

Colinton Courier

Newsletter of the Colinton Rural Fire Brigade * No 138* May 2013



Graham and the new Charlie

Committee 2013-2014:

Fire Captain: Graham Povey
Senior Deputy: Nick Goldie
Deputies: Bob Morison, Jeremy Mears, Michael Burton
President: Nick Goldie
Secretary: Sandra Lauer
Treasurer: Bob Morison
Training Officer: Jeremy Mears
Equipment Officer: Michael Burton
Community Awareness: Nick Goldie
Fundraising: Jacqui Williams
Permits: Graham Povey

NSW RFS Delegate: Jeremy Mears

Call out:

Early afternoon on *Wednesday 24 April*, a grass fire was reported on the property *Willandra* at the top of Ingelara Hill. Seven *Charlie* (Graham, James) was first on scene, followed by *Alpha* (Jeremy, Nick) and *Bravo* (Barry, Jacqui, Kieran). Cause of the fire was (once again) welding a fence. About three hectares were burnt, the fire was quickly contained, and crews were home in time for an afternoon cuppa.

On *Saturday 27 April*, Seven *Alpha* (Nick, Karl, Andrew) and *Bravo* (Michael, Eliška, Kirsti) with Graham in an RFS command vehicle, joined units from Anembo and Jerangle for a major hazard reduction burn along the Piggibilla Ridge off the Jerangle-Captains Flat Road. The land-owner gave crews some warning of what to expect when he named part of the fire trail "White Knuckle Ridge".

In charge of the burn was Anembo Captain Tony de Luca. With all the crews assembled for a briefing at a high point on the trail, he suggested that at the end of the day the land-owner would be providing tea and scones at the homestead. "I don't know about that," said the farmer, thoughtfully. "Last time I made scones ... I killed a sheep!" ☹

Annual General Meeting:

The Brigade AGM and election of office bearers was held on Saturday 11 May (see panel). Chris Allen, RFS District Services Coordinator for Cooma Monaro, arrived with a flourish in a brand new Cat Seven to replace the Brigade's aging Seven *Charlie*. It was hard to keep the attention on annual reports with such a red shiny vehicle, gleaming outside the door. As soon as formal proceedings

were complete (thanks to Chris who acted as Returning Officer) members crowded round the new tanker, experimenting with all the novel features: a remote switch for the pump in the cab! – nozzles spraying water on every window and every tyre! - roll-down reflective blinds for every window! It will take time for Brigade drivers and crews to learn to use the truck to its best advantage.

As well as the new *Charlie*, members attending the AGM took part in some demonstrations of domestic fire hazards, notably the use of a fire blanket to control an oil fire in a kitchen, and what to do with a flaming gas bottle. Crews also learned how to use the newly purchased back-pack blower. During the course of the AGM, the Brigade expressed its gratitude to all the people who donated funds to make this purchase possible. ↪

Conflagration:

“What’s the word for a mob of firefighters?” asked Kirsti, in the midst of a mob of firefighters being briefed on Piggibilla Ridge. After some thought, there was general approval for the collective noun: *A Conflagration of Firefighters*. ↪

Directing traffic:

(from the blog Australian Emergency Law, maintained by Michael Eburn. Thanks to Sandra for this link.)

The question was: can an RFS volunteer direct traffic? There’s no easy answer, but in summary, a volunteer can direct traffic at an accident, just as any other citizen can. They should be identifiable, by wearing personal protective clothing and a high-visibility tabard. A brigade officer can also close roads, partly or fully. However, this is in an emergency: if an RFS volunteer is asked to direct traffic at a work site, or a community or sports event, they should have completed a traffic controllers course.

ABC journalist Ian Mannix, who wrote *Great Australian Bushfire Stories*, asks whether a journalist going about their lawful business can ignore directions from an RFS officer. The answer, rather surprisingly, is – according to the law in NSW – yes. But as Michael Eburn says, whether that would be reasonable is debatable.

The RFS conducts courses for journalists, and on the RFS website it states: *it is a requirement that any media wishing to attend a bush or grass fire incident are appropriately trained in safe working practices around bush fires. It is also a requirement that media personnel are wearing appropriate Personal Protective Clothing.* ↪

Captains meeting:

Cooma-Monaro Captains and Deputies held the post-fire-season meeting in Cooma on *Wednesday 8 May*.

