

THE YARNER

The official newsletter of the **MCAV**

What's inside:

- A special piece all the way from America (attached to this email)
- The MCAV take part in a Covid friendly forum
- DELWP send letters to MCAV members (see Bruce's president column)
- The next installment of Reg's Wonnangatta story
- A poetry competition for all



Dates for the diary

We are laying out our MCAV Board Meeting dates early so that you have plenty of notice to come along.

The dates are as follows:

Zoom Board meeting: A board meeting will be held via Zoom on October 22. Please send us an email if you would like to attend

MCAV AGM: November date TBC. We are hoping, Covid restrictions pending, that we will be able to hold a face to face AGM and small "catch up" at McCormack Park in Merriji in November. Stay tuned for a date!

A word from the President, Bruce McCormack:

I can't believe its time for another Yarnier already. It seems as though so much, and yet so little with Covid, has happened.

Around 200 hoodies have been sold – thanks to all those who ordered – we have put out multiple press releases, have been involved in lots of Zoom meetings and I was even invited to speak at a VCE class on alpine environments and different methods of management.

All of this has suddenly been pushed to one side following recent discussions with DELWP, who have decided some of our grazing members should give their licenses a rest for 12 months and wanted us to help them break the news.

As you all know, this is my first time as President of the MCAV. It is approaching 12 months that I have been in the position, and I feel like we have achieved a lot in that time.

This was, however, the first issue that has really stumped me.

I try hard to do what I think is best not just for our grazing members, but for our associates, the bush in general and the MCAV as an organisation into the future.

Normally, this is relatively easy. We don't always agree, but we always have a similar vision for the MCAV, but this time was different.

DELWP approached the MCAV to let us know that they had undertaken aerial mapping and ground surveys and had determined that some grazing licenses burnt during the 19/20 bush-fires should be left ungrazed over the coming summer. They asked us for help in breaking this news to our members.

We were disappointed that we weren't included in the original discussions about which runs were, and were not, going to be stocked. It would have been nice to be asked for advice given our long association with the bush.

DELWP stressed they were keen to work with us not just on this project but potentially into the future, agreeing that although our paths were often different both organisations want what is best for the High Country even if we don't always agree on what that is.

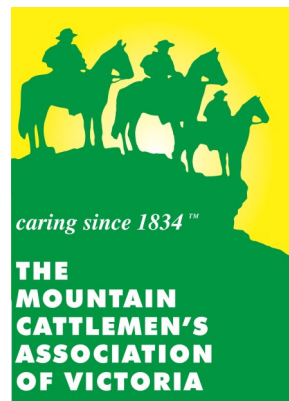
We took the matter back to the Board for discussion, as I felt it was a group decision and not one I could make alone - especially given my lease was not one of those in question.

The response was varied.

Of those that responded, some argued immediately that we in no way supported DELWP or their decision, and that this was simply the beginning of the end for those who were being told to keep out for the summer.

Others, including myself, felt that although we definitely should have been involved at an early stage—and it was an insult we were not—it was important to try to work with DELWP for the sake of the High Country and a future together. Whether we like it or not, these guys hold the reins to our horses, so to speak.

More information came to light – stories of this happening in the past where appeals to an independent party were possible, and stories of those who never returned to their grazing lease after the 03 fires.



Want your Yarnier posted?

This is our biggest Yarnier ever, and we don't want anyone to miss out on all the MCAV news and information.

If you prefer to receive your Yarnier in hard copy, please just let us know and we will add you onto our mail out list.

If you have a story for the Yarnier, an issue you would like us to cover or want to send in a letter to the editor shoot it to us by email at secretary@mcaav.com.au, or phone the office on 5775 1127.

We are also online, and post regularly to our Social media sites. So whichever way you want to receive your news, we have it covered.



THE YARNER



Thanks to Anthony, from High Country Adventure Tours, who came across this great picture on a Facebook historical site and sent it in.

Perhaps the most interesting feedback was coming from our more experienced members – that the spring grass growth after burning would be faster and stronger than a normal year, and that grazing this year was likely to be more important than ever. These members were speaking from experience and repeating what their fathers and others had told them. That after a fire you graze, and then burn again.

It seemed to me that our main message was staring me in the face – listen to the bush, listen to practical, local knowledge passed down the generations from one bushman to another. These are the guys we talk about all the time, the guys that were told, first hand, by the Indigenous population that the bush responds best to burning, eating, then more burning.

