout Kosciuszko National Park. Numbers are thought to be slowly increasing and a separate study of feral horse population ecology is currently being undertaken.

The grazing exclusion plots will, in the long term, provide the Australian Alps park management agencies with valuable information about the nature and extent of feral horse impacts on specific native vegetation communities in the alpine environment. This project will monitor and evaluate grazing pressure so that environmental and biodiversity changes are captured and recorded to assist future management of protected alpine areas.

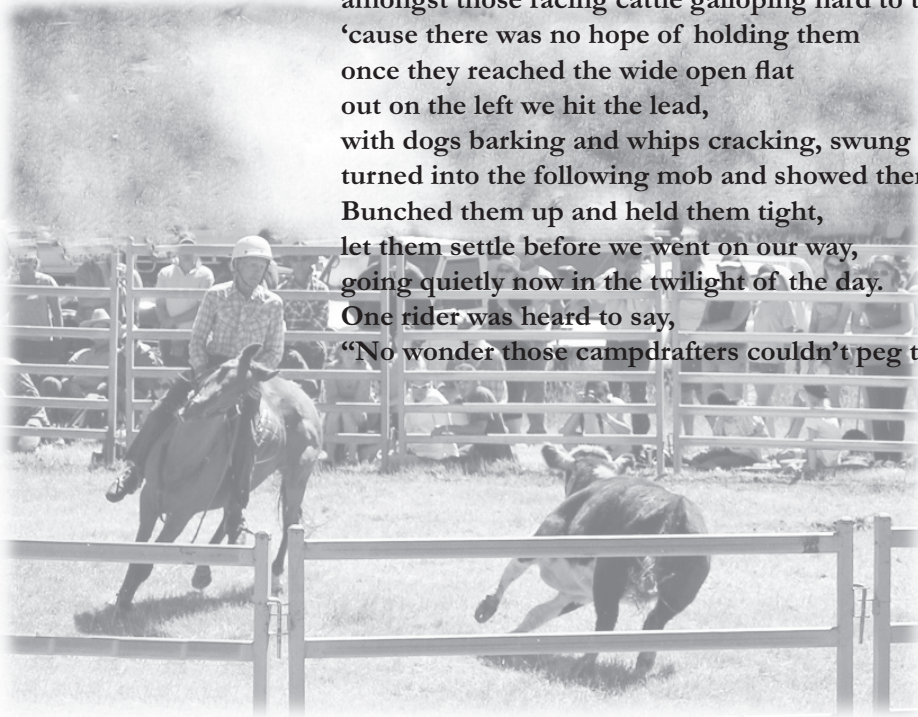


The fenced brumby plot with , inset, Buff Rogers at the plot. (Brian Higgins)

The Campdraft Mob

We let them out to head them home,
they were toey right from the start.
Had both horses and dogs working to the bone,
orders were to keep them tight, don't let them get apart.
Took an hour to settle them down,
still wouldn't put their heads down to eat,
couldn't give them an inch or we would be beat.
As they reached the top of the hill,
they could see their beloved home below.
This mob was getting restless and really wanted to go.
Three dogs, two drovers battling hard to hold the leaders
with their home in sight
Then all hell broke loose, they came from the side
they came from the back, and down the hill they went.
With dogs barking and whips cracking we yelled abuse
but there was no holding that mob back.
Then the man from Beloka let Larry have his head,
no need for spur here, for this horse knew his job;
as his rider murmured,
"Don't stumble here old mate, or I will surely meet my fate."
Dogs were no match for stampeding cattle,
it was horse and rider to win this battle.
Onward down that hill we went hell bent
amongst those racing cattle galloping hard to turn them back.
'cause there was no hope of holding them
once they reached the wide open flat
out on the left we hit the lead,
with dogs barking and whips cracking, swung the leaders to the right
turned into the following mob and showed them we wouldn't be beat.
Bunched them up and held them tight,
let them settle before we went on our way,
going quietly now in the twilight of the day.
One rider was heard to say,
"No wonder those campdrafters couldn't peg these buggers yesterday."

Trent / Rusty Connley



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An Emergency : Now and Then

BUFF ROGERS

About one hundred years ago, my grandparents, Tom Hodge and his wife Kate, who was more commonly known as Kit, purchased a 640 acre property fifteen kilometres west of Gelantipy. In those days, this paddock called the Bald Hills was very isolated with no roads and only a bit of a pack track leading into it.

At the time, rabbits were in plaque proportions throughout the district and with the Bald Hills being good, sweet basalt country, the rabbits naturally swarmed into it.

My grandparents were staying in a hut on the property, trying to curb the rabbit population by constant poisoning. In those days when rabbits were in big numbers, the best way to deal with them was to have a poison cart pulled by a horse. This cart made a bit of a furrow in the ground and dropped chopped up apples laced with strychnine into the furrow as it was pulled along. Another recipe was a mixture of pollard and phosphorous.

After they had been there a few days, my grandmother started to feel unwell, and by the next morning had become seriously ill. My grandfather knew he had to get her out to civilisation to receive any type of medical attention, so he saddled a horse and leaving my grandmother on her own, rode into Gelantipy to get help. He was able to enlist the help of four men about Gelantipy and promptly rode the

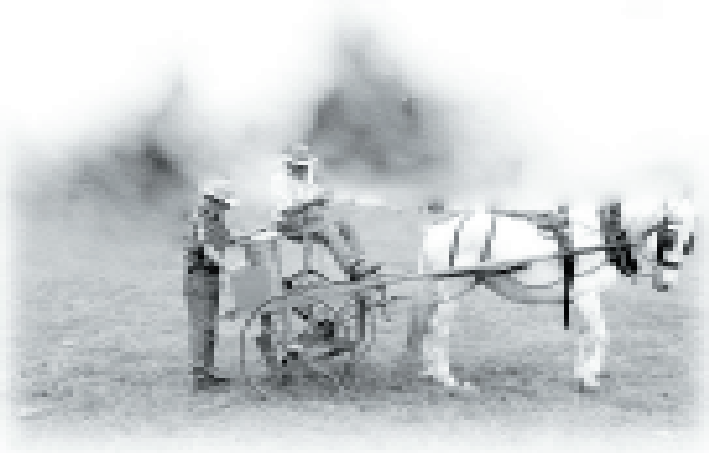
fifteen kilometres back to the Bald Hills. When they arrived, they cut two long saplings, fixed some chaff bags to them to make a stretcher, put my grandmother on it and carried her the fifteen kilometres over the rough bush track back to Gelantipy.

