

# BOGONG BULLETIN

## Bogong Chalet Management Group



# Fire Edition

## SO CLOSE !!!!!!

I was asked to describe the Bogong Chalet in one word, some people would use a word such as magical or fun reflecting the good times they have had there. I, however, would use a word such as mystic or surreal. Having been around for 60+ years, stepping into the Chalet is like stepping into another era, one where we can leave the fast paced hustle and bustle world behind. From good old Theodore providing the hot water to the smell of fresh bread baking in the cast iron stove the Chalet retains a sense of the old world, and this is why we believe it is immortal. Who would believe then that the one thing that has threatened us the most in 60 years is fire? High plains aren't supposed to burn but we came within metres of having our Chalet destroyed and it goes without saying how lucky we are it survived. The tow hut was destroyed and that is a great loss, but nothing compared to the loss we would have felt if we had lost the one thing that so many of us hold dear, our Chalet. In the aftermath of the fire I hope the one thing that every Rover thinks about, is that the Chalet may not be around forever and that we must grab every chance we can to get up there and enjoy it. It doesn't take a world class skier to enjoy the tranquility and mateship that you get at the Chalet. Thanks to everyone for your support and concern during this time, and let's now look forward to a good ski season and some relief for our firefighters. Daniel Angus (Vice-Chairman B.C.M.G)

*(Our Chairman, Paul Sheer is little busy this edition getting ready for his wedding to Liz Mishura—all the best)*



Remains of our ski tow hut

### Coming Events

- 7-10 March 2003—Labour Day Working Bee
- 1 April— Preferential Bookings Close
- 17-21 April 2003—Easter Working Bee and Nob's Training
- 9-10 May 2003— Food Weekend
- 12 June— Outdoor Expo
- 27 June—Season Opens Week 1

## TOW HUT DESTROYED

The ski tow at the Chalet suffered significant damage in the fires. The tow hut and its contents were destroyed. This included the rope which is the single most valuable component (dollars wise) of the tow. The poles are singed only. The small wooden bridge over the creek at the bottom of the tow has also been destroyed. Once we have access, the focus will initially be on the clean up process. The BCMG is looking at the feasibility of reconstruction for the 2003 season but this may simply be impossible as we will may have two months (if that) from gaining access until the snow arrives and the important thing is, of course, to get the chalet ready for the snow. We will keep you informed of the progress of reconstruction planning. The fire actually burnt within metres of the main building however it appears to have been doused by the small amount of rain we have received in the last month. The slope beside the tow has been 'naked' and we don't know how it will hold snow. Parks Victoria is yet to make decisions about the High Plains as all staff are still well and truly tied up with the ongoing fire. We still do not have access to the chalet as the High Plains Road is closed. Once we do have access the focus will be entirely on preparation for winter 2003. Please volunteer when asked for these working bees. Other plans include replacement of the ageing Lister generator and completion of the dining room paneling. There will be stacking of food and wood and general servicing and tidying up around the chalet. Numbers may be limited by environmental concerns so please volunteer early with the Bookings Officer on 0407CHALET (0407 242 538) - Mick Simpson Alpine Rover Crew Chairman

## History Project Underway

And then the phone call came through.... (Diary of how we got everything – including the dining room fire screen – out of the chalet) If I got a team of people together and headed to Mt Beauty immediately we had a window of opportunity to enter the High Plains and get to the chalet. We may not get to the chalet as the road to Falls Creek was surrounded by fire and the road beyond, also had fire around it. But the chance was there. We left Melbourne after midnight and got to Mt Beauty (Les's place) early in the morning. The choking smoke was present from Euroa and it just got thicker as we got closer. After waiting several hours at Falls Creek, final approval was given for us to go in, a complete briefing was held and escorted by appropriate authorities – off we went. Our mission was to remove all historical assets from the chalet as quickly as possible. We didn't know if we had one hour, three hours or no hours. It was just 'go for it'. Dressed in overalls, safety boots, full woollen shirt, cotton pants, hat and gloves we attacked the chalet. I had prioritised the contents of the chalet and started at the top of the list and worked down. Everything was dependant on where the fire was and how much time we had. After three hours, but it seemed like three minutes, we were told it was time to go. The gear then left the chalet. The drive down the mountain was done in complete silence. The fire was over the road; the utter devastation of the ground cover, trees that once stood tall now lay blackened on the ground. The sight was a moonscape. Shades of grey and black, no white or colour. Spectacular in its starkness, heart-breaking in its destruction. To list what have retrieved is too great but rest assured everything from the flobber donger to the fire screen was retrieved. Slowly these artefacts will be returned to the chalet but things will be different from now on. Some of your favourite historical items may never return to the chalet – it is too dangerous for them to be there. The logbooks will, but not in their current original condition. Your patience during the next couple of months (possibly years) will be appreciated. (Sue Tanck—Chalet Historian) *There is a mountain of work to do including copying all log books and cataloguing everything that has been saved. Keep an eye out as we ask for help (Mick Simpson)*

