



Echo from the Mountains

Victorian High Country Huts Association Inc – A0043804Y

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT...



As the festive season approaches, it is a pleasure to forward my first message as President of the VHCHA, and I look forward to filling the

position for the next term.

To reflect on what has been achieved over the past two years is a credit to everyone involved. Whilst things on the ground seem slow, behind the scenes mammoth tasks have been achieved. It is at this point I would like to congratulate the committee for their dedication and persistence.

The success and future of the VHCHA would not be possible without the support of our members. The committee thanks each and every one of you for your commitment to both the huts and the VHCHA. Members offering moral support are as important to the VHCHA as those who offer physical support.

With all the formalities finally in place with Parks Victoria and DSE, 2005 is looking to be very prosperous for the VHCHA.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to wish you all a safe and Merry Christmas and a happy New Year and we are looking forward to having some active plans in place in the New Year.

Dianne Carroll

OUR GENEROUS MEMBERS

Once again we are able to report the generosity of some of our members and we sincerely thank them.

Fiona Magnussen presented the Association with a cheque for \$505 at the AGM, from direct sales of her book *Victoria's Alpine Heritage, The Huts of the High Plains*, which was launched at our Special General Meeting last year.

John Hartnell, one of our newer members donated 10 copies of a calendar that he had made showing his drawings of huts, and the sale of these at the AGM resulted in a donation of \$100 to the VHCHA.

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FORTHCOMING HUTS WORKS

Owing to difficulties with approvals there will be no major re-builds this summer; however that does not mean there is not plenty to do. All the HMOs are organising clean-up and maintenance programs and they always welcome assistance and support from members. Contact Barry Hazeldine, Huts Maintenance Coordinator to find out how you can help.

HUTS MAINTENANCE GROUP

Huts Maintenance Coordinator: Barry Hazeldine Phone: 02 6020 8595 OR 0407 109 950 Email: BARRY.G.H@bigpond.com.au	
Area	Huts Maintenance Officer
1	HMO Wanted
2	HMO Wanted
3	HMO Wanted
4 & 5	Mick Vanderzalm Ph: 0429 024 445 mickv@net-tech.com.au
6	Darren McRae H Ph: 0409 513 549 darrenm@the-shed.net
7 & 8	Roger Sievwright Ph: 03 5768 2383 siev@netc.net.au
9A	Fiona Magnussen Ph: 0427 596 554 fiona.magnussen@bigpond.com
9B	Bob Johnstone Ph: 02 6056 9491 or 0417 680 758 bobj@bigpond.net.au
10	HMO Wanted
11	Leon Schreiber leon@tatmilk.com.au Pip Brown pip.brown@legalaid.nsw.gov.au

HMOs wanted - if you are interested in taking up one of the vacant areas please contact Barry Hazeldine.



Rebuilding of Federation and Michell Huts

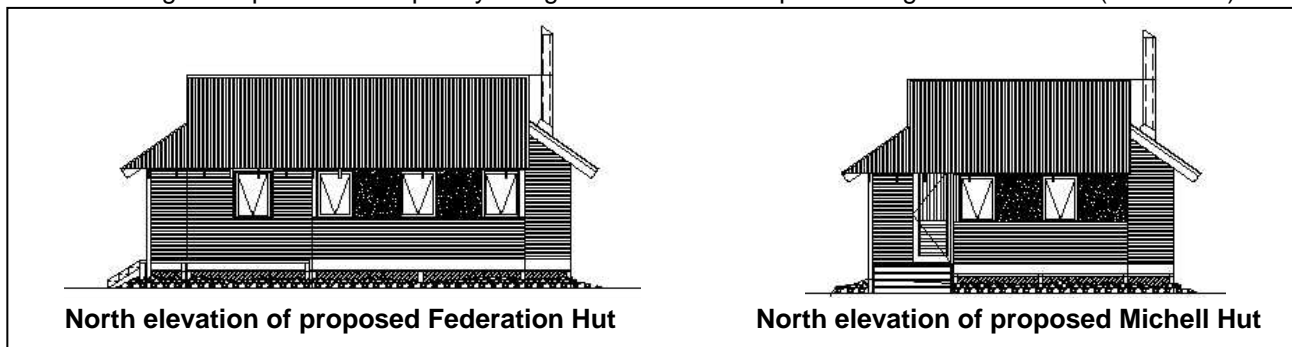
Many huts were damaged or destroyed in the 2003 bushfires. Of these, both Federation and Michell huts were completely destroyed. As these huts were assessed as having significant refuge value, they are being rebuilt by Parks Victoria under the Bushfire Recovery Program. Both huts are located above the snow line along popular walking routes. These sites experience heavy snow falls, strong winds and extremes in temperature, thus it was recommended that both

huts be replaced for the primary purpose of refuge or emergency shelter.