I don't know what happened to my grandmother once she arrived in Gelantipy, whether she was nursed back to health by the local women of the district or taken by buggy to the nearest doctor at Bruthen some one hundred kilometres away. I do know that she lived on to bear five children, my mother being the eldest, and died into her 70s.

Just recently, our next door neighbour had a serious horse accident. Nobody knows what happened as he was driving a mob of cattle on his own. His wife found him unconscious on the side of the road after his horse returned to the yards alone.

She tore home and rang the bush nurse who was there in forty minutes who in turn called for the Air Ambulance. In a little over an hour, the helicopter with two paramedics on board was landing beside him. By 4.00pm that afternoon, he was in the Alfred Hospital in Melbourne.

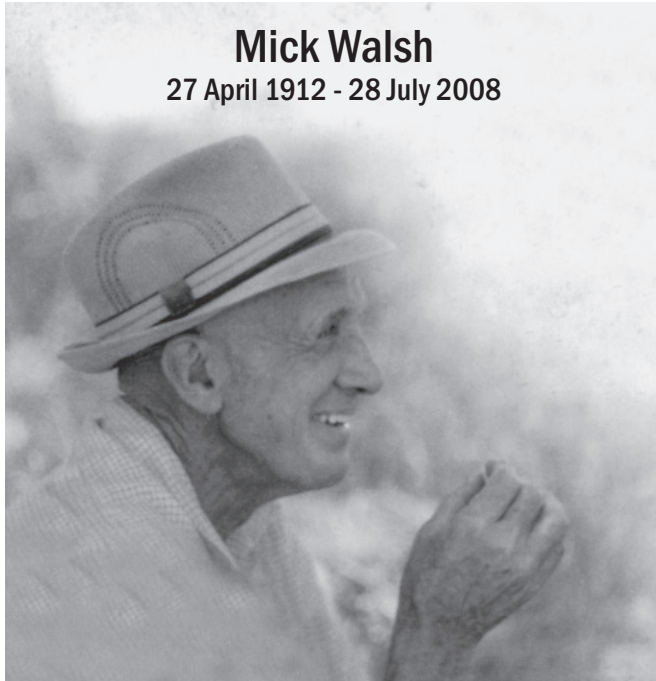
Sadly, after two months our neighbour is still unconscious. We are all keeping our fingers crossed and hoping.





Mick Walsh

27 April 1912 - 28 July 2008



Michael Joseph “Mick” Walsh was the second child of thirteen children born to James and Annie Ruby Walsh of Granite Flat. Hard working pioneers, their first three children were born at the Six Mile where they ran cattle for many years, an area now under the waters of Lake Dartmouth.

When we think of Mick Walsh, we envisage a wiry, tenacious, fellow who loved life; loved the bush, loved his family and extended family, loved Hereford cattle and excelled through hard work, to become a highly successful, highly respected cattleman whose memories we will cherish forever.

Mick was a self made success story who was always ably supported by his brothers and sisters and nephews and nieces.

Mick was renowned as a drover and cattleman, and was one of the last brumby runners in the Mitta Valley. Alongside Tom Coleman, Bill Mitchell, and Mick Lenanne, he would herd the wild horses towards Brumby Flat, an area opposite where the Eight Mile Creek ran into the Mitta River. Their

adventures became part of the Valley’s folklore and the Brumby Muster Trophy honours their exploits.

Mick’s very first job was hand milking Hereford cattle for the Enever family at Callaghan’s Creek: you’d think that would turn you off Herefords for life, but it only seemed to enhance his love for them. He combined this with rabbit trapping, and began to amass a few shillings.

His first land purchase was Holts at Granite Flat from Jack Scales. Every month, Mick would arrive with £5 payment and a pocket full of lollies for the five Scales children; he was very popular with them.

As a rabbit trapper he was unequalled, and in 1945 when he purchased the River paddock from Murphys, he paid within £20 of the purchase price in the very first year; all money earned through trapping. Skins at that stage were £1/1 lb.

Mick and Wally Ryder were unparalleled when it came to droving on the Bogong High Plains. They were two of the finest drovers and together formed a very formidable combination.



Mick's land bank continued to grow when in the mid 60s he purchased The Dart from Henry Cook. Mick simply loved the Dart, he seemed to relish the remote isolation that it offered. It was also the scene of some wonderful memories. The Eight Mile and Six Mile were also areas that were special to Mick. All of this went under water in the late 70s, but by then, Mick had added Hibbersons of Sandy Creek to his accumulated property.

In 1965 Mick found time to marry Joan: a happy union that lasted 43 years until Mick's passing. Joan was a wonderful support, backstop and bookkeeper for him, and was always there to help Mick through.

Mick loved to go out to the Stump Hotel, owned by the Perrys, for a yarn and a few beers. He also loved to stay up at his hut at Granite Flat, where he entertained many family and friends over the years with his droving stories and a cuppa.

Many stories abound about Mick.

Like when he sprayed his tomatoes with weed killer or the time he filled his oil starved ute with Tordon to get home from the Dart. And how he drove nails into the side of his ute to wire on the exhaust or how acrobatic he was on a clothesline. His love of matches often meant he burnt his own sliprails or blackberry fences out; on the night before branding, he would play euchre and poker under the light of a match, with great mates Bill Dwyer, Les Dunstan, Toy Mulqueeney, the Hodgkin boys, Denny LaFontaine, Tommy and Mike. Mick couldn't resist being in front of a camera and he couldn't resist those fireside yarn sessions, with Jack Dyer and John Perry and his mates.

Just one of the tales involving Mick was when he had taken thirty beautiful heifer weaners into the Six Mile to grow them out for an extra year, before joining them to a Hereford bull. Mike and John Scales accompanied him in three weeks later, to bring out two cows that had calved in there and bring them back to Granite Flat.

As they rode out of the bush into the clearing at the Six Mile, staring them in the face were the

thirty heifers and a two year old clean skin black baldy bull. The air immediately became blue: the language intense. 'They'll all be in calf' Mick was heard to roar; among other things.

They finally broke the bull and one cow and calf away from the mob with the bull sticking them up in a clump of ti-tree. The orders were made very clear. "Go in and flush him out Scalesy, I'll hold your horse." There was only one track in and the same track out.

