



Echo from the Mountains

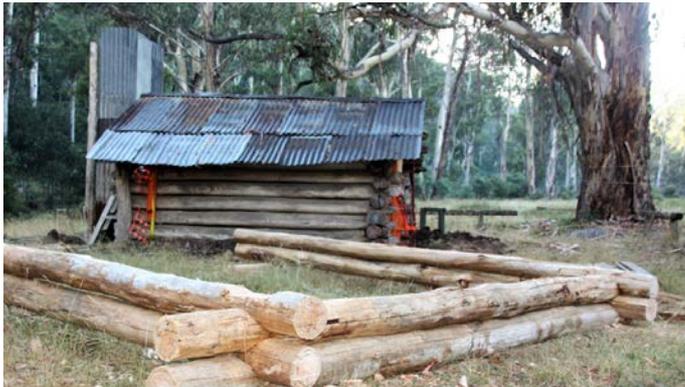
Victorian High Country Huts Association Inc - A0043804Y

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Bindaree Hut Gets a Lift

Rotten base logs of a hut usually means rebuilding a hut from the ground up. If left unattended those rotten logs will collapse and send the rest of the walls tumbling from above, Bindaree Hut was facing this uncertain demise if something was not done soon.

The Victorian High Country Huts and Parks Victoria have been strategically working on a plan to rectify this together. Stage 1: Rebuild the chimney - completed December 2016 and Stage 2: Raising Bindaree Hut - completed February 2018. Both stages included enthusiastic volunteers from the Mansfield Alpine Four Wheel Drive Club working closely with some of our passionate VHCHA members and PV Senior Ranger, Fleur Smith.



'From the ground up' now has a new meaning when it comes to the work done on Bindaree Hut this year with the whole structure being braced, clamped and raised by the Huts Association's new clamping equipment that was invented by our President, Allen Skilton.



With the hut secure and jacks in place, the hut was raised slowly under the watchful eye of Allen and the other appointed spotters on each corner. Only then could all the rotten logs be removed. New logs that had been prepared earlier by our clever Jimmy Findlay and Andy Hook with

their wonderful bush skills and old traditional tools, were carried over and put into place under the hut. The three new ground logs were inserted on a bed of screenings for drainage. As the hut was lowered back down into its original footprint at the end of the big day, I watched all the volunteers stand back together and look at the hut proudly knowing that they had just been involved in something wonderful and that the future of Bindaree Hut once again stands strong.



Huts Maintenance Officer Keith Leydon with his building skills was an amazing asset while supervising each part of the project and the team, he also helped others construct the new wood frame on the chimney, the new mantelpiece and build a new door. A huge thank you to everyone involved.

Report and photos: Sharyn Chambers

Group photo: Parks Victoria

Parks Victoria had some professional cameramen on site at Bindaree Hut and have released this YouTube video – see this link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gIFKc7Z5jkc>

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Wonangatta Mystery Centenary

VHCHA was invited by our good friends the “Friends of Wonnangatta Valley” and Parks Victoria to attend the “Centenary of the Wonnangatta Murders” event, held over the Labour Day Long Weekend March 2018. Stakeholders included the Mountain Cattlemen’s Association and Four Wheel Drive Victoria.

Our day started very early Saturday, departing from the Nug Nug camp ground, where we had assembled the night before. With utes and trailers loaded with display equipment and various tools, including the hut lifting equipment, we headed for Wonnangatta. We estimated a 2½ hour drive that ended taking closer to 3½ hours, we made it just in time.

On arrival, covered in dust, we went to work setting up marquees and display material whilst talking to the public, who were very interested in our past projects and the equipment we use. This interest continued through out the 2 days of the event.



New friends and some old friends of the association came in to chat and to take advantage of the shade. Families, groups and individuals; all good people ready talk and reminisce about rebuilds, work parties, and discuss new projects. Everyone enjoyed checking out our hut photos, reliving the times they have spent camping at some great locations, and asking about huts they have yet to visit.



Above 2 Photos: Wayne Peterken

We were busy! Estimates of between 600 and 1000 guests attended the weekend. They were entertained by people in period costumes, a talk on the still unsolved mystery given by a detective, historical talks around the homestead and gravesite, and a forum led by Geoff Burrowes, the film maker, and our HMO Keith Leydon wearing his Friends of Wonangatta hat. New facts were brought to light to exonerate previous suspects. There are still no answers to “whodunnit”?



