

Colinton Courier

Newsletter of the Colinton Rural Fire Brigade * No 134* January 2013



Gill mopping up at Yarrabin

Committee 2012-2013:

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Call out:

Tuesday 1 January, an early evening pager call for a small grass fire threatening some buildings just north of Michelago village: By the time Seven *Alpha* (Bob, Jeremy, Nick) had reached the scene, the Michelago brigade had the fire under control. Colinton *One* (Graham, Michael) was also stood down before reaching the incident.

Saturday 5 January the temperature reached 42C, and in the late afternoon thunderstorms swept in from the west. There were soon reports of lightning strikes and spot fires across the district. The Colinton brigade was on stand-by to assist Bredbo, where there were two fires, but were ultimately not needed. From around 1600 to 2200, Cooma Fire Control was intensely busy. Brigades attending fires included Numeralla, Nimmitabel, Numbla Vale, Cooma, Bredbo, Dalgety, Brothers, Anembo, Ando, Myalla, Shannons Flat, Adaminaby, Jindabyne, and across the border, ACT Parks. The ACT also sent a helicopter to monitor outbreaks along the Clear Range. In some areas, the storms brought welcome rain: Baroona Road recorded 8.5 mm before midnight.

Colinton crews were on stand-by all *Sunday 6 January* while neighbouring brigades fought fires near Numeralla, Youak, Bredbo and Anembo. A *Section 44* was declared for the Monaro from 1700 on Monday. On *Monday 7 January* Seven *Bravo* (Bob, Daniel, Tony C) was dispatched to join several other brigades patrolling the Yarrabin fire on Mount Forest Road, south of Numeralla, while Seven *Charlie* (Graham) joined Bredbo Group Captain Will G, dealing with a fire near Tea Tree Swamp. *One* and Seven

Alpha remained on stand-by with crews at the ready.

(A *Section 44* is an official recognition of a State of Emergency, allowing local incident managers to call on resources such as helicopters, bulk water transport, and earth-moving equipment, with the State bearing the cost rather than local government authorities.)

Meanwhile, in some districts, fire trucks are busy escorting grain headers – the harvest must go on.



Michael saves a weekender, Mount Forest Road

On Monday evening, *Seven Alpha* (Sandra, Michael, Nick) was dispatched to the Yarrabin fire, and spent a long night patrolling the perimeter, dealing with spot-fires and grassy outbreaks. (In the morning, the crew was pleased to see a small weekend cottage, directly in the path of the flames, had survived: Michael and Sandra had climbed on to the roof, blocked the downpipes, and filled the gutters with water.) Other brigades involved, as well as the locals, included

Peak View, Michelago, Bega, Bobundra, Bibbenluke, Cathcart, Cobargo, Queanbeyan, Dry Plains and Bombala.

Tuesday was a day of hot gusty winds, a Total Fire Ban was declared, with *Extreme* and even *Catastrophic* warnings across the State. Residents of the Mount Forest Road area were advised to leave, and many spent Monday and Tuesday evacuating their (portable) stock, such as dogs and horses. By evening, the fire had swept far beyond the containment lines established with such difficulty on Monday night. The next containment line would be the Dandjong Road to the south. *Colinton One* (Graham, Jeremy, Kirsti, Daniel, Lynn) and *Seven Bravo* (Paul, Barry, Kim) left for the fireground late on Tuesday evening.



Drip-torch operator Lynn

On Wednesday 9 January, *Alpha* (Bob, Gill, Nick) left Baroona Road at 0600, and briefly met the night time crews at the Yarrabin shearing shed staging area. They looked grimy and exhausted, and reported a long night of difficult conditions, with a cool change at 0300 –

this sounds like a welcome development, but in fact means contrary winds and fickle fire behaviour.

Alpha joined forces with Jerangle Seven *Alpha*, and spent the day patrolling the southern perimeter of the fire. This was largely routine, with patient extinguishing of small hot-spots anywhere close to the edge. But the wind was variable, and there were several 'escapes' into the unburnt country to the south, which needed prompt action to avoid disastrous consequences. And while the two small trucks patrolled, the action was taking place across the Numeralla River, where the fire burned through rough forest country up to the very top of the Great Dividing Range and then beyond, almost ten thousand hectares by Wednesday night.

Bravo (Michael, Jacqui, Karl) was out again on Thursday while *Alpha* received some much needed TLC to repair a leaky pump and clear out the drifts of empty water bottles and food wrappers. On Friday, *Bravo* (Tony C, Paul, and Justin) was out, while the main fire continued to move eastwards on the Kybeyan Range. Saturday saw *Alpha* (Karl, Daniel, Nick) in action again, in the northern sector of the fire, patrolling an eerie red landscape on a ridge which had previously been doused with retardant, leaving only smouldering stumps and logs. Gusty winds in the afternoon gave the task significance. As *Alpha* returned home along the Countageny road, waves were exchanged with the incoming night crew in *Bravo* (Sandra, Tania, Michael) who reported a quiet night of foggy weather. And – no rest for the trucks – *Alpha* (Bob, Tony C, Helen) headed out again early on Sunday morning. ☺

Oops ...

Alert readers will have noticed that the December issue of the Courier, No. 133, was inadvertently dated "November". The editor's apologies for any resulting confusion ... ☺

Gammage:

ANU historian Professor Bill Gammage has written a fascinating account of Aboriginal fire management before European settlement. Not everyone will agree with his version of history, but it is tightly argued and closely observed, and highly relevant to both farming and fire-fighting.

The Biggest Estate on Earth, Bill Gammage, Allen & Unwin 2011. ☺



Bob deals with a spot, smoke on the Kybeyan ranges beyond the Numeralla

Excavations:

After some years of discussion, mainly about who would pay, the Council allocated funds for the upgrade of the entrance to the fire station precinct. The work took place over the week before Christmas, and the brigade is duly grateful for the work done by contractors Group 42, and that access is now up to standard. ☺

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 (1.30 pm) to check the trucks before training.**

Community awareness for children is in action again, on the third Thursday of the month, at Colinton Fire Station for an informal hour or so, from 1900 (7 pm). Contact Michael Burton (0407 003 392).

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.



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



Karl on the fire-ground