But where did that leave the MCAV? DELWP weren't asking for advice, just assistance in breaking the news. They were doing what they believed was right, just as we have always done with our own message.

But how do you walk that line between working together and alienating one another?

As I have already said, the reality is DELWP care for the High Country as much as we do.

Sure, the blokes in Melbourne have no idea – but you get out on the ground and talk to the boys driving around and they know their stuff. Sometimes they do things they don't agree with because that's what the boss says, something I'm sure we can all relate to.

As President, I was reluctant to push back hard against DELWP and do not believe in going for heads.

I want to find a way that we can work together, share our knowledge and use the physical evidence from bushfire recovery to highlight a better High Country for the future. Being President is not just thinking about this year or next, but about where we will be in 10 years and 20 and even 50.

I have grandchildren I want to take over my lease, family that I want to continue on this proud tradition. We will only ever achieve that if all work together, taking paths to end up at a common goal.

In regards to DELWP, we intend to offer our support to those members directly affected. As I said earlier, we should have been involved from that first day. They should have contacted us for advice. I realise now that we should have looked to the past, predicted this and rung DELWP ourselves. Communication is a two way street.

Losing a grazing run, even just for 12 months, has a financial impact on all. The office will be in contact to help you out with grants and other opportunities. Please know we have your back, and will never stop fighting for you.

As we head into summer and the re-opening of the Parks I would like to re-iterate that we all want the same thing: a High Country we can be proud of.

Bringing the forest back

The Victorian Government is undertaking the largest forest restoration effort in the state's history with a \$7.7 million operation that airlifted tonnes of eucalypt seeds into areas of forest impacted by the bushfires.

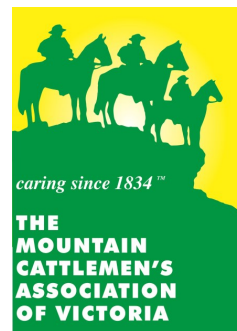
Between May and July more than 4.5 tonnes of eucalypt seed, was spread by helicopter across nearly 11,500 hectares of fire ravaged country - an area the equivalent of about 5,650 MCGs.

Thousands of the seeds are currently growing into giants of the Australian bush, including the iconic Mountain Ash – the tallest flowering plant in the world – and Alpine Ash which also reaches a significant size.

The re-seeding focuses on areas of nationally distinctive forests in Gippsland and North East Victoria that also suffered the impacts of fire in 2003, 2007 and 2014, and were severely burned again in the 2019/20 season.

The 2019/20 summer fires severely impacted Alpine Ash forests in both State forests and national parks, creating concern that without action some plant species could be compromised.

More than 56 people have been working on the reforestation project.



MCAV Board & People you can contact:

President: Bruce McCormack

Vice President: Ben Treasure

Secretary: Ken Heywood

Past President: Graeme Stoney

Treasurer/Associate Member: John Andrews

Special Projects Officer: Chris Commins

North East Branch reps: Lyric Anderson & Bruce Treasure

Mansfield Branch reps: Cass & Jack McCormack

Omeo Branch reps: Simon Turner & Darcy Fitzgerald

Gippsland Branch reps: Chris Hodge & Chris Cooper

Office Manager: Rhyll McCormack

Get Together Coordinator: Cass McCormack

Email: secretary@mcaav.com.au

THE YARNER

MCAV tentatively support Aboriginal Land agreement

THE Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria (MCAV) are cautiously accepting of the Land Use Activity Agreement, brokered between the Victorian Government and the Taungurung Land and Waters Council Aboriginal Corporation.

President of the MCAV, Bruce McCormack, said today that High Country cattlemen have always worked alongside the First People, and that – pending more information – he would expect this to continue.

"In principal, we have no problem with this agreement," he explained.

"We have always paid fees to have our cattle in the High Country, and expect this to be ongoing.

"We have never had a problem with the Taungurung people – we have just finalised a submission on Biodiversity decline in Victoria and in that we proudly detail our on-going association with Australia's First People, and our adoption of their cool burning techniques."

The Land Use Activity Agreement was gazetted on August 11, and details how some Victorians engaging in activities on crown land will be required to pay rent to the Taungurung people.