Keith Leydon (L) and Geoff Burrowes (R)



Police patrolling for illicit liquor on site

Exhausted, dry and in need of nourishment and liquid refreshment, we camped up in the small valley behind the homestead site. We rested in Conglomerate Creek, cool water ran across some very tired feet. One hundred years earlier, just downstream was where Jim Barklay’s body was found, a sobering thought once we learnt more of the story surrounding the Mystery of Wonnangatta.



Looking along the Centenary Village

Above 3 photos : Keith & Diane Leydon

The following day, packed and heading out we came across the horse riders, walking in line as they headed for the Dry River and the trails that will lead them back to the higher plains, a fitting end to a great weekend.

Report: Allen Skilton & Sue Paterson

The Renewal of Ryans Spur Hut

At a site meeting with DELWP Mansfield last year it was decided the hut could be repaired and made safe for the many 4x4 and motor bike enthusiasts that travel in that region.

The hut's rather unique position of being placed almost in the middle of the track gives it some charm. On the 28th October 2017 members of MJOC and Geelong 4x4 club including the VHCHA HMO met at the hut to begin repair work. The first task was to trim back the trees and bushes that were growing close to the hut. Over time these trees and bushes could compromise the huts structure. The area was cleaned up, all the debris removed and then work began on the hut itself.



Before photos

The back wall window was removed and new palings were attached to the south wall. Palings were replaced on the other external walls where needed. The hut was on a lean and in danger of collapse. The walls were made square again using ratchet straps to straighten the east wall and then held firm using hoop iron and covered with a timber brace to hide the hoop iron. The hut was now square.



Ratchet straps squaring the hut

New floor boards were attached where necessary and most of the insulation material was removed from the roof as it was just hanging and had no use. The old bed frames, sink and bench were removed. The remaining windows, 2 on the west wall and one on the front north facing wall, were repaired. The window sashes were removed and the windows were covered with mini orb sheets. Letting in light but no rain etc. A new bench was made for the inside and a step was built to enter the hut. Previously the step up into and out of the hut was a little high and could have caused safety issues. The old bench that had been outside the front of the hut was in need of attention as well, as the posts holding the top on were rotting at their bases. New support posts were made using a very convenient log that was on the track. The door was rehung with new hinges and a door latch made to enable the hut door to be closed.



New floor boards and bunks removed

A big fire pit was built using just rocks as discussed with DELWP, in the hope this would encourage correct camp fire use. The track on the North side of the hut has always retained water making it a big hole. Trenches were made in the hope that any water would now drain away. The inside of the hut was swept clean and all the rubbish outside was collected and removed.

This working bee had been planned as a 2-day event, camping at the hut. With such a dedicated and experienced team all the work was completed in just one day, a massive effort.

Ryans Spur Hut Cont:

We had rain, hail, thunder and lightning and sun, and with another major storm brewing it was decided it was not safe or practical to stay on the mountain overnight. We packed up and headed down with wild weather all around us.



Airing our tyres up down at Big River got everyone absolutely saturated in the pouring rain. It was getting late, we were all getting hungry and so had a great dinner and some laughs at the Black Spur Inn before heading our separate ways.

A huge thank you to MJOC, Geelong 4x4 club (especially two members who also donated their trailer for use to transport all the timber and equipment). The team got in, got the work done and worked well together. The work that everyone put in was amazing and now this little timber cutters hut will stand tall for many years.

The transformation has been incredible.

Report and photos: Shez Tedford.



JB Hut - Past and Present

Many of the names that are so familiar to High Plains travellers come from a very original source. The stockmen Jim Brown and John Wells were led above the snowline from the east by an aboriginal named Larnie around 1851. They were in search of a faster route from Cobungra to Beechworth for the cattle markets. Brown and Wells pioneered the trails across the plains into the Kiewa Valley as well as blazing an alternative track across Mt. Hotham and back to their Station on the Cobungra. As they did they have provided us with many of the evocative names of the High Plains that endure today. Rocky Valley, Pretty Valley, Feathertop, The Fainters, The Razorback, Blowhard and Bucketty Plain were all given to us by Brown and Wells. Mt Hotham was Baldy to them. Before the high peaks were named for colonial administrators, their legacy in this unique part of Victoria is easily remembered as we use their words for the same landmarks that guided them.

