



Voice of the Mountains

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

caring since 1835

No.33 (2010)



*So all the cracks had
gathered to the fray.*

Voice of the Mountains

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

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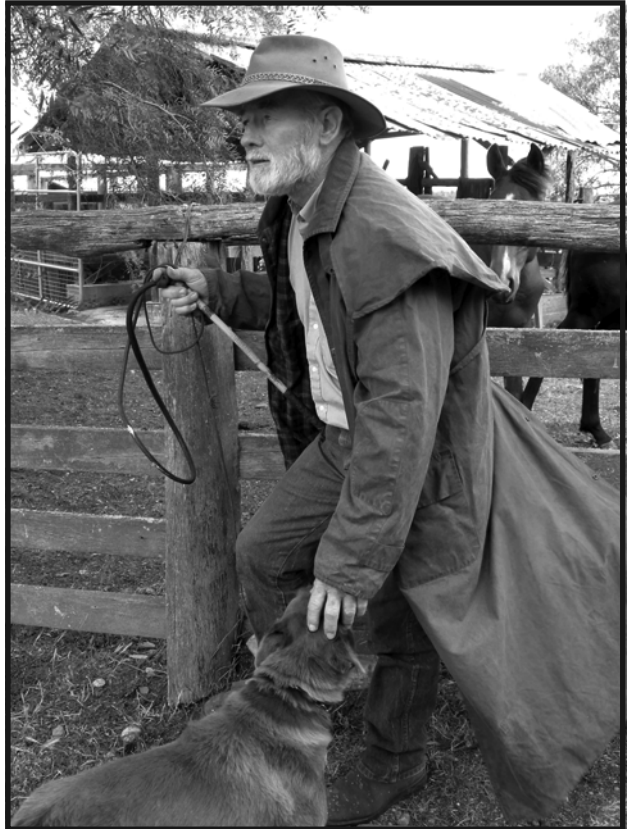
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Copies of the respective Get-Together images are available from both professional photographers. Gary Coombe Photography, Beechworth (www.garycoombephotography.com.au) 0418 926 405 and Christian Jemison, Images with Altitude, Bright (www.iwa.com.au) 0427 220 005

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President's Message 2010

DOUG TREASURE



MCAV President Doug Treasure

The continued support the MCAV receives from the broader community is a great morale booster. For those of us who work under a cloud regarding our alpine cattle grazing, this support is a great lift to us.

The past year has been one of interesting developments.

- ◆ The economy has been in the news a lot.
- ◆ The environment has received a lot of political attention, particularly with the outcome of the Copenhagen conference.
- ◆ Our population is ever increasing at a local, national and world level.
- ◆ Our water resources are becoming stretched whilst our ever increasing use of non renewable resources increases.
- ◆ The ability of the world being able to feed itself in a sustainable manner is in question.

I wonder if we are not on a collision course with nature because as a nation we want it easy and comfortable. So long as we have a strong Aussie dollar, we can import all our needs. Land management practices are ever under review, and they need to be. We cannot have a mind set that says give me more, and I will consider the environment when I am comfortable.

Food production is vital. We need to have it produced in a sustainable manner.

Well managed High country grazing produces clean, green healthy food, without creating salinity, without the use of a fertiliser regime that affects waterways. It assists water yield for our streams as less water evaporates from mown grass.

I believe that as the nation's environmental problems continue, the public will realise that many of our land use practices need to change.

A good look at what land management was in the past can be a good guide towards the future. Yes population pressure is much greater, but that does not mean the old basic principles are different.

Fuel reduction is one of the biggest issues we need to confront.

More helicopters and bigger fire trucks are good to have, but that is like putting more ambulances on the roads rather than educating drivers to look after themselves. It does not stop the problem of road trauma. Like poor land management, it only gives greater employment for those cleaning up after the trauma.

We in the MCAV will continue to advocate the return of cattle and the cattlemen.

We have knowledge built up over generations in the mountains to continue practices that will reduce the devastation of fire and sustainably help feed Australia.

Best wishes to all, and remember your responsibility to your planet and the future.

Cheers,

Doug Treasure.
President
Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria
January 2010

Why support the Mountain Cattlemen?

The Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria (MCAV) represents a hardy group of people whose families and predecessors have grazed their cattle and maintained the Victorian High Country dating back to 1834.

From Australian settlement to the present, caring for their cattle and custodianship of the land has been a cross generational family undertaking, so their training in the mountains is a lifetime experience. Consequently, the cattlemen are known for their love and knowledge of the bush, for independent action but with the ability to co-operate. They are persistent. They have a profound interest in the past. They respect their elders because of past lessons learned. As the cattlemen went about their difficult business, a unique Australian culture and heritage was gradually developed without them even knowing!

In the 1960s conservation and political group pressure aimed at removing cattle began to grow. Over the next forty years the cattlemen were involved in a bitter and prolonged public fight to save their leases. That fight was a saga and is a story in itself! The cattlemen's struggle led to an agreement brokered on the floor of State Parliament in 1989 to create an Alpine National Park. In return the cattlemen were granted, in legislation, seven year renewable licenses to graze some sections of the new Park.

In 2005 the Labor Government broke that agreement and cancelled all grazing in the Alpine National Park. The Park contained the bulk of the grazing leases so the removal dealt a significant emotional and economic blow to many families. Cattle are still run on some State Forest leases and there are concerns they will be the next to go. The loss of the Alpine leases led to a drop in MCAV membership but the cattlemen have a large and strong supporter base of financial associate members. These supporters believe in the ideals of the MCAV which over five decades has fought for sensible conservation and fire management and continued access to our public land.

Since 1834, the cattlemen's close connection to the High Country and especially their knowledge as to "how it works" is unparalleled, yet this knowledge is largely ignored by the authorities. No more better example is the 2003, 2006/7 and 2009 bushfires which were predicted and documented for the last forty years by the cattlemen. These documents can be viewed on our website at www.mcav.com.au.

The taking of the Alpine leases in 2005 means the intimate knowledge of the land, the culture and living Australian heritage of the Mountain Cattlemen is in grave danger of being lost to Australia forever. The MCAV is working to preserve that knowledge and heritage and to have cattle grazing reinstated as a proven management tool to reduce fuel loads. This has to be done while there are still cattlemen around to explain to the next generation how to do it.



Recording the real history of the high plains

CHRIS COMMINS

The MCAV was not invited to make a presentation at the Heritage Council's Cultural Landscapes Forum at Omeo in May 2009. Ironic, considering that a feature building of the Forum - Wallace's Hut - is the oldest structure on the high plains (c1889) and was actually built by cattlemen.

That was until Chris Commins made representation to Parks Victoria and pointed out that no other collective group of users has a longer association with the region than the mountain cattlemen.

Drawing on primary source evidence (the record books of Ensay Station) and personal experience Chris corrected some rather slanted views of the history of the mountains that were being presented.

We may be excluded from the mountains but we will not allow our history to be re-written into obscurity, it cannot be taken away from us nor can it be removed from the landscape.

For those that don't know me, my name is Chris Commins. I will give you some background on myself and my family's association with the High Country. I am a Mountain Cattleman and I live near Ensay working in a partnership with my brother Bruce.

Yesterday, Ian Stapleton gave an excellent presentation on various characters of the High Country. I'm sure he could fill another book or

two with interesting personalities. One such person was my primary school teacher, Mr Griffiths. Mr Griffiths was a very keen hunter, gun crank, and weekend warrior in the Citizen Military Forces, now the Army Reserve.

"Griffo" would train us in ballistics. Periodically he would bring an array of rifles to school and we students would set up blocks of wood at fifty or one hundred metres up to three



Bill Ab Chow with two of his packhorses. (Leanne Dyson)

hundred metres. Griffo would fire a variety of rifles from a .22 calibre to a .306, then we kids would race up to the blocks of wood, prise the projectile out and measure the depth of penetration. I guess you could say that was our science lesson.

For nature study, Mr Griffiths, armed with a .222 or 303 calibre rifle with school kids in tow, would head off across the paddocks to whistle up a fox. I think my daughter Emma doubted the validity of my stories until Emma and I bumped into my old school teacher recently. Mr Griffiths and I were recounting my early school career and he went on to tell Emma “That’s right! Not only that, at recess the kids would sometimes race into the school shouting excitedly, “Mr Griffiths, Mr Griffiths an eagle, an eagle”, so I would grab the 303 off the school desk, race outside and have a pot shot at the eagle.” We never saw Mr Griffiths deck one as the eagle was usually soaring at about 1000 feet, but it never stopped Griffo having a crack at them. It was a different world back then.

Another character that left a lasting impression on me was a man of Chinese heritage, Bill Ah Chow. Bill gave his pack horses “Billy” and “Paddy” to my parents, so my sister Anne, brother Bruce and myself had a mode of transport to school. I was the last of an era that rode horses to school, up and down the road, ten kilometres every day, to my little primary school. I rode double dink bare back with Bruce on “Paddy.” Being the youngest I was always steerage. It was not much fun, especially when you thought you could drive the horse better than big brother.

Bill Ah Chow was a remarkable person and fantastic story teller. He was a veteran of the First World War and was badly wounded and gassed on the battlefields of France. I doubt that there were many Chinese Australians who saw active service in the First A.I.F. After the war, Bill worked for most of his life in the bush, and he was probably best known for his construction of huts.



Bill Ah Chow (Leanne Dyson)

Bill built our hut (Commins’) at Quinn’s Plain, Nunniong, around 1937 But his most famous hut is “Moscow Villa” at Bentley’s Plain. This was a log cabin with three rooms for his own use whilst working for the Forests Commission. Constructed in 1942 around the time the Battle for Moscow was on, Bill decided to call it “Moscow Villa”. Shortly after completion, Bill had the bosses of the Forests Commission stay with him and they were not overly impressed with the name “Moscow Villa” with its socialist connotations. The obvious question was asked, “Why?” Bill went to his bedroom and shortly returned with the answer on a piece of paper. Moscow Villa is an acronym (I am sure he started a fad in the Department) and it stands for, My Own Summer Cottage Officially Welcomes Visitors Inside Light Luncheon Available - MOSCOW VILLA.



The appropriately named "Moscow Villa". (Leanne Dyson)

As a regular guest of my parents Bill enthralled us kids with his story telling, usually tall stories, and you knew when they were getting taller because Bill could not help but give you a big wink. When Bill died in August 1967, in his will he left his 1948 Series 1 Land Rover to my brother and myself, the walls of "Moscow Villa" to the Forests Commission and the roof to my father, Jim Commins.

The first member of my family to come to Ensay was my grandfather, James Lilburne Commins, as a soldier settler after World War I. He took up a grazing run at Nunniong in 1934 which we still hold. The northern section of the run was incorporated into the Alpine National Park from which we were evicted after the 2003 fires.

Thankyou Anne, (Sedgley) for the opportunity, at short notice to make this address. I have to say the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria was miffed it was not invited to address the High Country Forum in Omeo. After all, the first European settlers into

the high country of Victoria were Mountain Cattlemen - James Macfarlane at Macfarlane's Flat in 1835, O'Rourke's at Suggan Buggan in 1835, and the Pendergasts at Benambra shortly afterwards. We provide a living link with that Heritage.

The fires of Black Thursday, 6 Feb 1851, were indirectly the cause for the first graziers to come to the Bogongs and Cobungra High Plains. George Grey of Pelican Lagoon Run, Wangaratta, was burnt out, so went looking for grass, travelling to Mitta Mitta, then to Omeo. An aborigine showed Grey to Cobungra. Grey left two stockmen, James Brown and John Wells and stock at Cobungra. They stumbled upon the Bogong High Plains while investigating a more direct route to Beechworth.

The earliest registration of the Bogong High Plains as a run was in 1866 (Ensay Station Record). In 1883 Thomas MacNight Hamilton from Ensay Station took up a 100,000 acre run on Bogong. It was considered first class fattening summer country capable of carrying 50,000

sheep. Hamilton was given advice by a stock and station agent to buy sheep from the Monaro to stock the run. T.M Hamilton never took that advice and never grazed sheep on the Bogongs. T. M Hamilton relinquished the run in the early 1900s.

I would like to bring your attention to a point made by Dr Ruth Lawrence yesterday. Ruth stated as fact that 40,000 sheep ran on Bogong during the Federation Drought and subsequent drought of 1914/15. I seriously question those numbers as my research reads differently to Dr Lawrence's. My sources are the Ensay Station records and Peter Cabena's thesis, "Grazing the High Country". The 40,000 sheep was an estimate and they ran not just on Bogong, but Hotham, Dargo, Cobungra and Nunniong.

My experience as a stockman also makes me sceptical. Droving 1000 drought-stricken sheep up the western side of the Bogongs would be seriously difficult, let alone 40,000! Sheep only ran on the high country in drought years. The sheep had to be shepherded because of wild dogs and stockmen hated shepherding sheep in the bush. Alf Smith, from Omeo, shepherded sheep for 3 years before the second war; between the Blue Duck and Glen Wills, and he told me "the best thing to happen to me was World War Two. I was off to war, no more shepherding sheep!!"

Yesterday, at the Forum in Omeo, Parks Victoria handed out audio CDs giving a history tour from Omeo to Mount Beauty. It was disconcerting that another assertion had been made. It was stated that 40,000 cattle grazed on the High Plains in one particular drought. Because the CD related to the Bogongs, the inference was that the Bogongs were overgrazed by 40,000 cattle! This is another distortion of fact - 40,000 cattle equates to over 300,000 dry sheep equivalent and I suggest the 40,000 cattle may have run over an area stretching from the Bogongs to Mansfield, Dargo to Suggan Buggan and back, not just the Bogongs. Seriously, I am concerned about history being re-written,

especially when assertions are made without proof.

I often hear how fragile this environment is. It is much more resilient than man or beast; if you abuse it, it will destroy you. Mountain Cattlemen have a healthy respect for this environment. They survived because they were good observers of nature, they learnt from the aborigines and they continued the practice of fire stick farming. Lightning was allowed to run its course. With closer settlement the practice of fire stick farming was reined in.

