

Colinton Courier

Newsletter of the Colinton Rural Fire Brigade * No 85* December 2008



Bumbalong fire, the day after

Committee 2008-2009:

Fire Captain: Graham Povey
Senior Deputy: Nick Goldie
Deputies: Bob Morison, Jeremy Mears
President: Martin Hughes
Secretary: Nick Goldie
Treasurer: Bob Morison
Training Officer: Jeremy Mears
Equipment Officers: Graham Povey, Nick Goldie
Community Awareness: Nick Goldie
Permits: Graham Povey
NSW RFSA Delegate: Jeremy Mears

Call out:

Smoke was sighted at midday on *Sunday 16 November*, on the west side of the river north of Bumbalong Road. The fire started in a vehicle, which was completely destroyed, and spread northwards into paddocks and steep scrub along the river. Three Colinton trucks, *One, Seven Alpha* and *Seven Bravo* were turned out (Graham, Jeremy, Bob, Nick, Barry, Jacqui, Aldo and Brian) along with Bredbo *Nine* and Bredbo *One*, and even a couple of visiting members of the ACT Rural Fire Service. Local residents assisted, with a privately owned fire tanker and a quad-bike spray unit. The fire was contained and blacked out by late afternoon after burning about five hectares. Colinton *Seven Alpha* (Graham, Jeremy, Nick) patrolled the fire ground the next morning. ↪

Training:

The Colinton Brigade conducts training every month on the second Saturday, at two o'clock, at the Station at Colinton. Everyone is welcome.

The Junior brigade is in action, every second Thursday night. Contact Bob Morison or Tony Campbell for details. ↪

Training (2):

An unusual training day was held on *Saturday 13 December*, when members (Graham, Jeremy, Tony, Gill, Nick, Martin, Bob, Sandra, Noreen) took the trucks to the site of the 16 November fire. From a bluff above the scene, training officer Jeremy explained what actions the crews had taken during the fire. This was followed by some thoughts about the Linton (Vic.) disaster, where two crews

were over-run by fire – only one crew survived. Members then practiced emergency drills, with the reminder that the Linton crews had only ninety seconds to react to the fatal wind-change. ↻

Michelago BBQ:

The annual Michelago Brigade BBQ was held on Saturday 29 November on the Oval, in the face of electrical storms and drenching showers coming in across the ranges. Because of the muddy state of the ground, the 'fireys games' were cancelled, but fireys were well in evidence, many of them helping with stalls: members of Colinton, Smiths Road and Anembo as well as the Michelago Brigade. Past captain of Michelago Richard Stone was applauded as he received a memento of his time with the brigade ... ↻



A big red truck for Richard ...

Brigade 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: \$10.00 for residents, \$50.00 for non-residents. Donations are always welcome. If paying by mail, please provide a return address so a receipt can be mailed to you. ↻

Great Australian Bushfire Stories:

A new book from ABC journalist Ian Mannix is in the bookshops (and the ABC shop) just in time for Xmas.

Not a history, like Paul Collins' *Burn*, nor a text-book like McArthur and Luke's *Bushfires in Australia*, it's based on a dozen or so interviews with ordinary people who were involved in extraordinary bushfires – in Tasmania, Victoria, NSW, and of course the ACT.

Local heroes include John and Anna Hyles who saved (just) Booroomba Station near Tidbinbilla, Rick and Jayne Smith of Chapman, Richard and Sonia Stanton who lost their house in Duffy, and of course Val Jeffery of Tharwa ("Country towns throughout Australia often have a resident like him, who will irritate the bureaucrats because they don't always follow the 'guidelines' and become frustrated by occupational health and safety rules ... Val and his ilk are practical people whose most important role, as they see it, is the protection of lives and homes.")

Not all the stories have happy endings, and some of the happy endings are unexpected – the McCallums, a city couple who moved to the east coast of Tasmania, fled to the beach from an approaching firestorm after making no preparation. But their house was undamaged because, unknown to them, two firefighters arrived at the house moments later and, helped by a helicopter, defended it against embers and flames.