It is expected this will potentially impact not only Cattlemen with State Forest leases but also farmers, loggers, miners and even recreational activities.

Despite his Association's provisional support, Mr McCormack did say he was disappointed that the MCAV had not been consulted as part of the agreement process, even after the deal was finalized.

"It is disappointing to read of these agreements in the media, rather than being contacted first-hand," Mr McCormack said.

"This would have been courteous: ideally, we would have liked to be involved with formulating the agreement from the beginning, given our association with the High Country and the Taungurung People over the last 186 years."

The agreement covers 800,000 hectares of Parks and State Forest, stretching from Rochester to Bright and down to Warburton.

It includes sections of the Goulburn, King and Ovens Rivers.

When contacted, Mr McCormack said he was still wading through the document but did say he was hopeful there would be few changes for those within the MCAV.

"Without knowing the full implications, at this stage we have no problem with the Agreement assuming the fees will be passed on out of the current lease fees our members pay to the Government, and provided negotiations are between the Government and the Corporation," he said.

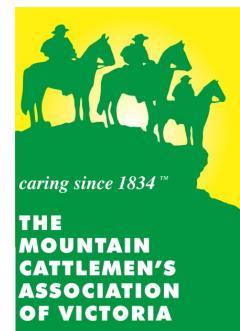
"I just hope this agreement does not result in more paperwork for country Victorians; any more red tape and bureaucratic discussion is unhelpful to individuals who now just want to get on with their lives."

Mr McCormack is keen to hear from other user groups who would be similarly affected by the agreement.

"While we support the theory of this agreement, we are also determined that the bush remain a space for all interested parties rather than it being controlled by a single entity.

"We will work hard to make sure this happens."

The MCAV had attempted to contact the Taungurung following the announcement but has so far not received a response.



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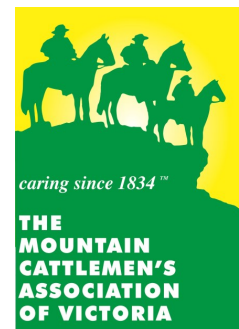
Gippsland Branch reps: Chris Hodge & Chris Cooper

Office Manager: Rhyl McCormack

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Email: secretary@mcaav.com.au

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Mountain Cattlemen agree with Interim Observations, but more needs to be done

"We agree."

That's the word from president of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria (MCAV), Bruce McCormack.

Speaking on the Interim Observations released by the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangement (the Bushfire Royal Commission), Mr McCormack said he was pleased to note that point 91 included "grazing by animals Can play an important role in ameliorating bushfire behaviour and increase the potential for suppression."

The same point goes on to note that "these activities will not eliminate bushfire risk."

On this, too, Mr McCormack agrees.

"One of the interim observations released out of the Bushfire Royal Commission is something we have been saying for almost 200 years – no, cattle grazing in the High Country will NOT stop a bushfire – but what it will do is reduce the intensity of it."

Despite the single line acknowledgment in the observations, Mr McCormack said he was disappointed more credit had not been given to grazing as a credible mitigation source.

"Grazing anywhere – whether it is on your farm at home or in the High Country – reduces fire fuel loads; it's as simple as that."

"In the State Forest and Alpine National Parks, where fire fuel loads are out of control, this can only be a good thing."

Mr McCormack said his organisation also felt the Observations had not given enough credence to Indigenous land management.

"There is a lot of talk about 'listening' to this group and that group," he said.

"There is strong pressure to 'listen' to experts both on the ground and scientific based – but none of this seems to translate to a genuine difference in the bush."

"We, along with our Indigenous, just want what's best for the High Country – instead of constantly talking about 'listening' perhaps we should actually start practicing it."



MCAV President, Bruce McCormack

The MCAV will be providing a detailed response to the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangement Interim Observations, calling for increased grazing runs in the High Country, a better communication system between tiers of government and those with on-the-ground experience, and an increase in prescribed burning to name a few.

The power of social media

Although it often cops a bad rap for spreading mis information and gossip, there are times that social media can play a role in filling in the gaps.

The MCAV was contacted by the Cattle Council of Australia (our Northern based grazing cousins), looking to identify a photo they had come across in storage.

A quick post to our Social page had the mystery solved— the picture was of Ken Treasure. The picture was identified by his son, Peter Treasure (pictured), who said it was taken by The Weekly Times in the late 70s or early 80s on the Dargo High Plains.