When the Forests Commission was created in 1918 it outlawed burning.

I will now read two extracts from the *Herald* newspaper dated 13 Feb 1932.

BAN ON BURNING-OFF DEFENDED

Commission's Reasons

"DESTRUCTION OF SAPLING AND SEEDLING GROWTH"

"Uncontrolled burning-off is disastrous, and is condemned in every country in the world where forests are regarded as valuable assets to the community,"

says the Forests Commission, in a comprehensive reply to recent complaints about forest fire regulations.

Landholders complain they are greatly harassed in fighting bushfires by these regulations.

What's new??? The second extract

"It has been proved beyond doubt, not only in Australia, that nothing less than absolute fire exclusion will promote real progress toward a fully productive forest property."

That was the science of the day. We say, just as the law can be perverted, so can science!

The disastrous 1939 fires were followed by a Royal Commission. Various Mountain Cattlemen gave evidence that lightning was a major cause of fire. The only mention Judge Stretton made of lightning in his report was in one sentence, *The real but rare occurrence of lightning.* In his conclusion as to causes of fire he had the



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bushman i.e. Mountain Cattleman, at the top of the list for illegally burning off. Lightning did not even rate a mention! We were portrayed as the bogey men of the bush. Not until the 1960s did the Forests Commission acknowledge lightning as the major cause of fire in South Eastern Australia.

In 1946 Judge Stretton presided over another Royal Commission, a Royal Commission into forest grazing. Again Mountain Cattlemen gave evidence. They gave evidence that rabbits were the main cause of erosion and land degradation. Judge Stretton arrogantly dismissed this evidence when he wrote *Brer rabbit may blame Brer fox !!*

This arrogant, dismissive attitude was pervasive and we still see it in Government and its bureaucracy today. Ignore local knowledge at your peril! Because of this dismissive treatment I have lot of empathy for our indigenous cousins.

Rabbits have been the greatest scourge this country has ever seen, ecologically and

economically. When we hear overgrazing, it is always graziers, their cattle, and sheep. No mention is made of rabbits and hares. Overgrazing is a subjective topic, it is like defining a loose woman. Apart from the obvious erosion problems they created, the rabbits along with the lack of “cool” fire, changed the landscape from an open woodland into a scrub dominated thicket. The negative impacts of rabbits and hares has never been fully understood or acknowledged by scientists, conservationists or government agencies. I think we all agreed yesterday that the greatest threat to the Alpine Park was another mega fire. I hate to say it, but it is coming, sooner rather than later.

As the owner of earthmoving equipment, I am a contracted Primary Fire Fighter for the Department of Sustainability and Environment, and have been involved in every major fire in Eastern Victoria over the last 36 years including the recent tragic Black Saturday fires, as well as numerous minor fires. I have extensive experience with fire, fire behaviour, fire control and mitigation. It is not climate change that is the problem, it is fuel loads. It is the only factor we can control. In many areas, I see fuel loads six times greater than prior to the 2003 fires. The next fire is going to be seriously intense, much worse than 2003.

To help mitigate this threat Government and people opposed to alpine grazing need to take their blinkers off and return cattle to the Park. Every tool in the management box should be used. Primarily, much more fuel reduction burning is required, but it has to be a “cool burn”; any fire that causes leaf scorch on the tree canopy will only compound the problem of excessive fuel loads. Grazing and “cool fire” are complementary and go hand in hand with good management.

Every activity has an impact on the environment, and the miniscule negative impact of cattle grazing compared to any other activity, is far outweighed by the positive benefits.



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“Vale Ken”

He rode 'cross the tracks on The Cobbler,
mist shrouded mountains close by
await the winter that's coming,
heavy storm clouds fill the sky.

His stockwhip cracks like a rifle,
the cattle respond to its sound,
to vacate the lush summer pasture,
before the first snows cover the ground.

His trusty stockhorse is his partner,
not bound to a particular breed.
It can read the mind of the cattle,
turn a beast at neck breaking speed.

His red kelpie dogs follow stoutly,
jogging close to the horses heels,
then dart through the bush and bracken,
a rogue scrubber baulks and wheels.

Years pass into decades,
his youthful days long left behind.
His battle scarred body, worn and wear;
but droving trips still fill his mind.

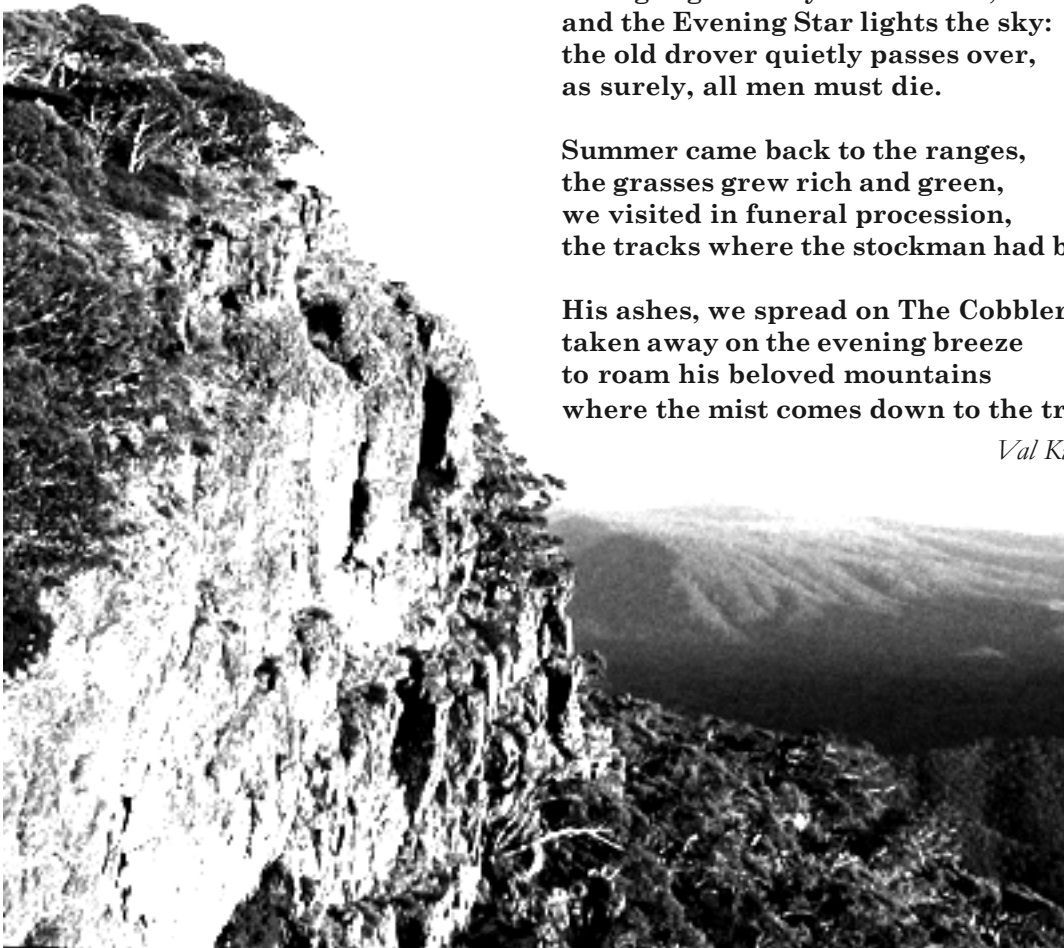
He dreams again of the hillsides,
of the horses he used to ride,
pushing cattle through tall gums and
dogwood,
of kelpies that once were his pride.

Twilight gives way to darkness,
and the Evening Star lights the sky:
the old drover quietly passes over,
as surely, all men must die.

Summer came back to the ranges,
the grasses grew rich and green,
we visited in funeral procession,
the tracks where the stockman had been.

His ashes, we spread on The Cobbler,
taken away on the evening breeze
to roam his beloved mountains
where the mist comes down to the trees.

Val Kirley



Lost in the Woods

ROGER FRANKLIN

Franklin is the author of *Inferno: The Day Victoria Burned*, which chronicles the state's ordeal by fire on 7 February 2009. This article is adapted from an address he delivered to a meeting of the Stretton Group on 19 November 2009.

It is quite a step from the High Country to Royal Park, in the middle of inner-suburban Melbourne, but there are a couple of things that almost make the drive worthwhile. When pondering the refusal by Premier John Brumby and his minions to implement sound and sensible forest-management policies, the bush and the big city actually have a lot in common.

The first thing to notice as you enter Royal Park, Parkville from the Carlton side is the Burke and Wills monument, which honors Australia's most hapless explorers. One suspects it might have been thrown up by a gang of apprentice stonemasons, quite possibly after a spirited session at the nearby Parkville Hotel. Or perhaps the builders had a sense of humour. Whatever the reason, it is certainly appropriate: an ugly, over-mortared, jerrybuilt cone of barely hewn rock to commemorate an ill-conceived, officially funded and poorly supervised expedition of exploration.

It was on the spot where the monument now stands that Robert O'Hara Burke, a man with an infamous talent for getting lost when he was Beechworth's chief copper, attempted to get his party moving. Like every other aspect of his journey to oblivion, it proved to be a debacle of the first order.

The plan was to leave in the morning and put quite a few miles under the wagons' wheels before sundown, but things didn't work out that way. By the time Burke & Co. had rounded up recalcitrant camels, stacked gear willy-nilly on too few wagons and fought amongst themselves, as they would do incessantly over the months to come, it was 4:30 p.m. By late that night the expedition had progressed no further than Essendon.

They certainly had a lot of gear to haul.

There was an oak dining table with matching chairs, flash cutlery, folding baths, and even a large Chinese gong, the idea being that its reverberations would carry for miles over the empty interior and

bring lost members of the party back in time for dinner – served off china plates, of course.

The monument is a reminder of a fundamental truth, when deep pockets meet ill-considered enthusiasms, the likely result will be a costly demonstration of the law of tragic consequences.

If the notion is stirring that Burke and Wills were forerunners of today's officially sanctioned approach to fire and forest management, go to the top of the class. The explorers had their lovely but useless brass gong. Today we are treated to Elvis the chopper, which is of no use whatsoever when a bushfire is generating more than 10 megawatts.

Just to put that in perspective, some of the fire fronts that destroyed 173 lives on 7 February 2009, were rated at around 140 megawatts. Elvis was limited to fighting the fires' peripheral spread. At combating the main front itself, it was next to useless.

Actually, that's not being fair to Elvis, which does serve a very definite purpose. When it comes to photo opportunities, the flying stick creature can't be beat – especially as a backdrop for politicians wearing expressions meant to convey a concern for life and property. At \$14 million a year, however, that seems rather a lot to pay for a slick sound byte on the nightly news.

The monument is the first thing to notice, but beside it and running in an archipelago of green islands beside the narrow, divided, traffic-choked road that follows the slight slope past the Zoo and onto Flemington, there is something else – something that should be of immense concern.

For reasons that defy logic and history, the officials have decided to make Royal Park a showpiece for what is misleadingly known as urban conservation. Large patches of the park are being "re-planted" with native shrubs, grasses and trees, an effort that draws many local residents from their terrace houses of a Sunday morning to do what they fondly imagine to be their bit for the environment.

These are many of the same people, mind you, who fought tooth and nail to scuttle a proposed tunnel, which would have removed most of the cars that now clog their neighbourhood at peak hour. A tunnel linking the Eastern Freeway with the Bolte and Westgate bridges would have kept those commuters in top gear and significantly reduced fuel consumption and the resulting emissions, not to mention the urban blight of honking horns and rumbling exhausts.

But cars, like cattle and logic, are out of favour in official circles, so a move that common sense ordains as simple, straightforward and beneficial to all parties was scotched before it could be launched. If there is anything more valued by our presiding political class than a photo op, it is the affections – and the preferences – of those who mark their lifestyles, and their ballots, in ostentatious shades of green. And that brings us back to the so-called re-planting of Royal Park, which was never planted in the first place. Don't take my word for it, look up what Melbourne's founding father John Batman has to say. It was an open area, he noted, with very few trees, and those in evidence represented only three varieties.

Yet today, in the heart of Melbourne, a fire hazard is being quite deliberately created. How bad is it? Well, it still has a long way to go before it can match the 40-year accumulation of ground fuels that made the Kinglake and Strathewen infernos so unstoppable. Indeed, some of the planted patches are quite neat and orderly, nicely mulched and lacking the ladder storey that will get flames into the crown. They are ornamental, but other of the green islands are rapidly thickening, with fallen branches and a dense ground-storey fuzz of shrubbery. This is said to be necessary in order to preserve the habitat of the white skink.

The certainty is that, sooner or later, it will burn. When the City of Geelong replanted its median strips with native grasses, the tussocks had to be uprooted after the local fireys grew sick and tired of turning out to extinguish the highway's traffic islands. Passing traffic and tossed cigarette butts will that do every time and, sooner or later, it will happen in Royal Park, too. As fire scientist David Packham reminded me only the other day, Black Friday in 1939 saw fires break out along St Kilda Road.

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Downwind – and by that I mean the typical northerly howlers that always mark Victoria’s worst fire days – stand the homes of those who so enthusiastically support the idea that their Sunday morning efforts with spades and saplings are vital to the planet’s survival. They mean well, but what of their own safety when the fires come, as they surely must?

Royal Park is not an anomaly. Throughout greater Melbourne, incendiary pockets dot the pages of every Melways map. Plenty Gorge – an overgrown green dagger pointed at the heart of Mill Park — is another. To drive through the Dandenongs is to feel a tightening in the pit of your stomach. How will anyone survive when those hills go up? What of Warrandyte and other suburban pockets too numerous to mention?