## The Last Visit

The immediate threat to the chalet main building from fire has gone, and I now take time to reflect on thoughts and my experiences whilst up at the chalet during the lightning strikes on that early Wednesday (8 Jan 2003) morning. The overnight rain had been light compared to the crashing of thunder and occasional overhead flashes. We awoke to find the Wednesday morning cool and misty. As the 4/11 Venturers packed up to trundle up and down to the Cope Hut gate at midday the mist was still low and cool on the breath. Thursday - It had cleared to blue again. Visitors dropped by that day they told of smoke coming from near Bogong village. This was surprise as I had been sitting on Investiture Point that morning and could see no sign of smoke. A call from Matt Anderson that afternoon confirmed that the news had reached Melbourne. I remember telling Matt that even though I had heard of fire in the area, witness's reports suggested no significant threat was posed to the chalet! Friday was spent on summer touring with a bike and car tour around to Pretty Valley. Already tracks were being closed off towards Tawonga Huts and the local cattlemen were attempting to locate hikers in the area. The weekend progressed with typical fun and enjoyment. Plumes of smoke were quite distant but now evident on the horizons. Dick and Lou even joined us to celebrate their wedding anniversary. Checkout day still weighs heavily on the thoughts of all those up there at the time. We reconciled ourselves by saying the fires would never get close to the Chalet. "There was far too much distance between them and us". I found it difficult to do the final lockup - everywhere I looked there was something else that should accompany the logbooks down the hill. The irreplaceable items both large and small were in every room. It was Dick who voiced the underlining heart stopper. "How do you pack away the spirit of the place?" Down in Mount Beauty, images of the days before with the high plains in sunshine and the sole snow gum next to the chalet in flower close in on me like the surrounding smoke. Humbled by the feeling of helplessness we head back to Melbourne to await the chalet's fate. I am greeted by my distraught mother who had come up to see the chalet for the first time. She is shaken to the core and I join her when she says we will not live to see those plains restored to their former glory!

Glen Pendavingh (Bogong Rover Crew)

*Glen led the last visit to the chalet before it was closed and his party was present when the lightning strikes occurred that started these fires.*

## Hut Losses and Salvations

The loss of numerous historic huts in the fires will be keenly felt by all Alpine Rovers. This list is far from complete and may not be entirely accurate as information is patchy and possibly inaccurate. At some stages we had been told that Cope, Fitzgeralds and Edmansons had all been burnt down but were then miraculously resurrected! We still don't know about many with any degree of certainty. We may possibly not know positively for months yet.

### Confirmed Lost

Huggins, Horsehair, McNamara's (Bucketty Plain), Battys, Bogong Creek, Bon Accord, Damm, Federation, Michell, Red, Red Robin, Ropers, Spring Saddle

### Confirmed Saved

Bivouac, Blairs, Bogong Jacks, Cairn Creek, Cleve Cole, Cope, Cope Saddle, Diamantina, Dibbins, Edmansons, Faithfulls, Fitzgeralds, JB Plain, Johnstons, Joyce Brockoff, Kellys, Langfords Gap, MUMC, McNamara (Dinner Plain), Ryders, Silver Brumby, Tawonga, Wallaces, Westons, Wilkinsons, Wire Plain, Youngs, Blowhard, Dinner Plain (CRB), Alpine Nursery, Spargos

### Not Known

Pretty Valley, Fitzgeralds New

This information is patchy and changes from day to day so don't rely on it just yet. As always don't rely on huts for accommodation and ensure you have the appropriate equipment at all times for all conditions

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During the Fire Crisis in January the BCMG was very thankful for the emails from ARC/AVU members—Here is a very small sample

*THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU !!!!! I can't tell you how grateful we are to get that news. Except I know how grateful you would have been to know that the Rover Chalet is safe as well. I get to Wilky rarely these days, but knowing it is there makes my life so much richer. We were actually supposed to be going up for a few days the week before last (my first trip for a few years) but we weren't able to go because of the fires. We will now have to wait until March to get up there but I will just have to be patient like I have been the last couple of weeks not knowing what was happening. Thank you again, (Janette Mattingley – Wilkinson's Lodge 2/2/03)*

