

Colinton Courier

Newsletter of the Colinton Rural Fire Brigade * No 120* November 2011



Water source at the Spring Paddock fire

Committee 2011-2012:

Fire Captain: Graham Povey

Senior Deputy: Nick Goldie

Deputies: Bob Morison, Jeremy Mears, Barry Woolcott

President: Nick Goldie

Secretary: Sandra Lauer

Treasurer: Bob Morison **Training Officer:** Jeremy Mears

Equipment Officer: Michael Burton

Community Awareness: Nick Goldie

Fundraising: Sandra Lauer

Permits: Graham Povey

NSW RFSA Delegate: Jeremy Mears

❧

Fire Season

NO FIRES
may be lit without a permit.

It is your responsibility to clean,
clear, prepare and mow your own
property.

❧



Michael and Tony on the TSR

Call out:

On the afternoon of *Monday 10 October* the brigade carried out a second fuel-

reduction burn on the Travelling Stock Route (TSR) opposite Ingelara. Seven *Alpha* (Tony R, Nick) created a wet-line along the perimeter, while *Bravo* (Michael, Kirsti) followed with the drip-torch. Seven *Charlie* (Graham, Bob) lit up the windward edge, and the flames met in the centre as planned.

During the course of the burn, there was a report of smoke on (variously) Ryries Hill Road or Ryan's Road.

Seven *Alpha* investigated and found a small grass fire at the end of Ryan's Road, where the property owner (doing the right thing) had been mowing the grass near his house, but the mower caught fire and ignited the grass. The fire was quickly put out, and crews were home in time for the evening meal.

At lunch-time on *Sunday 23 October*, a smoke sighting was reported from the Poveys Road / Calabash area, and it was soon confirmed that there was a major fire in the Spring Paddock. The three Colinton Sevens were quickly dispatched (*Alpha*: Michael, Bob M, Nick; *Bravo*: Barry, Jacqui, Kim; *Charlie*: Graham, Jeremy, Sandra). James joined the convoy in his own ute, and Bredbo *Seven* and *Nine* also arrived on scene.

During the afternoon, Martin arrived in his own ute, and Bob L in *One* brought more crew members (Lynn, Justin, Jo, Gary, Daniel, Kirsti) who were quickly pressed into service with rake-hoes.

The fire was in rough country with tussocky valleys and steep wooded hills. At first, the crews managed to stop the blaze at a grassy creek, but it was soon obvious that too much of the surrounding scrub was already alight. Captain Graham made the decision to back-burn from a bull-dozed trail along high ridge to the north of the fire-ground. This created a spectacular night-

time blaze, with smoke and flames being drawn in to the centre.

Crews were busy most of the night back-burning and patrolling the perimeter. There were a number of spot-overs which needed quick and intensive attention. Crews were home (warily) by 0330.

On *Monday 24 October*, the three *Sevens* were again dispatched at 0800 (Graham, Martin, Tony R, Nick, Michael, Ben, Bob L), and were joined by Jerangle *Seven* for a long day of patrolling and mopping up.

The Bredbo 'welfare trailer' was present providing meals, and crews were grateful to Julith, Sally, Beatrice and Sparky.

During the afternoon there was a short rain shower. Crews were home in time for the evening meal, and there was the welcome sound of rain on the roof. 



Mick judges the gap ...

Hot House progress:

On Thursday morning 13 October the long awaited sea-containers were delivered to the Colinton site. The three containers will be used to create a fire-proof metal "house" for structural fire training.

On site to help position the containers were Graham, Jeremy, Justin and Nick, under the direction of Mick H. The crane and truck drivers did a remarkable precision job, and the helpers were able to leave the site, after a cuppa, by mid-morning.

Stairs, balustrades, roofs and railings are being fabricated by Cooma Steel, and will be welded and bolted into place now the containers are in position. ↪

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. ↪

Burning Issues:

Abridged from a review by Nick Goldie, for the Cooma Monaro Express, Tuesday 11 October.

To some it seems such a simple issue. If you want to prevent bushfires, get rid of the fuel. *Burning Issues*, a new book by Mark Adams (University of Sydney) and Peter Attiwill (University of Melbourne) explains that it is a complex issue, with no simple answer.

Setting the scene, the authors point to some surprising statistics (at least, to those of us who live on the Monaro): fires burnt 3m hectares in Victoria and NSW in the summer of 2002-2003, a bad fire year. At

the same time, fires burnt some 95m ha throughout Australia, but most of this huge burnt area was in the tropical savannas of the north and north-west. Who even knew?

Burning Issues is specifically concerned with the forested areas of the south east, and the vexed question of fuel reduction burning. One area which has been studied for some years, especially in Victoria, is water use in forested areas, and how this is affected by burning. "We have known for decades that high intensity fires have dramatic effects on water yield from forest," write the authors, who comment approvingly on West Australian research into thinning and fuel-reduction fires which increase water yield. Old forests use less water than young forests, but good management can create 'old-forest like' attributes in younger stands.

It is not possible to look at fires in Australia without considering climate change. Climate has of course always changed, and in geological eras the continent has been wetter and dryer, and less or more subject to fire. Fire has played a major role in the evolution of Australia's unique flora and fauna. However, the authors note that recent reports by CSIRO and the Bureau of Meteorology show that there is unprecedented risk of fire in coming decades due to climate change, most particularly in inland NSW, where there is a measurable increase in the predicted number of 'very high' to 'extreme' fire days, as well as a longer bushfire season.

Does fuel-reduction burning achieve its aims? "No fuel, no fire" is indisputable, say the authors, but there are many variables which make the whole question very complex. In WA as well as Victoria and NSW, fire and forestry authorities have improved techniques, equipment, and weather forecasting in response to 'bad' fire years. In WA they have also radically

increased areas of forest which have been 'prescribed burned'.

While the authors note that at the Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission there was expert consensus about the need for fuel-reduction burning, they are concerned about the lack of burning in NSW and especially the ACT, while there is a change of forest tenure from state forest to national park, and what they find an unacceptable level of urban-based policy decision.

“Wisdom,” they conclude, “is that fire – neither too frequent nor too seldom – will produce the best outcomes for biodiversity in much of the southern eucalypt forests of Australia. The same is true for woodlands, heathlands and grassland.”

Burning Issues (CSIRO 2011) will become essential reading for anyone involved in fire or forest management. It is available in Cooma from *Monaro Books and Music*. ↪



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**



Training:

The Colinton Brigade conducts training every month on the second Saturday, at two o'clock, at the Station at Colinton. Everyone is welcome. ***If possible, crews are asked to arrive at 1330 to check the trucks before training.***

The Junior brigade is in action, once a month on the second Thursday of the month. Contact Michael Burton (0407 003 392) for details. ↪



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:



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The Colinton Courier is also available at www.michelagoregion.org.au
Views expressed in **The Colinton Courier** are not necessarily those of the editor, the Brigade, or the RFS.



Congratulations ...

to a number of our newer members who attended their first “real” fire this month, (and who were reminded of the old saying “*hurry up and wait!*”) – thank you for turning out. ↪