As the huts were of various standards of construction, the replacement huts are not trying to replicate that which was destroyed but to provide shelter in a contemporary design. The huts are designed to provide improved refuge and safety to users in extreme weather conditions and times of emergency, excluding wild fire.

The comprehensive process developed for hut replacement that is currently being followed is:

- **Risk assessment** - A detailed Hazardous Materials Risk Assessment of sites after the fire was completed. This was to identify the extent and location of asbestos materials, associated asbestos cement debris and other potentially hazardous fire damaged building materials.
- **Site clean up** - An appropriate decontamination and clean up was undertaken. With a clearance certificate issued, the sites are now considered suitable for members of the public and construction workers to enter.
- **Design** - Three conceptual designs for each of the two huts were developed.
- **Stakeholder consultation** - The following stakeholders were consulted regarding the hut rebuilding - Victorian High Country Huts Association, Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs, Mount Bogong Club, and other interested parties.
- **Design and contractor selection** - In consultation with stakeholders the final designs for the huts were agreed upon. Contemporary designs with a focus on public refuge were chosen (see below).



- **Prefabrication** - A contractor was selected to prefabricate huts off-site under the supervision of an architect to ensure all Australian Standards were met. Recycled timbers were used in construction. Prior to the huts being flown to their mountain sites by helicopter, both huts were partially assembled off-site last month (November) and inspected to ensure the prefabricated huts met project standards and guidelines. They were then dismantled again to await transportation.
- **Transportation and construction** - Once weather conditions allowed, the hut components were airlifted on December 2nd to their remote mountain sites. Construction will now take place and the huts will be completed before Christmas to ensure bushwalkers have the backup of adequate refuge in the event of an emergency or extreme weather.

For further information, please contact Sue Williames, Bushfire Recovery Communications Officer, Parks Victoria on (03) 5172 2196.

IT'S NOT A MOUSE!

Most small mammals inhabiting buildings in alpine areas are native and protected by law. The exotic species (common house mouse and black rat) are very UNCOMMON in alpine areas. Parks Victoria has an excellent information sheet on *Mammals in huts* and this can be obtained at any Parks Victoria Office or Resort Management Office in the Alpine areas.

ORANGE HAWKWEED ALERT

An introduced species that has the ability to invade the high country, out-compete native plants and disturb local ecosystems is Orange Hawkweed. It spreads by runners over short distances and seeds over larger areas. If you find any orange hawkweed contact your local council or Parks Victoria. Information about this and other prohibited weeds is available from Parks Victoria & Dept. Sustainability & Environment.



AGM REPORT

Forty people attended the VHCHA attended the 2nd Annual General Meeting, which was held at Mansfield Council Meeting Room on 16 October 2004. The meeting was followed by dinner at the Mansfield Hotel which was attended by about 20 members, many of whom stayed in the area for the weekend.

The AGM was formally opened by Graeme Stoney MP, who welcomed the members to Mansfield and gave an account of his family's connections with the mountains and his part in building Bluff hut in 1956. He was responsible for packing the materials, particularly the roofing iron, up the steep track to the hut site and he mentioned that Jack Ware had adzed the timber frame.

The committee met on two occasions (Bright in May & Wangaratta in July) and communicated and met via the email on numerous occasions during the year. Each Committee member gave a report at the AGM on their activities. Highlights of the VHCHA year were:

- Registration as a "Friends" group by Parks Victoria.
- Successful Pioneer Skills weekend held in January.
- Relationship with Kosciusko Huts Association established, including discussions about the formation of a Federation of Mountain Hut Associations.
- Received an ABN, not registered for GST.
- Endorsed by the Australian Taxation Office as an Income Tax Exempt Charitable Institution.
- Dianne Carroll engaged in historical research on huts for the second *Butler Report* commissioned by Parks Victoria on the heritage assessment of huts on public land.
- Input to interpretation boards by Parks Vic to be placed at six existing huts and at sites of six huts destroyed in the 2003 bushfires.
- Roughrider's hut built at Omeo during the Pioneer Skills workshop, proving to be an excellent promotional tool for the Association.
- McNamara's hut, Buckety Plain, rebuilt over Easter and subsequent weekends, well used over winter by the Mittagundi Outdoor Education Centre.
- Dianne represented the Association at the reopening of the Geehi huts.
- Receipt of grant from Parks Vic for log books and log book holders.
- Quarterly Newsletters to members.
- New website developed by Amanda Penrose, and more changes planned for 2005.
- Huts database in the competent hands of Roger Sievwright - eleven hut maintenance areas identified, additional HMOs required and a conservation plan for each hut needs to be developed.