Hello Bogong team, thanks for the fire updates on the web, I have enjoyed being able to read the latest news. It was better than word of mouth, seeing I heard many stories, in fact why I went to the website It's good news that the buildings are okay because we all know if they were lost we could never rebuild them. Yours in scouting (David "Wombat" Lyons 2/2/03)

Hi Mick, I'd like to thank you as an Alpine Rover currently overseas, for keeping me (and others like me) up to date on the fire situation. The last few weeks I have been heading to the Bogong web site first thing when I log onto the net, to see if there's any updates, hoping that all is ok. It is a relief and I congratulate you and the people on the ground feeding you information, and those protecting the Chalet (and the other historic alpine huts), for keeping us who can't be of any use from where we are, so well informed. I'm hoping to be back in time for a Winter Party late in the season this year and I apologise for not being in a position to assist you in the repairs and other tasks required before then. regards, Steve Tyas ex-Willinda RC currently in Nuremburg, Germany!

Hi Mick Thanks for the continual updates. I was checking the internet every 15 minutes waiting for the 10.30pm update and I was very happy to see the news. LUCKY!! Shame about the technical!!! books but you can't complain. I hope the rain helps stop any further fires in the area. We continue to have snow here which makes me feel along way away from all the problems in Australia at the moment. ....

*(Matt Franzke 1/2/03 from Kandersteg – Switzerland)*

I was unaware that the lodge was in trouble as I'm currently in Aberdeen Scotland where the flooding is on my mind more often, it's good to hear all is well at this moment and look forward to making a winter party when back down under

*(Andrew Carrick – 24/1/03 from Scotland)*

## Water Supply

It is not clear as yet if the Chalet's water supply is contaminated with silt, ash or chemicals from fire bombing. We will be having the supply checked out and endeavoring to deal with the situation before the onset of winter. We draw mostly from underground but a little surface water is obtained from the home slope. The home slope has not been burnt so we remain hopeful that the pure clean water we are used to will remain that way. Once we have access it may be necessary, until checks are completed, to carry drinking water into the chalet. We will keep you informed.

**Bogong News** - Congratulations to Daniel Wilson and Julie March on the birth of Tahlia on 10 January 2003 (7lb 2 oz 3180 g) Congratulations to Tony and Michelle Nathan (nee Greirson) on the birth of Miles on 24 January 2003 (7 lb 15 oz—3600 g). And a special congratulations to Andrew and Meredith Gallagher on the birth of Nicole at Bendigo on 19 February 2003 (7 lb 11 oz). Congratulations to Ian Fieldhouse and Tammie on their engagement in January 2003.

**WINTER PARTIES 2003** Bookings are expected to heavy for the winter of 2003 so get your application in now. Remember there is a substantial discount if your application is in before 1 April 2003. The application form is at the end of the Bulletin.

## More Messages from Alpine Rovers

Hey Mick - thanks for keeping us up to speed. The fires and the chalet have been very much at the forefront of my mind these past few weeks!... Regarding the tow hut's technical library, could it be that the bushfire is big on censorship? (dirty, dirty little boys!)

*(Robyn Hodge – 2/2/03)*

Well Done Guys You have done a great Job in Keeping the Victorian Rovers up to date with the news of what is going on with the chalet. I've never been there I hope to go there next yr. Please Include me on your mailing list when you need support for Working Bees, Its a long trip from Geelong but one weekend shouldn't be a problem. See ya Keep Up the Good Work David Leney **Mudbash 2003 1/2/03**)

Let's continue to pray for a speedy cessation to all the fires and all those who are tirelessly out there fighting and supporting....thank you for your continual updates. If any assistance is needed, just call me.

*(David Whitelaw – 29/1/03)*

Bogong Rover Crew Members are reminded to nominate any potential Bogong Rovers directly to the warden Matt Anderson on 03 9733 1899 by May. This gives enough time for the Bogong Rover Crew Nomination Committee time to meet to consider the nomination before it is forwarded to the BC Rovers in time for a winter 2003 investiture. Get those nominations happening.

## The Biggest Ones

I was asked on Week 8 2002 where were the 10 tallest mountains in Victoria. I knew that 9 of the top 10 were within striking distance of the chalet but which were in which order I had no idea—SO here is the answer!