John discovered that you can't support your weight on a stick of ti-tree, it bends very easily, and claims he can still feel that bull's breath under his back as a clung to the ti-tree.

They managed to get the recalcitrant bull and two cows and calves back to Granite Flat, and as Mike searched the shelves for the scalpel the call came from the yard. "You won't need that," and as they turned around in the saddle Mick stood there, with two very bloodied trophies in his hand, announcing that the bull's calf making days were over.

In recent years Mick and daughter Wendy enjoyed many holidays together. One such holiday was taking the Ghan Train from Adelaide to Darwin, Mick had waited for years for the completion of the rail line extension to make this journey.

He did have an incredible life and was relatively fit for almost 96 years. And as family and friends gathered to bid Mick a final farewell it seemed that he still had to have the last word.

During the final part of the funeral service, the personally written prayers included one that Mick so often made himself - a pray for good soaking rain to fall on the beautiful land that he loved so very much. And with that a thunder clap exploded over the church and heavy rain fell for a solid ten minutes - enough to delay the congregation from leaving the church.

Thankyou Mick for the magnificent memories and stories you have left behind.

This is an abridged version of the eulogy given by John Scales at Mick's funeral service. Thanks John.



Colin J. K. "Col" Reynolds

23 January 1927 - 25 July 2008

When Col Reynolds passed away at Mansfield in July last year, it was clear from the huge congregation in attendance at his service that he had touched many lives. He was a true gentleman, a real character, a man of the greatest integrity with an engaging personality.

Col was not a mountain cattleman by birth, but he was in spirit. He was born a million miles away from the high country - in Hong Kong to Lal Hutton and an Englishman, William Reynolds, who was a deputy registrar at the university. At the age of three the family moved to Melbourne where his brother Richard was born in 1931. In the 1940s the family again moved to Olinda where his parents took over management of the Mt Dandenong Hotel. This was a major change for the family and it was here that Col was introduced to horse riding - a passion that lasted all his life.

Many Mansfield and district residents will remember riding with Col, either socially with him as the Master of the Mansfield Hunt, or on the set of *The Man from Snowy River*. He was a very accomplished horseman.

For a short time Col attended Scotch College where he discovered a love of music. In 1943 his life changed dramatically when his mother died suddenly followed by the death of his father one year later. Col left Scotch College and after a brief time was sent as a jackaroo to a property near Orange in New South Wales. He eventually returned to Melbourne working as a motor mechanic.

It was at the motor mechanic's that he met his first wife, Nancy, who was the book keeper for the same business. They shared a common love of horses and car racing and married in 1954. They had a desire to farm and after a series of shifts and the births of their children Michael and Cathy the family finally settled at Mansfield in 1960. Col and Nancy had found their piece of "God's own country" and Col settled in as a stock and station agent. What he lacked in formal qualifications he made up for with a high degree of common sense.

Sadly Nancy died in 1995 and after her death Col was extremely lonely. Then former secretary of the MCAV, Sue Silvers, came into Col's life and brought him much happiness. He discovered a renewed zest for life and took up golf when he was 70. Col and Sue married in 2001 and had a wonderful seven years of marriage. Col had hoped he would spend the whole of his life on the farm, and he did. He died there peacefully in his sleep.

Col will forever be in my memory as the epitome of a gentleman. Years ago, when the Get-Together was at Sheeppark Flat, and the gate was still manned by the cattlemen themselves, the 2am shift needed to be filled. I stuck my hand up for the four hours to 6am Saturday morning together with another of the girls. I remember being down there in the back of the horse float with just a couple of torches and the moonlight for only a very short time when down the track wandered Col bearing gifts for us - tilly light in one hand and fortification in the other. He came back every hour or so just to make sure we were o.k. and that "none of those young bucks are giving you any trouble about paying up are they"? By the time he walked back and forth to the camp it probably would have been easier for him to man the gate himself, but his concern about "the girls on the gate" has long been remembered.

Debbie Squires with assistance from the eulogy written by his daughter Cathy as presented in the High Country Times 12 August 2008.



Gerard Francis "Chips" Egan

17 November 1933 - 17 March 2008

Gerry is another of those souls who belonged in the mountains beside the cattlemen

He was born in Bunyip the second child of Frank and Kit Egan and lived at Cora Lynn with his older sister Mary and younger brother Michael. The children all helped on the farm and attended the local Catholic school at Iona. Gerry then went to St Bede's at Mentone as a boarder and counted the days until he could return home. He completed his schooling at the end of Year 11 when he was sixteen years of age and worked on the family farm.

He purchased a truck and commenced a general cartage role in the area transporting hay, taking livestock and vegetable products to markets in Melbourne and Dandenong. It was then that he investigated moving to Heyfield to expand his cartage business. He made the decision to come to Heyfield in 1953 and lived in one of the mill huts while carting pulp to Maryvale - but he was constantly on the lookout for opportunities.

He married Dawn in 1956 and they purchased their home in Anderson Street where they continued to live for the next 50 years. As Gerry's cartage business grew, so did the family. Gerry and Dawn had three children, Kerri, Vicki and Stephen, of whom he was immensely proud.

Gerry loved history and the bush and the mountains. In the late 60s and early 70s Gerry ventured into the bush buying a bulldozer and a

contract to source and transport timber from the bush to the mills. It was then that he forged great friendships with the Higgins family, Brian Brown and Carl Krawzyck. He always said that as a logging contractor he was a committed conservationist.

Gerry was also a story teller. He loved a yarn and he loved writing his own poems. He was a regular at the Get-Togethers and when the Don Kneebone Heritage Award came along it was right up Gerry's alley. Right from the start in 1992, Gerry would contribute to the wealth of stories told and each year he would come back with another poem or yarn. Sometimes it was a battle to see who between Mick Walsh and Gerry would give up first and concede defeat in the "spinning" department.

Gerry did not have good health in recent years but had contributed greatly to his local community in his lifetime. His death in March is a genuine loss for the community of Heyfield.

Debbie Squires with the assistance of Brian Higgins.