To see a needless hazard being installed at the very centre of Melbourne’s most densely populated core is to gain another perspective on the damage being done to the High Country and other areas by similarly misguided initiatives. If our political masters cannot grasp this self-evident truth when the cause for concern is no more than a five minute ride in a government car from Spring Street, is it any wonder that the degradation of the genuine, bona fide bush is not merely allowed to proceed without handicap or encumbrance, but actively encouraged?

Out of sight and very much out of mind is the official philosophy. And it is very easy for the hazards and threats to life and property to remain hidden if your vision extends no further than the – ahem – “environmentally aware” precincts of the green-voting inner city.

The cattlemen’s persecution is very much a part of that political narrative. Cattle out, our masters

decreed. Cattle bring flies and compact the soil, they said. Cattle do nothing to minimize the fire risk, they said, because as every resident of Fitzroy knows, cows don’t eat bark.

See how easy it is make things nice and natural, they continued? Fence off the bush, banish the people who have been there and cared for the land for well over a century, and see how the votes roll in. Except, like that monument to Burke and Wills, the contradictions enshrined in the green priesthood’s dogmas are obvious to anyone who takes the time to look. Indeed, the inconsistencies and selective logic are jaw-dropping.

Cattle have been evicted. But what of all the other introduced species, from foxes to blackberries to carp, Scotch thistles, deer, cats, rabbits, broom, pigs, goats and dogs. The last pest on that list is particularly destructive: several years after cattle were run out of the mountains, the same state government responsible for their eviction also removed the bounty on feral dogs and foxes. Cattle out. Dogs and foxes, as you were. Why the difference?

The reason, one suspects, resides at the very heart of the green religion’s core beliefs. Cattle were committing one of the green religion’s greatest mortal sins: they were an integral part of the lives and livelihoods of human beings and their families – and it is humans, in the official view, that are the real problem. And thus do our forest-management policies stagger ever deeper into the woods, misguided and lost to reason. Like Burke and Wills, they are directed not by common sense or competence, but by an arrogant, all-consuming refusal to acknowledge the blindingly obvious.

The explorers came to a gruesome end. Let the same fate not be shared by our forests.



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Mountain Call

I come from down the city, I settled in the burb's.
My paper is delivered the driver throws it from the curb.
I walk on concrete footpaths and drive on bitumen
and buy my eggs in cartons, we do not have a hen.
And from my kitchen window the hills in the distance shimmer
they call to me so softly in the setting sunlight glimmer
and I can see the eucalyptus haze on a sunny day
and wish I was out country a long long way away.

So I ask the misses kindly if the 4WD is free,
so I can plan a weekend down by the sea,
so she accommodates me and says why not go bush
but we must share the driv'n, and she plants one on the mush.
So we come to some arrangement, cos she likes to drive on tracks
which snake up mighty mountains and cross rivers round the backs
of the rugged country where brumbies like to roam
to enjoy the wilderness, the mountain folk call home.

I guess I'm not a townie who likes a soy latte'
I would rather climb a mountain, an' in a tent I'll lay,
'cos I like the smell of gum trees and sunsets at days end
to view from chilly ridges, with billy and a friend.
This is an ode to country where air is rare and thin
and when it comes to transport the horses always win,
where a campfire is required to cook and keep you warm
and a tent is always carried to shelter from the storm.

This country's made of blizzards, wildfires shafts and snakes
and hot northerlies that dry you out and bake
upon your balding head and your skin rugged and tan
and forges great legends of horse, woman and man.
But now I pack my vehicle and the misses guides the wheels
to wind our way back home to city jobs and deals
and as the tree line ridges slowly fades from view
my soul sings merrily of heritage renewed.

Greg Altamore, Apr. 2008



Victoria bushfires stoked by Green vote

DAVID PACKHAM OAM is an honorary senior research fellow at Monash University's School of Geography and Environmental Science

Reprinted from *The Australian* 10 February 2009 in response to the Black Saturday fires 2009.

Victoria has suffered the most tragic bushfire disaster to have occurred on this continent throughout its period of human habitation.

The deaths, loss of homes and businesses and the blow to our feeling of security will take decades to fade into history. The trauma will live with the victims, who, to a greater or lesser extent, are all of us.

How could this happen when we have been told in a withering, continuous barrage of public relations that with technology and well-polished uniforms, we can cope with the unleashing of huge forces of nature.

I have been a bushfire scientist for more than 50 years, dealing with all aspects of bushfires, from prescribed burning to flame chemistry, and serving as supervisor of fire weather services for Australia. We need to understand what has happened so that we can accept or prevent future fire disasters.

That this disaster was about to happen became clear when the weather bureau issued an accurate fire weather forecast last Wednesday, which prompted me, as a private citizen, to raise the alarm through a memo distributed to concerned residents.

The science is simple. A fire disaster of this nature requires a combination of hot, dry, windy weather in drought conditions. It also requires a source of ignition. In the past, this purpose has been served by lightning. In this disaster, lightning has not played a big part, and for this Victorians should be grateful. But other sources of ignition are ever-present. When the temperature and wind increase to extreme levels, small events — perhaps the scrape of metal across a rock, a transformer overheating or sparks from a diesel engine — are capable of starting a fire that can in minutes become unstoppable if the fuel is present.

The third and only controllable factor in this deadly triangle is fuel: the dead leaves, pieces of bark and grass that become the gas that feeds the

50m high flames that roar through the bush with the sound of jet engines.

Fuels build up year after year at an approximate rate of one tonne a hectare a year, up to a maximum of about 30 tonnes a hectare. If the fuels exceed about eight tonnes a hectare, disastrous fires can and will occur. Every objective analysis of the dynamics of fuel and fire concludes that unless the fuels are maintained at near the levels that our indigenous stewards of the land achieved, then we will have unhealthy and unsafe forests that from time to time will generate disasters such as the one that erupted on Saturday.

It has been a difficult lesson for me to accept that despite the severe damage to our forests and even a fatal fire in our nation's capital, the political decision has been to do nothing that will change the extreme threat to which our forests and rural lands are exposed. The decision to ignore the threat has been encouraged by some shocking pseudo-science from a few academics who use arguments that may have a place in political discourse but should have no place in managing our environment and protecting it and us from the bushfire threat.

The conclusion of these academics is that high intensity fires are good for the environment and that the resulting mudslides after rains are merely localised and serve to redistribute nutrients. The purpose of this failed policy is to secure uninformed city votes.

Only a few expert retired fire managers, experienced bushies and some courageous politicians are prepared to buck the decision to lock up our bush and leave it to burn.

The politicians who willingly accept this rubbish use it to justify the perpetuation of the greatest threat to our forests, water supplies, homes and lives in order to secure a minority green vote. They continue to throw millions (and no doubt soon billions) at ineffective suppression toys, while the few foresters and bush people who know how to

manage our public lands are starved of the resources they need to reduce fuel loads. It is hard for me to see this perversion of public policy and to accept that the folk of the bush have lost their battle to live a safe life in a cared-for rural and forest environment, all because of the environmental fantasies of outraged extremists and latte conservationists.

In a letter to my local paper, the *Weekly Times*, on January 25, I predicted we were facing a very critical situation in which 1000 to 2000 homes could be lost in the Yarra catchment, the Otways and/or the Strezleckis; that 100 souls could be lost in a most horrible and violent way; and that there was

even a threat to Melbourne's water supply, which could be rendered unusable by the ash and debris. Horrifically, much of this has come to pass, and it is not yet the end of the bushfire season.

In the face of this inferno, the perpetrators of this obscenity should have the decency to stand up and say they were wrong. Southeast Australia is the worst place in the world for bushfires, and we must not waste any time in getting down to the task of making our bush healthy and safe.

But don't hold your breath. Do you hear that lovely sound the warbling pigs make as they fly by?

From: David & Helen[SMTP:_____][David Packham]

Sent: Thursday, 5 February 2009 4:46

Subject: Extreme fire threat Saturday 7 Feb

The Bureau of Met has issued its estimates for fire weather for Saturday 7 Feb. **They are the worst that I have ever seen.** A forest fire danger index of 100 is forecast for almost the whole state. Using Tullamarine as an indicator for the worst case for Victoria the estimates are as follows.

Temp 44, Dew point -5, RH 7%, Wind NNW 55 kph gusting to 85 Forest fire danger index (FFDI) 100, Grass fire danger Index (GFDI)100. When you use McArthur meters this results in (assuming a fine fuel of 30 to/ha) in a forest rate of spread of 5.6 kph and a flame height of 77meters. I have found (based of [sic] Hobart 1967) that McArthur underestimates in these extreme conditions and if the Drought factor is allowed to expand beyond 10 and an exponential average for wind speed + and - the gusting McArthur then works well. I have recalculated the FFDI for Saturday using the expanded drought factor of 12 but only using the average wind speed as forecast and not the exponential average which would increase the FFDI some more.

My calculations yield: FFDI 186, Forest Rate of spread 6.7 kph, Flame height 90m, Spotting 20km

A westerly change of 35 kph i.e. strong but not as intense as Ash Wednesday 1983 (around 60 -70 kph) is forecast for late afternoon or into evening. That wind change of course greatly increases the area burnt as the east flank becomes the fire front for an hour or so and the fuels take 30 minutes or more to build their fuel moisture up again. **The fire intensity calculates at 100.5 megawatt per metre. The max for fire fighting is 2.5Mw/m, crown fires start at about 10Mw/m.** Assuming GFDI of 100, the grassland rate of spread is 13 kph but I would expect that it would reach the J.Noble max of 20 -25 kph.

I doubt if the State has ever before faced such extreme conditions with fuel levels higher than ever, the prospects for Saturday are horrible. Friday looks a little difficult and Sunday after the Saturday change is forecast to be very good although unfortunately no rain seems to be forecast. The saving situation is that the extreme dry air does not encourage lightning and it is not mentioned on the forecasts for the next few days. Thus we are subject only to accidental and arson ignitions. Let us hope that neither of these occur although a realistic assessment would have to expect some. The high risk areas because of the terrible fuel situation are The Yarra catchment, the Otways and the remainder of the Strezleckies. [sic] **After checking on my analysis and if you deem it helpful could you let your networks know that this is the situation this fuelled up State is facing at least in my opinion.**

You have no idea of how much I hope that I am wrong.

David Packham.

An abridged copy of the email sent by David Packham to authorities warning of the impending Black Saturday disaster. This was distributed some 48 hours before that day.

A Letter from the Community in February 2000

A copy of this petition recently came to light and it illustrates the foresight of the experienced signatories. In February 2000 it was sent to various officials and government departments warning of the unacceptable fuel build up in the mountains. Of particular interest is that signatories had to have had more than 30 years "life experience" in the mountains.

To whom it may concern:

As people associated with the mountains for most, or all our lives, and some being descendants of families who have been here for generations, we wish our concerns be known.

It is our opinion that the fire risk in the mountains is far more serious than before the devastating fires of 1939. An air of false security and complacency has been allowed to develop over the years.

We believe it is only good luck that has stopped a disaster as bad, or far worse than Black Friday from happening again. If Ash Wednesday had started two and a half hours earlier and if the Caledonia fire had started three weeks earlier, they would have been completely uncontrollable. It would be irresponsible to believe this luck will continue. It is inevitable the mountains are going to be burnt out with a big hot fire, similar to 1939 or 1851, which resulted from fuel build-ups less than half the present.

Little of the Stretton Royal Commission recommendations after the 1939 fire, are being taken on board with fuel control to create a safe forest. Far too much reliance is placed on fire fighting as a tool of suppression, when it was clearly demonstrated with the Caledonia fire that they could not stop break-outs even on cool calm overcast days. It was only cool weather and rain that stopped this fire.

Before the 1939 fire, there was widespread cool burning by farmers and Mountain Cattlemen to promote growth and reduce fuel to safe limits (this was illegal). This created many pockets of vegetation that were not burnt in a hot fire. Logging operations after 1939 relocated to these areas, as Forestry Reserves had been destroyed. There is almost none of this burning now in alpine areas and minimal below. Most or all timber reserves would be lost, similar to what has happened in the Carey State Forest. There would be very few pockets, if any, in the mountains, for many mammal and bird colonies to survive, to repopulate.

Many water supplies, including Melbourne's, are at serious risk from erosion and mud pollution, similar to what has happened in the Caledonia Valley. A hot fire through the 60 year fuel build-up in Melbourne catchments has the potential to reduce Melbourne's water by approx 40% from lack of run-off, as forests regenerate 20-30 years after the event.

The potential for many people to be burnt to death in a fast moving fire is very real. This would be even worse if it happened on a long weekend.

There needs to be a full and open public inquiry to examine the Caledonia fire fighting effort, and why Park and Forest management have not followed the strong recommendations on fire prevention to create a safe forest by fuel reduction burning. These were outlined by the Stretton Royal Commission after the 1939 bushfires, and are just as relevant now.

We the undersigned,

[therein followed over fifty signatures including]

from Wulgulmerang/Buchan: Gordon Moon, Barry Keat, Norm Woodhouse, Janine Cooper, Peter C. Moon, David Rogers, John Rogers, Ian Minchin, J. Woodgate, Malcolm Cox

from Glenmaggie/Maffra/Licola: Pat Coleman, Anthony Higgins, James Jackman, Gerald Coleman, Brian Higgins, Harold Guy, Ralph Barraclough, Trevor Williamson, Mark Coleman

from Dederang/Mt Beauty: Jack Hicks, Ian Roper, Stuart Hicks, John Maddison, G. Maddison, Harry Ryder, Ron Briggs

Omeo/Benambrambra/Ensay: Graham Connley, W.J. Hollonds, Alan C. Smith, Barry R. Pendergast, J.E. Flannagan, J.W. Crisp, W.J.C. Pendergast, P.M. Pendergast, I.M. Pendergast, N.H. Smith, R.L.J. Pendergast, C. Hollonds, J.D. Pendergast, M.M. Pendergast, Vince Pendergast, D. Howe, G. Faithfull, Anne Faithfull, Peter Soutter, Graeme Pendergast, K.W. Pendergast, Ben Buckley, H. Faithfull, Gary Hollonds, Dennis Pendergast

The Maharajah

Tom Laklen stirred in his sleep, half woken by the cattle dogs bark,
that tried to warn his master of the intruders in the dark
Tom was the station manager, and as the sun dawned o'er the hill,
he looked towards the stable yards everything was silent and still.

