



Echo from the Mountains

Victorian High Country Huts Association Inc - A0043804Y

A Quarterly Newsletter Volume 17 Number 1 March 2019

Greetings From The President

This summer season has been hot and horrible, with fires and extreme temperatures all over the high country. After the loss of the Glenmore Huts we hope to dodge losing any more this season. As I write this column, Gippsland erupts into a new volley of bush fires.

With all these fires we have had some projects get postponed. This hasn't stopped the planning process and with some luck we'll see them restart as we get closer to the cooler months.

Behind the scenes, the work is continuing as the land managers assess the loss and plan for the future for the Glenmore Huts. We shall keep you up to date as time goes on. Keep an eye on your email and our website for any announcements.

Our HMOs are attending a Heritage Workshop later in March, here they will gain valuable exposure to traditional carpentry and the process involved when working at a heritage level. There will be a full report with pictures on this workshop in the next issue of the newsletter.

The February committee meeting was held at Tomahawk Hut situated northeast of Mansfield. After a few weeks of mid 40's for this region it was a welcome relief to sit amongst the tall timber at a cooler elevation for a few hours as we conducted the first committee meeting for 2019.



Committee meeting under the gums at Tomahawk Hut

Prior to this meeting we attended a familiarisation session with Parks Victoria and their "Park Connect" web-based application. PV introduced the committee and HMOs to their online volunteer system, our aim was to evaluate and suggest any additional mechanisms that would help run projects into the future. If you're interested in volunteering please sign up at

www.parkconnect.vic.gov.au Here you can find all sorts of activities run by different volunteer groups across all our parks here in Victoria. There are an ever-increasing number of projects from pulling weeds to counting wildlife; volunteering as guides to helping as camp hosts.

Some of you may have noticed links in a couple of articles to our new YouTube channel <http://bit.do/hutsvic> (or Google - Huts Victoria YouTube). A few members have been busy making short videos from projects they are involved in. Please subscribe, like, and click on the bell icon to get notification when a new video is posted.



The committee having lunch after the meeting

Stay safe everyone. We have a way to go before fire season is definitely over.

Regards

Allen Skilton

Photos: Wayne Peterken

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Lachie Gales Looks Back 10 Years

Last year we acknowledged the fabulous projects that Lachie Gales and his intrepid crew have completed on the occasion of their 10 Year Anniversary. At the time Lachie promised he would write us a review. I'm delighted to bring it to you here, with some more of his photos. Editor.

The 7kms between the Big River fire trail and Young's Hut is across undulating heath country that makes the Bogong High Plains a unique and treasured landscape. Following the snow poles across the plains wouldn't normally be so challenging, even at night. Around pole 267 I noticed that the laughter had faded. We were a couple of hours into the walk to Young's Hut which would usually have seen us with the packs off and tents set up. The darkness of night had wrapped fully around us, our arms and legs were tiring and the track ahead wasn't getting any easier. Only our head torches showed any brightness.

This walk was very different to any other trip to Young's. We came for a special purpose; a rescue, helping with urgent repairs to the much loved hut that sits on the southern edge of the High Plains. We were walking in at night to get a good start on the job ahead, making the most of the weekend. We were carrying everything we needed, partly in our overloaded backpacks but mostly in two large, overfull builders wheelbarrows.

And wheelbarrows across the High Plains makes everything a challenge.



Laughter came easily as we started. We had power tools, saw stools, an extension ladder, hardware for fixing and bracing, we even carried lead flashing! A huge roll of wall insulation was strapped hard on top of one of our barrows. Our packs, with camping gear, food and collections of hand tools and batteries, weighed 30kg. We'd started at dusk, shortcutting the track with the aim of picking it up at the legendary snow pole numbered 333. We soon remembered the alpine heath grew up through a carpet of basalt stones that made every step with the barrow an effort, bouncing rather than rolling across the untracked country. We put two blokes in harness out front while one lifted, balanced and pushed from behind. We laughed like school kids as we pushed on into what was clearly a folly. We could do this! What a story it will be to tell. Wheelbarrows across the High Plains, the legend wrote itself! The jibes and cheek of old mates making the whole insanity of it all seem possible.