Robinson William

"Bob" Andrews

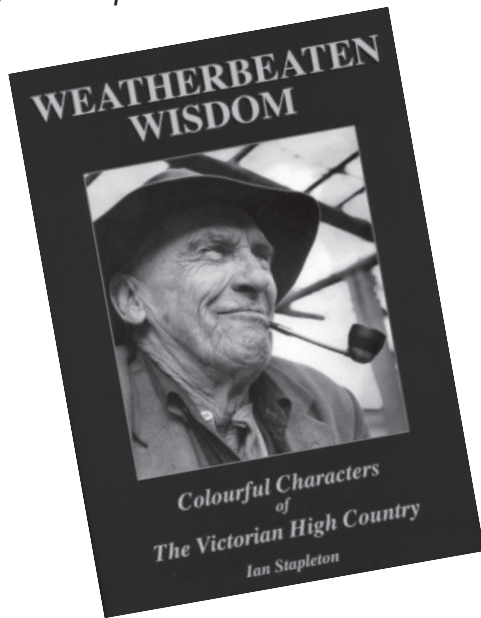
25 July 1924 - 21 December 2008

It is also noted that well known local Gippsland agent, Bob Andrews, passed away in December. For many years Bob had been associated with the Omeo/Benambrambra/Ensary sales with the AML&F team and was a familiar figure around the yards.

On the Bookshelf

Weatherbeaten Wisdom

by Ian Stapleton



If you have a genuine interest in the books available about the high country of Victoria then you will be familiar with the comprehensive work done by Ian Stapleton. He first went to the Bogongs in the 1960s under the guise of the outdoor education scheme and he has been attached to it ever since.

Weatherbeaten Wisdom is the fourth in a series on the characters and “wisdom” of the high country. This was also supposed to be the last - but it appears that Ian has at least two more planned which is good to hear - *Of Pioneers and Perseverance* and *A Mountain Muster*, after which he is threatening to flatten the computer with his Land Rover and hang the remains on the wall! (I think this has something to do with how involved he has become with this series.)

In his years of collecting, Ian has copied many photographs, made numerous recordings and scribbled so many notes I am sure that he is personally responsible for the logging of at least a few acres of trees.

Ian’s contribution to the recorded history is immense and this book is no exception. Those readers familiar with his previous titles know

the quality of the productions and the wealth of information they contain, but for the uninitiated, in the words of Molly Meldrum “do yourself a favour” and have a look at this.

This fourth book in the set draws on characters from all over the Victorian High Country. This time they do not hail from one particular area, nor do their life stories necessarily have anything in common at all. The one thread that ties them all together is that their stores make us think and reflect upon our own lives, values and priorities.

Whether it be gold miners like Cec Cooper, Arthur Nightingale or Bill Matthews, publicans like Granny Svenson, bullockies like Agnes Buntine or Charles Wykes, farmers like Oliver Smith, Bill Ayres, Alan Bennie or Wilfred Nicholas, mountain cattlemen like the Bryces, the Guys, Denny Connolly, Jim Fry or Jack Doherty, storekeepers like Albert and Martha Stout, adventurers like Harry Price, hut builders like Fred Fry, sawmillers like Harold Doughty, policemen like Jim Draper, or poets like Billy Wye, something in each of their stories will strike a chord with you.

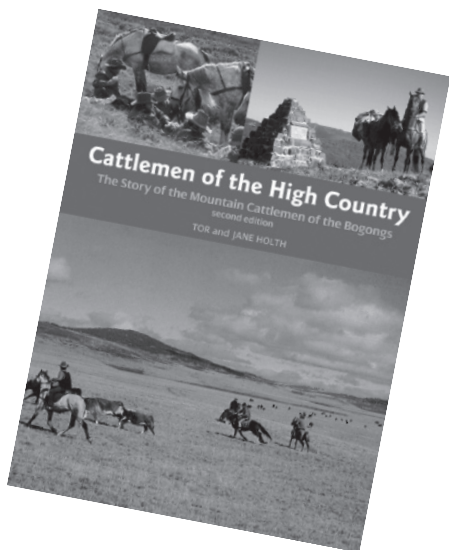
In 2005 I said the second book was a beautifully produced hardcover book of 273 pages with many photographs, some that hadn’t seen the light of day for many a year. It represented excellent value for an Australian produced book of this quality. Nothing has changed - except that this time you get more pages.

Ian will be at the Get-Together where you can purchase signed copies of the book or write to him at Feathertop Track, Harrietville 3741 and I am sure he would be delighted to hear from you.



*Christa Treasure and Ian Stapleton
at the 2008 Get-Together*

Cattlemen of the High Country by Tor and Jane Holth



In the summer of 2003 bushfires raged for nearly two months in the alps of north-east Victoria. Instead of being allowed back onto their leases the following summer, the mountain cattlemen were instructed by the state government to not take their cattle up in case they caused further damage. In 2005 the seven-year leases expired, and they were not renewed, ending a tradition which was being handed on to a fourth generation.

After being out of print for many years this new edition of *Cattlemen of the High Country* looks at the issue of fire and cattle grazing and the struggle of the mountain cattlemen to retain their leases. It provides an enduring record of those whose lives have formed the basis of verse and legend.

In this book their yarns and reminiscences reveal a characteristic courage and endurance, and an indomitable sense of humour. If you don't own a copy of the first edition then this book is a "must have" for your shelf.

Available at your local bookshop through Dennis Jones Distributors.

Beautiful Australian Horses 2009 by Nicole Emanuel

If you like the look of the cover of this year's *Voice of the Mountains* check out more of Nicole's work in her calendar *Beautiful Australian Horses 2009*, (a limited number are available at the marketing tent). Nicole is a freelance photographer with an obvious passion and love of horses and the matching ability to photograph. She has captured some wonderful images on rides with the Lovicks and around Tom Groggin amongst others.

Currently in the process of moving to Gippsland she is thankful to the cattlemen she has met and befriended as they are the inspiration behind many of the images in the calendar.

The calendar is self-published and only available from her direct. She has also printed bookmarks and greeting cards along the same line. You can order or contact Nicole through her website at www.capriolepress.com or by writing to PO Box 811, Gisborne, 3437 while her mail is being redirected.





**Maximum Good Times
thanks to our Friends at
Pepsi Max**



34th Annual Get-Together Junction Plain 2008

Junction Plain was once again the venue for a great Get-Together with glorious weather and great music for the more than 2,000 who attended. The highlight of the weekend was the prestigious Cattlemen's Cup with a "from behind" win for reigning champion Lincoln Adams, narrowing out Graeme Rozynski. No doubt, Graeme will be harder to beat next year if Lincoln decides to try for a fifth win. Steve Bolton and David Olsson were third and

fourth respectively. Following the main event a field of talented up and coming Juniors showed just how tight this race is going to be for years to come.