The stable boy burst into the room on his face, the look of shock
there in his shaking hand was a cut chain and padlock
"The Maharajah's missing Sir!" The boy's features had turned white.
"The horse was sleeping peacefully, I checked him through the night."

The Maharajah was the pride of Major Lewis's racing string.
Winner of many contests with speed of a bird on the wing.
The Major called on Laklen the best tracker in the land
to follow on the tracks they left and bring the stallion back in hand.

He crossed the Murray River onto the Victorian side,
then climbed o'er the foothills into the Great Divide.
He made inquiries as he went of the flashy chestnut horse
from the answers he received he knew he was on the course.

He passed through many mining towns and settlements on the way,
till he arrived at Jamieson, the gold centre of the day.
He booked into the hotel there and stabled his horses out,
never did he let be know what his business was about.

While quietly seated at the bar on his shoulder a strong hand fell.
'Twas the hand of old Bob Wren, a miner he knew so well.
Wren had a mine at the river and camp on a little flat,
he remembered seeing some strangers with a handsome chestnut like that.

They'd passed his way one morning the stallion shone like burnished gold.
He'd escaped and fled to the scrubland was the story later told.
For weeks Tom searched the gullies while Wren worked at the mine.
sometimes thinking to themselves that they were wasting time.

As they rode up a rise one day 'neath a shady lightwood tree,
'twas the missing chestnut stallion, standing strong, defiant and free.
They spurred their horses after him but were outrun by his pace,
when they reached the top of the ridge, he'd vanished without a trace.

Tom rode the hills for miles and miles but no sign did he see,
he built a big log yard on the clearing by the creek.
One evening while checking lines that were set in the stream for trout
Tom got an eerie feeling that something strange was about.

He knew it was no person so he sat in the shadows to think,
then, to his surprise, 'twas the stallion comin' to drink.
His hands began to tremble his eyes gleamed at the sight
but the horse sensed his presence and disappeared into the night.

Laklen returned 'cross the Murray his search had been in vain,
he'd lost the goal he was seeking, the horse with the golden mane.
Wren retired from digging, sold his lease and his claim
to a man called Fred Mitchell, that creek still bears his name.

Mitchell sold out his interests to Will Hoskin, who cleared more land
built a house and yards, planted orchards and pine trees grand.
The Hoskins were hard workers their social airs were a delight,
many an evening was spent with dancing till morning light.

Race meetings were held on the flat, owners watched with pride
and bet amongst each other, the fastest horses on the Divide.
The Mitchell's run was well known for the fastest horses on the range
and often was the question asked, "Is the Rajah's blood in their veins?"

Val Kirley 1983



The Maharajah was the winning entry in the Don Kneebone Heritage Award for 2009.

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Don McMillan 0428 498 320

Trevor Stothers 0428 656 270

Greg Birss 0417 454 052

Bob Scott 5148 6255

A brief summary of progress in the HighFire experiments and studies

MARK ADAMS Professor and Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Sydney

Background

The HighFire program of the Bushfire CRC began life as a series of projects encompassing (i) mountain weather, (ii) social effects of the 2003 fires, (iii) ecological effects of the 2003 fires, and, (iv) effectiveness of prescribed fire and grazing in mitigating bushfire risk.

Only the last two components are continuing under the HighFire banner, supported now by the University of Sydney. They include a network of weather stations on, and in the region around, the Bogong High Plains (Vic) and the Cotter catchment (ACT). They are further complemented by two “flux towers” that record climatic conditions and fluxes of water and carbon on a minute by minute basis on the Dargo High Plains (Vic) and on the Snowy Plains (NSW). The flux towers are now supported by the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure (NCRIS) scheme.

Weather and carbon and water fluxes

A network of within-forest weather stations is a vital addition to standard ‘open-air’ stations. The within-forest stations allow us to monitor variables such as humidity that are very different within the forest to outside, and that play major roles in determining key attributes such as the water use by understorey vegetation. Our network has been accumulating data since 2005. Not surprisingly, it shows that the high country is very variable, climatically speaking. Owing to the mountainous terrain, aspect (i.e. whether a site faces north, south, east or west) has a much greater role in determining thermal and hydrological regimes than it does at lower elevations on less steeply sloping country. This accords with the patterns of vegetation – more dense on sheltered, southerly and easterly aspects and more open on northerly and westerly aspects.

Our two flux towers are highlighting differences between two areas of high country that are similar in many respects (altitude, rainfall, plant community composition), but separated by over 100km of latitude and differ in underlying geology. For example, in any given year, one or

other of the Dargo High Plains or the Snowy Plains may have consistent snow cover for several months while the other may have none. This has enormous consequences for thermal regimes and for carbon and water fluxes. The insulation provided by snow cover holds soil surface temperatures to just above freezing. With out snow cover, night-time frosts can extend down into the surface few cm of soil while daytime temperatures may rise to the low teens. This much larger ‘diurnal range’ stimulates soil activity and contributes to greater losses of carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the soils. While it is too early to be sure, the data so far suggest that snow-cover is a good thing in terms of productivity of grasslands. The corollary is that losses of snow-cover may result in losses of productivity.

Effects of the 2003 fires

We are examining how the fires affected regrowth of the vegetation and their nutrition, the carbon and water balance of the ecosystems, and their greenhouse gas emissions. Our studies include the Bogong High Plains and the surrounding high mountain forests such as the upper Kiewa and upper Mitta Mitta. We have extended this work to the Cotter catchment in the ACT.

The regrowth is vigorous. The eucalypts (mainly Snowgum and Alpine Ash) are regenerating from seed and by sprouting. Legumes are flourishing, especially in the Alpine Ash forests. Perhaps surprising is the lack of evidence of major losses of nutrients. In part this is due to the dominance of ammonium (and the organic nitrogen) in the soils of the high country – nitrate plays little if any role in plant nutrition in these systems. But mostly it is due to the good cover of plants before the fires and their adaptation to fire, including their rapid regrowth, which ensures little nutrients are lost, except during the fire itself.

A key aspect of the high country is its role as a water reserve for the Murray-Darling system and for Gippsland. The aftermath of the 2003 fires includes major changes to hydrology. The regrowth

will for several decades, use much more water than the mature trees it replaced. The greater 'stomatal conductance' of the young leaves equates roughly with rate of water use or loss to the atmosphere. The vegetation may use up to 90% of all incoming rainfall (including snow) – it is the small fraction left over that is available to become streamflow. The increased water use by the overstorey trees in the upper parts of the mountain catchments is bad news for downstream users of water. This contrasts with results from our prescribed burning studies (see below).

Roles of prescribed fire and grazing in mitigating bushfire risk

We began our work with a thorough review of previous research. That review highlighted two main points: (i) while there have been studies of grazing in the high country, there is a clear lack of research into the interaction of grazing with prescribed fire, and (ii) some of the research that is cited as being the 'evidence base' for major policy decisions, including decisions to remove or retain cattle grazing, could not be regarded as rigorous (i.e. well replicated at adequate scale) if judged by today's standards. That is not to say that all past research has been poor – some of it was clearly 'ground-breaking' and set a vital platform for other to follow. However standards improve continuously and there was a clear lack of replication in some of the grazing studies that are held to 'prove the case that grazing is 'bad'.

Our work includes replicated tests of the fire x grazing interaction on the Snowy Plains and on the Dargo High Plains, using large fenced plots.

The early results from the Snowy Plains are clear. Grazed plots are not floristically different to un-grazed plots and there is no evidence of any increase in weed abundance as a result of grazing – weeds are generally few in number across all sites. Prescribed fire has had the predicted effect of reducing fuel loads and enhancing growth of grasses and ferns, without eliminating the shrubs. Moreover, the prescribed fires were 'heterogenous'. They were hotter in some places and cooler in others. In some place the aboveground parts of the overstorey eucalypts were killed and are being replaced by growth from rootstocks. To date, the effect of grazing + fire treatment is not different to the just fire treatment.

It is still very early in the life of this experiment. However some other results are worth mentioning.

First, early results suggest that prescribed fire may increase the availability of water in these systems. Availability of water in the soils in the burnt plots was greater than in the unburnt plots. This is due to reduced surface area of foliage after fire. It must be remembered that the availability of water in soil depends on how much is used by plants and dictates how much will eventually reach rivers and dams.

Secondly, our data strongly suggest that these organic matter rich soils are methane-oxidizers. That is they convert methane into the much less damaging CO₂. The soils at the Snowy Plains oxidize methane, more or less continuously, at rates around 100 – 120 ug CH₄m⁻²hour⁻¹, irrespective of burning treatment.

This equates, roughly to 9 kg of methane oxidized per hectare each year. A good average figure for methane production by cattle in Australia is 60 kg head⁻¹ year⁻¹.

So a typical herd of, say, 100 cattle on a 500 ha property on the Snowy Plains for four months might have produced 2000 kg methane, but that same property will oxidize 4500 kg each and every year, helping offset the methane emissions of stock while they were grazing in the high country, and some of their emissions when grazing in the lower country. Obviously, the soils of the high country are not the same as soils elsewhere (where rates of methane oxidation may be much less) and the methane benefits would probably be there whether the land is grazed or not. However, the data so far contribute to a sound case for 'enterprise-scale' analysis of greenhouse gasses balances rather than just addition of the 'negatives'. They also argue the case for the type of low-intensity pastoralism practised in recent decades in the high country.

Summary

It will not be a surprise to many that some preconceived and city driven perceptions of fire and grazing in the high country are poorly based. The HighFire experiments need much longer periods of time before they can provide definitive evidence. That said, the early data are encouraging insofar as they have at least raised legitimate questions about many of the assertions of the past.

ETS Lifeline: soils capable of absorbing cattle methane

MATT CAWOOD

Reprinted from *The Land* 3 September 2009 regarding the research work of Professor Mark Adams, University of Sydney

Livestock producers may have an emissions trading lifeline with the discovery that Australian soils are capable of neutralising more methane than cattle can produce from the same land.

Although only a preliminary finding, University of Sydney researchers have added a piece to the global warming policy puzzle.

How does methane produced by ruminant animals fit into the biological cycle?

Their research, done on grazing land in the Snowy Mountain region on soils with high organic matter levels of 5-7 per cent, found that these high country soils oxidise methane at a rate of 100 milligrams per square metre per hour, or roughly 8760 kilograms per hectare per year. By contrast, 100 head of cattle produce about 5400 kg/ha of methane a year.

“In other words, high country grazing is easily methane-neutral and may even offset cow-methane from other parts of the landscape,” said Professor Mark Adams, Dean of Sydney University’s Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources.

However, Prof Adams said more work is needed to tighten up his “back of the envelope” calculations, and to determine exactly what is happening in the soils being studied.

Nor is soil oxidation of methane an end to livestock emissions. Prof Adams explained that a specific class of bacteria uses methane as part of its metabolic process. In oxidising methane, the bacteria produces another greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide (CO₂). But because methane is considered to have 23 times the greenhouse gas warming potential of CO₂, the soil oxidation process, if considered part of a biological cycle, has the potential to cut the cost of livestock emissions by 23 times.

Prof Adams described the process as “very significant, and very consistent” across the high organic matter soils studied on the Snowy and Bogong high plains. The methane finding was an unexpected outcome of a study established to look at interactions between grazing and bushfires.

“We reasoned that we also needed to know a little about how land management was going to affect greenhouse gas emissions, including what we thought would be methane emissions from the soils,” Prof Adams said. “Lo and behold, we didn’t have methane emissions, we had methane oxidation.”

The study wasn’t the first to observe oxidation of methane by soil microbes but it is the first to measure the phenomenon in Australian soils.

“We don’t have a good handle on the conditions that promote the growth of methane-oxidising bacteria; we don’t know the exact nature of the microbial communities, we don’t know what else we could do to encourage them. We know little, and in the world’s literature on this, there’s not much more than a handful of publications.”

However, Prof. Adams believes that the soils most capable of oxidising methane are likely to be well-drained, with good structure, rich in organic matter, and will not have been heavily treated with fertilisers known to kill off microbial life.

“Broadacre, low-intensity grazing operations might be something that Australia might well become specialised in as being more carbon-neutral. We could perhaps develop markets for beef or lamb produced using very little fossil fuels, and in a completely carbon-neutral way.”

“There’s much more potential significance to this, if we can get our story right, and our land management right.” A Sydney University proposal to extend its research into soil oxidation of methane was rejected by the Federal Department of Agriculture.

Professor Mark Adams says “...high country cattle grazing is easily methane-neutral and may even offset cow-methane from other parts of the landscape.”