After an hour off track we found pole 333 and breathed a collective sigh. Surely things would get easier now that we were on a well worn path, even in the complete darkness. That hope vanished quickly. The path that well shod feet negotiate easily was still a nightmare of blocking stones and uneven ground. The snow poles themselves became a magnet for our ladder strapped across the barrow top, the moonless night making it hard to judge the detour to skirt them. Time after time the barrow swung hard around as the ladder collected the pine pole, tipping and wrenching, jarring arms and nerves. The humour was gone as we pushed through our tiredness and looked for the track to start its descent to the gully where Young's quietly waited.



After 4 hours, we arrived relieved and tired and wiser for the experience. Laying in a down sleeping bag inside my tent I realised I knew a lot more about this patch of ground than I ever had before and even more about the limitations of wheelbarrows. I also had another story to add to our hut building tales.

In the 10 years of working on Alpine Huts we have completely rebuilt two huts from the ground up, spending weekend after weekend raising the buildings in homage to the originals. The first, Ropers hut, was built as a pole frame, clad in recycled corrugated iron, insulated with styrene insulation and clad again with galvanised iron. I revisited Ropers this month and it's in great condition, the victorian ash benches and floors giving great service and feature, just as we left it.

Weston's Hut had been razed to the ground by fire and the logistics of rebuilding were a real challenge. Located on Lake Spur that leads down to the West Kiewa River, vehicle access was impossible. All materials and most of the equipment had to be dropped in by helicopter. We drove across the High Plains to a basecamp at Tawonga Huts. From there our daily walk took us through the alpine heath and snow gums, down the spur to the little hut surrounded by the grey skeletons of the alpine ash.

In 2012 Parks Victoria (PV) rewarded us with an even bigger challenge; the restoration of the heritage listed Wallace's Hut. To many people, Wallace's is the single most important hut in Victoria. One of the most visited and photographed places in the Alpine National Park, it remains authentic in its construction and in its history. When we started work it was in dire condition, its structure collapsing with rot, emergency bracing detracting from peoples experience when they came to visit. PV demonstrated enormous faith in our abilities, technically and logistically. They recognised that we brought the necessary personal values to the table when dealing with such a sensitive piece of our heritage. Today visitors are

challenged to find the new amongst the old and our work has stood up to the exacting standards required in conserving these treasured buildings. That included recording the archaeology of the place, something we became adept at and adopted as a standard practice.

After Wallace's we had a brief hiatus but were soon back on the High Plains, starting with Edmonson's Hut. A new floor was required as well as repairs to the roof and significant landscaping to divert water and silt flowing through the sub floor area. We spent a weekend in March in unceasing high winds which carried a major storm cell over us. Fourteen of us wedged into the hut as the storm unleashed and the lightning came to ground. During the night the temperature dropped from a chill 6 degrees at 3 am to minus 2 by sunrise. Light rain became sleet and sometimes snow. Temperatures never rose above 2 degrees all day and our many layers of clothing stayed on for the duration. The diesel in our vehicles froze and we boiled gallons of water by campfire to get them pumping again.

At Mittagundi, we provided a boost to their maintenance program, giving some much needed care to the hut of founder Ian Stapleton.

Our initial impression of McNamara's Dinner Plain Hut was that we were too late to help. The building showed all of its 100 odd years, weathered by decades of snow, wind and rain. The bed logs, some half buried, appeared irretrievably rotten and the integrity of the log walls was dramatically compromised. Its remote location on a High Plains plateau between the Bundarra river in the north and the Cobungra river in the south made the logistics of staging work parties extraordinarily complex. Our planning and preparation paid off in every way including being able to have everyone who came along engaged in worthwhile work no matter what their age or their skill set was. To conserve McNamara's, some 33 individuals would contribute roughly 1,800 hours of labour.

JB Hut near Dinner Plain Village has been well used over the decades, especially in the winter. Its proximity to the ski fields has made it a popular overnight camp for the hardier traveller. 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. A party of 12 took on the task of halting the decline, a group that included builders and professors, dentists and mechanics, wine merchants and glaziers. The work achieved was typically impressive.