Ken leads out the front, with Toby the dog and Jim Treasure behind. The picture was one of several taken at the time. Thanks to all those who sent us emails and messaging to help us solve the mystery!



THE YARNER

Brush off your pens, we have a poetry competition for you

We know many of you are missing the connection that comes from attending a Get Together, and hard as it is to believe it has been 18 months since last we gathered.

However, we have done a bit of scouting around for those that love to put pen to paper and come up with a potential alternative to the Don Kneebone.

The "Dusty Swag" Awards were established in 2000 by Rex Tate to encourage poets and storytellers to record the stories of Australia, its unique landscape and its unsung heroes. Entries are invited from Poets and Storytellers of all ages.

2020 Competition theme "AUSTRALIAN BUSH"
Closing Date: 30/11/2020

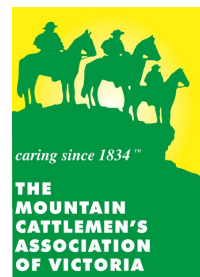
JUNIORS (Primary) Poem 20 lines max: Short Story – up to 200 words
SENIORS (Secondary) Poem 40 lines max: Short Story – up to 750 words
ADULTS (Over 18 yrs) Poem 60 lines max: Short Story – up to 1000 words

Entry Fee per entry \$10 (adults) Children (free)

Prizes will be awarded for 1st place (\$100) & 2nd Place (\$50) – Adults
1st place (\$50) & 2nd Place (\$25) – Juniors/Seniors
(**plus a years subscription to the ABPA)

Winners will be announced on Australia Day 26th January 2021 and winners will be invited to present their Poem/Story at the ABPA National Championships to be held in Orange at the Banjo Paterson Festival in February 2021. With the author's permission, winning Poems/Stories are eligible to be published in the ABPA Magazine and on the ABPA Website.

Head to the Writers Victoria website to download an entry form, or give – Christine Middleton a call on 0419526550.



The High-country Cattleman's Plea

By Sharon Dow

I'd love an UNBURNT country
where our history is remembered,
Where the keepers of our land are recognised
for skills that deflect the embers

I'd love a land that's green
thriving and in good health,
And what we are proposing
will contribute to it's wealth

Of flourishing wildlife and native Flora
that the country did abound,
Before the government stopped it
and our land management was denounced

Please give back to those of us
prepared to help restore,
The beauty of the high country
the way it was before

Before the flames took hold
and brought tragedy to so many,
Before it took so much
devastating our wildlife and bushland aplenty

Let the cattle do the work
and we'll be there to guide them,
We promise to help renew
The land we all rely on

Do that Australia and you'll see
the point we're trying to make,
Is that political decisions aren't always the
best,
when our country is at stake

Bring back cattle to the high country
and we'll manage it like before,
the flames took it all away
and brought heartache to us all.

NEW FENCING

On-ground assessments to replace or repair damaged boundary fence lines adjoining National Parks and State Forests following last summer's bushfires are complete in the Corryong area.

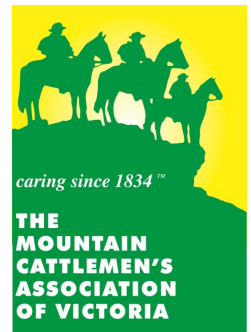
Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVic) recovery teams have assessed 115 fire-affected properties in the Upper Murray Fire District to determine damage to fences as a result of the Walwa fire."

The assessments were part of the Victorian Government's Boundary Fencing Program which provided eligible landowners \$5000 per kilometre for materials to repair or upgrade fire-affected fences on the public land interface.

THE YARNER



MCAV Snapshots—
Who loves the new
hoodies!



THE YARNER



New study from the USA—cattle grazing does reduce blazing

MCAV Board member, Chris Commins, came across this very interesting article about the Californian wildfires and using grazing as a mitigation control method. It was written by Sierra McClain and printed in Capital Press on Sep 9. Attached to this email is another story, written first hand by a cattle farmer just like any of us. It is emotional, stirring, raw and an honest look at what the Californian fires means for those on the land. At 5000 + words it is too long to include, but will be sent out with all Yarners as a bonus read.

University of California Cooperative Extension researchers just completed a timely study showing cattle grazing is an essential tool in reducing wildfire — a tool they say should be expanded and refined.