Competition was just as keen in the other events for the weekend with the Wally Ryder Walking Race, the Packhorse events, Whipcracking and Challenges all attracting enthusiastic competition. Results were:

Junior Whipcracking

- 1st Luke Higgins
- 2nd Ellie Woodgate
- 3rd Jack Mitchell

Juvenile Whipcracking

- 1st Jenelle Kiely
- 2nd Emma Higgins
- 3rd Paige Williams

Ladies Whipcracking

- 1st Dianne Hurley
- 2nd Aleshia Sievers
- 3rd Suzannah Keyte

Open Whipcracking

- 1st Dianne Hurley
- 2nd Wayne Campbell
- 3rd Aleshia Sievers

Dog High Jump

- Equal 1st Britney Bolton with "Tip"
Greg Cunningham with "Tara"
- 3rd Bill Larmbur with "Blue"

Ladies Bushman's Challenge

- 1st Dianna and Sara
- 2nd Terrienne Whittington
- 3rd Sue and Bonnie Newton

Mens Bushman's Challenge

- 1st Tom Mitchell and
Lloyd Powell
- 2nd Kane and Grant
- 3rd Brian and Noel

Tug-of-War

- Mens** Mansfield

- Ladies** Dusk til Down

Air Bull Ride

- 1st Mal from Narracan
- 2nd Policeman
- 3rd Justin from Tumut

Ladies Haystacking

- 1st Amanda and Jo
- 2nd Kathryn Tobias and
Annette Miller
- 3rd Rosie Bennett
and Rhonda Bennett

Mens Haystacking

- 1st Leo and Ben
- 2nd Steve and Wayne
- 3rd Don and Paul

Cross Cut Saw Competition

- 1st Rachel and Sophie
- 2nd Adam and Chelsea
- 3rd Tup and Luke N

Junior Cross Cut Saw

- 1st Rachel and Sophie
- 2nd Adam and Chelsea
- 3rd Tup and Ellen
- 4th Luke and Terry
- 5th Tom and Mitchell

