



# MOUNTAIN CATTLEMENS NEWS

Newsletter of the Mountain Cattlemens Association of Victoria  
P O Box 294, Mansfield, Vic 3722

October 1991

Dear Members and Associate Members,

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Association was held at the Victorian Farmers Federation in Melbourne on Wednesday 25th September, 1991, and was well attended by members and associates.

The President addressed the meeting on his activities for the Association during the year, and reports were received from the Executive Officer, Marketing Officer and Secretary/Treasurer.

Subscription fees for Members and Associate members were held at last years level, as it was believed that the recession and general downturn in the rural sector did not warrant a rise in subscription fees.

Graeme Stoney tendered his resignation as Executive Officer and member of the Central Council at the meeting, which resolved to suspend the position of Executive Officer for a twelve month period as a trial. Members spoke very warmly of the great job done by Graeme over the many years he had worked as Executive Officer for the Association. Graeme was presented with a Certificate of Life membership, and was co-opted to the Central Council for as long as possible before he had to concentrate on the next State election issues.

Mr Alex Arbuthnot, President of the Victorian Farmers Federation addressed the meeting on the challenges facing all Australians, and particularly Australian farmers in the 1990's, and pledged his, and the support of the Victorian Farmers Federation for the M.C.A.V.

Office Bearers for 1991/1992 were elected as follows:

President	Doug Treasure.
Chairman	Allan Brewer.
Marketing Officer	Ros Andrews.
Special Projects	Jim Commins.
Secretary/Treasurer	Sue Silvers.
Snr. Vice President	Harry Ryder.
2nd Vice President	Bruce McCormack.

Certificates were presented to the following members:

Jim Commins Life membership. Although Jim was made a Life member of the Association some years ago upon his retirement as President, he had not received a Certificate.

Graeme Stoney Life membership.

Sue Silvers Life membership.

Keith and Annie Whittam Honorary Associate membership.

David Treasure Certificate of Appreciation.

Annie Whittam resigned as Marketing Officer after many years of devoted service to the M.C.A.V. The time had come when she found she had to spend more time with her teenage children. Annie was sincerely thanked for all her work for the Association.

The full Annual Report and Minutes of the Annual General Meeting will be published in the next edition of the Voice of the Mountains which will be circularised to all Members and Associate members.

A Central Council meeting followed the Annual Meeting with a short break for lunch.

#### **MARKETING - A MESSAGE FROM THE NEW OFFICER.**

After many years the address for marketing has changed. Annie and Keith have done a marvellous job and have now moved to greener pastures.

Enquiries for all merchandise items (windcheaters, t-shirts, singlets, stickers, badges, stubby holders, hats etc.) should now be directed to:

Ros and John Andrews,  
9 Kooyongkoot Road,  
HAWTHORN VIC 3122

Phone: (03) 818 7833

\* Some 7th Edition Port is still available, 8th Edition will be released at the Get Together.

\* Black windcheaters are now in stock.

We're looking for poster material. We would be pleased to hear from anyone with suitable, medium or large format mountain or action shots as soon as possible.

**1992 GET TOGETHER**

Plans for the 1992 Get Together are well advanced. The venue is the property of David Guy at Waterford near Dargo. The date, you will remember, has changed from previous years, to **JANUARY 18th - 19th.** and invitations with precise directions will be sent out in December. The invitation will also list events etc. There will be a new section this year. Members of the Public Land Council of Victoria will be invited to attend, and plans are afoot for an inaugural event, where members of the Public Land Council will pit their wiles and strength against that of the Mountain Cattlemen. A tug-of-war has been proposed, and is being considered, with various other matters, by the Committee running the weekend.

**Important Note:**

Entries close for all horse races except the Cattlemens Cup and Junior Cup by last mail on Friday the 10th January 1992.

Entry forms are available from:

Val Woodgate,  
Orbost Road,  
BUCHAN VIC 3885

Phone: 051 55 9278.

or -

Rita McMahon,  
Lind Avenue,  
DARGO VIC 3862

Phone: 051 40 1253.

All other entries close at noon on Saturday the 18th January.

Horse events will be run under the rules of the Bush Riders Association, and there will be a vet check at 9:00 a.m. Saturday 18th January.

**ASSOCIATE MEMBERS WEEKEND**

You will remember that in the last Newsletter we advertised a weekend for Associate members run by the Mansfield Branch. This weekend has been deferred to next autumn, and details will be advised in a later newsletter.