Recent record-shattering wildfires across California, Oregon and Washington have demonstrated the need for better fire control.

Researchers say their study shows that without the 1.8 million beef cattle that graze California's rangelands annually, the state would have hundreds to thousands of additional pounds per acre of fine fuels on the landscape, and this year's wildfires would be even more devastating. Researchers say cattle grazing is underutilized on public and private lands and targeted grazing should be expanded.

"Cattle grazing directly impacts fuel load and fire behavior," said Felix Ratcliff, a rangeland consultant who contributed to the research.

Researchers say more private landowners and public land agencies should contract for grazing.

About 40% of California is grazed, according to Sheila Barry, University of California natural resource and livestock adviser and researcher in the study.

But many grazable acres aren't grazed, she said.

The public, said Barry, often does not see benefits of grazing; they see short grass and cow patties. Cattle's role in preventing wildfires, she said, is often overlooked.

Justin Oldfield, executive director of the California Cattle Council, which funded the research, told the Capital Press he hopes the study demonstrates grazing benefits.

Some public land agencies already use cattle.

Allison Rofo, rangeland specialist for East Bay Parks in California, said she considers cattle grazing of annual grasslands the "single most effective passive management tool" in fire control.

The East Bay Regional Park District, she said, leases 70% of its 123,000 acres for grazing.

Rofo said the district's popular lease program has a waiting list.

Alan Renz, a cattle rancher with 20 leases, said leasing public land demands more driving time, diesel and employees. But it also provides financial opportunities, forage and security; if one property burns, he still has 19 others.

But grazing more land isn't the end-all solution. Researchers say grazing needs to be targeted.

Statewide, researchers found cattle remove, on average, 596 pounds of fuel per acre. In some regions with more forage, cattle would need to consume another 180 pounds per acre to bring grass down to 800 pounds per acre, which keeps flame lengths below four feet, a critical threshold for accessibility to firefighters.

Not every area should be grazed to 800 pounds per acre, researchers say. Farmers have competing goals. Preventing erosion and promoting forage require more grass, while preventing fire requires less.

Renz, the rancher, called it a balancing act.

"If I don't graze it enough, fire. If I graze it all the way down, nothing left to eat," he said.

Devii Rao, livestock and natural resources adviser at the University of California Cooperative Extension and the study's lead, said ranchers should target grazing around homes, infrastructure, roadsides and at the wildland-urban interface.

Researchers also encourage ranchers to consider mixed-species grazing.

"There are so many things we can do better. Cattle grazing is really important to fire safety, and it's time we have more conversations about it," said Rao.

THE YARNER

Wonnangatta Station—by Reg Barnewall (dec)



Last edition, we featured the first installment of this fascinating story about the Wonnangatta Station, the families involved and of course Rainbow the mare. We were first alerted to the story by Howard James, so big thanks to Howard! This story is written by Reg., and we acknowledge that some information may have been updated since then..

Such a sheer plethora of books, articles and lectures has been sparked about Wonnangatta over the past century that no effort will be made here to repeat any part of that abundance of accounts and record. That brief explanation which is in these pages is purely designed to answer the question from the odd uninitiated reader “just what and where is Wonnangatta? And why is it of interest?”. The list of references to the subject is far too long to be included here, but as good a starting point as any is The History of Wonnangatta Station by Wallace Malcolm Mortimer. This story leans heavily on Mortimer's book for details, as this author has never visited Wonnangatta and largely relies upon those stories and anecdotes he listened to as a small child around the large dining table of “Crickstown” down along the Goulburn River.

For those readers of a more inquisitive bent The Wonnangatta Mystery by Keith Leydon and Michael Ray could provide more intrigue. It is an inquiry into the unsolved murders and proffers various hypotheses.

In the dreamtime according to aboriginal lore passed down verbally from generation to generation long before the white man ventured onto these austral shores various tribes of the dusky people roamed the high country now known to us as the Victorian High Country - better described as the Great Dividing Range. The annual breeding cycle of the Bogong moth, a much sought after delicacy, brought tribes together in the area of these mountain ranges. Peace always reigned during these feasts on which they fattened and, for the time being forgot all inter-tribal disagreements which might have festered during the year on the lowlands.