The Brands on the Bar

*The Snowy River Country Brands on the
Tarcool, Wombat Crossing Bar 2010*



Ned O'Rourke

HSF

Shinfield
(NSW)

K

Keith Rogers

PV

Percy Ventry



Moon

TW

Tom William Dent



McKay

JH

Howson Family
Boisdale



Claude Moon



Early Nungatta
Station (NSW)



Henry Hodge



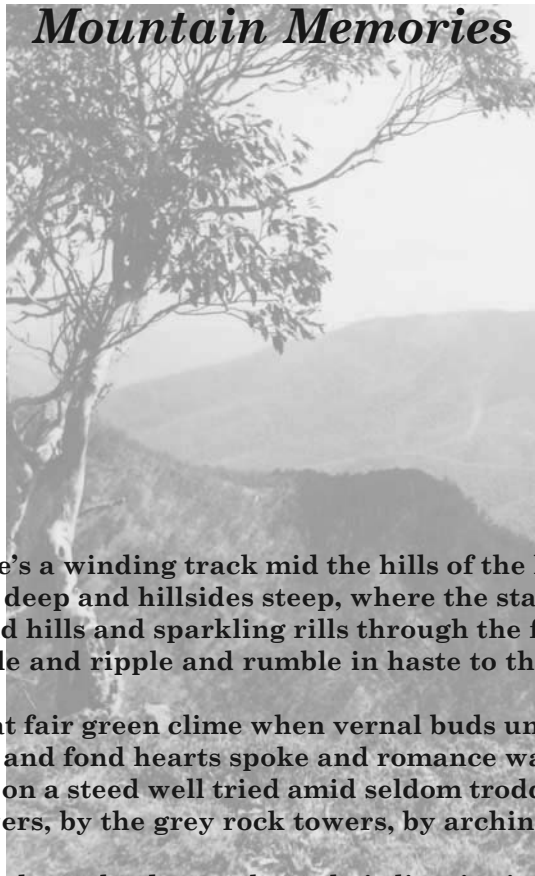
Rogers
Black Mountain



Woodgates

The bar tops and boards were proudly crafted by the Duncan family - Terry, Lisa, Don and Valma.

Mountain Memories



Away far back there's a winding track mid the hills of the high up land
through the gullies deep and hillsides steep, where the stately forests stand.
Where the snow clad hills and sparkling rills through the fern in the breeze a-quiver,
with riot and tumble and ripple and rumble in haste to the Delatite River.

I recall the time that fair green clime when vernal buds unfurled,
and love first woke and fond hearts spoke and romance was all the world.
Oh! tis good to ride on a steed well tried amid seldom trodden ways
by the twining flowers, by the grey rock towers, by arching tree fern sprays.

By flowering trees where the drowsy bees their litanies intone,
and bird choirs raise glad songs of praise to God's eternal throne;
Oh! the air is sweet, and with life replete in those hills when a new dawn reigns;
and hope springs high as the gale sings by and with life blood throb the veins.

When the world was new, ere the frail canoe launched prehistoric man
and his wonder grew with the changing view as his voyaging began.
In that Alpine land stood summits grand, tall peaks and spires sublime,
but their outlines bold are bowed and old worn down by the hand of time.

That grim old range has magical change as Winter speeds for spring,
and Summer calm and Autumnal charm sweet Nature pictures bring;
The hoary mountains and foaming fountains of winter's freezing sway,
the sensuous shrouds of smoke drift clouds when Summer's bush fires stray;

The wondrous hue of the distant blue when Autumn clouds are high,
the tender green that robes the scene when maiden spring comes nigh.
When in brilliant halls the pleasure palls of dance and revelry,
I would fain go back by that winding track where the wild hills call for me;

Away from the glare and haunts of care is where Nature's feet have trod,
where the land is blest with peace and rest and the soul comes near to God.

Billy Ruth Jan 09



After Draft



MCAV A

When you look at these incredible photos from our family heritage, they also depict our nation's heritage. These photos are a family and as you can see so much of their lives and those ones in the album back at the old place.

Think about all those photos you have in your home, your parents have on the shelf, in the cupboard, they are a family's past, of good times and bad; the horses, the snow, fire, drought, you are looking at the share of

We are desperately trying to gather these types of photos. Don't stow the images away in the shed for the future. These photos are a major link with the past, a pictorial glimpse into the past. This is how we lived, the tradition can live on in a thousand words', please give us millions of reasons

Stop and think! What better way to show the past than to show what was like to be mountain cattleman. It's a way of

How can I go about this? They are my family's past. Don't worry; we understand that parties can be arranged to copy the images and put them in

Thankyou to the Higgins family for allowing

Give me a call or text on 0438 522 378, email me or arrange what is best for you and your important



Archive Plea

from the past they depict not just a family's history/
these images are from an album held by the Higgins
s are familiar to you. Yes, those photos are just like

our albums, boxes, draws at home, those ones that
in the shed. When you look at them and see your
dogs, cattle, bush, droving, the muster, mountains,
and heritage of the Mountain Cattleman.

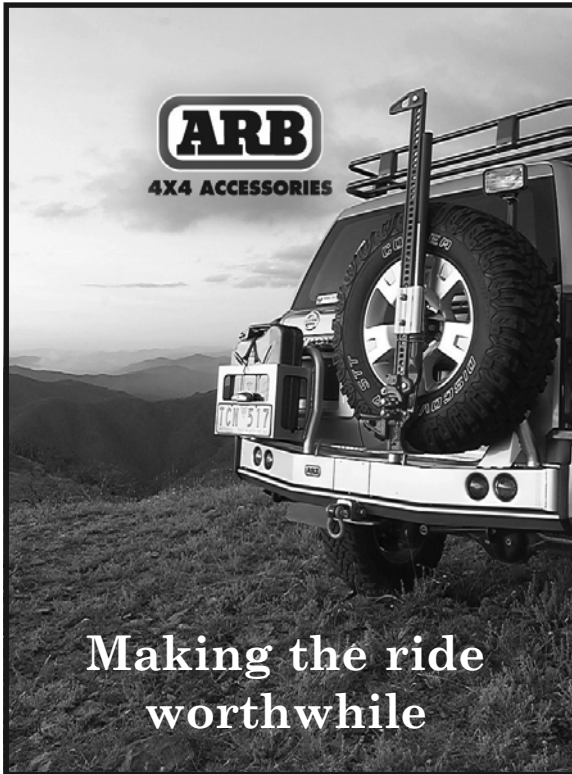
es of irreplaceable images into the MCAV archives.
rats, silverfish and mould to destroy. Those photos
e into what life was like, that's the way it was done,
f we are shown how. They say 'a picture paints a
ons to put this archive together.

ose who have no idea, no perception of what it is/
preserving what it is to be a mountain cattleman.

ly's photos, they are personal, our original link with
ng with an original photo is not what you want. We
the MCAV archives.

ng us to share with you some of their family's past.
ail me on debbie.squires@bigpond.com and we can
t part of the Mountain Cattlemen's Archives.






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The Gathering of the “Cracks”

Turned 11yrs old just a few months ago,
and what a life I've had.

To the mountain cattlemen reunion
nine times already so I'm glad.

From Dargo, the Bennison, Omeo and Licola to name a few.
this year at Merrijig 2009 will be just as special too.

Gathering of the “Cracks” – what an experience it will be.

Seen “The Man from Snow River” many many times – believe me.

My home at Seaton, north of Heyfield with its mountain views.
reminds me all the time of my family
with high country grazing history so true.

They have had for generations gathering of the “cracks”
and mustered mountain cattle with courage care and hacks.

Each reunion gives me memories

so different from the last ,

but this year at Merrijig my big aim and task -

to have my Akubra autographed with great dreams from the past.

So when you see me in the queue of hundreds lined up here,

please push me towards the front

My hat will hold you dear.

Tom and Sigrid, Charlie and Geoff,
the cast and crew to sign.

I hope to shake your hand and thank you for your time.

So if my hat's successful,

I'll show my world with pride.

Tradition and heritage is a part of me to strive,

The Man from Snowy River,

the Gathering of the “Cracks”

I Salute You.

Justin Morgan



“Tarcool” at Wombat Crossing

LYRIC ANDERSON

with additional information from Susan Noble and the Howson family



Enthusiastic “working bees” were held at the Get Together site on the Avon River.

The MCAV would like to acknowledge and thank the Howson family for generously allowing the Get-Together to take place on their property, “Tarcool”, on the Avon River.

Tom and Christine Howson have lived on the place for 27 years, running Angus cows and calves on the property. They have lent their place for the second time, after their first attempt at hosting the 1996 Get-Together was thwarted due to a complaint from neighbours regarding the state of the road. The Get-Together was moved to Waterford along the Wonangatta River. Mrs Howson said the family was really looking forward to having the Get-Together this year and that all three of their children had travelled home to be a part of it.

“Tarcool”, an Aboriginal word meaning ‘bend in the river’, has seen many generations of families along its river banks. The property has also seen many changes from dairying to Merino and Hereford studs and it has also seen its size built up, broken up and subdivided.

Originally the property was a dairy farm and part of the Foster brothers’ holdings, as most of the land on the west side of the river then was. The land to the east of the Avon was owned by Angus McMillan.

The property then changed hands from the Fosters to Tom Daymond, who ran cattle until Jack Cromb bought the 320-acre farm in about 1957. Bill and Faye Cromb bought the place

from Bill's father in about 1959 and ran sheep and cattle while they lived in Maffra. The Crombs' finally sold the property in 1962 to buy in at Ensay where they ran sheep and cattle until they retired. They now live at Eagle Point.

Bill and Joyce Akers then bought the property and built yards and sheds. They were burnt in the fires of 1965, which originated at Dennison and went through to the coast. They re-built and also put up the house and built the dam. "It was before megalitres were used to measure water and I remember that it was an 11-acre foot dam, meaning there was a foot of water to the acre," Mr Akers said; adding that the government released Crown land of about 300 or 400 acres on the back half of the property which they acquired and took the property size to about 700 acres.


Mr Akers explained that the site of the shearing shed they built was on the site of the old dairy and that the family ran Tarcool Merino


stud on the property, the area was known as 'Wombat'. The stud was a mix of Hazeldene and Chatsworth House bloodlines in an effort to try to take advantage of the height of the Hazeldene line while keeping the fine wool of the Chatsworth line.

In 1970-71 the property was devastated by floods which covered all the bottom flats and killed sixty Tarcool stud rams. Mr Akers said he had 'never known it to happen before' and wouldn't think it had happened since.

John Edward 'Ted' Howson and his wife Mary purchased 550 acres in 1970 and also used the property name, "Tarcool", for their Hereford stud.

The majority of the land is now subdivided but previously the Howsons showed and sold Herefords and also sold bulls. Mr Howson died a few years ago and Mrs Howson lives in Maffra while Tom's brother Peter and his family still live across the river.




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Old Rusty



Old Rusty rests his head on his paw
as his breathing begins to slow,
he will travel the High Plains no more-
for he's going where all good dogs go.

As the light in his eyes is dimming
his master gently fondles his head,
while a voice is quietly singing
of the legends now long dead.

He travels back in time to the High Plains
the cattlemen, campfire and songs,
when the fire's roar, and the gentle rains
were all part of where he belongs.

Where the snowgums and brumbies survive
the coldest of Winter snow,
and tales of legendary cattle drives
were told by the campfire's glow.

Where the crack of a whip was sharp
in the still of an early dawn,
and the rough of the sleeper's tarp
barely felt by the cattlemen worn.

Where the simple life of pioneer
lies embedded in your heart,
for the love of the mountains so dear
that their spirits will never part.

He recalls sadly the greatest battle
between politicians and the bush,
when they banned the mountain cattle
for the Greens had all the push.

He remembers the march down Spring Street
and the horsemen who gathered en masse;
the clatter of asphalt and hoof beat
the huge sea of Akubra hats.

He longs for the wisdom now gone-
when cattlemen managed their lease,
how the department got it all wrong
his only comfort now, is in peace.

So as Rusty draws his final breath
he roams the High Plains once more,
a tear is shed for the old dog's death
lying still, on the hut's dusty floor.

Fifteen years by his master's side
he'd been a faithful and trusting mate,
when the cattleman takes his last great ride
Rusty will be waiting there at the gate.

And together again, their spirits will roam
across mountains and crystal clear streams,
a master and mate's eternal home-
in the land where Koories still dream....

Zita Heywood 2006

Mountain Cattleman Frank Ryan remembered



Nug Wylie, Neville Wright, Leonard Ryan, Rosalea Ryan, Barbara Ryan, and Dan Ryan are pictured after the unveiling of the plaque at "Bennies". (Wendy Jubb Stoney)

Well known and respected Mountain Cattleman the late Frank Ryan, was honoured and remembered on March 21 and 22 by his relatives, friends and the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria.

The weekend ceremony was held on the upper Rose River at the historic "Bennies" near Frank Ryan's former cattle lease.

On the Saturday a group of riders rode into the lease at the head of the Dandongadale River along the original bridle track, revisiting the lease and remembering Frank and his good mate the late Don Kneebone. The ride was led by Frank's nephew Chris Ryan and friend Roger Smitheron.

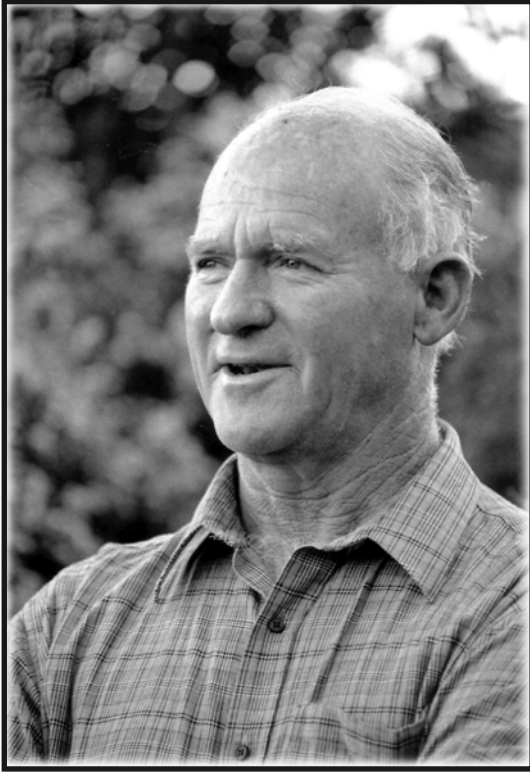
A plaque remembering Frank had been placed on a rock at Bennies and this was unveiled on Sunday by members of Frank's family. It is situated beside another plaque remembering Don Kneebone, so the mates are still together.

The ceremony was chaired by local bushman Neville Wright and tributes were paid to Frank by speakers including Christa Treasure, Ron Briggs, Graeme Hughes and Graeme Stoney.