Wally Ryder Walking Race

- 1st Jim Flannagan
- 2nd Charles Connley
- 3rd Ann Maree Forge

Junior Packhorse Race

- 1st Ellen Forge
- 2nd Georgia Flannagan
- 3rd Mitchell Ward

Ladies Packhorse Race

- 1st Anne-Maree Forge
- 2nd Bonnie Newton
- 3rd Aleshia Sievers

Mens Packhorse Race

- 1st Graham Forge
- 2nd Ron Connley
- 3rd David Olsson

Neatest Pack

- Bonnie Newton

Relay Race

- 1st Graham Forge
- 2nd Ian Forge
- 3rd Ben Neville

Junior Cattlemen's Cup

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

Cattlemen's Cup

- 1st Lincoln Adams
- 2nd Graeme Rozynski
- 3rd Steve Bolton
- 4th David Olsson

Don Kneebone Heritage Award

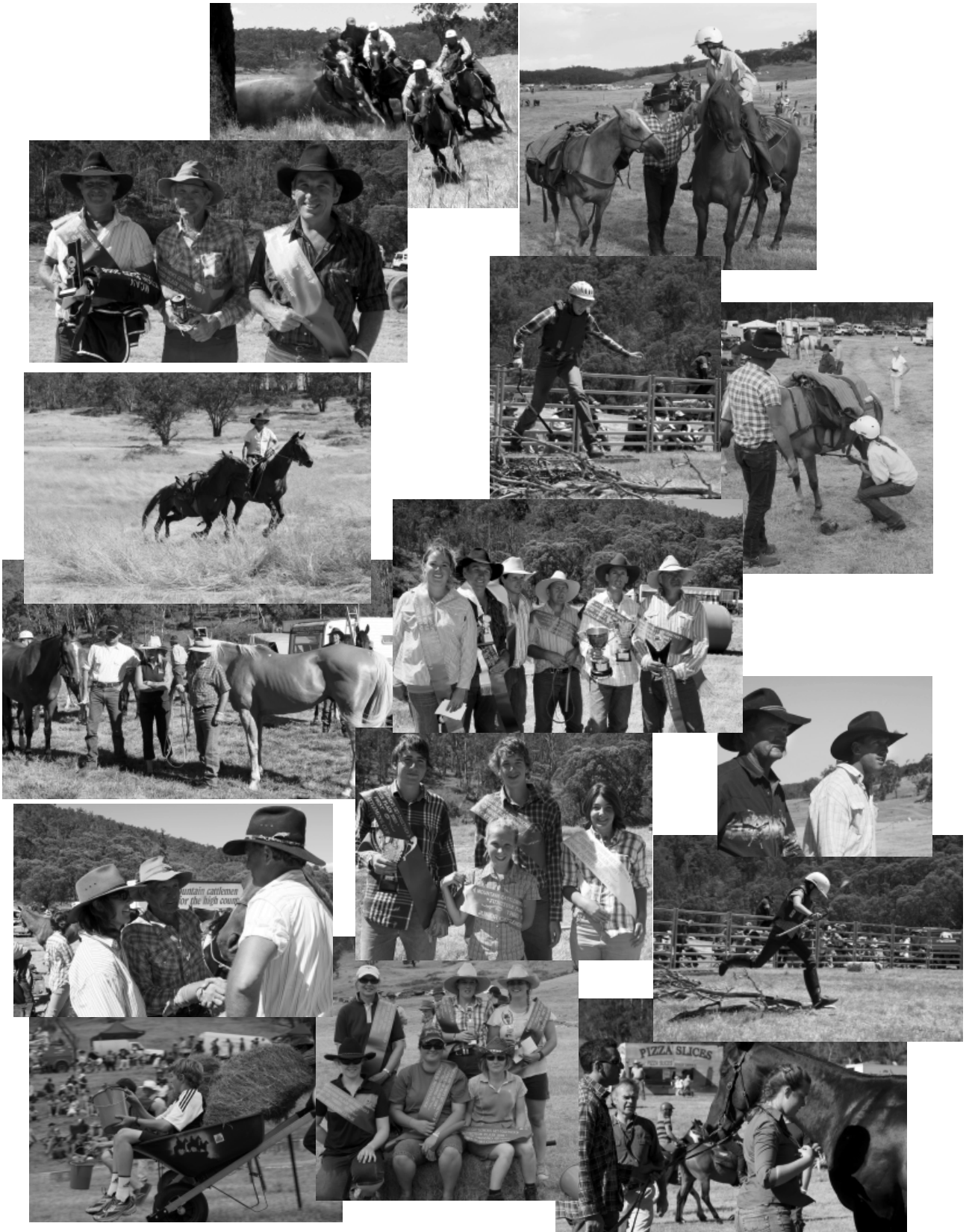
- Bill Ruth

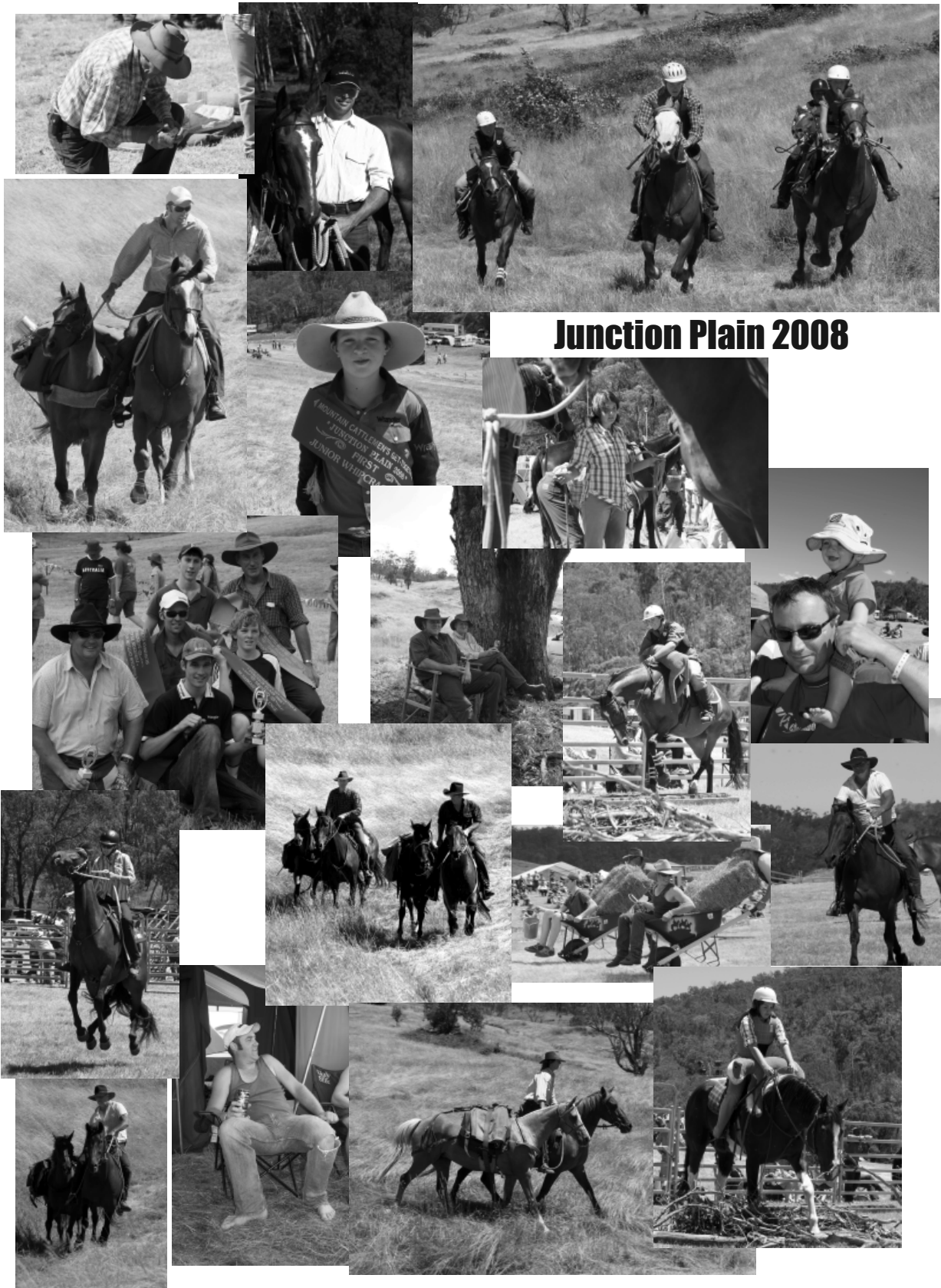
Bush Minstrel Award

- Alan Mull

Bush Laureate

- Greg Oatley





Junction Plain 2008



Junction Plain 2008



Photographs of the Get-Together courtesy of Frances Westbury and Julie and Dennis Carstairs





Winning the Cattlemen's Cup Not Easy



**New Mazda BT-50
Too Easy**

69th ANNUAL MOUNTAIN WEANER CALF SALES

EU ACCREDITED CATTLE

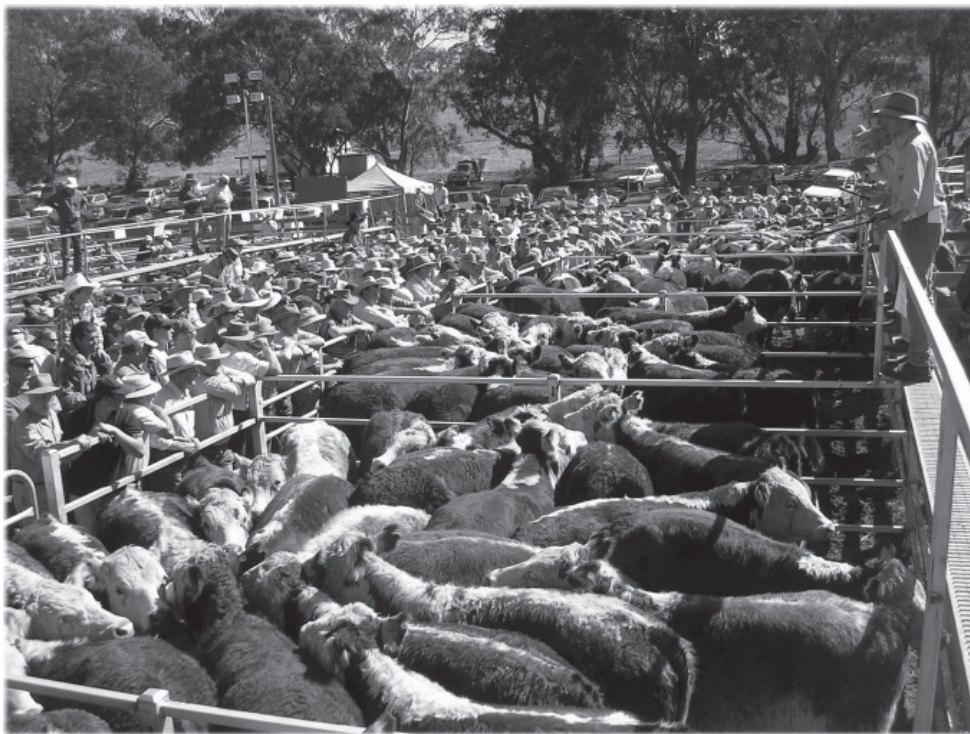
This is a beef sale only - female cattle are free to NSW and SA.

