



Echo from the Mountains

Victorian High Country Huts Association Inc – A0043804Y

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The long winter is finally over in the mountains, which means that Christmas festivities and the holiday period are rapidly approaching.

The first ten months of our association's life has been very hectic for the inaugural committee, who have contributed a huge amount to the setting up of the association.

Over the next few months, due to all this background work, you will all have the opportunity to volunteer for hut maintenance activities and hopefully, some rebuilding projects.

The Australia Day weekend in Omeo Valley is shaping up to be a very memorable and worthwhile event, so mark your diaries now to be part of a weekend of fun, learning and celebration.

I would like to thank each of you for caring enough about our alpine huts to become part of the association and wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

Fiona Magnussen

YOUR NEW COMMITTEE

The new committee as elected at the AGM with subsequent approved appointments is:

President	Fiona Magnussen
VP & Project Manager	Dianne Carroll
Secretary	David Oldfield
Treasurer	Chris Downie
Membership Secretary	Robert France
Huts Maintenance Group Leader	Barry Hazeldine
Huts Maintenance Advisor	Noel Gough
Newsletter Editor	Paula Tomsett
Committee Member	Greg Love

FIRST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Over fifty members, friends and representatives from Parks Victoria attended our first Annual General Meeting at Crystal Creek Resort, Dinner Plain on 25 October 2003.

The President, Fiona Magnussen, described the formation of the Association as a result of the bushfires and loss of 58 huts in the high country of Victoria.

Significant achievements included gaining 153 members, rebuilding Horsehair Hut, meetings with Parks Victoria in Melbourne and Bright to facilitate replacement of some burnt huts, and 13 huts approved for rebuilding.

The liaison with Kosciusko Huts Association (KHA) has been excellent and we support their vision of a Federation of Mountain Hut Associations of Australia.

A new logo had been designed, a survey of members conducted on issues related to hut rebuilding and maintenance and the database of huts on public land currently stood at 230 huts.

Dianne Carroll, Vice President, described the tremendous level of support that we had received which had enabled the Association to achieve so much in so short a time. A Pioneer Skills Workshop was planned for the Australia Day weekend in 2004 to commemorate the first anniversary of the bushfires and to help to pass on the craftsman skills to a new generation.

Rob France reported on membership activities, a new brochure to promote the Association had been produced. Communications with members through newsletters had been good and it was hoped to use electronic methods in the future where possible.

David Oldfield reported that procedures had been put in place to enable the routine work to be done so that others could get on with the important work of maintaining and rebuilding huts.

Chris Downie reported that he had taken over as treasurer in September after Eric Godward stepped down due to pressure of work.

All the Special Resolutions, which had been circulated in advance to all members, to change the statement of purposes, to amend the model rules and to fix membership fees were carried unanimously. *(We have subsequently been notified by Consumer Affairs Victoria that all the changes to our purposes and model rules have been approved.)*

Deidre Shaw, as a representative of the KHA, said how pleased they were to see the formation of VHCHA. She presented two galvanised log book holders to mark the occasion, which were accepted with thanks by Fiona Magnussen.

The President announced that she had investigated the possibility of having the next AGM at Marysville, possibly in the second weekend in November 2004. It was resolved that the committee be authorised to continue to negotiate to secure a suitable venue for the 2004 AGM.



HUTS ACTIVITIES WORKSHOP

Held after the AGM and introduced by Rob France who outlined the program for the afternoon. Dianne Carroll launched "Huts in the Victorian Alps" by Klaus Hueneke.



Dianne addressing some of the crowd at the workshop.

Dianne Carroll has set up a Huts Database with 58 burnt huts, 213 sites and 230 huts. It is proposed to arrange workshops on caretaking huts in each region so that there would be a smaller focus for each area. There is a need to work with existing caretaker groups to check which huts are not being maintained.

The meetings with Parks Victoria in Melbourne and Bright were discussed. It had been agreed to rebuild 13 huts. The plans for each hut were shown. Interpretation signs at sites of burnt huts were to go ahead with \$30,000 allocated by Parks Victoria. There were many huts on DSE land as well as those in the Alpine National Park (ANP).

Gill Anderson from **Parks Victoria** talked about the management framework and said how much Parks Victoria needs willing workers to maintain huts. There are 85 huts in the ANP. The process and procedures for work on huts was described.

The management structure and who would be responsible for huts in each management unit were described. For Bogong it would be Enzo Brotto, Andrew Markwick for King Howqua, Wayne McCallum for Wonnangatta Moroka and Annie Leschen for East Alps. All these officers were present.

For huts on DSE land Ted Stabb is the contact for the North East region and Rob Stewart for Gippsland.

