

Colinton Courier

Newsletter of the Colinton Rural Fire Brigade * No 88* March 2009



fund raising at Thredbo

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:

Nil



Fire Season: Important Notice

Because of the prevailing dry and windy conditions, the Bush Fire Danger Period in the Cooma-Monaro region has been extended until **Thursday 30 April**.

This means that the normal rules about NOT lighting fires in the open without a permit have been extended from the usual season end at 31 March. Permits may be issued by your local brigade captain, but it is unlikely that any permits will be issued unless there is substantial rain.

Note that on days of Total Fire Ban, NO fires may be lit, even if a permit has been issued.



Aftermath:

Media attention has moved on, but there's much serious discussion in internet forums and the more thoughtful magazines, about what happened in Victoria. In particular we noted an article in the March issue of *The Monthly*: by John van Tiggelen, a journalist who has written about cyclones in Queensland.

Van Tiggelen is particularly interested in the Forest Fire Danger Index, 'a composite measure of the humidity, wind speed, temperature and combustibility' calibrated such that a score of 100 is that of the conditions on Black Friday 1939. Burn-offs, he says, require a score of less than 12, Total Fire Bans are triggered at 50. He quotes a firefighter in January 2006, who worried that the 'stay and defend or go early' policy is reasonable if the FFDI stays below 60 – but at 80, there have to be new

rules – the fire danger is literally heading off the scale. And on 7 February 2009, at Kilmore, the FFDI reached a terrifying 189.

Meanwhile, on the internet forums the debate continues. Blaming someone – the greenies, the National Parks, forest management, shire planners, fire authorities – seems to be the most common reaction. In a discussion forum on the ABC News website there was a refreshing message from someone called Susannah (a member of the NSW RFS), who said briskly: stop whingeing from the sidelines, join your local volunteer brigade, learn basic bushfire-fighting skills, do something useful.

The RFS Association forum carried many messages, often about lack of information for NSW volunteers going (or not going) to Victoria. Some NSW firefighters came back from Gippsland amazed by the size of the trees and the density of the forests. Quote:

For those who have not worked in 100 - 200 yr old forest areas, you have no idea of the size of forests you are working with. When the head ranger of the area you are working in says there were areas that have never burnt in living memory, whether from wild fire or fuel reductions, that went up like a match, on the day in question, you start to get a grip on what happen that Saturday. When the same ranger tells you that you are working in areas of 100 to 200 tonnes per hectare, you get a scope of what sort of fire behaviour you will get with containment line construction. The size and scope of this has totally over-stretched ICS/IMT procedures, but they are doing a valiant job in trying to get and keep on top of it.

A letter from naturalist Ian Fraser to the *Canberra Times* helped put things in perspective:

Fires (as measured by charcoal studies) first appeared in Australia 20 million years ago, as drying began and the rainforests began to repeat ... The typically Australian hard-leaved, drought-resistant vegetation – including eucalypts and wattles – came to dominate with the commencement of the current ice age, 1.8

million years ago. The first 97 per cent of even that short but crucial time of fire evolution was human-free. It is very likely that Aboriginal fire helped maintain vegetation changes triggered by the end of the last two glaciations.

From the ABC's Quentin Dempster, a piece in which he reports that both the Climate Change Institute (which commissions research from the Bureau of Meteorology, CSIRO and the Bushfire CRC), and the United Firefighters Union of Australia, state that these fires were indeed off the scale, and there is no doubt that they were 'climate change fires'.

On 6 March, *The Age* reported that the Victorian Government has introduced new building codes for buildings in fire-prone areas:

The risk of bushfire to the home will determine what building rules are applied. In the most extreme fire risk areas, measures required for new homes will include:

A concrete slab;

Exterior walls must be constructed of non-combustible material such as brick veneer or concrete;

Non-combustible material on the roof, veranda or deck;

Sealed wall and roof joints to guard against ember attacks;

Shutters made from aluminium or other non-combustible material, or toughened glass for windows;

Door frames made from fire resistant timber, with a weather strip at the base;

Metal, rather than plastic, external trimmings such as vents, guttering and down pipes.

This is expected to add up to \$20,000 to the cost of a home in a bushfire area.

Bushfire plan:

Also from Victoria, see

http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/documents/living-bush-workbook/Litb_plan_liftout_guide.pdf for a model bushfire plan (dating from 2008).



John takes the money ...

Legends of Thredbo:

Uniformed RFS volunteers from brigades including Adaminaby, Berridale, Bredbo and Colinton (John, Nick) attended the *CMC Rocks the Snowys 2009* country rock festival on 6-7 March, along with many other RFS members who were just there as part of the four-thousand strong crowd.

The music was loud and long, and the crowd astonishingly generous, with some seven thousand dollars donated to the Trust Fund for ACT firefighter David Balfour, who died fighting the fires in Victoria.

John and Nick arrived on Saturday as the gates were opening. There seemed to be no organization for fund-raising, so Rachel the event manager ran off a couple of signs on her computer and provided a plastic Huggies box, while Nick scrounged a mayonnaise bucket from the coffee stall, and they were in business just as the

crowds rolled in, anxious to get rid of their small change and occasional \$50 note.

- “You guys are legends!” said a pretty girl to John. He looked modest.
- Four likely lads in jeans, huge hats, and *Deniliquin Ute Muster* singlets fossicked through their pockets for handfuls of change which they poured into the bucket. One of them produced a condom (still wrapped) and offered it. “It’s always good to be prepared,” said John thoughtfully, but declined the offer.
- Four likely lasses in *short shorts*, huge hats, singlets and cowboy boots giggled past. “I’m sorry,” said one, “I’ve got nothing on me!” “That’s right,” said the elderly couple sitting on a bench nearby. “You haven’t got much on you, have you.”

By lunch time on Saturday, the collecting buckets were becoming seriously heavy. Johnno and Dale were working the crowd, Rich and Steph had promised to take over at the gate, Adrian had arrived with his own buckets and John and Nick were free to enjoy the show ...

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):

The 2009 Training Action Plan is now available. Note that a senior First Aid course will be held at Colinton on Saturday 28 and Sunday 29 March. Please contact Jeremy (6100 0100) as soon as possible for details.

A Rural Fire Driving (RFD) course is scheduled for Berridale on 3, 4, 5 April, and a Crew Leader (CLV) course for Cooma on 18, 19 April.

An Advanced Firefighter course is planned for Cooma on 14, 16 and 17 May, and a Village Firefighter course for Berridale over six evenings (19, 20, 21, 26, 27, 28 May)

Details from Jeremy. 



Items for **The Colinton Courier** to Nick Goldie at horehound@yless4u.com.au
02 6235 9190
by the first Saturday each month, or to any Committee member. For production assistance we are grateful to:

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The Colinton Courier is also available at
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.



Help:

Sally Hughes has started the task of co-ordinating a group of volunteers to assist firefighters when there is a need for services such as catering or child-minding.

A small group met at the Colinton fire station on Saturday 14 March to discuss what is needed, and how to put it into effect. In the first instance, Sally has asked that anyone who can help – and doesn't want to be an active firefighter – should get in touch with her.

Active firefighters are expected to carry a certain amount of emergency rations in their kitbags, but freshly cut sandwiches or a hot cuppa can be a great morale booster when an incident drags on ...

Sally can be contacted on 02 6235 9093 or mshughes@activ8.net.au 

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. 



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