**7 YEAR GRAZING LICENCES**

The long promised, long awaited 7 year grazing licences

have now issued for grazing areas within the Alpine National Park. For this season only, members with grazing areas outside the National Park, or partly outside, will be issued with a one year licence, but the Department has stated its intention to issue a 7 year licence for a member's total area before the 1992/3 season.

It is now a matter of history that the Association was less than 48 hours away from issuing proceedings in the Supreme Court, when the licences issued. They were unsatisfactory in that there were some dozen or more clauses which were petty over-regulation. All involved matters which we had been discussing with the Department for over 12 months, but it could not come to terms with the commonsense approach the Association was advocating. A meeting with the Department was quickly arranged and all but one issue was rapidly and satisfactorily resolved. The only outstanding matter is the unfortunate situation where the Department have decided to count calves as adults in the allocations, but once again we hope that reality will prevail.

Matters resolved include:

Regional Managers will provide cattlemen with a letter of consent to use traditional stock routes.

Kellys will be able to erect a hut, yards and holding paddock in consultation with the Region.

Dogs need only be identified by Shire or DCE tags, and cattlemen can carry the tags with them rather than the dog wearing a collar.

In a situation where cattlemen might have to operate outside the licence area it will be good enough to advise the Region as soon as practical afterwards. It was pointed out that it would be better to advise the Region beforehand, but it was understood that this would not always be practical.

On the question of earmarks it was agreed that licencees would confirm existing brands and/or advise new brands at the time of stock allocations and would notify further brand changes during the season where appropriate.

Licencees will be permitted to keep keys to appropriate gates for the full 12 months, excepting where abuse of the system was evident.

Public Liability. It was explained that DCE now require all commercial users of public land to undertake this type of insurance. The insurance is to cover the licencee against negligence and is not to cover the Department. DCE carries its own insurance.

Payment of future licence fees. It was agreed that seasonal alpine grazing required a different approach to the DCE's draft credit policy, and that accounts should be issued at the time stock allocations were made and that payment be made within 14 days after the entry of cattle.

Review of boundaries. The Department have given a commitment that it would attempt to deal with individual concerns and that a review of boundaries could occur after the end of the current season where necessary.

Total allocation (in cases of more than one licence). Queries on total allocation for areas within and without the Park can be ascertained by telephoning the appropriate Regional office.

All cattlemen have accepted their 7 year licences on a without prejudice basis. With reference to the Bogong High Plains we have written to the Department accepting their Harrietville proposal that the northern end cattlemen (the phase out runholders) take a cut of 30% of adult stock, and the southern runholders accept a reduction of 15% of adult stock, and that calves should not be counted as 'head'. We are awaiting a reply.

#### **FLORA & FAUNA GUARANTEE**

Still on the Bogong High Plains. The mossbeds, fen (bog pool) sub communities, dwarf Sedge, Mountain Daisy and Mountain Cress have been nominated by the Flora & Fauna Guarantee Unit as being threatened with extinction. We have put a submission to the Scientific Advisory Committee which was very selective in its use of our material. We have also had a meeting with the Acting Director of the Unit and members of his staff, and have requested that the Association be involved in the preparation of any Action Plans.

The Association has pointed out that in respect of the Flora and Fauna nominations there has been no consideration given to the effects of climate and seismic shift in changes which have occurred in some mossbeds on the Bogong High Plains. For example, the mossbed near Cope Creek deteriorated due to seismic shift, and this was observed by the SEC which was constructing tunnelling in the area. The workmen left the area after work one evening, and on their return the tunnels they had constructed were observed to have changed completely, some being at right-angles to others. This mossbed is now re-establishing itself a short distance away.

It is also interesting to note that this same mossbed was used in a monitoring program by the DC&E in January 1991, and DC&E staff were obliged to tramp backwards and forwards through the mossbed in the process of taking

their measurements.

#### LAND CONSERVATION COUNCIL

The newsletter of the Public Land Council of Victoria contains an interesting article regarding the level of independence of the LCC and notes that its membership is heavily weighted in favour of the conservation ethic and that it has been forced to accept direction from the Government.

Its membership was amended in 1989 to reduce the number of representatives of the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands from five to three. However, the LCC is now back to a position of having five members from the Department of Conservation and Environment.

Groups involved in commercial and recreational utilisation of public land have consistently been denied membership on the grounds that it would be inappropriate to appoint members of lobby groups. However, the Conservation Council of Victoria has two representatives on the LCC and one is a former President of the Victorian National Parks Association.

So much for independence!