A poem written by Don Kneebone's daughter Christine was read to the audience by Wendy Jubb Stoney. Neville Wright excelled himself by presenting a roast dinner, hearty breakfast and lunch to the good crowd who attended.

MCAV president, Christa Treasure later said that the Mountain Cattlemen would continue to push for grazing to be used widely as a management tool in both State Forest and National Parks. She also announced the MCAV intended to sponsor similar heritage rides to different leases around the High Country in forthcoming years.

"We must retain for posterity the special knowledge the cattlemen have about their leases even after cattle have been removed and one way to do that is to ride into the lease and have someone connected to the country tell our riders and especially our young people all about the history. At the same time we will also remember the stories of the particular cattlemen's families who ran cattle on the country for up to 150 years. We are determined that the knowledge will not be lost and we will be proactive in preserving our proud heritage and history."



Maurice “Mossie” Coleman

8 March 1922 - 6 December 2009

Maurice was born at St Davids Hospital Maffra, the eldest son of Maurice and Eileen Johanna (nee Kingwell) Coleman. He spent his entire 87 years on the property at Glenmaggie and passed away on 6 December 2009. Maurice was a devoted husband, father, grandfather and uncle, as well as an active community member.

He spent his early years growing up on the family property “Grandview” at Glenmaggie. At the age of seven years he began school at St Joseph’s Convent in Maffra which he attended for four years, boarding with his father’s sister, Auntie Mary Killeen. In 1933, he returned to his parents’ home and continued

his education at Glenmaggie state school until leaving at the age of fourteen to help his father on the farm. There he took part in milking, harvesting, tobacco growing, shearing and general farm work, as well as off-farm work with the Country Roads Board.

During the Second World War, Maurice was recruited into the army at the age of eighteen, but after eighteen months the Labour industry had him discharged to shear sheep as there was an acute shortage of shearers. Maurice went on to shear professionally for twenty years.

Maurice also began beekeeping and over the years built up a large business taking hives all over the state until losing all his hives and bees in the 1965 bushfires. In his time as an apiarist, he developed a strong passion for the bush and botany and had an eye for noticing things which were unusual. This resulted in the identification and naming of Mountain Banksia (*Banksia canei*), as a new species of banksia, in 1962.

On 12 June 1954, Maurice married Maureen Francis Doolan and they subsequently made their home on part of the Glenmaggie property selected and purchased by his grandfather in the 1870s and 1880s. There they reared a family of six boys and three girls. Following the death of his parents and brother Bill, Maurice purchased the adjoining homestead “Grandview” property. He also purchased a property at Riverslea on the junction of the Thomson and Macalister rivers on which he undertook substantial pasture improvement work.

For a time, Maurice ran both sheep and cattle on the Glenmaggie property, eventually getting out of the sheep business to focus on his Angus herd. The cattle were grazed on the property at Glenmaggie during the winter and taken to the



high country runs for the summer months. Taking the cattle to the high country runs over Mt Useful via McEvoy's Track and the annual muster at Easter was something his children always looked forward to with great anticipation. Later on, young cattle were "finished off" on the river flats at Riverslea. For many years, the cattle were sold at the annual sales at Heyfield saleyards, and the stock was held in high regard by agents and buyers.

Maurice was a member of the CFA up until the time of his death, serving for over fifty years, which included being captain of the Glenmaggie brigade for more than thirty years of that time. He was presented with the National Medal in 1983 in recognition of his service. The property at Glenmaggie was impacted by bushfires in 1939, 1965 and 2007, and on numerous occasions over the years fires impacted on the cattle runs. Maurice had strong views on land and fire management practices and often spoke of the need for more fuel reduction burning, particularly after the three recent major fire events in this state. He was very interested in the work of the current Royal Commission and contemplated what the findings might be compared with those found after the 1939 fires.

Maurice was also a builder, plumber, electrician and mechanic, the knowledge gained through reading, studying and experience. He undertook numerous renovations of the family home to accommodate the growing family and carried out repairs to the household equipment and machinery. Prior to electricity arriving in the Macalister valley, he installed and maintained a large number of the lighting plants on the local properties from Glenmaggie to Licola. His knowledge and assistance was keenly sought

when people had problems with the power supplies.

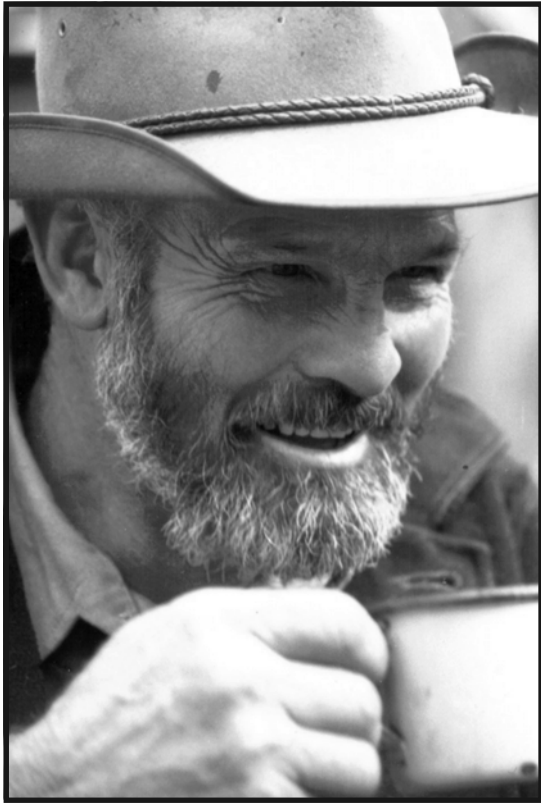
In more recent years, Maurice devoted time to his hobby of collecting and restoring stationary engines and preserving part of our history. This hobby enabled him to travel many parts of South Eastern Australia and England seeking out engines of interest and attending rallies, making many friendships in the process. A number of stationary engines owned and used on the family property form part of his collection.

Maurice was an active community member being an inaugural member of the Heyfield Lions Club on which he served up until the time of his death and in 2008 received the Melvin Jones Fellow Award. He also was a member of the Glenmaggie Hall Committee, the Glenmaggie Cemetery Trust, the Cowwarr Heyfield Parish Catholic Church Committee, St Bede's Mentone school board. Maurice was also served on the Glenmaggie Foreshore Committee which undertook the development of the camping and caravan park facilities at Lake Glenmaggie today enjoyed by many tourists and campers over their Christmas and Easter breaks.

Maurice will be remembered for his kind and compassionate nature, readiness to provide assistance to those in need and willingness to share his knowledge and experience. He lived a rich and fulfilling life and in his words "That's a good job done".

This eulogy was given by Mossie Coleman's daughter, Anne, at his funeral.





Clive Hodge

8 March 1922 - 6 December 2009

Clive Hodge was born at Buchan, the third child and first son of Gordon and Min Hodge. He grew up with siblings Dawn, Wanda, Lloyd and Frank and was educated at Buchan school. Life was very tough and all the children had to pull their own weight with daily chores. This resulted in Clive often falling asleep at his school desk though he later attended Caulfield Grammar for a year.

In 1949 the family moved to “Annsfield” at Rosedale where Clive met Marion and they married in 1953. They started married life on a station at Camperdown in the western district, where Clive was head stockman. Janine was the first born and after moving back to Boisdale, sons Dale, Steve and Chris completed the family. Clive was working land at Newry but also spent much time in the bush trapping dingoes for the Lands Department, all the while building up his cattle numbers.

After a short time at Briagolong, Clive, Marion and the kids moved to “Whitewood Park” at Valencia Creek in 1969. This would become the family home of 22 years. Clive continued to build on his beloved Hereford herd and liked nothing better than to attend stud sales to purchase blood line bulls.

It was from Valencia Creek that Clive established Mountain Safaris of Gippsland with Charlie Noble and over the years many local and overseas visitors shared with Clive his knowledge of the mountains.

With continuing drought conditions in Victoria, Clive and Marion acquired the NSW property “Woodstock” in 1991. Clive and Dale regularly topped the Adelong and Tumbarumba calf sales. In 1997 Marion passed away and Clive made the decision to come back to Gippsland. He purchased a small property at Wuk Wuk and it was here that he continued with his Herefords. Unfortunately, ill health in 2009, bought an end to this.

Clive was recognized throughout Gippsland as a top horseman, bushman and mountain cattleman. He was successful in whatever challenge he set himself – marriage, family, father, dog trapper, cattle breeder, tourist operator or being involved with the CFA, SES and local government. But his life long passion was always to be a good bushman.

He was very supportive of the Mountain Cattlemen and their fight through the 1980s to keep their leases. He was on the MCAV Central Council for years and had valuable input to decisions and the direction of the association. They were tough and difficult times.

Clive rode in the first Cattlemen’s Cup on a big white dappled horse. His photo was on the front page of the *Stock and Land* and Clive looked a million dollars, lining up with Charlie and John Lovick, a couple of Connleys and other well known names. The race was fast and furious, both Lovicks and Stoney fell off in the river. Ken Connley won, but Clive was right on his heels. It was fantastic and the crowd loved it.



In 1984 the cattlemen held a major rally and protest in Melbourne on the steps of parliament. But concerns were aired about what would happen when the bush horses spotted a tram for the first time? The risks and the unknowns were enormous. Clive spoke up, "If that's what it takes, I will be on my horse in the morning" he said. "But what happens if a horse shoe gets stuck in the tram tracks? someone asked. "We bloody well slide it to the terminus and get him out!" said Clive.

The cattlemen rode, with 304 horses, two wagons and four dogs. Melbourne loved it. Clive was also very involved in the Alpine Tour Operators Association which went on to become VTOA and later Tourism Alliance.

Over the years many stories of Clive Hodge have been told, like the time he turned up at Howit Hut on horseback, with dog traps, and his horse was lame. Guys lent him a packhorse that had never been ridden. That wasn't a problem for Clive - if it meant his horse could have a days spell.

When he climbed aboard with a fist full of dingo traps slung over his shoulder and a trap setter in the other hand the horse bucked high and many have heard how Clive grabbed hold of the roof guttering to steady himself to

make sure he came down on the packhorse's back. They also know how he hit the horse on the head with the trap setter as it landed. Clive always said that his back, and the back of his head, was sorer than the horse from being hit by the flying dog traps.

During his time with the SES he was involved in many rescues and saved many lives as he was well regarded for his tracking abilities. Sixty eight school children were lost in the snow on Mt Wellington in 1974 in a school excursion that went wrong in bad weather. Many were saved by Clive and his landrover, one of the first that was equipped with a heater. Although they suffered from frostbite some of them maintained contact with Clive for many years.

He is also remembered for badgering a very weary rake-hoe fire crew to move from under a huge tree that fell only a few minutes later, right where they had been laying. Similarly he convinced a family to move their tent from under an old snow gum at Howit hut and it fell only a few hours later with barely a breath of wind.

The last time most of us saw Clive was at Buttercup Get Together January 2009. Despite being very unwell, Clive proudly rode in the Snowy Reunion. He was shaking hands with the stars and more importantly his old riding mates.

They don't make bushmen like Clive Hodge anymore. He is missed.



With thanks to the Hogde family, Georgie Connan and Graham Stoney for Clive's eulogy.

Robert “Bob” Richardson

8 June 1943 - 12 October 2009

Bob Richardson was born in England and came to Australia as a child as a “£10 Pom”. He grew to love the Australian way of life and his new adopted home. He passed away at Merrijig last year.

A civil service for Bob’s life was held at Mansfield where Graeme Stoney was master of ceremonies and many speakers spoke of Bob’s family life, his union work and his concerns about the environment. Bob was regarded as a mentor in many public arenas including Timber Communities Australia, Push for the Bush, Plug the Pipe and the Mountain Cattlemen’s Association.

Doug Treasure, speaking on behalf of the MCAV at his funeral service, said that Bob had turned up in his life when he needed a hand and that he was someone who was always interested in his fellow man. “Do you need a hand mate,” was almost a trade mark for Bob. He said that Bob was “the epitome of the mate you needed. He was the bloke today that represented the mate that was needed when driving in the outback 100 years ago. He was the bloke next to you in the trenches at Gallipoli that you could rely on. He was the modern day bloke who supported you.” However Doug believed Bob went one step further, “he was an advocate for the people and got out in front and led in arenas that were not always understood by many of us.”

“The MCAV has had its down times and about five years ago we were really down. We had been banned from grazing in National Parks, had suffered severe fires in 2003 and an economic downturn in agriculture generally. Bob turned up. Initially I thought this bloke is a bit of a voice in the wilderness, who is he anyway and that he probably couldn’t ride a horse!”



Bob addressing the media during the Wonnangatta Ride.

“Well you are never too old to learn. What did Bob do? He basically said, “Don’t give up” and “I’ll give you a hand.” He then encouraged the cattlemen to get active and this encouragement saw us organising a ride through Melbourne, a trip through Wonnangatta with cattle and a general rebuilding of morale within the Association - so that today the MCAV has new life. Bob was not here for Bob - he was here for his fellow man.”

Bob never shirked his support for the workers; he was loyal; he was courageous; he was proud to be called a bushie; he was a writer and he could play *Amazing Grace* on the tin whistle! He was self effacing and loved being in the background, supporting workers and their families.

Extracted from eulogies given by Doug Treasure and Wendy Jubb Stoney at Bob’s funeral.

Rite of Passage

Young and old the riders came, from places far and wide
to congregate at Merrijig, close by Mount Buller's side.
One, a lanky lad, just out of his teens
in an almost new Akubra, and faded denim jeans
he rode a feisty cross-bred, a pretty dapple grey.
The old man sidled up to him, shook hands and said "G'day."

So you were raised on Banjo's verse and tales of Lawson too,
you've sung along with Williamson, the popular "True Blue".
You thrill to the 'Man from Snowy' ride and admire Ned Kelly's cheek,
there's romance in the stockman's life, which now you want to seek.
You've ridden in the sho ring and rodeos 'cross the land'
and now, here at the 'Cracks Cup', you'd like to try your hand.

