

Colinton Courier

Newsletter of the Colinton Rural Fire Brigade * No 174* May 2016



Avonside: onward and upward

Committee 2016-2017:

Fire Captain: Graham Povey
Senior Deputy: Nick Goldie
Deputies: Bob Morison, Jeremy Mears, Michael Burton, Barry Woolacott
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Secretary: Sandra Lauer
Treasurer: Bob Morison
Training Officer: Jeremy Mears
Equipment Officers: Michael Burton, Karl Higgins
Community Awareness: Nick Goldie,
Fundraising: Gill Robinson
Permits: Graham Povey

NSW RFSA Delegate: Jeremy Mears


Call out:

On *Saturday 7 May* crews were called from Bredbo, Anembo and Colinton to assist Michelago with a fast-moving grass fire south of Micalago Road.

Colinton Seven *Alpha* (Michael B, Andrew, Nick) and *Bravo* (Barry, Jacqui) were soon on scene at Iron Ore Park. *Alpha* followed a fence-line up a rocky hill covered with thick reedy grass, burning briskly to the south.

After being joined on the hillside by Anembo *Seven*, the crew of *Alpha* spent the next forty minutes removing a recalcitrant stone from between the dual tyres, while the fire was rounded up and declared "out" by late afternoon.

Brigade members participated in several hazard reduction burns during the month. On *Wednesday 27 April*, Captain Graham joined members of the Bredbo Brigade burning an area of love grass to the north of Cosgrove Hill.

On *Friday 29 April*, Seven *Charlie* (Graham, Tony R, Nick) attended a burn at Avonside, near Jindabyne, over 230 hectares of very steep country, sloping down to the Snowy River. Crews from Berridale, Kalkite, Wollondibby, Colinton and Cooma took part, with Fred Nichols (Cooma Fire Mitigation Officer) as Officer in Charge. 

Wicked Problem, New Solutions: Our Fire, Our Problem:

In April Sandra and Jeremy went to the *IAWF* 5th Fire Behaviour and Fuels Conference*, being held jointly in Melbourne, and Portland, Oregon USA.

Presentations and posters included the latest in fire behaviour and risk models, how to implement those models in practice, indigenous fire management, fuel reduction strategies, modelling the impact of post-fire ash, fire weather behaviour research and predictions, the impacts of climate change (models and potential consequences) and future challenges for fire suppression.

Keynote sessions were run simultaneously in Portland and Melbourne. A strong message from researchers and practitioners is the need to strengthen relationships with all stakeholders (e.g. community, government, fire agencies and researchers) and that fire is as much a social issue as it is an ecological issue.

To quote senior editor of *Wildfire* magazine Ron Steffens, from his keynote speech, "Fire isn't wicked. It's neither good nor bad. It's the management of fire that is the wicked problem."

Sandra writes: "Conferences are also about meeting people and networking. We met people from around the world, as well as many we had met at the IAWF conference in Boise last year. The two field trips also provided a chance to see practical and collaborative applications of fire research by stakeholders including research organisations, local governments and communities."

Sandra attended a *Forest Fire and Fuels* field trip that showcased a custom built community fire refuge (and rural fire station) in Millgrove, with a trip to a fire tower (complete with emergency fire bunker refuge) to discuss fire management issues for protecting Melbourne's water catchment, and a visit to research plots to demonstrate the latest techniques for measuring the impact of weather/topography on fuels.

The *East Central Bushfire Risk Landscape* field trip that Jeremy attended

demonstrated fire hazard mitigation strategies around the Mount Dandenong area (30km east of CBD). Since this area contains public reserves, the Dandenong Ranges National Park, a large water reservoir and suburbs, authorities had to develop a hazard reduction scheme to include all these areas. This involved working with homeowner groups to manage vegetation in backyards, as well as government organisations attempting to minimise bushfire hazards. Many of the suburban areas are adjacent to public lands, requiring a coordinated public and private lands approach to minimise bushfire risk.

Sandra writes: "We also visited a Safer Places community refuge, part of the Ferny Creek Primary School which was modified to meet the guidelines. Then there was a visit to Monbulk CFA Station to admire the shiny things, including breathing apparatus (CABA) for structural fires, rescue and bushfire firefighting equipment."

**International Association of Wildland Fire*. Thanks to the ACT Bushfire Council and ESA for sponsoring Sandra to attend the conference. ↪

Courses:

Advanced Firefighter courses have been held in Cooma, covering Crew Safety and Welfare (CSW), Fire Behaviour, Pumping and Hydraulics, and Navigation. A final assessment day is scheduled for *Saturday 28 May*. Meanwhile a supplementary day covering CSW was held at Smiths Road on *Saturday 30 April*.

Members are encouraged to nominate for courses through the MyRFS website.

Start with *My Profile*, then *Training Centre*, *Course Type* and follow the links. ↪



Charlie (and Tony) in steep country overlooking the Snowy River valley

Aviation workshop:
from Michael B

“On Saturday 30 April I and 60 others attended the Aviation Communication and Evaluation (ACE) workshop in Cooma.

“Agencies involved included NSWRFSS, National Parks and the Forestry Corporation from as far as Tumut, Bungendore and Wamboin and members from our local area. The workshop was facilitated by Sam Crothers, A/Aviation Learning & Development Officer from Sydney. The aim was to enable us to identify, communicate and evaluate the techniques used for aerial firefighting support.

“The workshop consisted of five modules covered in a morning of intense theory:

- the types of aircraft used by the RFS, capacity and capability of each of the aircraft, how much each aircraft costs to run
- types of gels, foam and retardants and how to apply these successfully to complete the required objective

- firebombing footprints and coverage rates
- ground to air communications, with the tools for identifying yourself to the aircraft in a clear and logical sequence (the “clock face” method) not saying to the aircraft 'I'm over here standing under a large tree'.
- common ground-to-air terminology.

“After a brief lunch, we headed to a property near Cooma airport. Here we called in fixed wing bombers to drop retardants onto a specific target, and called in helicopters using their buckets for pin point accuracy.



Cooma airport: loading retardant (photo: Sandra)

“Jeremy and Sandra were at the airport loading the retardant into the bombers that we were using, as part of their Air Base Operator (ABO) re-certification. Our drops had to be accurate so as not to waste their hard work!

“There were three clear points regularly mentioned during the workshop:

- Never expect the aircraft to save the day
- Never expect the aircraft to do your job
- Never expect to have an aircraft for the whole day.

“Aircraft are there to assist the ground crews.”

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.



*Bunker to protect fire spotters, at the base of the Millgrove (Vic.) fire tower:
(photo: Sandra)*



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