#### CONCERN FOR THE FUTURE OF WILSONS PROM PARK

On 18th September this year the Melbourne Age published a very concerning but interesting article about botanic changes threatening the livelihood of some species on the Promontory, and fire is being seen as the only means of rescue.

The Age article written by Kay Ansell makes the following points.

Coastal heathland on the Prom, home to a diverse range of plant and animal species is being invaded by tea tree and kunzia, and if the problem is not tackled, vast areas of the Prom could become a monoculture of tea tree, a wasteland in ecological terms compared with the varied communities it is engulfing. In as little as a decade, the Age quotes the Ranger as saying, it may be too late to undo the damage.

For the first time in a Victorian national park, **fire, the key to regenerating many plant species - is expected to be used as a management tool in maintaining diversity.** (Our emphasis).

Before the area became a national park, fire started by lightning strikes and local Aborigines had been part of the regeneration cycle.

In Victoria, the Age goes on to say, fire in national parks has always been regarded as the enemy and the Prom isthmus has not had a large fire in 30 years.

Aerial photographs reveal the dramatic changes during that period. Huge banksias up to three metres in diameter, visible from the air, have been swamped by coastal tea tree.

The Age quotes Mr. Jim Whelan, the Ranger in charge of the northern end of Wilsons Prom as saying that policy-makers had argued against the use of fire in the past on the grounds that "we can't play God by burning". "But", Mr. Whelan says, "I say we're playing God by not burning."

The DC&E is financing research by Melbourne University botanists into the causes of the tea tree invasion.

In addition to the effects of excluding fire, overgrazing by kangaroos and rabbits is also throwing the park "out of kilter", Mr. Whelan says.

Experimental burning of coastal heathlands at Whiskey and Picnic bays are unsightly but essential to holding back the tea tree tide.

Mr. Whelan says visitors will have to get used to seeing the scenery scarred in this way and it will not be possible to wait until research confirms beyond doubt that fire is the key. He estimates it will be necessary to burn up to 15,000 of the Prom's 49,000 hectares, in small areas over a number of years.

(Courtesy Age Newspaper)

Well! What would the old Cattlemen of the Prom think of this situation?

Voice of the Mountains, 1988 Edition No. 11 contains an article by Carole Williams about grazing on the Prom, and she notes that cattle first came to the Prom in 1850, and that regular burning ensured the continuity of feed. The Prom provided a sheltered haven for the cattle in the winter, and although no records have been uncovered as positive proof, it is thought that the Yanakie Runs were extended in 1859 to include the remainder of the Prom.

In 1905 Wilson's Promontory was declared a National Park, with cattle grazing still permitted.

Although cattle grazing has, and will continue, in parts of the Park until 1992 the whole operation has scaled down to only 7-800 head compared with 3,000 head thirty years ago.

Mountain Cattlemen have never ceased from repeating that grazing and the judicious use of fire, are the only practical and proper ways of maintaining the Alpine and bushland environments in pristine condition.

Jim Commins observes in Voice of the Mountains 1991 No. 14 - in respect of the alpine and subalpine areas, that for far too long managing authorities have denied the use of low intensity fire as a management tool, above the 1200 metre level, and as a result a heavy growth of tall woody shrubs now dominate much of the ground cover on the Bogong High Plains and elsewhere.

Sounds like deja vu, Jim?

Jim goes on to say that there is little or no evidence of the shrubs senescence after 50 years, as was predicted to happen by the late Stella Carr, so it is unfortunate that patch burning was not re-introduced years ago when it would have been accomplished successfully with minimum impact and risk.

What a pity that people with a lifetime of practical experience and knowledge, who care deeply for the environment, like the Mountain Cattlemen, are not listened to, and their advice sought and implemented by 'the powers that be'.

Of course, the Mountain Cattlemen are all the wrong colour, and live and work in the wrong place. None of them have a doctorate of philosophy, none of them are dark green, and none of them live in Melbourne or any other major city.

**MOUNTAIN CATTLEMEN FAMILIES. CAN YOU HELP WITH OUR ARCHIVES?**

At the last Get Together at Sheeppyard Flat, Don Porter set up a tent and equipment to photograph family photographic and printed memories, to help the MCAV set up a library of archival material for use in displays, publications, reports and as an historical collection.

Don will be setting up his equipment at the coming Get Together at Waterford, and we hope that you will have the time to sort through your family records, and bring with you anything you think is important to be copied. There is no cost for the copying of course, and as it is done on the spot, your precious family records can be instantly returned to you. More information on this project will be sent out with the Get Together invitations in December.

Regards to you all!