An American gold seeker in the late 1850s, Oliver Smith, finding no luck in the east Gippsland area of the Humphrey River decided to look further upstream where he found the Humphrey joined by a larger stream which we now know as the Wonnangatta River. To his amazement he had stumbled upon a tract of open and obviously arable land through which the river made its way south to into Gippsland's Lake - the centrepiece of the resort and fishing town of Lakes Entrance near Bairnsdale.

Smith had enough farming knowledge to realise its potential and that its future lay in cattle grazing despite its altitude of some 700 metres (2,300ft). This land, to be known in future years as The Wonnangatta Plain, encompassed some thousands of acres (hectares) protected on all sides by the towering ramparts of the ranges. That these would be snow-covered in winter, the spring thaw turning these creeks into mini torrents, posed little problem to Smith. With enough personal funding to pursue his dream he purchased a good mob of store cattle from the Gippsland area and drove them through the southern foothills to graze on the fertile pastures along the Wonnangatta river.

He quickly put together a small log hut on the banks of the Conglomerate Creek, a small tributary of the main river, and soon was joined by his wife (or partner) Nancy Hayes and their four offspring. Despite the hard life style and great isolation they had hewn out of this wilderness the enterprise prospered to the stage where additional help with the increasing chores became a proposition. The Victorian government had by then instigated the land selection process and what had up till then been a largely free-for-all squatting of many thousand acres became surveyed into a number of selections. Some of these Smith took up, surrounding the main lease which was to become known as Wonnangatta Station.

So much interest has centred on Wonnangatta Station over the years for so many reasons that a plethora of books have been written with this as the main theme. Certainly the dual murders in 1918 of a later station manager Jim Barclay and a station worker John Bamford provided budding novelists and lounge-chair detectives with ample ground for several million words on the event and “who dunnit”. To this day the murders have not been “solved” despite there having been many suspects and countless opinions. There are still people in the Mansfield general area who “know for sure who the culprit(s) were. For sure there must have been more than one”..

In view of the abundance of reference material for the interested reader a thin skeleton of the history of the place, the people and events which came to pass during those years will be given a few words here.

The peak period of the gold rush saw communities of gold seekers grow up in isolated pockets – mainly along several of the creeks in the mountainous area of Central Gippsland. Long before roads were constructed these settlements were supplied entirely by trains of pack horses carrying in the staples of life – and for the successful gold-seekers- the luxuries too! With distant Myrtleford as the main supply base secondary stores were established at settlements like Grant and Talbotville. Most of these places withered and died after the gold days ran out.

THE YARNER

Place names such as Dandongadale, Grant, Viking, Bright, Wandiligong, Dargo, Riley's Creek, Hogtown, Stonewall, Winchester, Mayfair and Ramstown will conjure up for many dreamers mental pictures of a past age in the history of Victoria.

The charges for carriage by these horse-train owners were astronomical but it was a case of take it or starve. Many diggers who had not "struck it lucky" found the going extremely hard but for some it was an eldorado. One such man was owner of a lucrative pack-train business, Scotsman John Bryce, who had made a small fortune from his servicing gold settlements from bases at both Myrtleford involving a transit of the Great Dividing Range and as far south as Bairnsdale when winter snows closed the northern trail.

One of these trails transited Wonnangatta and Bryce frequently broke his journey with overnight stoppages at the Wonnangatta homestead and, in so doing became a good friend of the owner Smith whose difficulties he realised. It was thus that he found a ready ear when a proposal from Smith of a partnership in the station was posed. Having had an earlier stint on the land farming his was a ready acceptance of the offer. He took up personal residence on the property leaving his wife and family back at the mining town of Grant where they had resided for a number of years.

Despite their now combined labours Smith was tiring of the isolation - his family having largely dispersed. His wife was pregnant again she having given birth previously unaided by any midwife or even an untrained female. Then his wife again, without as female carer, gave birth to stillborn twins. Suffering post natal problems Ellen Smith passed away on March 5th, 1873 aged just 36.