JB Plain lies west of the alpine village of Dinner Plain and was named after Jim Brown. Once skiers from Mt Hotham could find the tree there where Jim carved his initials. Even now it's not hard to imagine these two tough, resilient stockmen enjoying an easy ride through the snowgrass and eucalypts that grace this beautiful part of the High Country.

Now the Great Alpine Road cuts through this country like a black rail, dividing it artificially and encouraging its users to fly past JB Plain, its hut and its quiet wonder. For those who stop and walk, or ski the trails, JB Plain has many rewards easily found.

The existing building is the second hut on the site named after Jim Brown and was located there in 1978. Placed there by Pooncarie Pty Ltd, as part of their grazing operations, it was originally a Forests Commission hut and possibly came from Swifts Saw Mill which might explain its cladding in vertical lining boards.



The hut has a gabled corrugated iron roof and skillion to the South side, the gutter on the North is under the eaves, so that the snow won't pull it off. There is a large brick chimney, typical of a late 60s design. The vertical boards are V jointed softwood over an unusual softwood frame, possibly oregon.

JB Hut Cont:

The cladding has a distinctive pinkish hue, the by product of fire retardant treatments done in the face of the bushfires of 2003 and beyond. The hut is lined with 150mm softwood boards, the floor is tongue and groove hardwood.

JB Hut has been well used over the decades, especially in the winter. Its proximity to the commercial ski fields has made it a popular overnight camp for the hardier traveller. Both Parks Victoria and VHCHA have been aware of some significant maintenance issues that were leading to real structural problems with the hut. A broken roof sheet was allowing water to rot the wall frame beneath, broken windows let the elements in, access to the hut was dicey with the absence of steps. On the weekend of the 3-4th of March, VHCHA staged a work party to set JB Hut right.



The work was all fairly straight forward and we only needed a relatively small crew. So a party of 12 took on the task, a party that included builders and professors, dentists and mechanics, wine merchants and glaziers. The work achieved was typically impressive and included:

- Reconstruct rotted stud frame of the skillion in hardwood timber
- Replace damaged roof sheet to the skillion roof
- Remove and replace a patched sheet on the main roof
- Flashing of chimney to roof sheets to prevent water ingress, something never previously done
- Flashing of the roof barge outside chimney
- Screwing down of skillion roof sheets, filling of holes with grey silicon and fixing of edge sheets at barges
- Refix wall sheets with recycled roof nails
- Reinforce and refix the skillion roof frame
- Reglazing of all windows with 6.38mm laminated glass including new glazing beads.
- Repair of Window shutters and replace missing boards
- Reconstruct shutter restraints to their original condition
- Repair of floor frame, relocation of stump for bearer support, re connection of floor joists and replacement of floor boards
- Minor repair of floor in skillion at doorway
- Construct entry steps to Building Code standard in hardwood, supported by steel plates concreted in place.
- Timber oiled on all surfaces.
- Clean out of built up ash in fireplace
- Fix metal sheet to match existing at base of west wall

In our planning we had discussed the window shutters and the intention to fix them in place to prevent a repeat of their deterioration. Our use of laminated glass means they no longer have a functional use but the shutters are a very defining part of the exterior. On the wall either side of the shutters were fixed blocks, the remnant of a shutter bar system designed to restrain the shutters, open or closed.

With the timber we had we decided to reinstate that system to return the building to a more original condition and secure the shutters against the elements and vandalism. We applied the method to the skillion opening as well, the difference being we have fixed those shutters closed. This secures the skillion room from rain and snow in the long term although it also closes out some light. We resolved the weatherproofing of the building should have precedence.

This is a significant change externally but seeing the shutter bars in place helps tell the story of the hut very effectively, evoking the extreme conditions these buildings endure, particularly in the winter. It's all fixed in place discreetly to look of its era and to be vandal proof.



Certainly we had a very productive weekend and we're confident our work will extend the facility and safety of the hut for some time into the future. There's more that could be done at JB Hut but for now the most pressing issues have been addressed. We owe a vote of thanks to Andy Channon and Julian Atherstone at Parks Victoria Bright for their support in purchasing all the materials required as well as financing the feeding of the crew. This has been yet another successful partnership of VHCHA and PV.



