

Colinton Courier

Newsletter of the Colinton Rural Fire Brigade * No 166* September 2015



Karl and Jeremy mopping up

Committee 2015-2016:

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NSW RFSA Delegate: Jeremy Mears

Call out:

At around ten in the morning of *Wednesday 12 August* there was a call for crews to attend a motor vehicle accident on the Monaro Highway, just north of Michelago. According to the pager message, Colinton would be supporting the Michelago brigade.

Seven *Alpha* (Sandra, Jeremy, Nick) was soon on the road, with *Charlie* (Tony C, Barry, Karl) leaving the station not far behind.

Traffic was banked up for a considerable distance north and south, with a damaged vehicle in the middle of the road and another on the upper embankment. Several police cars were in attendance, with two SES trucks, and a truck from NSW Fire and Rescue.

Michelago brigade crews were prevented by the traffic from reaching the Michelago station.

Two people were taken by ambulance to hospital.

Police allowed vehicles to use one lane, alternating northbound and southbound traffic. Crews were home by one o'clock.

On *Saturday 15 August*, there was a late afternoon call for a grass fire south of Bredbo. Bredbo crews were soon in attendance, and were joined by Colinton Seven *Bravo* (Graham, Barry), while *Alpha* (Michael, Nick) was soon on the road.

With Tony R and Daniel waiting at the station, *Charlie* was also brought into service, crewed by Michael B and Daniel, leaving *Alpha* with Tony R and Nick.

The fire was a considerable distance south of Bredbo, and it became clear that the crews already in attendance had it well under control. *Alpha* and *Charlie* were stood down, and returned to the station.

Crews were home in time for the kick-off of the Bledisloe Cup.

On *Sunday 13 September*, Michelago Brigade were carrying out regular training on Micaligo Road, when a fire broke out on a property further west on the same road. A small burn had escaped into love grass paddocks and was rapidly spreading. Michelago Captain Brent called for reinforcements.

Colinton Seven *Alpha* (Michael B, Karl) and *Bravo* (Graham, Jeremy) were quickly on their way. Eventually vehicles from Michelago, Colinton, and Bredbo attended the fire, with Anembo and Smiths Road on stand-by. The fire was contained by early afternoon.

On *Tuesday 15 September* there was a call at mid-morning for a fire on Bumbalong Road. Seven *Alpha* (Jeremy, Karl, Nick) was first on scene: once again a small burn has escaped into love grass paddocks to the north of Bumbalong Road, on the east bank of the river. About twenty hectares was ablaze.

Alpha gained a crew member when Sandra arrived in her own car, and was joined by *Charlie* (Graham, Daniel) and *One* (Bob, Jacqui, Nathan), along with trucks from Michelago and Bredbo.

The situation was complicated by a number of large apple box trees which were alight, and needed to be felled by expert chainsaw operator Will. The fire was out by late afternoon. The following day, *Alpha* (Jeremy, Nick) patrolled the area. ✍



Will taking down a “problem tree” burning inside the trunk

NRMA Community Grants:

On *Monday 24 August*, members of the Brigade gathered for morning tea at the NRMA office in Cooma, to acknowledge the generous NRMA Community Grant which the Brigade has received. The grant enabled the purchase of a portable generator, to power lights and urn on the catering trailer. Captain Graham thanked the local NRMA for their continuing generosity and support. ✍

Hotspots revisited:

Those with a long memory will remember the launch (by then Science Minister Peter McGauran) of *Sentinel Hotspots*, a system developed by CSIRO and Geoscience Australia. This satellite-based interactive map was heavily used during the Canberra fires of 2003.

A upgraded *Sentinel* system was launched in August , using the Japanese

satellite *Himawari-8*. The new system will be in place by mid-2016.

Rather than the six-hour time lapse of the older system, the new *Sentinel* will update its images of bushfire hotspots every ten minutes, or 144 times per day. Information will be sent directly to emergency services, and there will be a website for public use.

Chief of Geoscience Australia Dr Chris Pigram said: "We're taking it (*Sentinel*) from a monitoring tool to very much a strategic tool ... with information from the Bureau of Meteorology we will be able to model very accurately where the fire will move and how it will respond."

The 3.5 tonne *Himawari-8* satellite was launched by the Japanese Meteorological Agency in October last year, into geostationary orbit above the Western Pacific. Images from the satellite will be available on the Bureau of Meteorology website from September this year. ↪

Training:

The Colinton Brigade conducts training every month on the second Saturday, at 2.00 pm 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. ↪

US Fires:

If you are interested in the fires in the USA, the *National Interagency Fire Center* website has current statistics.

In early September, the number of fires was 45,491, covering an area of 8,754,359 acres.

Three US Forest Service firefighters were killed when their vehicle was over-run at the Twisp River fire in Washington State. And it is reported that, for the first time in

its history, Washington is accepting citizen volunteers to help fight the fires (especially if they can operate bulldozers or backhoes.) Hundreds of homes and buildings have been lost, with thousands of residents being evacuated.

It was reported in late August that some 70 Australian and New Zealand firefighters had arrived in Boise, Idaho. ↪

Up and Away: (from Sandra Lauer)

Michael Ellis and I travelled to Bathurst to attend the Air Base Operator (ABO) course from 11-13 September, which was run in conjunction with the Aviation Radio Operator (ARO) course.

On the first day of the course we were introduced to aviation theory in one large group of about 60 ABO and ARO participants. Safety around aircraft was the "take home message" for the day.

On the second day the ABO students were allocated into teams of six to learn about the different tasks an ABO may be required to undertake on an airbase. This was done as a round robin, with each station demonstrating a different set of skills. For these exercises all the aircraft were turned off, so we had the opportunity to "have a go" in a fairly relaxed environment.

We were shown how to work safely around aircraft, mix/load Phos-chek and gel suppressants into an Air Tractor aeroplane, marshal and hot fuel a helicopter, test aviation fuel for contaminants, and load passengers into helicopters.

On the final day we were assessed with a live "air base" scenario, where the all the aircraft were in full operation; taking off, landing and taxiing with propellers/rotors in full swing. The ARO students were also assessed as part of this live "air base" scenario. The highlight of the assessment

was the opportunity to have TWO rides in the NSW RFS MBB/Kawasaki BK 117 twin engine helicopter, as part of the "loading passengers" assessment. As this was my first time in a helicopter, I was a very happy lady! Marshalling the helicopters was also a highlight, as we had to guide the helicopters in to land using the hand signals we had learnt the previous day.

Thanks to the NSW RFS State Aviation Desk (SAD) and associated contractors/facilitators for a great three days. As one of only two females attending this ABO course, I really enjoyed the opportunity to work in a challenging but exciting environment.

Working with aircraft on a NSW RFS airbase is no different to being on a fireground; everything is just bigger and noisier. As we were told re the pumps, "it's either on or off, no in between!". I look forward to applying my skills as part of the Monaro aviation team that is being developed.

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*Items for **The Colinton Courier** to Nick Goldie at nickgoldie@bigpond.com
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are grateful to:*


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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**

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Fire Season:

**A reminder that the
Bushfire Danger Season
starts on
1 October.**

**This means that
NO FIRES
may be lit without a
permit.**

**All permits are revoked
on days when there is a
Total Fire Ban.**

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