

Colinton Courier

Newsletter of the Colinton Rural Fire Brigade * No 96 * November 2009



Bob at the Round Robin, drafting with a clamshell

Committee 2009-2010:

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: Jeremy Mears
Community Awareness: Nick Goldie
Permits: Graham Povey
NSW RFSA Delegate: Jeremy Mears

Call out:

On the morning of *Wednesday 4 November* Jeremy, heading south along the highway, discovered a single-vehicle accident, just south of Ryries Hill Road. The accident had happened some hours earlier; the driver was not injured and left the scene, while Jeremy waited for the police and tow truck.

On the evening of the same day, Graham in *Seven Charlie* drove the length of Ryries Hill Road to investigate a reported smoke sighting, but nothing was found. ↪

TOBAN:

The first **Total Fire Ban** of the season was declared for the Monaro and the ACT, as well as many other parts of NSW, on *Monday 16 November*. Brigade members with a pager received the message on Sunday evening, and it was announced on the ABC news. During the fire season, check the RFS website for TOBANS and fire updates. During a Total Fire Ban no fires may be lit, and it's important not to use any machinery, eg slashers, mowers, angle-grinders, which could cause sparks.

Total Fire Ban Rules:

(adapted from the RFS website)

No fire may be lit in the open and all permits are suspended. This includes incinerators and barbecues which burn solid fuel, e.g. wood or charcoal.

You may use a gas or electric barbecue, but only if:
it is on a residential property within 20 metres of the house or dwelling; or

it is a picnic area and the appliance is approved by Council, National Parks or State Forest;
it is under the direct control of a responsible adult;
the ground within 2 metres of the barbecue is cleared of all materials; which could burn
you have an immediate and continuous supply of water available.

Lighting a fire on a day of Total Fire Ban attracts a fine of up to \$5500 and/or 12 months gaol. Penalties for a fire that escapes and damages or destroys life, property or the environment can be fines and gaol terms up to \$100,000 and/or 14 years gaol. ↪

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: \$15.00 for adults, \$5.00 for juniors. Donations are always welcome. Please provide a return address so a receipt can be mailed to you. ↪

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.

A Basic Firefighter (BF) course is being held at Colinton in November. ↪

Training (2) – Round Robin

On *Saturday 31 October*, members of local brigades including Anembo, Cooma, Michelago, Numeralla, Colinton (Graham, Jeremy, Martin, Nick, Noreen, Bob, Gill,

Tony R, Michael) and members of the Cooma NSW Fire Brigade took part in a Round Robin at Bredbo.

Three scenarios were provided, involving radio communication (Rein Peet, instructor), pumps and pumping, and 'bush skills' (Graham and Sparky, working with and around a grader). The 'pumping' scenario (Mick H, Dave K, Nick) took place on the banks of the river, and showed up some familiar problems as crews attempted to draft water with more or less success. This also showed up some equipment faults which needed subsequent repair.

Lunch was provided by Jeanette Holton and Sally Hughes - to whom thanks.

After lunch Bredbo's Chris Robinson gave a short workshop on the special problems of lovegrass fires, then putting theory into practice, conducted a lovegrass burn in paddocks to the west of Bredbo. With no wind and quite lush growth, there looked to be little chance of a hot fire, but the green grass burned strongly with flame heights up to three metres. All available tankers were kept busy at the perimeter of the fire; towards the end of the afternoon two Cat One tankers sank heavily into the soft soil on either side of the ridge, and had to be rescued by Sparky in his grader. ↪

Seeking long-term relationship:

After nine years, and 95 issues of the *Colinton Courier*, messrs Sharp of Fyshwick have informed us that they are no longer able to assist with the printing of the newsletter (they had a *diktat* from Head Office, referring to the global financial crisis). We are very grateful to Sharp who were always generous and helpful. So we are looking for a printer. We supply the paper, and the labour. We need a machine (A3) we can use once a month, and preferably on a reasonably long-term basis ... if anyone can help, let us know. ↪

Victoria:

The ABC's Jane Cowan was first on the scene after the Marysville disaster, and she has been reporting in detail on the Royal Commission. Her analysis of evidence about incident management, and perceived gaps between management and fire fighters on the ground, makes uncomfortable reading. See: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/11/09/2737340.htm> for a recent report. ↻



Round Robin - burning lovegrass

Tinderry tour:

by Tony Robinson

On Sunday 25 October the Anembo Brigade organised a trip along the fire trails in the Tinderry Nature Reserve, for local residents and brigade members to familiarise themselves with the area and to learn some fire load assessment techniques. At 10.30 am Maggie and Natalie from Parks and Wildlife unlocked the gates at the Round Flat Trail off the Tinderry Road and led us into the Park.

Four vehicles including *Anembo 9* took seven adults and five children on a grand tour of this fascinating area.

A major fire swept through the Tinderrys in 1957, starting at the old eucalyptus oil extraction factory. Since then there have been a few small fires; some blackened stumps and trunks are visible, but generally there's been heavy fuel build up in the intervening years. Maggie and Natalie took us through the *Overall Fuel Hazard Guide* (Victorian Dept of Sustainability 1999). We went through assessing fine ground fuel load, elevated fuel, bark hazard and then an overall assessment. Looking up the tables in the booklet, fine fuel was rated as high, elevated fuel as high and bark hazard, moderate to high. Overall the fire index came out, not surprisingly, as very high. (Experienced fireys would have not needed the guide to arrive at that conclusion but for us beginners it was a very useful exercise.)

Following the assessment we went on a tour of the fire trails; East Tinderry, Bluebell Link and Bluebell Swamp. We stopped for a welcome lunch break at the Bluebell Swamp where we were able to take in the surrounds at a more leisurely pace. What strikes you in the Tinderrys are the very different tree species and understory from what we see in the Michelago "lowlands"; Black Sallees (*Eucalyptus stellulata*), Candlebarks (*E. rubida*), Snow Gums (*E. pauciflora*), Brown Barrel (*E. fastigata*) and Narrow-leaved Peppermint (*E. radiata*) predominate. The understory is mainly Blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*), Blackthorn, Egg and Bacon (*Davesia* sp) and a range of other shrubs known to others but not to me.

The fauna is also very diverse and the locals commented on the abundant populations of Gang-Gang Cockatoos. Apparently also present are Eastern Spotted Quolls, Yellow Bellied gliders, Powerful Owls (and presumably Brush-Tailed Possums on which they feed) and

the Alpine Tree Frog. Walking through the forest one could recognise other bird calls familiar to us river folk.

Perhaps the highlight was a visit to a site that was very special to the Aboriginal mobs that used to come through the area in the bogong moth season. I have heard others talk about this site but this was the first time I had seen it for myself. It consists of a jumble of enormous granite boulders, probably over ten acres in its entirety, covered patchily in moss and lichen and presenting a complex maze of tunnels, canyons and crevices occasionally opening into larger spaces. The Aboriginal people went there to eat moths and to plan and philosophise. After European invasion cattle duffers used it as a corral and slaughterhouse from where they sold meat to the locals. A fine old trade I suspect and not a lot of questions asked.

As we left the site the rain had started and it was off home in a steadily increasing downpour. Thanks to Parks and Wildlife and the Anembo Brigade for the opportunity to see this wonderful landscape.

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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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*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:
Noel Teys Real Estate 0428 625 307

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.*

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Embarrassingly embogged ...