



ABOVE: So what if they don't look like your average jockey. They were still the placenessers in the Cattleman's Cup, a race for mountain horsemen whose skills in the saddle are enshrined in Australian folklore. The race last Sunday was won by Ken Conoley, of Omeo, ahead of Graeme Stoney, of Mansfield, and Hayden Hamilton, of Boisdale.

The cattlemen ride again

WHEN the mountain cattlemen have a shindig they make a job of it.

Like last weekend when 1200 of them and their friends got together for a high plains booley, which took in a race meeting, a mountain man's wedding, an all-night barbecue and a visit from a ghost.

And to make sure there were no gatecrashers, the cattlemen took their guests way back into the hills — to Holmes Plain deep in the high country close to the Great Divide.

The stars of the occasion were the Conoley family of Omeo.

Tom Conoley got married on Saturday and his brother, Ken, won his second Mountain Cattlemen's Cup on Sunday.

For the rest of this week the Conoleys have all had sore hearts.

The wedding was something else.

The blushing bride, Sue Briggs, arrived at the open-air church in a linker decorated with everlasting daisies, escorted by three bridesmaids on horseback.

And just to make sure the bridal party got there safely every available horseman formed a huge posse to escort the lovelies.

It was the first wedding known to have been celebrated in the mountains.

But even while the cattlemen had their fun they made time to get down to some politicking.

That was why they invited the Minister for Conservation and Forests, Mr McKenzie to the blowout.

At a straight talking meeting on Saturday night, the mountain men said they wanted to retain the long-standing right to graze cattle in the alps.

To which Mr McKenzie replied that a compromise should be reached so that all

people who lived the high country should continue to enjoy it and have access to it.

The cattlemen took this to mean that the Minister intended to see to it that their access, which dates back 150 years, would not be denied them.

Even the president of the Victorian Farmers and Graziers Association, Mr Graeme Stoney, and executive of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria said there was strong support in the community for cattlemen, continuing to use the high plains as a summer refuge for their stock.

Many responsible people opposed the wishes of certain elements who wanted the cattlemen excluded from the mountains.

Having made their points about political matters, the cattlemen got back to their fun, the highlight of which was the cup race on Sunday.

Ken Conoley beat off a strong challenge from Graeme Stoney, of Mansfield, with Hayden Hamilton, of Boisdale, third.

As for the "ghost" that turned up late on Sunday, the visitors' fears were allayed when Clive Hodge, a Gippsland cattleman, revealed himself from under his sheet. But he did give some a nasty turn first.

back the
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field



Victorian hay off to Japan?

A MASSIVE potential trade exists in feeding Japanese dairy cattle with Victorian hay.

The Agriculture Minister, Mr Kent, believes Victorian farmers could sell 200,000 tonnes of hay a year to Japan.

At present, sales run at a mere 3000 tonnes.

Hay sales began in 1981 with trial shipments filling empty shipping containers returning to Japan.

The trade came to a halt last year when drought made it impossible to sell hay at all.

But expansion of the Japanese dairy industry has

made its farmers more anxious to get supplies.

This year, they hope to buy 5000 tonnes of hay from Australia.

They would take 200,000 tonnes if supply, handling and fumigation problems could be overcome.

The Japanese farmers are at present buying 77 per cent of their hay from the US and 18 per cent from China.

They are keen to buy from the Southern Hemisphere and expand into buying lucerne pellets and wafers.

Mr Kent believes there is potential for the export of 10 per cent of Victorian bulk roughage production.

"My department is treating this as a matter of very high priority," he said.

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Rural NEWS

by Mike Dowling

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