**MT BOGONG—1986 metres**

**Mt Feathertop—1922 metres**

**Mt Nelse—1884 metres**

**Mt Fainter—1882 metres**

**Mt Loch—1875 metres**

**Mt Hotham—1868 metres**

**The Niggerheads—1852 metres**

**Mt McKay—1842 metres**

**The Cobberas—1838 metres**

**Mt Cope—1837 metres**

Spion Kopje just misses out at 1836 metres!

Can anyone claim to have skied and walked all of the top 10 mountains?

## Chalet Historical Rescue—24 January 2003—Thank You

The BCMG on behalf of the BRC would sincerely like to thank the people who attended on the 24 January 2003 in the efforts to save the chalet's historical contents – they are John Clark, Michael Spencer, Toby Beekman, Mick Connor, Peter Rossborough, Daniel Wilson, Tony Nathan, Gavin Mascas, Darren Gardiner, Kate Brandis, Les Wiebanga, Dick Michell and Sue Tanck. Congratulations to Tony and Michelle who had their baby boy, Miles, while Tony was driving back from the Chalet!

### Hut Losses and Salvations Continued

The losses in New South Wales are also significant and include Brooks, Delaneys, Boltens Hill, Pretty Plain, Patons, Orange/Diane, Old Geehi/YHA, Geehi, Dr Forbes, Boobee, Pugalistic, O'Keefes, Verandah Camp, Olsens Lo Shelter, Opera House and Grey Hill Café. In the ACT there were also significant losses including substantial damage at Camp Cotter. Other losses include the very historic Franklin Chalet (see edition 63 of Australian Geographic), Slalom Hut, Stockyard Creek, Snowgum and Picadilly. Reids Pinch, Blundells and Blue Range Huts are presumed to have been destroyed. Pryors, Orraral Homestead, Gudgenby Homestead, Brandy Flat, Rendevous Creek, Frank & Jacks, Hospital Creek and Demanding Huts have been confirmed as still standing. There are many wonderful stories of skiing and walking the high country of Australia and it up to Alpine Rovers to keep those memories alive. The loss of these huts will not erase the wonderful memories that Alpine Rovers have skiing and walking in these areas. *(Mick Simpson (Bogong Rover Crew))*

There is no definitive list of Alpine Rovers in existence and I am slowly working my way through some index cards left by the late Mick Scarff, the database from the early 1990's onwards, the Bogong Rover Crew list and records from 1999 onwards. It is my intention to merge all these records but I will need some info from all you guys as well. I am looking for your name (and maiden name if applicable) and the year you became an Alpine Rover (and your partner if that person is an Alpine Rover).

**Ski It, Hike It**  
**Bike It, I Like It**  
 FOR A GOOD TIME CALL  
**0407 CHALET**  
**0407 242 538**

If you know any information about the early years or members of the Alpine Rover Crew I would love to know as well. Email me at [smsimpson@virtual.net.au](mailto:smsimpson@virtual.net.au) *(Mick Simpson)*

EMAIL [bogongchalet@vicscouts.asn.au](mailto:bogongchalet@vicscouts.asn.au)



*Daniel hard at work at the January BCMG meeting*

### Profile—Daniel Angus—BCMG Vice Chairman

The Vice Chairman of the BCMG in 2003 is Daniel Angus who is a member of the Bill Waters Rover Crew and just 20 years old. This is his first term on the BCMG and became an Alpine Rover in 2000. Despite his tender years he brings a wealth of Roving experience to the BCMG having already served a term as secretary his local regional Rover Council. Dan joins a long list of Bill Waters Rovers who have served on the BCMG including Bruce Durant, Kylie Durant, Mike Spencer & Mick Simpson. Other current Bill Waters Rovers on the BCMG are Stuart Bailey and Veronica Unkles.

**THE BOGONG BULLETIN** - The Bogong Bulletin has a circulation of over 500. It is compiled and mailed by volunteers from the BCMG and helpers. Despite this volunteer labour, it takes about 30 hours to copy, fold, address, stamp and put in envelopes and the Bulletin costs around \$1000 a year to send out!! The advent of email means the number of Bulletins that go into envelopes has been reduced to about 300. If you have an email address that you haven't told us about please send it to me at my email address below so I can add you to the mailing list. You will stay on the email list for as long as you wish with no 3 year cut off. The electronic version is now in full colour and has plenty of photographs. During the fire crisis regular, sometimes daily, emails were sent as we were able to obtain information. If I have lost your address or you were getting the Bulletin via email then started getting it by snail mail please remind me with your email address. The money and effort we can save goes a long way to keeping costs down for future years!! Mick SIMPSON, Chairman ARC