We were also supported on this job by Andrew and Ros Gormley of Wangaratta Motor Group who ensured our work party enjoyed the very best in accomodation in Dinner Plain. I know everyone enjoyed their time off site as much as on the job!

Report: Lachie Gales Photos: Graham Gales

Cleve Cole Hut - Stone by Stone

Cleve Cole Hut also known as Cleve Cole Memorial Hut was built in 1937 in a sheltered area below the tree line at the head of Camp Creek, Mt Bogong, at an altitude of 1760 metres. It is dedicated to the memory of Cleve Cole, a Victorian skiing pioneer who died after being trapped on Mount Bogong in the winter of 1936. In a virtual wilderness it is a magnificent refuge and a base in all seasons for walkers and skiers alike. The intention behind its construction by the Ski Club of Victoria was to reduce the ever-present dangers posed by Mt Bogong, the same dangers which over the years brought several peoples' lives to an untimely end. The hut's construction was started in February 1937 and it was usable by winter of the same year. In all, about 10 tonnes of building materials were moved up the mountain by packhorses. The hut is a solid stone building, with a kitchen, bunk/living areas and an outside toilet, the main part of the hut has two bench bunks with wide mats that might take five people on each level. Sleeping in your tent outside is usually a more comfortable option as some weekends 30 or more people can turn up and it gets very crowded. If a member is at the hut then that opens up the private club section with another 6 or 8 births at a squeeze but only for members or emergency. There are always a few native critters in the hut so leaving food anywhere they can get to is not advisable. It is recommended to hang your packs or at least your food bags off the wall. Water is from a spring and is piped into the hut.

Cleve Cole Hut was classified by the National Trust in 1988 and is maintained by Parks Victoria, the land managers of the Alpine National Park and the Mount Bogong Club, whose members have improved the hut and kept it in excellent condition since 1965. The Club, from its inception, has consisted of people who are totally committed to the care and maintenance of Mount Bogong, Cleve Cole Hut and Michell Refuge Hut. The Club finances the supply and packing-in of essential maintenance materials from subscriptions, donations and social fund-raising activities.

80 years of alpine weather has taken its toll on the rocks & mortar all over the Cleve Cole hut and heavy rain would permeate through the walls, running down the inside onto the floor. The entry stairs were crumbling and falling apart. Whilst many patch up jobs had been done over the years, it was time for a full refurbishment.



Gordon Pirie from Glen Wills and Jim Crebin from Mt Beauty, both life members of the Mount Bogong Club and valued members of VHCHA, took on the massive task. Gordon did the stairs and fireplace hearth, Jim did the repointing of external walls and with help from a few locals from both sides of the mountain. Over the previous two summers the stairs have been completely rebuilt and enlarged to sweep around to the end of the hut, blending in beautifully with the old stonework.

The old mortar has been painstakingly chipped out, and new waterproof mortar keyed into the old rock work with about half the walls now completed. Around 3 tonnes of sand and cement have been air lifted to Cleve Cole for this and the club is very grateful to PV and Ranger Kevin Cosgriff of Mt. Beauty for facilitating this. The next few summers should see the walls finished and it is also planned to re-lay the rock floor entrance. An annual work party happens every Anzac weekend with up to 40 volunteers from the Mt Bogong Club involved in the cleaning, painting and other jobs needed to ready the hut for Winter. Snow poles, signs, and walking tracks are repaired by the club on this weekend, as well as any repairs needed to Michell's Hut on the Eskdale spur.



New steps at Cleve Cole Hut Photos: M. Hogge

The hut is a vital resource for all, please take care of it and respect the 'huts code'. Most huts are public property, although originally privately built, so consider them to be your own and respect them.

Report Sharyn Chambers Reference material was gathered from members of the Mount Bogong Club, VHCHA, Victorian Alpine Huts Heritage Survey 2005 and the Mount Bogong Club website)

<http://www.mtbogongclub.org.au/index.php/cleve-cole->

Upcoming Major Works

Major restoration works at Copes Huts are continuing in April, lead by Lachie Gales with his team of Heritage Hut Builders and enthusiasts. This should be the last major work party at Cope Hut.