A common thread is *surprise*: even experienced country people who have made the best possible preparations are stunned by the noise, the heat, and the speed at which things happen. And everyone can learn from events.

John Hyles is still an active member of the Tharwa brigade, and, says Ian Mannix "at the end of 2002, he thought he had a rough idea what to expect. Everything pointed to disaster: drought, grazing licences suspended in the high country and national parks, fuel loads building up, fewer backburns and firefighting efforts diminished by people leaving rural properties."

In the event, Booroomba homestead was saved after an epic battle. The clean-up afterwards continued for months, even years, and included huge stock losses.

"John replanted the property with deciduous trees, not eucalypts. The mulch in the garden (which had repeatedly burst into flame) was graded away, never to be placed around the house again. John bought more buckets: about thirty per house, he thought. Buckets of water are often more effective than hoses in controlling spot fires."

Author Ian Mannix is the Adelaide-based Manager of ABC Local Radio Emergency Services.

Great Australian Bushfire Stories, by Ian Mannix, ABC Books 2008, \$29.95. ↪

Arson:

from a story by Georgina Robinson, Sydney Morning Herald, November 17

A 23-year-old NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) volunteer who has been stood down, has been charged with starting at least 13 separate fires on roadsides outside Inverell, north-west of Armidale, since September.

In the worst incident, police allege he burnt out 80 hectares of private property after a fire he lit on Crown land spread to the neighbouring property, about four kilometres from Inverell, on September 3.

Police were examining as many as 43 other fires dating back to December 2007.

In most cases, the 23-year-old labourer allegedly lit the fire, left the area, then returned to extinguish the blaze as a member of the local RFS brigade.

No one was injured in any incident but police said the waste of time and resources was alarming.

"RFS firefighters are trusted members of the community," Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons said. Like other professions of trust, unfortunately, there are sometimes people who decide to break that trust.

"This is one member out of more than 70,000 hard working, professional, dedicated and highly skilled men and women, who devote millions of hours to protecting their communities every year." ↪

Over the Border:

On *Monday 15 December* members of brigades which border the ACT - Aaminaby, Bredbo, Smiths Road, Shannons Flat and Colinton (Graham and Nick) - along with RFS officers from the Monaro Team (Barry, Jim, Rein), met ACT Rural Fire Brigade risk assessment specialists, at the Shannons Flat hall.

Topics included final details of a new map book being compiled by the ACT's Alan Walker, with the help of Geoscience Australia, which will give accurate positions in each brigade area for buildings, water points and anything else of significance to fire control. By January, each brigade will receive draft maps for comment, and the whole process is to be completed for the 2009-10 fire season. An important part of this will be deciding on common names for features and fire trails which currently can change their name at the border.

Equally important is the ACT/NSW Mutual Aid Agreement, which sets in place such things as common radio frequencies – at last *we can talk to them!* – and standard operating procedures. Notably, the ACT RFS does not attend motor vehicle

accidents, which are left to the professional ACT Fire Brigade; in remote areas of the ACT, local NSW brigades, trained to deal with MVAs, may be the most appropriate people to respond.

Helicopters and helicopter fuel came in for detailed discussion, particularly the new possibilities of airborne mapping systems which are fast, accurate, and available.

Hazard reduction burns planned for after the fire season will also affect Colinton members, with several major burns mapped out for the ACT border region along the Clear Range.

The meeting finished with a BBQ, and some informal discussion about the roles of volunteers in different jurisdictions, the possibility of another FESTA in March, and – of course – rain, wind and weather. ☞



Bumbalong fire, the day after, looking north



Items for **The Colinton Courier** to Nick Goldie
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by the first Saturday each month, or to any
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The Colinton Courier is also available at

[www.michelagoregion.org.au/bushfire/brigades
.htm](http://www.michelagoregion.org.au/bushfire/brigades.htm)

Views expressed in **The Colinton Courier** are
not necessarily those of the editor, the Brigade,
or the RFS.



***We wish all our friends and neighbours
a happy, safe and rainy festive season!***



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 4131

0419 406 908