I tell you, it's not so easy boy, not joy ride you will find,
clinging to the cliff face, round mountain sides you'll wind,
down gullies deep on mountain tracks, scarcely a horse-width wide,
through mountain ash and messmate and scrub where wombats hide,
in holes, rocks and broken ground can catch a horse mid-stride.

In gorges, steep between 'the hills, where sunlight barely shows,
'cross ranging streams, all icy cold from melting winter snows.
Upward to the summit, you'll struggle, horse and man
seeking out safe footing, anywhere you can.
As you burst into the sunlight, short of breath, mount flecked with foam,
you'll gaze 'round in wonder, before heading down and home.

If you think the outward journey's tough, this you need to know,
the downward trip is twice as rough, 'Old Jack' will tell you so.
Your horse will need the nerve of Nick, you'll need nerves of steel
and remember there'll be others following, close upon you heel.
The track is almost vertical, and 'tis a certain bet
that quite a few will tumble, 'specially if it's wet.

A new respect in you will live, for mountain, man and beast
as you join 'round the campfire, to yarn and joke and feast.
In future times, when days are long and life is rather glum
for whether you are first or last, no ones counts the score.
You've had the guts to have a go, no man can ask for more
and when the race is over and all is said and done
You've proved yourself a mountain man - I'm proud of you my son!

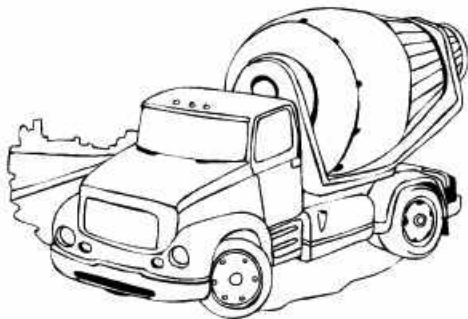
Elizabeth Wilde Jan 2009

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Chewing the Fat

In 2009 the MCAV decided to commission art work for a tautliner operating in the North East of Victoria. This follows the very successful art work on a truck based in Gippsland. Christine English (nee Kneebone) liaised with Taylors Transport who were very happy to co-operate and associate member David Hubble created the art work free of charge in collaboration with MCAV President Christa Mitchell and Graeme Stoney. The truck is presently plying the road between Melbourne and Sydney.



*Pauline Connley would dearly love to acquire a copy of **Voice of the Mountains No. 9**. This is the issue that is labelled Cobungra Station and features a mob of herefords moving across the front cover. If you have one that you no longer want, please call her.*

HEY YOU-YES YOU, BEHIND THE LENS !!

At every Get-Together literally thousands of images are captured - and thousands more are taken on guided rides through the mountains and at MCAV events.

But apart from you, the photographer seeing them, hardly anyone else gets to appreciate your talent!

Think of *Voice of the Mountains* when you take your photos - if you send it to me it could be your image on the cover next year.

**All images gratefully received and acknowledged at
PO Box 816 Bairnsdale 3875**



The merchandising team were hard at it with the MCAV marketing tent at the Traralgon Show.

The Cattleman's Daughter

Rachael Treasure's latest book 'The Cattleman's Daughter' has been released and covers some great pro-grazing, pro-cattlemen messages. It's an entertaining read, threaded with a love story and the cold hard facts on using fire and grazing as management tools in the high country. Available from booksellers or Rachael.

Corin Linch, former Don Kneebone poet, has a new book now available.

Innocence Stolen and all the rubbish it causes

\$23 plus \$4 pp within Australia.
Poems to make you laugh, or cry and poems to make you think. Postage and Packing \$4 per book within Australia, order from Corin Linch, PO Box 613, Jurien Bay WA 6516



35th Annual Get-Together Buttercup 2009



It has been 28 long years since The Man from Snowy River touched our hearts and imaginations and once again our spirits were lifted at the Mountain Cattleman's Get Together and Man from Snowy River Reunion held at Buttercup, Merrijig. The event was a great success in 2009, the highlight of the weekend was the crack riders on horseback reuniting with Sigrid Thornton, Tom Burlinson and Gus Mercurio after many years without seeing each other.

There were smiles and handshakes everywhere as the stars and crack horsemen caught up before the feature ride down the straight on Saturday afternoon. After showing the crowd that they still had what it takes, the riders were all presented with a 'Snowy River Legends Medallion', in recognition of their contribution to the movie and promotion of our much loved High Country. Tom and Sigrid spent many hours that afternoon signing autographs and talking with the crowd. And we would like to thank Charlie and Glenda Lovick for organising the film reunion and making it such a success.

With perfect weather and the event's largest ever crowd of spectators and associates, more than 4,500 people were treated to a continuous schedule of events; the good old whip cracking, lolly scramble, walking race, pack horse race and other regular draw cards entertained. The feature packhorse race where the old skills of being able to quickly pack gear in pack saddles and trot a course was again won comfortably by Graeme Forge of Oxley.

Whilst in the main arena some new displays were added to the schedule, polocrosse teams put on a display game, there was tent pegging and even a horse sale to keep the crowd busy. The woodchop championship entertained droves of people all afternoon and the fun kept on coming with the dog high jump and tug of war entrants slugging it out for their piece of glory. If that wasn't enough to tickle your fancy, there were many stall holders selling their wares and tantalising tastebuds, giving families plenty to do and see all weekend.

As the sun began to set across the McCormack family property and the day drew



to a close. The Don Kneebone Poetry competition, in which Tom Burlinson gave a stirring rendition of Banjo Patterson's "The Man from Snowy River", polished off the day. This year Sigrid Thornton was one of the four judges for the finals and she also presented the awards. The Don Kneebone section for original poetry was won by Val Kirley of Mansfield with a poem called *The Maharajah* while the Poet Laureate went to Zita Heywood of Everton with *Old Rusty*. Gippsland's poets fared well with the junior winner Kate Crombie of Metung reciting *The Rocky Plain Ranger* and Stratford's well known man of verse, Dennis Carstairs, winning the Bush Minstrel award with *Wally Ryder*.

The 'Aaron Daniels Band' captured the hearts and boots of many on Saturday evening, they kept the crowd singing and dancing into the wee hours.

Sunday morning dawned with yet another perfect day. "Buttercup" was a buzz with the anticipation of another day jam packed with entertainment for young and old. More new events captured the attention of the crowd till midday, when competitors mounted their trusty steeds for the feature events, the junior and senior

Cattlemen's Cups. After riders battled it out through the tough bush track Sigrid and Tom presented the deserving winners with their winning cups and prizes. Congratulations to local lass, Jo Stevens from Mansfield taking out the Junior Cattlemen's Cup. Maffra's Lincoln Adams was vying for his fourth win in a row but had to be content with second. He was beaten to the finish line by bush racer and long-time friend Neil Wait who proudly took home the Senior Cattlemen's Cup. Congratulations Neil.

This annual event is a great way for local hard-working mountain cattlemen and their families to come together to celebrate their heritage and passion for this magnificent country of ours. Together with old and new found friends we proudly continue to keep the dream and traditions of our ancestors and the high country alive.

In closing I would like to sincerely thank all of our sponsors big and small, along with the entire Mansfield community - without whose generosity, hard work and dedication the 2009 Get together would never have been the success it was. Thank you.

Bruce McCormack



Buttercup 2009

Junior Whipcracking

10 years and under

- 1st Jacqueline Davies
- 2nd Tahne Olssen
- 3rd Alex Ferguson
- 3rd Sophie

Juvenile Whipcracking

- 1st Emme Higgins
- 2nd Paige Williams
- 3rd Luke Higgins

Ladies Whipcracking

- 1st Diana Hurley
- 2nd Aleshia Sievers
- 3rd Sally Watt
- 4th Andrea Cook

Open Whipcracking

- 1st Diana Hurley
- 2nd Aleshia Sievers
- 3rd Stewart Bryant

Whipcracking (horseback)

- 1st Sally Watt
- 2nd Tarinae Pendergast
- 3rd Gigi Cardwell

Dog High Jump

- 1st "Aussie"
and Barry Horsburgh
- 2nd "Tex" and Neil Brady
- 3rd "Dusty"
and Leo Macdonald

Mountain Men's Challenge

Ladies

- 1st Dianna Hurley and GD
- 2nd Sarah Norman and Rachel Fallon
- 3rd Amanda Pendergast and Terrienne Whittington

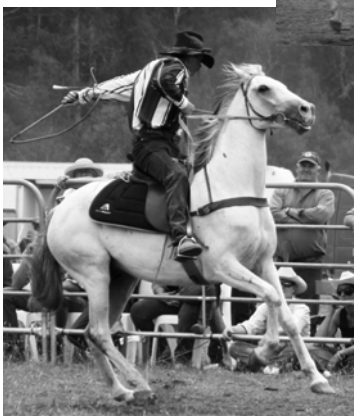
Mountain Men's Challenge

Mens

- 1st Baz and Jimmy
- 2nd Chris and Chris
- 3rd Ross and Tim



Buttercup 2009



Photographs of the Get-Together courtesy of Frances Westbury, Gary Coombes and Christian Jemison.

Tug-of-War

Mens Team McCormack

Ladies Team Zan

Cow Skin Drag

1st Gigi Cardwell and Tammy

2nd Adam McCormack and Gunna

3rd Robert Edwards and Combi

Ladies Haystacking

1st Rebecca and Sasha

Mens Haystacking

1st Leo Macdonald and
Brendon Willow

Wally Ryder Walking Race

1st Billy Finn

2nd Kerry-Anne Forge
with Sebastian

3rd Gary Carne with
Rose

4th Dion Carstairs

Frank Ryan Packhorse Events

Junior Packhorse Race

1st Ellen Forge with
Penny and Sebastian

2nd Josh Seymour with
Lightning and Starlight

Ladies Packhorse Race

1st Anne-Maree Forge with
Penny and Sebastian

2nd Jenelle Kiely with
Snowy and Blaze

3rd Ros Knight with
India and Murphy

Open Packhorse Race

1st Graham Forge with
Benny and Sebastian

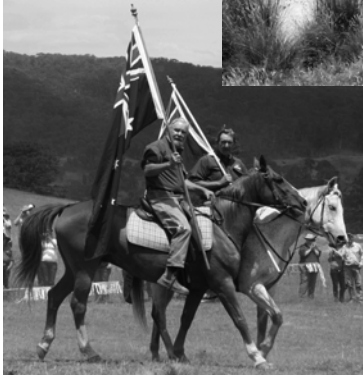
2nd Jim Kiely with
Snowy and Blaze

3rd Ben Neville with
Hughie and Rosie

4th Alan Rice

Neatest Pack

Jim Kiely



Relay Race

- 1st Cook family
- 2nd Forge family
- 3rd McCormack family

Rescue Race

- 1st Laura-Jean Felmingham
- 2nd Adam McCormack and Matt Maliki
- 3rd Billy Finn and Sammy

Mazda Junior

Cattlemen's Cup

- 1st Joanne Stevens on Doolam Gem
- 2nd Nicole Pearson on Viper
- 3rd Marika Angrove on Streetwise

Mazda Mountain

Cattlemen's Cup

- 1st Neil Waite on Sam
- 2nd Lincoln Adams on Calibre
- 3rd Chris Connley on Herbie
- 4th Bret Lancaster

Don Kneebone Heritage Award

Snr Val Kirley with her poem "The Maharajah"

Jnr Kate Crombie with her poem "Rocky Plain Ranger"

Bush Minstrel Award

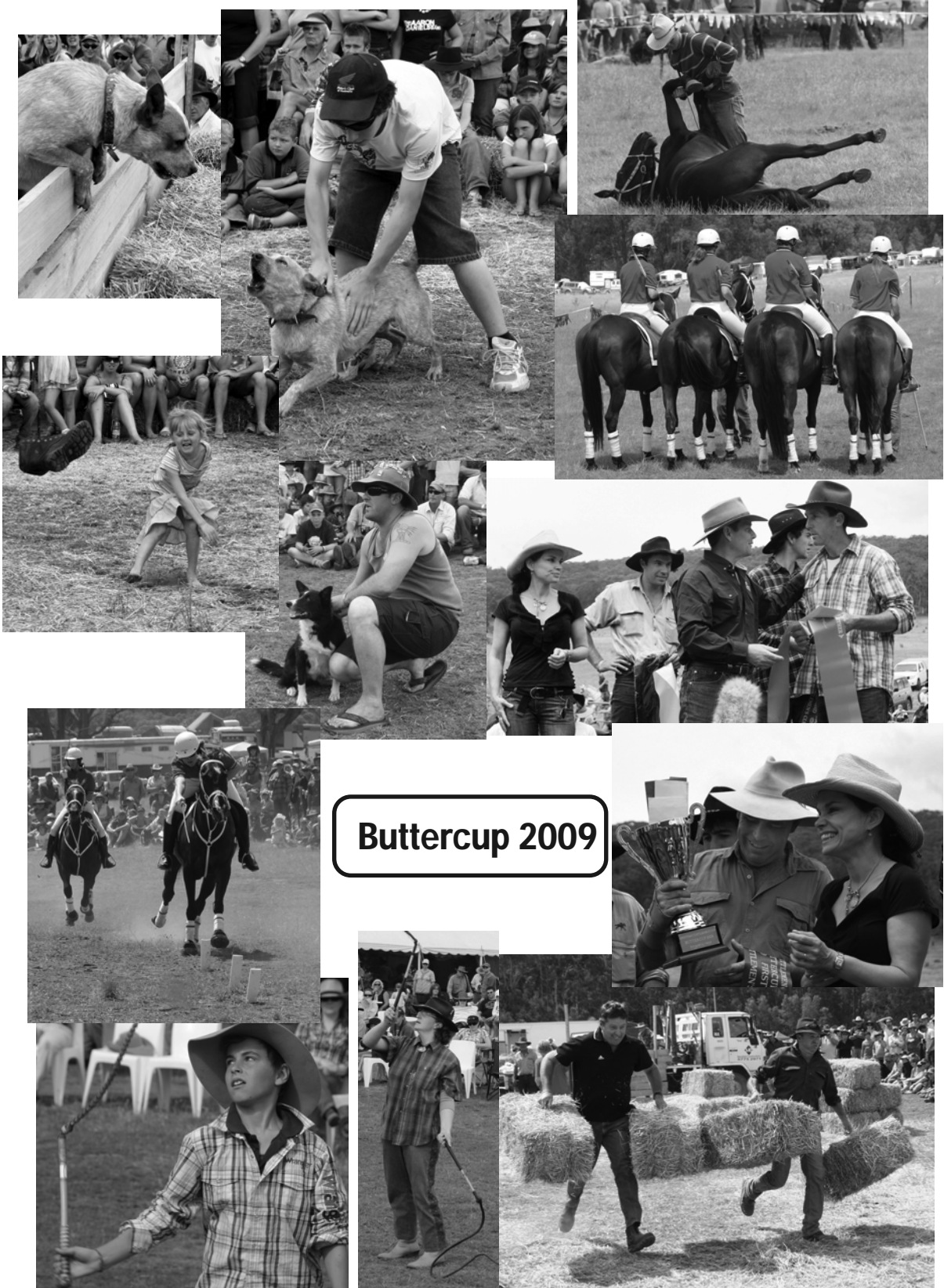
Dennis Carstairs and his poem "Wally Ryder"