Wayne Peterken has been in intensive discussions with Geelong 4WD club and Parks Victoria and together will complete the work on McMichaels Hut prior to winter.

Wayne and Shez Tedford are in the planning phase for works on Kellys Hut. However this much larger project, including straightening the hut, with significant heritage planning required and will happen in Spring.

DELWP Help Huts At Fire Risk

The recent Tamboritha-Dingo Hill Track fire, 25kms north of Licola. has burned approximately 7,500 hectares of bush. In the area of risk lay two of our iconic huts; Kellys Hut and Guys Hut on Bryce's Plain.

DELWP Gippsland stepped in and wrapped both huts in protective fire resistant material to help protect these valuable heritage huts in case the predicted winds brought the fire in their direction.

Thankfully the huts experienced no direct threat, and with the fire contained, they were able to be unwrapped a week later.

We are very proud of the relationships that we have built with the Land Managers in Victoria, both DELWP and Parks Victoria, and our shared role of preserving these important pieces of Victorian history.



If you are planning on heading to the bush soon keep informed on Autumn preventative burns by checking DELWP and PV Facebook and Websites.



Kellys Hut, in the Alpine National Park about 4kms west of Arbuckle Junction. All wrapped up ahead of the predicted gusty winds on the 18th March.

Photos Courtesy of DELWP Gippsland

Your Donations Hard at Work

Donations from individuals and organisations make an enormous difference to our ability to work on huts. We are masters at recycling however there are always some materials that need to be procured and all donations go directly towards hut projects.

Recently the Committee voted unanimously to release \$2000 for the manufacture of 4 replacement window sashes and some loose glazing for repair of existing sashes for the ongoing restoration works on Cope Hut. Parks Victoria have funded a great deal in materials, catering and accommodation costs for the large group of volunteers that attended the last two work parties there and they will again be providing that logistical support in April for the final works. However, with PV's budgets running tight towards the end of Financial Year it is these occasions where your donations really make that difference.

Watch the next newsletter for photos of the new windows finishing the fabulous works being done at Cope Hut.

We gratefully acknowledge the following for their support:

John Anderson

Cherie Harrison

Dorothy Burton

Michael Halley-Frame

Peninsula Bushwalking Club

Thank You!

Welcome New Members

It is always a joy to welcome new members to our Association. We hope you enjoy your involvement in whichever form that may take, from getting down and dirty on a work party, or reading our newsletters and knowing that your membership fee goes towards preserving a part of our Alpine Heritage. A hearty welcome to:

William Notman

Andrew Jackson

Robyn Thiesse

Sandra Beltrame

Adam Pohls

Peter Kneen

Peter Hansen

Tony Middleditch

John Keys

Colin Hopwood

Simon Mitchell

Gaston Facci

Jo-Ann Brailey

Michael Halley-Frame

Rebecca Moyle

Martin Kilkenny

Allen Davis

Dallas Gravener

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<p>Area names are general geographic names only and do not reflect the extent or number of huts in each area.</p> <p>Existing Hut Maintenance Areas remain unchanged, however your committee has reviewed and re-defined all areas so that there is now a more even distribution of huts within each area.</p> <p>Changes to areas have been minor, however it may take some time for our hut maintenance officers to become familiar with changes. During the next few months we ask that all enquiries be directed firstly to our Hut Maintenance Coordinator at hmc@hutsvictoria.org.au, Wayne will respond or redirect enquiries to the appropriate area on your behalf.</p>	

Hut Maintenance Officers

We Have a Full Team!!

We welcome Wylie McGuinness on board as our newest HMO, taking on Area 8 - Barry Mountains. Wylie is a long standing member of VHCHA and has recently returned to the Eastern States after a number of years in WA and some extended travel across Australia.

It is a long time since we have had all our HMO positions filled. The huts have a fabulous team looking after them. Have they ever been in better hands? As always, our thanks go to all our hardworking HMOs!

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<https://www.facebook.com/hutsvic>

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Newsletter Contributions:

Please send stories preferably by email as a **"Word document" (doc or docx)**. When sending photographs please don't include them in the text document but attached them as a separate .jpg or .pdf file, to editor@hutsvictoria.org.au.