Cope Hut was special from the outset. Built in 1928, it was the first accommodation on the plains for people who were there only for the beauty of it all. Its construction marked a change in how Victorians valued the High Country. No longer just for cattle runs and trade routes across the Alps, the High Plains had become a place to connect with Nature in its purest forms, full of wild wonder and everlasting awe. Over three extended weekends we achieved an astonishing amount of work including some major structural reconstruction to floor and frame. We did it all in line with the Burra Charter principles and have returned the hut to a well worn version of the original.

There's so much more to tell but time and space constrains. Our trip to Young's, wheelbarrows and all, has become the stuff of legend for our crew but it's only one story in the many big experiences we've had rebuilding and restoring

these special buildings amongst the snow gums. We've endured snow storms that iced up beards, pushed on working through teeming rain, driven ourselves along tracks we'd only ever walked before and fallen trees for building timber in the lush forest below the snowline. We have woken in the morning to a blanket of snow, thick on the ground and in the trees, a quiet wonderland of white. We've worked remotely, many miles away from home, catered for 30 people under canvas & in contemporary kitchens, spent hours around the campfire drawing laughter from each other. We've walked to work in the mornings and followed the same track back to camp in the fading light of dusk.

At our last work party for Cope Hut, we celebrated our 10 years work amongst ourselves. In the comfortable surroundings of the Rover Chalet, we displayed photos of our adventures with a projector while different people described their own highlights. The depth of engagement amongst our growing crew was quite palpable, the pride people have in being involved in our work was very obvious. We capped the evening off with an unexpected and very welcome cake, ceremoniously sliced by the small group amongst us that have participated in every job since Ropers, way back in 2008.



L>R Jim Crebbin, Terry Turnbull, Lachie Gales, Dave Schirmer, Pat O'Donohue. Photo: Sharyn McGregor.

While the good works on the huts are the visible testament of our ten years work, our real achievement has been the camaraderie and care we've shared among old friends and new. The strength of the experiences we have created has us all returning time and again, our trips to the High Plains enriching all our lives as we venture above the snow line. With the strong support of PV, we seem set to continue to return and do the good works of the VHCHA and that is something I know we're looking forward to.

But I am told there's to be no more wheelbarrows.



60 Years Of History Burns

It's with a nostalgic yet heavy heart that I write this piece. Glenmore Huts which are located approximately 40kms North West of Buchan, East Gippsland, have been lost to the terrible fire still burning out of control (at time of writing) in the Timbarra District.

Glenmore's history is incredibly rich and although primarily logging huts they were utilised by many locals over the years for varied purposes. One of the most historically significant points to note about this group of huts is the number of buildings. It is extremely unusual that 4 out of the five huts remained in the disused coupe and these huts were the only complete logging camp remaining in the High Country. These are not to be confused with Turntables Huts which were built by the Roads Authority (although those huts were used for logging as well).

The following piece reads as a series of short anecdotes from the Archives of Albert Nelson (Albert Nelson Article: Volume 15, No. 2), Chris and Des Radford and Ned Fulton.

ANOTHER BLITZ BITES THE BANK

Whilst recollecting about Ford Blitzs and Albert's uncanny knack for surviving accidents, he tells of how he was fully loaded winding down the Timbarra road when his steering failed on the tiny sidecut and he sent it over the edge and down into the Buchan Valley. All that was damaged was 'A fence and my bloody nerves'. It was these Blitzs that were the source of a few laughs from the locals. It seemed everyone except the Roads Authority were aware that Albert was the proud owner of numerous (and also identical) Ford Blitz's and only one number plate.

THE BUCKLEYS BURNT MY BLOODY LOAD

Another chuckle-worthy anecdote Albert not-so-fondly recalled was the day one of the Buckley boys almost burnt his truck to the ground. Back in those days a fuel reduction burn off was simply a lighter stick dropped from a plane and ground crews would carefully control the blaze. However ground crews couldn't control where the stick landed and one of the Buckley Boys (Albert never mentioned which one) managed to drop it smack onto one of Alberts brand new W Model Kenworths which was incidentally fully loaded and crawling down the Glenmore Road on its way to the mill. As you can imagine the logs caught fire and poor Albie had to call for the ground crews to come and put his truck out!