Her husband never recovered from the shock of these deaths combined with dramatic losses of cattle. He offered his half share of Wonnangatta to Bryce who took it up with alacrity and soon moved his family in. He improved the homestead with additional rooms added and furnished it elaborately over the years. Largely this was constructed of timber from the property - the product of two-man pit saws

Having married Hannah Quye also a British migrant in 1857 they reared a family of ten children and like Smith before him prospered on the station despite the arduous work load and the remoteness of the location. They did however enjoy some mutual visits to family friends at the mining towns of Grant and Talbotville and occasionally hosted dances at the homestead. Following land selection in the area the Victorian government funded the clearing of additional bridle trails as well as "roads" suitable for drays and wagonettes which brought in the supplies of food-stuffs and building materials. This substantially offset the loneliness. Mail was delivered weekly by horseback mailman who also carried with him on his homeward journey orders for supplies to be ready for the next foray into "town" by the wagonette.

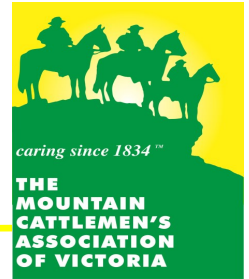
At the turn of the century the children had gone their separate ways. In 1902 with the desire to see his grandchildren at Denison he overnighted on the way at the Iguana Creek hotel where he suddenly became ill, dying the following day from a kidney disease known as uraemia. His will was extremely discriminatory in that several of his children were totally ignored leading to a general family break up. But his widow and at least two of his sons continued to live at Wonnangatta until her death in 1914 after which the divided family decided to sell the Wonnangatta station.

This is the point in the history of Wonnangatta where Mansfield takes front stage – and where we will leave this story until the next Yarner!

Rainbows Saddle, was a poem written by Howard James, and entered in the Don Kneebone award as a song a few years ago. The mare, Rainbow, was a brumby filly that was part of a mob that roamed near the Wonnangatta. Her eventual owner, Reg Barnewall,, had her caught and broken her and she became his faithful mare for twenty years. Rainbow's saddle is now called 'The Wonnangatta Saddle'. Further information on the saddle and Rainbow can be in the June / July edition of the Yarner, or at www.mcav.com.au



THE YARNER



Call for better Alpine National Park maintenance

This article was written by Sam Rouget and printed in the Mansfield Courier in August, following the hosting of a public forum on the issue of cattle grazing.

POLITICIANS and public figures called for better maintenance of the Alpine National Park at the Mansfield Courier's forum last week.

The event, held via Zoom, was attended by Mountain Cattlemen Association of Victoria (MCAV) President Bruce McCormack, Member for Eildon Cindy McLeish, Nationals Senator for Victoria Bridget McKenzie and candidate for the upcoming Mansfield Shire local government election Kammy Cordner Hunt.

Beginning the forum, participants were asked whether cattle grazing should be allowed to make a return to the Alpine National Park.

MCAV President Bruce McCormack responded, explaining that he and his family, who have grazed cattle in the High Country for decades, were very disappointed when they had their national park licence stripped in 2005.

"It's important to keep that culture and tradition going," he said.

"We know the bush pretty well cos we're out there that often."

Mr McCormack suggested that, along with fuel reduction burns, alpine grazing might decrease the fuel load that can be burnt during bushfires.

Member for Eildon Cindy McLeish labelled the issue "tricky and controversial", and said it is easy to understand both sides of it.

"For the cattlemen it has the purpose of feeding their stock while keeping fuel down," Ms McLeish said.

"And for the other side, it is about the environmental damage.

"I think one of the things at the heart of the issue is that land management of National Parks is pretty lousy at the moment."

Providing anecdotal evidence of blackberries and invasive weeds spreading out of control, she said that the mountain cattlemen were one method of controlling the unwanted species.

"Parks are not managing that at all, and I'm quite disturbed at the lack of management," Ms McLeish said.

Although not present at the meeting, Phil Ingamells, Park Protection at Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) told the Mansfield Courier that "there is evidence in some areas that cattle grazing can promote the growth of flammable shrubs."

In support of his statement, candidate for Mansfield Shire local government election, Kammy Cordner Hunt said that she "wouldn't like to see [cattle grazing] resumed in the alpine areas."

"I've been researching the damage caused by all hoofed animals up there.

"I don't really see how there can be any merit in adding cattle to that mix when there's so many problems to be dealt with by management.

"There's a lot of stressors happening up there, especially with climate change happening as well.

"I can't see that adding another stress item would possibly help."

In response, Nationals Senator for Victoria Bridget McKenzie described the issue as one "very close to [her] heart" and mentioned that she raised it in her first speech to parliament nearly nine years ago.



THE YARNER

"We've been high country cattlemen since my family arrived in Omeo in the 1850s," she said.