Issues discussed included the January *Section 44* for the Monaro; a summary of incidents including fires and vehicle accidents for the fire season; hazard reduction burns; upgrading of radio communications; and the resignation of Mick Holton, former Learning and Development (L&D) officer. Mick will be replaced by Tim Ingram, previously an L&D Officer with National Parks.

Brief reports from each Brigade agreed that there has been a worrying lack of rain and that love-grass is an increasing problem in many areas. A special Captains meeting will be convened in June to work out plans to deal with this growing threat. ↪

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.*** ❧

❧
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**

❧



Nick and Jeremy contemplate life from a new truck (photo by Sandra)

From the President's Report 2012-2013

Twelve months ago we joined crews from Michelago and Anembo up on the Calabash Fire Trail burning along the western edge of the trail, and taking due care of the known koala colonies in that thick scrub.

In June, we noted a strong negative reaction by the Rural Fire Service Association (RFSA) to the suggestion by the Shires Association of NSW that local government should withdraw from the management of the RFS, in favour of a centralised State Government department.

The brigade was successful in applying for a grant from the NRMA 2012 Community Grants program for emergency lighting, and in July we took possession of an Australian Light Tower, for use at staging areas and motor vehicle accidents.

Graham, Barry, Sandra and Jeremy attended a regional forum in Nimmitabel, at which Assistant RFS Commissioner Dominic Lane was told about the increasing fire danger in parts of the Monaro due to changes in land management practices and local weather patterns.

At the end of June, more than a hundred RFS instructors and L&D administrators took part in a



Andrew protects a fence line

conference at Charles Sturt University in Bathurst. Cooma-Monaro was represented by L&D Officer Mick Holton, Vern Dunning, Richard Davies, Tony de Luca, and Nick Goldie. An important segment of the conference dealt with operational matters, in which the presenter Phil Robeson argued that the RFS needs to develop a formal procedure for inevitable extreme situations, beyond defensive firefighting, which he called *Safeguarding Strategy*. The primary aims are: **warn, move, protect**; and the function of a fire truck will be to pump information as much as water.

In late August, Sandra and Jeremy attended the 2012 Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Council (AFAC) and Bushfire CRC Conference in Perth, where they were sorely tempted at the Trade Expo by an array of big yellow fire trucks.

January 2013 was a month of alarms and call-outs. On January 5th, the temperature reached 42C, thunderstorms came in from the west, with widespread lightning strikes. There were *Extreme* and even *Catastrophic* warnings across the State. On 6 January a *Section 44* was declared for the Monaro. The Yarrabin fire involved almost every Monaro brigade, and almost every Colinton member, until heavy rain on 27 January completed the blacking out process. At the same time as the Yarrabin/Numeralla fire, there were a number of outbreaks near Shannons Flat where Colinton also assisted. The Shannons Flat community held a BBQ on 16 March to thank all those who had helped with these fires.

In March, fourteen participants from Colinton and neighbouring brigades took part in a two-day Bush Firefighter course at the Colinton station. Also in March, members of the Brigade hosted a dinner at Michelago Hall for the Rotary Clubs of Cooma and Tuggeranong. Colinton volunteers provided a selection of home-cooked and delicious meals for the Rotarians, and were well rewarded as the dinner raised substantial funds for the Brigade. The Brigade was also involved in Driver Reviver at the Colinton Rest Area – thanks mainly to Jeremy and Sandra for organizing this valuable activity.

We have a history of the Brigade, under the title *Colinton: a Small Brigade with a Big Task* in the forthcoming RFS *Bushfire Bulletin*.

Although rural fire brigades are made up of volunteers, and ultimately equipped by the Council, we carry out a number of fund-raising activities. Most recently, an insert in the *Courier* raised more than enough funds to purchase a back-pack blower. April is also an important month for a variety of grant applications. We currently have applications for funding with the NRMA Community Grants 2013 program, the Fahcsia Volunteer Grants 2013 program, the RFSA Grants

2013 program, and the Small Grants for Small Communities (FRRR) 2013 program.

And so – coming full circle – in early April the Brigade, along with Michelago and Anembo, carried out a major hazard reduction burn along the koala-infested Calabash Fire Trail.

Once again, thank you to all who have contributed, in whatever capacity. We have a Brigade to be proud of. 



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Views expressed in The Colinton Courier are not
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RFS.*



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: \$20.00 for adults, \$5.00 for juniors. Donations are always welcome.

Please provide a return address so a receipt can be mailed to you. 