THE EGGLIFTER FIREPLACE

The most North facing hut was primarily used and owned by Des Radford and Ned Fulton. These two names were synonymous with logging in East Gippsland and Ned, and Des' son Chris have many stories from their time at Glenmore. The brick fireplace that was attached was built by both Ned and Des. Ned explained

over a few beers an interesting tale of how they got all the way up to the huts with everything they needed to build a new bricks and mortar fireplace, only to discover once they arrived they had forgotten trowels. Not to be deterred from an important mission they used egglifters to trowel the mud on instead. That fireplace staunchly stood the test of time, surviving a happy 57 years!



Eggliifter Fireplace in 2015 Photo: Dean Dal Santo

THE PHONE TREE

There are quite a few stories from the Radford-Fulton archives that grace my audio recordings file, of which many include accidents in the bush. In a different era when OH&S was non-existent and neither were Sat-Phones, everyone made do with what they had. Accidents were nearly a sure thing, some not so serious but others sadly were. Glenmore however had an emergency help line in the form of a phone tree half way between Gillingal Station and Glenmore. This phone tree was exactly that. A rough n ready phone box bolted to a tree. The phone line connected to the phone at Gillingal Station and that was how you would call for help in the bush. Chris Radford recalls using the telephone lines as a map when he was a boy. He used it as a guide to shortcut his way on foot up through the scrub to Glenmore to meet his dad, Des.

RAIN AND A ONE-LOG-LOAD

If you head on past The Glenmore Huts and veer to the left up Nunnet road, you will spot an interesting flat spot on the left about half a kilometre up the road. This was where a semi-permanent log dump was located. In the dry months Chris Radford tells of how they would cart logs to the dump and store them so that cartage and mills could continue to operate, even in Winter. It was this time of year on a classic wet, wintery day that Albert Nelson skittled a one log loaded Ford Blitz off the Glenmore Road when his brakes failed. He tells of how he jumped out of the cab and landed in the mud while the Blitz forged on through the bush, gaining momentum, until it came to an abrupt stop when it hit a large stump. The front end of the Blitz wrapped around the tree stump but Albert recollects that they winched the

truck out 'banged a new radiator in and off she went, oh and we fixed the brakes too of course'.

THEIR FUTURE

The question you're all probably asking: What happens now? The future of the site is extremely positive. Although my team and I are still reeling from the loss of many hundreds of hours of volunteer manpower and the destruction of what was a unique piece of Australian logging history, We are determined to rise from the ashes, one step at a time. We will pull on our work boots and take up a wrecking bar and begin the mammoth job of site-cleanup. Then we will begin working alongside DEWLP to come up with a plan for the area's rehabilitation. This process is a lengthy one and although it has an extremely positive future it will still take some time to perfect a game-plan to make it happen.

Glenmore huts may be burnt and destroyed but their history lives on through the anecdotes of the people and families connected to these wonderful huts. The fate of the site is bright and positive steps towards its future have already been taken. My team and I will dust ourselves off and start from scratch, and we wouldn't have it any other way!

Article: Shannon Peters

4WD Show at Lardner Park

The Huts Association participated at the Victorian 4WD Show at Lardner Park on 17th February.

We were very pleased to see the great interest in the huts and our marquee was quite often packed. A lot of good discussions were had, and new contacts made. It was a perfect opportunity to catch up with other groups we work with closely such as Parks Victoria, 4WD Victoria and Friends of Wonnangatta Valley. Although the day got rather hot towards the end, we had a very successful event and we certainly will be back next year.

Thanks to the Land Rover Owners Club of Victoria for organising this world class venue and event.



Article & photo: Wayne Peterken

Getting Involved - A Guide For Members

A few members have asked how they can get involved with the projects and the hut work, or even help out "behind the scenes". Some of you even join up with that specific purpose in mind and find it unusual that upcoming projects and working bees are not advertised to the membership that often.

We are aware of this frustration so this article might explain. The main reasons behind it are as follows

- Much of the upcoming work cannot get promoted to the general membership or the public beforehand, for very good reason. You would understand that because most of our worksites are technically building sites, strict safety and site management controls are required of us by the land managers we work with (Parks Victoria and DELWP). We need to demonstrate we can manage people visiting and working on the site before approval is given to proceed.

