

Colinton Courier

Newsletter of the Colinton Rural Fire Brigade * No 104 * July 2010



*Jeremy and Daniel meet a chopper
(pics: thanks to Bruce English)*

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NSW RFSA Delegate: Jeremy Mears

Call out:

Nil

✍

Membership:

Membership: please pay by cash at training, or cheque to The Treasurer, Colinton Rural Fire Brigade, 88 Weemala Lane, Michelago NSW 2620. Membership fees: \$15.00 for adults, \$5.00 for juniors. Donations are always welcome. Please provide a return address so a receipt can be mailed to you.

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Training:

The Colinton Brigade conducts training every month on the second Saturday, at two o'clock, at the Station at Colinton. Everyone is welcome. The Junior brigade is in action, once a month on the second Thursday of the month. Contact Michael Burton (0407 003 392) for details.

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Training 2:

(thanks to Jeremy for this story)

Daniel Rankin, Nick Robinson, Michael Burton and I travelled up to Jindabyne to do the Aircraft Basic Knowledge course.

The course is designed to lead into other aircraft related courses, as the Basic Firefighter course leads into all the other fire related courses. Cooma Monaro doesn't have much formal training in working with aircraft so Mick Holton our L&D officer has been working hard to rectify this. The ABK course is the first step.

It was a well attended course so they'd broken it into a morning group, a BBQ then the afternoon group (us). The BBQ was at the Jindabyne airfield with crews from Numerella, Michelago, Shannons Flat and Colinton. The BBQ was provided by members of the Jindabyne Flying Club just in front of their clubhouse overlooking the airstrip. It was a somewhat chilly day, though sunny, so hot food and drinks were welcomed.



BBQ at Jindabyne airfield

After the BBQ we got down to business and headed down to the nearby Jindabyne Recreational Centre to start the course. The instructor was Greg Pasfield who's a pilot and has worked on fires around the area. The first part of the course was just a general intro into the basic properties of flight and why planes and helicopters don't just fall out of the sky. I've always liked anything that flies so knew most of this stuff. There was a mix of total aircraft newbies, enthusiasts like me and the odd pilot. Lots of familiar faces.

We then looked at into *airfields* and how they are organised: how runways are numbered; ie runway 23 means it's pointing to 230 degrees; how most runways have a unique radio beacon you can tune into to guide you to it; many other details, things we wouldn't need to know at this level but just to give us an overview.

Navigation was interesting, as aircraft use their own systems of measurement: knots instead of kilometres per hour, nautical miles instead of kilometres and altitude in feet rather than metres. Of particular note is grid references, the RFS uses 6 digit UTM codes; ie 356 208; aircraft use degrees and minutes. So if you call in a grid reference to an aircraft in UTM format the pilot will need to convert it.



On a wing and a prayer ...

Communications went into the various radios used and the need for ground crews to know their truck number. It's printed on top of the cab, and is unrelated to the normal one such as *Colinton 7B*. (In some trucks, it is also on a plaque on the dashboard).

Working safely around aircraft was a very important component. Airfields and aircraft are inherently dangerous so you need to know how to do things properly. No fun getting chopped to pieces by propellers or clobbered by a helicopter. All cues, such as when to approach, must be taken from the pilot.

We were quizzed on our knowledge and then it was back to airfield to be shown around some aircraft. There was a helicopter and the pilot to show us around and warn us of the danger areas and we could have a good look around the cabin. Next was a fixed wing aircraft and another description of how to avoid being chopped up. Emergency procedures were covered, just in case one does fall out of the sky. It was good to be able to wander around and see what we'd been told about in the theory section.

And that was it for day. A great course and (we hope) the beginning of many others. Thanks to Mick Holton and the instructors and pilots who let us wander around and touch their vastly expensive machines. ↻

Training (3):

The normal training day on *Saturday 10 July* was not entirely "normal", as training officer Jeremy had arranged a dramatic scenario. After the Executive meeting, and as members assembled at the training centre, he and Captain Graham took themselves off in *Seven Charlie*, with no explanation beyond a warning: "there will be motor vehicle accident." And within fifteen minutes, there was a radio call: all trucks to proceed to the following grid reference. *Seven Alpha* departed first, with Martin, Nick and Jo – on her very first visit to the brigade – followed by *One* and *Seven Bravo* with full crews. The grid reference, surprisingly, was on the other side of the river, on a steep track heading west from Downstream Road.

At the top of a steepish hill, in a patch of open ground, was (1) a shed, with evil-looking reddish fumes billowing out, (2) a small red car, burning merrily and (3) a puff of white smoke beyond the clearing, in the scrub. *Alpha* was first on scene, and quickly approached the burning car, concerned about the possibility of trapped people, though it was almost immediately clear that it was burning much too fiercely for *Alpha's* small pump and active reel to have much impact.



Martin approaches the blazing car ...

Alpha was soon joined by *Bravo*, who rolled out a more effective 38mm hose, allowing Martin to put out the fire while Nick held a safety hose for Martin's protection and Jo, rapidly learning, operated the pump. Meanwhile the crew of *One* were cautiously investigating the fuming shed; and then (suddenly) there was a loud report in the bush and another dense plume of smoke. Leaving *Bravo* to look after the smouldering car, *Alpha* headed

into the bush to find a burning drum which was soon extinguished.

The moral of the story? The need for speed, in getting to the scene and then being ready with adequate water; the need for extreme caution where there are fumes or smoke, especially if they are an odd colour; and the need for caution when approaching a burning vehicle, which always contains pipes and tubes and cylinders which can and do *explode*.

Thanks to Graham and Jeremy for organising a dramatic event, and to Bob and Kirsti for their hospitality and for the extra bangs and smoke effects. 

If Qld is there, can we be far behind? *from AAP, Brisbane*

High fuel loads across Queensland could mean a bad bushfire season for the state, authorities warn. Heavy summer rains have seen vegetation thrive across Queensland.

Just how bad the bushfire threat will be this year will depend on the extent of winter rains, Queensland Fire and Rescue Service Commissioner Lee Johnson says. "A lot of preparations have gone into understanding the amount of grass that is in many parts of Queensland as a result of excellent rain earlier this year and late last year," Mr Johnson said. "That means the fuel potential is extremely high. In fact, many parts of western and southwestern Queensland have grasslands that many people haven't seen since 1974." Mr Johnson said authorities would have a better idea of the bushfire threat in about six weeks' time.

"The outlook for the moment is that we could expect in many parts of Queensland to get slightly higher than average winter rains, and if that happens the situation will moderate," he said. 



Items for **The Colinton Courier** to Nick Goldie at horehound@yless4u.com.au

02 6235 9190

by the first Saturday each month, or to any Committee member. For production assistance we are grateful to:

*Noel Teys Real Estate 0428 625 307
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Corporate Design
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The Colinton Courier is also available at

www.michelagoregion.org.au/bushfire/brigades.htm

Views expressed in The Colinton Courier are not necessarily those of the editor, the Brigade, or the RFS.



Essential numbers

Emergency 000

Fire:

**Cooma Monaro Fire Control
(24 hrs)**

1 300 722 164

02-6455 0455

Fire:

**Captain and Permit Officer:
Graham Povey**

02-6454 4150

0419 406 908