"I fully support the cattlemen position - always have, and always will."

In regards to fuel reduction and fire management, Ms McKenzie said that she believes that "we can manage fuel loads in a way that provides economic, social and environmental outcomes that will benefit the Alpine area and our broader communities."

Cattle grazing in the Alpine National Parks is a cultural practice that dates back to the 1800s when cattle were first introduced to the area.

"We need to make sure that those who have a deep and abiding connection to country are able to continue to operate," Ms McKenzie said, explaining that she looks forward to a day where cattle can be re-introduced to the Alpine National Park in a controlled and well-managed manner.

"The High Country, thanks to the failure of State Labor Governments to really control feral pests and weeds, is overrun with deer, foxes and pigs."

As a deer hunter, Ms McKenzie would like to see these areas become more accessible to all.

"There are strong and powerful forces, who are city centric focused, that want to really shut up National Parks rather than open them up so that we can get serious about feral pest and weed management," she said.

"The worst neighbour for a farmer is the State Labor Government with the backing of the Greens."

Describing the State Government's approach to National Parks as "lock up and leave," McKenzie asserted her disappointment regarding the management strategy.

"It is appalling," she said.

"That creates a greater danger for bushfire risk."

Mr McCormack described the "lock up and leave" approach as "the easy way out."

Ms Cordner Hunt agreed, however pointed out that it is a lack of funding behind the ideology rather than city-centric politics.

"The Parks management has been underfunded and decreasingly funded over a period of time," she said.

"State Governments just seem to find less and less resources available to look after National Parks.

"There's no income coming from the National Parks and it's a vast area that needs looking after.

"That's a really difficult ideological hurdle to step over."

Bruce during his Zoom public forum about cattle grazing—so professionally set up the girls even had him in front of a light ring - but couldn't quite smooth out all those wrinkles !



THE YARNER

Deer shooting to resume in National Park

- a word from Parks Victoria

Parks Victoria will be implementing a deer control program in the Alpine National Park (southern alps) from this month until to May 2021.

The large and devastating fires of 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 burnt over 1.5 million hectares of land across Victoria.

As we all know, the fires were exceptional in size and impact and had a devastating effect on the natural environment. Under these conditions, invasive species are a significant threat to the survival and recovery of native plants, animals and large areas of habitat.

Action is required to ensure habitats, native plants and animals are protected while at their most vulnerable.

This involves controlling deer, not just in the burnt areas, but also in the adjacent unburnt areas which provide refuge for native species and harbour for introduced species.

Parks Victoria will recommence its deer control (ground shooting) program in the Alpine National Park north of Licola in September 2020; this program will continue until May 2021.

Deer are the main target species; pigs and goats will also be controlled where they occur. The program will be carried out under strict conditions designed to ensure safe, effective, and humane practices are implemented. Suitably qualified and experienced contractors will be engaged to deliver the work.

As deer are nocturnal, this work will mostly be undertaken at night. All personnel involved will be working under the supervision of Parks Victoria staff.

They will be readily identifiable and will act in accordance with all legal requirements to ensure the safe use of firearms.

Recreational deer hunting is a legitimate activity permitted in the park where the deer control operations are being conducted. The park will not be closed while these operations are underway.

Note: the park may, at times, be closed for other reasons.

Visit the Parks Victoria website for the latest information about access – parks.vic.gov.au.



Delivering the goods—

MCAV thanks Jarod Pinder

The Pinder family, who have several photographers and camera men in their ranks, have always supported the MCAV.

Jarod has captured more than 55 hours of footage, from mountain top stills to interviews with the late Buff Rogers.

The MCAV intend to release snippets as they are edited, with a long term project in the pipeline (budget depending).

The project was made possible by a generous donation from Harold Mitchell and a line in the MCAV budget.

Jarod donated much of his own time towards the project, and is pictured below during a shoot.



Winners announced:

Our free service fee to Palmers Super Idea, a black Australian Stock Horse, was won by Rod Jones. This was part of a competition where all financial MCAV members were automatically entered to win.

Second place, a Palmer's Super Idea hoodie, went to Elise Grobe and third place, an MCAV hoodie, went to Rob Stork.

Congratulations all.—and thanks again to the Palmers Super Idea team.

You can watch the live draw on our Facebook page or the YouTube channel.