- Many of the projects are organised with other groups and clubs, such as 4WD Clubs or Bushwalking Clubs. So for those projects, the onsite labour mostly comes from their membership. Also many of the Hut Maintenance Officers (HMOs) have their own trusted volunteer crews that they work with.

However there certainly are plenty of ways you can get involved in our work. People are always moving on, and the roles need to be filled and the work must carry on. It may just take a bit more persistence than other volunteer organisations. Here are a few suggestions.

- Stay a VHCHA member, that is the first pre-requisite.
- If you have an interest in working on huts in a specific area, email the HMO for that area and talk about it. Sometimes our HMOs are away or involved with other things (they are all volunteers too) so if you have no luck contacting them, email the Hut Maintenance Coordinator (HMC). You will find all the HMO email contacts in our newsletter and on our website.
- We are always looking for people willing to take on the caretaker roles for a hut. If you know of a specific hut that has no caretaker, and would like to take on that role, contact the HMO for that area, or the HMC.
- Our HMOs do occasionally move on for various reasons, and we need to fill those positions, so if you express an interest in that role we can keep your name on file.
- A lot of 4WD Clubs and bushwalking clubs are already caretakers of huts. If you are interested in joining one of these clubs, perhaps choose one that is already involved in hut work. We can give you a list of those clubs if you email the HMC.
- We can let you know when our committee meetings are and you can come along and meet us and talk to us. We can explain how we all got involved. There are always opportunities to work on the Committee or on one of the supporting roles. If you are interested in coming to one, email our President or Secretary.

Where Did It Begin For You?

We continue our series of introductions to let our members see how we all fell in love with the High Country and the many Huts that we now take great pride in helping to preserve.

I am very excited that this month we have our first member contribution. Thanks very much Graeme.

Graeme Munro - VHCHA Member and bushwalker

About 30 odd years ago a friend I occasionally walked with suggested a 2 day walk to the Bogong High Plains. This was new country for us.

On a foggy Saturday morning in May we left the Loch carpark following the Alpine Walking Track.

Our first stop was Derrick Hut, after pausing for photos we continued on.

Some time later we arrived at Dibbins Hut at the head of the Cobungra River. We lunched there, and took more photos. Departing some time later we began the climb to the high plains, up to the snow pole junction at pole No. 333. From here we descended to the Tawonga Huts where we spent the night eating and chatting to father and son cattlemen from Dederang.

On Sunday morning we headed back up to Pole No. 333 to pick up the route down the Lake Spur to Westons Hut. We took more photos.

We continued down the spur to Blairs Hut on the west branch of the Kiewa River. Following lunch at Blairs, we followed the 4WD road to the huts and battery workings of the Red Robin gold mine where we met Ken Harris, the owner/operator of the mine at the time. As he was going up to the mine to pick up a load of dirt, we hitched a ride with him as far as the mine then we walked over Mt Loch and back to the car park.

2 years later we repeated the walk, this time with no ride. We walked up Machinery Spur, total distance walked was 37 kilometres.

My next purchase was a copy of "Cattlemen and Huts of the High Plains" by Harry Stephenson. Thus the love of huts began for me. Over the last 30 years I have continued to visit huts both on foot and by 4WD. Thank you to the Huts Association. Keep up the good work.



Graeme Munro (r) and his son James. Photo: G. Munro

Wayne Peterken – Hut Maintenance Coordinator and HMO for Area 3.

We have always enjoyed camping in the Australian bush. In 2000 I bought my first 4WD, with the intention of going that "little bit further", and joined a 4WD Club to learn how to use it properly. While on those trips we got our first taste of the High Country Huts. That sparked my interest to find out more about them.

Around 2008, I owned a Landrover, and saw some posts from members of the online Australian Landrovers forum (AULRO) wanting to do something about the old huts that were falling down. People in the group knew of Stones Outstation Hut in the Eildon National Park that desperately needed work, so that was the first project I was involved with. I greatly enjoyed the experience, the feeling of doing something worthwhile while out in the bush, and the camaraderie that develops.