All cattle standing on soft floor yards with water.

A large percentage of calves yard or ELMS weaned.

OMEQ BENAMBRA ENSAY OMEQ

Tuesday 10 March and Wednesday 11 March 2009



*All intending purchasers must register their names
and P.I.C. numbers prior to the sales.*

A scanning fee will be charged to all purchasers.

Contact: David Hill 0417 538 220
 Morgan Davies 0438 081 529
 Office (03) 5152 3037

Elders

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria held on Friday 26 September 2008 at the Berwick Showgrounds commencing at 10.15am.

Present

Christa Treasure, Ray Anderson, Lyric and Rhyme Anderson, Wendy Jubb Stoney, Graeme Stoney, Fiona Treasure, Frances Westbury, Rhonda Treasure, Cath Noble, Susan Noble, Kaye Chapman, David Treasure, Glenn Joiner, Doug Treasure, Laurie Morrison, Chris Commins Travis Conn, Norm Nelson, Stewart Bourke, Sue Dalziel, P Monds, Brian Higgins, Richard Faithfull, Anne Faithfull, Bruce McCormack, Rusty Connley, John Cook.

Apologies

Bruce Commins, Kate Commins, Louie Commins, Anne Patterson, Simon Turner, Charlie Lovick, Erika Kirk, Ben Treasure, Ron Briggs, Ross Brown, Melissa Joiner, Pauline Venn.

Minutes

Fiona Treasure read the minutes from the 2007 AGM. Chris Commins accepted the minutes as read, seconded Doug Treasure, voted on and carried.

Annual Report

Christa Treasure gave her report verbally. Graeme Stoney moved that Christa's report be accepted, seconded by Doug Treasure, voted and carried. Doug thanked Christa for her hard work.

Financial Report

The financial report was given by Anne Faithfull including hard copies of the report. Graeme Stoney moves that Anne's report be accepted, seconded by Doug Treasure. Carried.

Marketing Report

Pauline Venn was absent from the meeting and Susan Noble gave a brief rundown on what is happening with marketing. Graeme Stoney moves that we formally write to Pauline – thanking her for her efforts. Seconded Chris Commins. Carried.

Election of Office Bearers

President Christa Treasure invited David Treasure to take the chair for the election of office bearers.

President

The nomination of Christa Treasure was moved by Graeme Stoney. There being no other nominations, Christa Treasure was declared elected.

Vice President

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

Secretary

The nomination of Fiona Treasure was moved by Christa Treasure. There being no other nominations, Fiona Treasure was declared elected.

Treasurer

The nomination of Anne Faithfull was moved by Doug Treasure. There being no other nominations, Anne Faithfull was declared elected.

PR Officer

It was discussed about having a PR Officer with no conclusion.

Marketing Officer

The nomination of Susan Noble was moved by Anne Faithfull. There being no other nominations, Susan Noble was declared elected.

GTG Co-ordinator

The nomination of Bruce Mc Cormack was moved by John Cook. There being no other nominations, Bruce Mc Cormack was declared elected.

David Treasure handed the Chair back to Christa Treasure.

Simon Turner has been filling the position of 'Special Projects Officer'. The AGM moved that Christa Treasure asks Simon Turner to take on the future special project work. Seconded by Chris Commins, voted on and carried.

Appointment of Auditor:

It was moved by Anne Faithfull that Ken White from Whites Accounting & Taxation Solutions, Bairnsdale be the Auditor. Seconded by Doug Treasure. Carried.

Fixing Honorariums:

President - \$6000

It was moved by Graeme Stoney and seconded by Doug Treasure 'that the president's honorarium of \$6000 remains the same'. Carried.

Vice President - \$2500

It was moved by Doug Treasure and seconded by John Cook 'that the vice president's honorarium of \$2500 remains the same'. Carried. Last year Chris Commins donated \$2000 of his honorarium back into the Association.

Secretary - \$5000

It was moved by Graeme Stoney and seconded by Bruce Mc Cormack 'that the secretary receives an honorarium of \$5000 per year'. Carried.

Treasurer - \$5000

It was moved by John Cook and seconded by Doug Treasure 'that the treasurer receives an honorarium of \$5000 per year.' Carried.

Marketing Officer - \$2000

It was moved by Doug Treasure and seconded by Richard Faithfull 'that the marketing officer's remuneration of \$2000 remains the same'. Carried.

Setting membership and associate membership subscription fees.

Doug Treasure moves that full membership levels remain the same – 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. This was seconded by Chris Commins. Carried.

The associate member fees were discussed. Anne Faithfull moved the motion that the singles fee should remain at \$30 but the family fees should increase from \$40 to \$50. This was seconded by Susan Noble.

Graeme Stoney and others did not back this idea of increasing the fees for families.

Graeme Stoney moves an amendment that the fees for singles and families remain the same. Seconded by Brian Higgins. Amendment carried to become the motion – voted on and carried.

Branch Reports

David Treasure – Gippsland
Chris Commins – Omeo
Bruce McCormack – Mansfield

Awards

Graeme Stoney awarded Life Membership to Doug Treasure.
Certificates of Appreciation were awarded to John Dowdle, Debbie Squires and Pauline Venn.