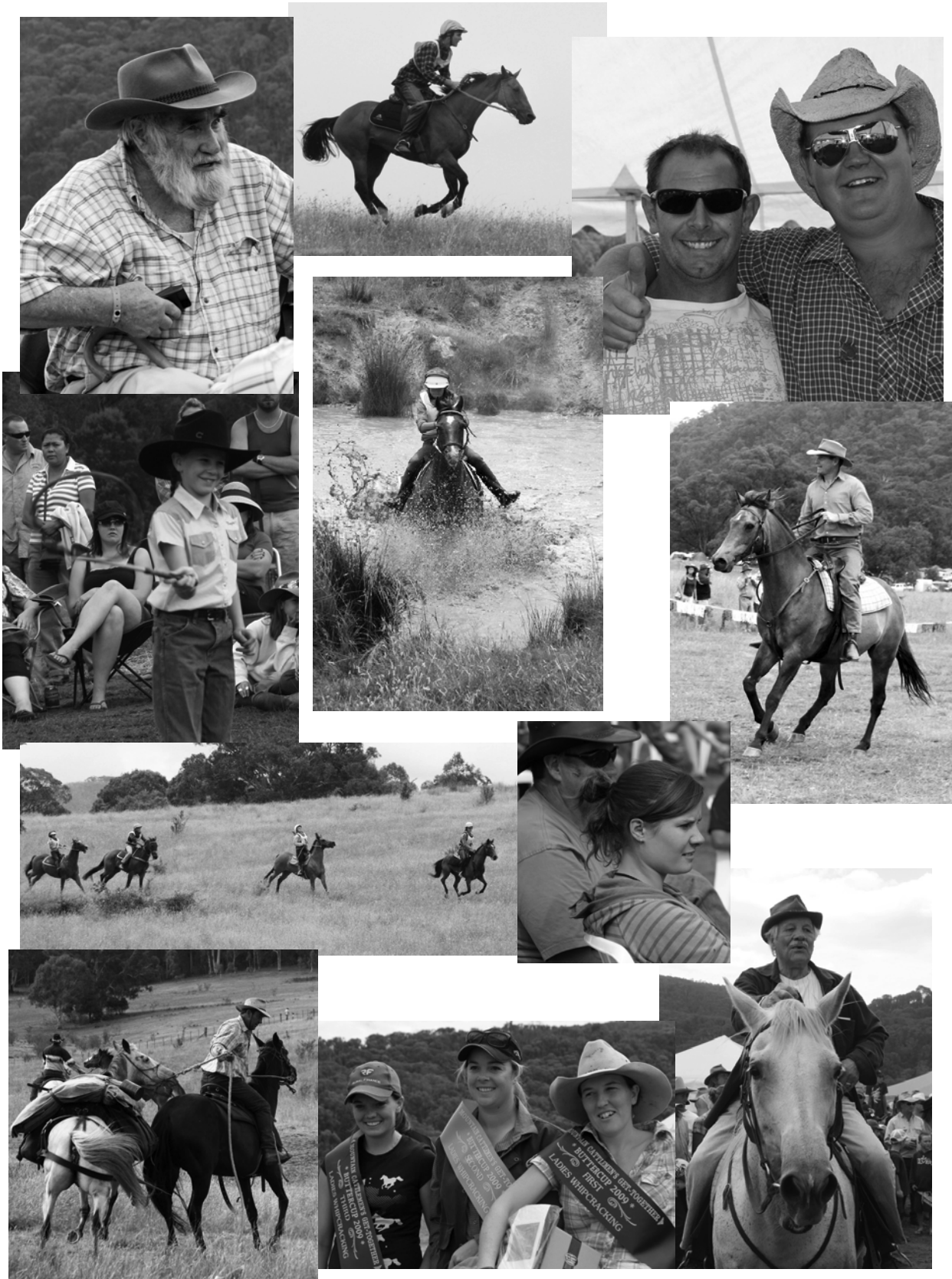
Bush Laureate

Zita Heywood with her poem "Old Rusty"

Buttercup 2009







Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria held on Friday 25 September 2009 at the Berwick Showgrounds commencing at 10.31am.

Christa Treasure welcomed everyone and introduced Mary Longden and Ben Guzzardi from RDAA (Riding for the Disabled Association Australia), who give a brief speech and presented the MCAV with a plaque as a thank you for donating money from the sale of a horse at the Mansfield "Buttercup" Get Together 2009.

Present

Christa Treasure, Ray Anderson, Graeme Stoney, Fiona Treasure, Frances Westbury, Rhonda Treasure, Cath Noble, Susan Noble, Julia Reti, Doug Treasure, Mary Treasure, Chris Commins, Brian Higgins, Ron Briggs, Neville Wright, Lyn Wright, Scott Jennison, Stephen Mc Lean, Edward O'Donohue, Simon Turner, Danny Cook, Chris Cooper, Richard Faithfull, Anne Faithfull, Bruce Mc Cormack, John Cook, Ben Treasure, Mary Longden, Ben Guzzardi, Willy Fantom

Apologies

Wendy Jubb Stoney, Bluey Commins, Janice Cooper, Buff Rodgers, Erika Kirk, Ross and Magda Brown, Jack Hicks, David Evans, Peter Monds, Anthony Higgins, Kevin Higgins, Froggy and Rita Mc Mahon, Mark Coleman.

Minutes

Fiona Treasure read the minutes from the 2008 Annual General Meeting. Bruce Mc Cormack accepted the minutes as read, seconded Brian Higgins. Carried.

Annual Report

President Christa Treasure gave her report verbally. Graeme Stoney moved that Christa's report be accepted, seconded by Chris Commins. Carried.

Graeme thanked Christa for her fantastic work and presented her with some flowers.

Financial Report

The financial report was given by Anne Faithfull including hard copies of the report. Chris Cooper moved that Anne's report be accepted, seconded by Chris Commins. Carried.



*Retiring President Christa Mitchell with
Graeme Stoney at the Annual General Meeting.*

Marketing Report

Susan Noble delivered the marketing report. The idea was discussed that there be a separate account for marketing so we can visibly see marketing profits.

Rhonda Treasure moved that the Treasurer presents to the AGM separate accounts showing the net profit of the year's marketing activities including the Get Together results and any other fund raising activities for the year. This was seconded by Graeme Stoney. Carried. Susan Noble moved that her report be accepted. Seconded Brian Higgins. Carried.

Christa introduced Ed O'Donohue MP and he addressed the meeting emphasizing the influence of the February fires and the shift in environmental management.

Fixing Honorariums

Graeme Stoney spoke to the meeting about the honorariums and how he believes they should be raised in order to keep the organization professional. Chris Commins and Rhonda Treasure agree with this.

Chris Commins moves that the honorariums change as follows

President	\$21,000
Vice President	\$ 2,500
Treasurer	\$10,000
Secretary	\$ 7,000
Merchandise	\$ 3,000
Get Together Coordinator	\$ 3,000

and to be reviewed on an annual basis. Seconded Graeme Stoney. Carried.

Graeme Stoney moved that the President's expenses include an \$80 per month reimbursement for phone, out of pocket expenses and travel cost of 30 cents per km when on official business. Seconded Chris Commins. Carried.

Election of Office Bearers

The President Christa Treasure invited Simon Turner to take the chair for the election of office bearers.

President

Doug Treasure was nominated by Chris Commins. There being no other nominations, Doug Treasure was declared elected.

Vice President

Christa Treasure nominated Chris Commins. There being no other nominations, Chris Commins was declared elected.

President's Assistant

John Cook nominated Graeme Stoney. There being no other nominations, Graeme Stoney was declared elected.

Secretary

Christa Treasure nominated Fiona Treasure. There being no other nominations, Fiona Treasure was declared elected.

Treasurer

Anne Faithfull was nominated by Graeme Stoney. There being no other nominations, Anne Faithfull was declared elected.

Marketing Officer

Susan Noble was nominated by Anne Faithfull. There being no other nominations, Susan Noble was declared elected.

Get Together Co-ordinator

Ben Treasure was nominated by John Cook. There being no other nominations, Ben Treasure was declared elected.

Simon Turner handed the chair to Doug Treasure.

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.

Appointment of Public Officer

It was moved by Graeme Stoney that Anne Faithfull be the Public Officer. Seconded Doug Treasure. Carried.

Setting membership and associate membership subscription fees

Christa Treasure moved that the full membership be set at a flat rate of \$220 for everyone, therefore abolishing the additional \$3.30 per head for over 100 head. Seconded John Cook

Chris Cooper moved an amendment that the full membership remain as it was, including the \$3.30 per head for over 100 head. Seconded Neville Wright. Amendment is lost. Motion voted on. Carried.

Simon Turner moves that the associate member fees remain the same at singles \$30 and families \$40. Seconded Graeme Stoney. Carried.

Branch Reports

<i>Mansfield</i>	Bruce Mc Cormack
<i>North East</i>	Ron Briggs
<i>Omeo</i>	Chris Commins
<i>Gippsland</i>	Ben Treasure

Ben Treasure gave everyone an up date on the Get Together. There was a discussion on when the gates should open for campers. Some felt strongly that early campers (particularly those riding horses to the Get Together), should be welcome to arrive early in the week. Others felt that no one should be allowed on the property until the gates open on Friday.

General Business

1. Christa Treasure spoke regarding the possibility of changing the constitution. She felt that the designations 'members' and 'associates' could be changed to 'grazing members' and 'members'. Christa felt this was a more appropriate description as the associates play a vital role in the Association. Chris Cooper did not see the point of doing this. Simon Turner was concerned about implications. Cath Noble stated that as an associate she did not really belong at the meetings while Scott Jennison felt there was an 'us and them' feeling to the members and associates. Christa Treasure further suggested the formation of a subcommittee to investigate the matter.

Graeme Stoney indicated his preparedness to lead a small committee to investigate this and to report back to the next Annual General Meeting.

Chris Commins moved that a subcommittee consisting of Graeme Stoney, Doug Treasure, Ray Anderson and Scott Jennison will look at associate members and their rights. This was seconded by Cath Noble. Carried.

2. Christa Treasure spoke of the possible amalgamation of the North East and Mansfield branches. Ron Briggs believes the North East branch is no longer viable.

Chris Cooper moved that the Secretary write to the North East members asking for their input, the letter to include a RSVP, and to also explain that Mansfield would welcome an amalgamation. Seconded John Cook. Carried.

3. Willy Fantom told the meeting he was looking for horses to take on parts of his ride through Victoria.

Meeting closed at 3.01pm.



The newly elected office bearers of the MCAV at the Annual General Meeting.

MCAV Sponsors 2010



MAZDA

Richards Harvesting & Haulage, Morwell
McCormack Mountain Valley Trail Rides
Whites Fertiliser, Bairnsdale
Johnston's Busted Arse Logging
Gunns Timber, Heyfield
Transtedel Livestock Carriers, Boisdale
Duncan family
Rodwells, Sale
Workhire Australia, Sale
Kerr Bros Earthmoving, Lang Lang
Richard Bell Excavations, Research
Off Mountain Accommodation, Mansfield
Jorgensen Transport, Maffra
Office National, Bairnsdale
Newry Hotel
Eskdale Hotel
Ross International, Traralgon
Bairnsdale Horse Centre
Dwyers Toyota, Bairnsdale
4WD TV
Dyers Gippsland Transport
ARB 4x4 Accessories
Rachael Treasure

Brown Wigg, Maffra
Snowy Range Horseback Tours
Pine Freighters Logging & Cartage, Rosedale
Heywood's Yowie Logging, Heyfield
Bundy Ag, Maffra
Landmark, Sale
Jim Treasure
Murray Goulburn Trading
Maffra Pre-mix Concrete
Smiths Livestock Cartage
Ollie Electrical Services, Mooroolbark
H & H Hall Contracting, Stratford
Global Traffic Management
Tatt's General Store, Boisdale
Newry Fencing Contractors
Briagolong Hotel
Bairnsdale Windscreens
Young Signs, Jumbuk
McInnes Earthmoving, Metung
Gippsland Farmer
Keith Mills Vet Clinic, Toora
Rosedale Bakery
Egee Printers, Bairnsdale



WELLINGTON
SHIRE COUNCIL

The Heart of Gippsland

The Association is indebted to these businesses, organisations and individuals for their loyal support of the mountain cattlemen. This year we owe a special thanks to the Howson family for the use of their property and all the Get Together workers who attended working bees and spent untold hours "getting things ready" to ensure a successful weekend. Thank you all.

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**