I volunteered to become HMO for Area 7 Howqua, then Area 5 Baw Baw, which saw my first major project with the restoration of Store Point Hut, along with the Pajero 4WD Club. I was Secretary for a while, took on the Hut Maintenance Coordinator Role. After a short interval as HMO for Area 3 Licola, I am now back in the HMC role.

I've worked on various large projects including the total rebuilds of Ritchie's, King, Bluff and Mt Terrible Huts, after destruction by fire, and some major conservation work on Howitt, Guys Bryces Plain, currently Kelly's Holmes Plain Hut, and numerous other projects.

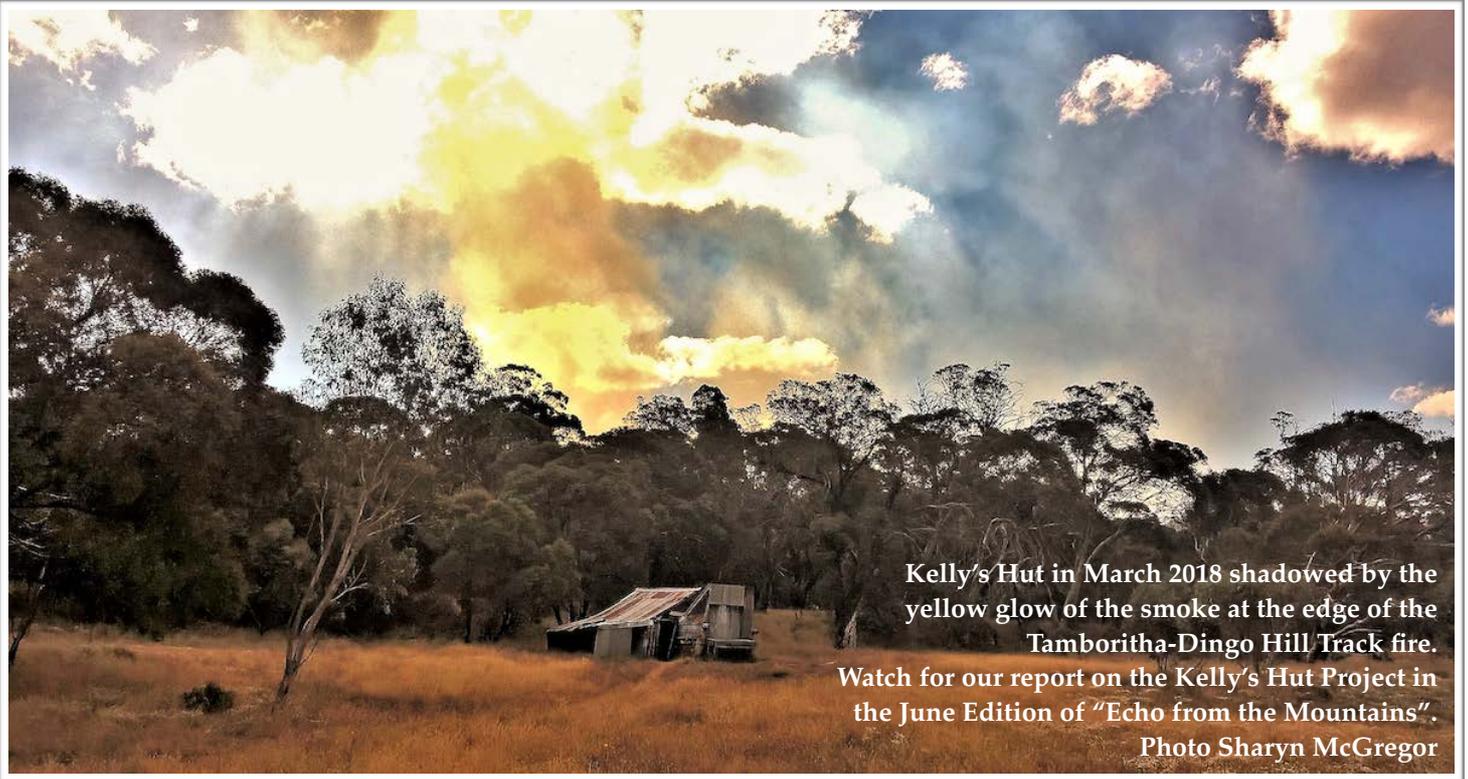
The huts are special, they seethe with history that you can feel when you stand inside them. When we leave, they still stand out there in the bush as silent sentinels to all that have lived, worked from and used them as refuge or shelter. No two huts are the same. To me they almost have a human quality. But they will eventually succumb to fire, storm, rot, or vandalism. That's where we come in.