Meeting closed at 11.40am.

SNOWY RANGE HORSEBACK TOURS

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



WOOD'S POINT
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WE HAVE OUR OWN HIGH COUNTRY ACCOMMODATION ON
THE LAND OUR FAMILY HAS HELD FOR OVER 140 YEARS

The Association is indebted to the following businesses and organisations for their ongoing and loyal support of the mountain cattlemen. This year we owe a special thanks to Bruce and Debra McCormack, Steve and Sharon Bell and Peter and Helen Benziger for the use of their properties and all the Get Together workers who attended working bees and spent untold hours “getting things ready” and then spend their weekend working to make sure it is a successful Get-Together for everyone. Thank you all.

Dyers Transport	Mansfield Betta Electrical	Snowy Mountain	Taipan Footwear
Mazda Australia	Furniture One	Rug Company	Breandon and
Mansfield Lions	Bill Lines	Home Timber	Jackie Fraser
Mansfield Apex	Outdoor Pleasure	and Hardware	Variety Store Mansfield
AML Risk	Tolmie Tavern	High Country Horses	NAB Bank
ARB 4x4 Accessories	Henry the Third	Mansfield Shoe Store	J C Melton
Mansfield Shire	Tony Demasi	Home Station	Australian Sweets
Bins' n' Skips	Mt Buller Freight	Chippys Timber	Oleo Mac Chainsaw
Peter Wooley	Evan Lowing	Country Tales Bookstore	Rhino Tanks
David Blunden	Bunnings	Watson's Mountain	Mansfield Mt Buller
Mansfield	Great Log Bear Homes	Country Trail Rides	Alpine Transport
Community Radio	McCormack's Mountain	Merrijig Rodeo Committee	Coates Hire
St John's Ambulance	Valley Trailrides	Mansfield Agriculture	Pacific Hire Mansfield
Ambulance Victoria	Oakbank	and Pastoral Society	J.C. Melton
Mansfield Courier	Mansfield Veterinary Clinic	Phudleys	Sports First
Peter Murray	Mansfield Ice	Mansfield Produce	Work Hire Australia
Rows-A-Loo	Marksiga Mansfield	and Pet Supplies	Tallangatta Construction
Mansfield Printing	Delatite Hotel	Ochre Earth	and Maintenance
Ian Forge	Lovicks	Twisted Sisters	Fisher and Paykel
Weekly Times	High Country Adventure	Lingerie Shop	Nylex Tanks
Rodwells Mansfield	Oobidat	Rays Outdoor Western Boot	Tankmaster Tanks
Tourism Victoria	Libby's Saddlery	Traders	Koala Country Orchards
A Class Solar	Mobile Saddler	Scalliwags	Central Steel Traders
Systems Conergy-Apricus	Rick and Lesley Allen	Mansfield Family Clothing	Tango Communications
Mansfield Signs	Sunset Campers	Mansfield Horsepower	Beechworth Honey
Bohaut Transport	Traralgon	Mansfield	Leonie Photographic
	Albury Horseland	Tattslotto Agency	Images
	Mansfield Country Apparel	Wino-Art	

Acknowledgments and Back Issues

I would like to thank all who have helped and given assistance in the production of Voice of the Mountains once again.

This year was just as frantic - thank goodness for emails, jpgs and mobile phones. To all those who responded, thank you - your contribution was appreciated. This year the lucky recipients of the pushy phone calls and emails were: Deb and Bruce McCormack, Christa Mitchell, Graeme Stoney and Wendy Jubb Stoney, Susan Noble, Brian Higgins, Sue Reynolds, John Scales, the Walsh family, Simon Turner, and I know others were asked to respond quickly to requests on my behalf so thank you one and all.

Once again, Frances Westbury has thoroughly documented the Get Together with her photographs as well as Julie and Dennis Carstairs and I thank them for their efforts. I know I can rely on a disc of photos from Frances every year. And while on photographs, thanks also to Nicole Emmanuel who took the wonderful cover photo and managed to get emails to me while shifting house. Leanne Dyson who got "roped in" last year has again assisted with the actual production of Voice in the typing, "get this", "read that" and coffee departments. Thanks Leanne.

Neil Cox also got "roped in" at the last minute and spent hours on end proof reading, so if there are things still wrong, I probably did it when I did the corrections. Thank you Neil.

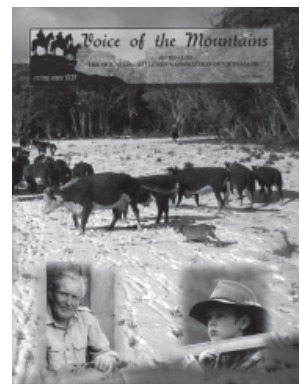
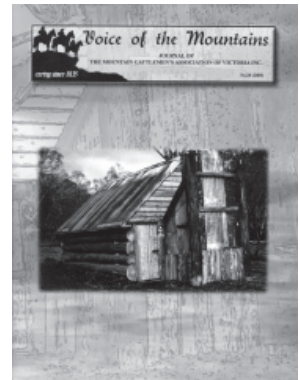
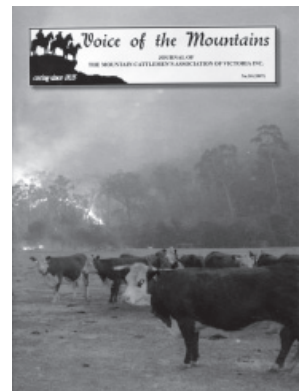
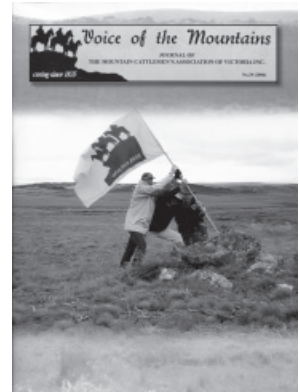
Each year Stephen Baggs, (my employer) gives me carte blanche time, computer facilities, internet, phone and e-mail access to complete Voice. This year has been no different. Thank you again. The pressure was really on the E-Gee team again this year and again they have come through. Thank you too.

Had it not been for all of these people - there would be no Voice of the Mountains.

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

Debbie Squires
Editor

Limited back copies of some of the past issues
are available by post from
MCAV, P.O. Box 376, Sale 3850





*Preserving our heritage
and passing it on to the next generation*