President Fiona gave her report highlighting many of these achievements and thanked the committee for their support over the preceding twelve months. Fiona would not be re-standing for President but intended to remain on the Committee and would also take on the role of HMO. The members present thanked Fiona and the committee for their work on behalf of the VHCHA by a round of applause.

The 2004/2005 VHCHA Committee members are:

President & Project Manager	Dianne Carroll
Vice President & HMO	Fiona Magnussen
Treasurer	Chris Downie
Secretary	David Oldfield
Membership	Rob France
Huts Maintenance Adviser	Noel Gough
Huts Maintenance Coordinator	Barry Hazeldine
Newsletter Editor	Paula Tomsett
Merchandising	Greg Love & Lee Magnussen

21ST EDITION OLD CATTLEMEN'S PORT CROCK

To celebrate 170 years of High Country cattle grazing, R L Buller & Son of Rutherglen have bottled a fine Tawny Port featuring the rebuilt Horsehair Hut for the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria. The cost is just \$35.00. Order forms are available from the Mountain Cattlemen's Association, contact Pauline Venn, P O Box 34 Benambra 3900, ph/fx 03 5159 9332 or email paulinevenn@bigpond.com.



HMOs HAVE BEEN BUSY!

Two successful work parties got down to Huts business on November 26 & 27.

1. **Area 4 & 5 HMO Mick Vanderzalm** held his first hut clean-up and maintenance weekend organised in conjunction with Wayne McCallum, Parks Vic Ranger Heyfield who has special responsibilities for the huts in that area. Seventeen members and friends assembled at an idyllic camp site by Shaw's Creek and the first task on Saturday was to dismantle the Wellington River Hut, described in the Butler Report as "given the recent construction date and consequent short association with High Plains grazing, this hut has no known significance". The corrugated iron walls showed the results of much handy work with axes and shot guns but the roofing iron was sound. Wayne thought it may take most of the day to do the job, but by morning smoko the iron had been loaded onto a trailer and the timber frame neatly stacked, nails removed, to be shifted next day. All recovered materials were taken to the Parks Vic depot at Surveyor's Creek for use on future hut projects such as Howitt Hut.

McMichael's Hut was cleaned up and rubbish removed as the party moved up to Kelly's Hut. The fence around the hut was rebuilt across an old track that is being revegetated.



The roof of the skillion was repaired by replacing a broken beam, a job that was finished on Sunday morning. A

whole trailer load of rubbish was collected in and around Kelly's hut and a stile was also installed to give easy access for walkers over the seven wire fence around the hut.

2. The North East Freemasons Task Force, under the direction of **Area 6 HMO Bob Johnstone**, conducted a clean-up and assessment of several huts in the Bogong area.

The Huts were Fitzgerald's, Kelly's, Johnston's, Edmondson's, Faithfull's, McNamara's, Pretty Valley, Cope Saddle, Wallace, Cope and Langford Gap. Bogong Rover Scout Hut was also checked out and a group visit was made to Wilkinson's site, which has been cleared and a re-vegetation project undertaken by Parks Victoria.

The working group was assisted by Enzo Brotto, Parks Vic Ranger Bright, who provided transport to some of the locations and assisted by carting away the many bags of rubbish.

All in all a successful weekend for the clean-up and the identification of maintenance requirements of the Huts visited.

PLANNING A MOVE OR CHANGE OF EMAIL ADDRESS?

If you are then please let our Secretary David Oldfield know as soon as possible so that we can update our records. See below for David's contact details.

CONTACTING US

VHCHA Phone: 0428 591 964

Visit our website: www.vhcha.org.au

Secretary David Oldfield:

Ph 03 9747 1411 Fx 03 9747 1418

Email dsoldf@netconnect.com.au

President Dianne Carroll

VHCHA Projects Manager

Email vhcha@dodo.com.au

Ph 02 6036 3949

VHCHA MERCHANDISE

Two Committee members, Greg Love and Lee Magnussen, have taken on the task of looking after the VHCHA merchandise – selling, re-stocking, displays at events, etc. The items incorporate the VHCHA logo and are all quality items.

For information about purchasing any of the items see our website, www.vhcha.org.au or phone 0428 591 964. Please note, we have limited sizes, and delivery of those not in stock may take up to six weeks.



Caps (baseball style)	\$15	One size
Short sleeved polo shirts	\$35	XS-3XL
Cotton long sleeved shirts	\$45	S-2XL
Vests (red or yellow lining)	\$55	XS-3XL



Seasons Greetings