The Huts Association too is a unique, special group. It brings together people of all walks of life and skillsets, but with the same passion and affection for the huts and the bush. If you have that passion and are a "self starter" it might just be good for you too.



Wayne Peterken - 2nd from right at Stones Outstation

I'm interested in where it all started for you. Which was the first hut you visited? Do you have a favourite? I would love to hear from more of our members. Please drop me an email to editor@hutsvictoria.org.au



Kelly's Hut in March 2018 shadowed by the yellow glow of the smoke at the edge of the Tamboritha-Dingo Hill Track fire. Watch for our report on the Kelly's Hut Project in the June Edition of "Echo from the Mountains".
Photo Sharyn McGregor

New Videos on YouTube

It is still only a fledgling but we now have a YouTube Channel where we are able to share our videos. <http://bit.do/hutsvic> or search YouTube for "Huts Victoria".

We are excited to have our first two videos uploaded, featuring the time-lapse of the Gooleys Creek Hut works <https://youtu.be/uXQ37Kgn39c>

and the recent works done, and plans for Kelly's Hut

<https://youtu.be/Xlq66agemCA>



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.

We gratefully acknowledge the following for their support:

Paul McKenzie

John Anderson

Colin Ritchie

Jerry Gregg

Matt De Belin

Kellie Doering

Doug Gray

Have Your Say On Forests

Future of our Forests – Online Survey

All Victorians are invited to answer an online survey and provide their views on how forest management can be improved, and what you would like from forests into the future.

The survey is open until 31 March 2019 on the Engage Victoria website:

<https://engage.vic.gov.au/future-of-our-forests>

200 HUTS

200 ADVENTURES

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:

Murray Valley Bushwalkers

John Griffin

Terra Roam

Ken Leigh

Peter Hasell

HMO Contact List

Huts Maintenance Coordinator	
hmc@hutsvictoria.org.au	
Area	Huts Maintenance Officer
1 East Gippsland	hmo1@hutsvictoria.com
2 Dargo	hmo2@hutsvictoria.org.au
3 Licola	hmo3@hutsvictoria.org.au
4 Baw Baw	hmo4@hutsvictoria.org.au
5 Marysville	hmo5@hutsvictoria.org.au
6 Buller	hmo6@hutsvictoria.org.au
7 Howqua	hmo7@hutsvictoria.org.au
8 Barry Mountains	hmo8@hutsvictoria.org.au
9 Hotham	hmo9@hutsvictoria.org.au
10 Bogong	hmo10@hutsvictoria.org.au
11 Dartmouth	hmo11@hutsvictoria.org.au
12 Davies Plain	hmo12@hutsvictoria.org.au
<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>	

FACEBOOK FOLLOWING

If you're on Facebook and not yet following us, you're missing out!
Or page is currently being enjoyed by over 40,000 people!

The albums continue to fill with photos old and new, contributed from far and wide.

You can have your photos added to the galleries too!

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



Contacting us

Visit our **WEB site** : WWW.hutsvictoria.org.au

Post: PO Box 784 Mansfield 3724

Secretary: Tim Davies

Email: secretary@hutsvictoria.org.au

President: Allen Skilton

Email president@hutsvictoria.org.au

Phone: 0428 681 816

Vice President: Stephen Renfree

Email: vp@hutsvictoria.org.au

Treasurer: Andrew Higgs

Email: treasurer@hutsvictoria.org.au

Membership Secretary Janet Skilton

Email: membership@hutsvictoria.org.au

Hut Maintenance Coordinator: Wayne Peterken

Email: HMC@hutsvictoria.org.au

Newsletter Editor: Sue Paterson

Phone: 0412 820 120

Email editor@hutsvictoria.org.au

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.