Many walking tracks are still closed so there would be no access until the tracks had been cleared and declared safe. Check Parks Victoria's website for details of which tracks have been opened or contact their local Ranger of the area you intend to visit

WORK PARTY EXPERIENCES

Noel Gough described his experiences as HMO for the Geehi region with KHA. A good relationship between the HMO and the National Park staff was essential.

Face to face contact makes all the difference. Work has to be done in replication style. Public safety now needs to be considered, the existing fabric needs to be retained but also made safe.

An engineer is now required to sign off on the proposed work to say that it is structurally sound. All work should be organised in writing and this provides a historical record of work on the hut.

Noel proposed that HMOs should form a group within the committee. Watty paints supplied all paints required by KHA free of charge. It was agreed that Noel should liaise with Watty on behalf of VHCHA.

HUTS MAINTENANCE REGIONS

A number of willing people volunteered and have been appointed as Huts Maintenance Officers however as the final list of regions and the huts therein will not be finalised in time for this newsletter for information about huts in your areas contact the Huts Maintenance Group Leader, Barry Hazeldine on:

Phone 02 6020 8595 OR 0407 109 950
Email BARRY.G.H@bigpond.com.au

CONTACTING US

For information about the VHCHA contact Secretary David Oldfield on Ph 03 9747 1411 Fx 03 9747 1418 of email dsoldf@netconnect.com.au or check out the website

www.vhcha.org.au

NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS

Contact Newsletter Editor Paula Tomsett
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WILLING & WELCOME PARTNERS

From Parks Victoria Summary Annual Report 2002/03, People, Community and Cultural Heritage – "We continued to protect, maintain and interpret European heritage sites within the parks estate. The summer wildfires damaged or destroyed a number of historic huts and other sites in the Alpine National Park. But the fires also exposed historic goldmines and settlements, yielding valuable information about the people who lived and worked there. Parks Victoria is supporting the efforts of the Victorian High Country Huts Association, formed to preserve this special heritage and coordinate efforts to restore or repair selected huts."





Project Managers Report

The last ten months have flown and things are progressing. Although it looks slow, there has been a mountain of organising happening behind the scenes.

I attended two meetings with Parks Victoria (PV) and Department of Sustainability & Environment (DSE) on Friday, 15th of December. The meeting was to establish the next step to take as far as managing the huts throughout the region and to work with both authorities to prepare our 'caretakers handbook'.

The **CARETAKERS HANDBOOK** will be available for distribution at the Pioneer Workshop, and through your Huts Maintenance Officer.

Many people have made contact in regards to '**CARETAKING**' and we are working as quickly as possible to implement the structure. As some of the huts were previously looked after by organisations, we need to ensure that we don't double up on any one hut. Although some may not get the hut of their choice, each hut is as important as the next.

In the initial stages we need each hut assessed; this task will be simplified with the Assessment Sheet included in the Handbook. The sooner we can accomplish this, the sooner we can get works underway.

PV & DSE has offered their staff to assist in the process, and historical huts will eventually have a full conservation study done on them.

Many of the huts are nearing a state of disrepair, and as there are so many out there, we need to include their current status in a database, prioritise works and implement urgent repairs are done this season.

FIRE REDUCTION - Ideally this season we need each hut and site cleaned up – with another summer fire season knocking on our door, we need to ensure that we never have the devastation that we are currently trying to recover from again.

So if you have a spare weekend, and would like to make an assessment prior to the workshop, please contact your regional HMO for an Assessment Sheet.

The other meeting was in regard to the huts that are to be rebuilt. Currently Federation, Michell and the Mt Benambra Fire Tower are in the planning stages. The Red Robin is happening with the assistance of Heritage Vic.

Buckwong is also being reconstructed by the licencees. The others are currently on hold. The reasoning for this is due to the Cattle Leases. Each is being assessed, and if any are allowed to continue to graze, their hut can be rebuilt. Those that are restricted for the next two years will not be allowed. This decision came through the Alpine Advisory Committee, the Alpine NP managing committee – not Parks Vic. We should know the outcome by the beginning of January.

The other part of this meeting was to have a deputation with PV and present our case for the importance of the rebuilding of McNamara's Hut at Buckety Plain.

I invited Mittagundi to attend and I was very pleased with the entire meeting. A recommendation is going to the Director of Parks and we now await the outcome.

I believe that the VHCHA is working well with the authorities, and our patience is paying off.

We have a huge task ahead, and if the planning and construction is done right in the initial stages it is going to be a lot simpler to implement in the long term.

In the meantime, we have arranged the **PIONEER WORKSHOP SKILLS** – we have 3 skilled Pioneer Craftsmen, who will be educating people in Pioneering skills – this is limited to 40 people, so if you are interested, please register with me. Others are invited to watch. There will be other demonstrations throughout the weekend (see program).

The weekend will also include a demonstration of a full hut rebuild – from nothing to a finished hut – all to occur in three days.

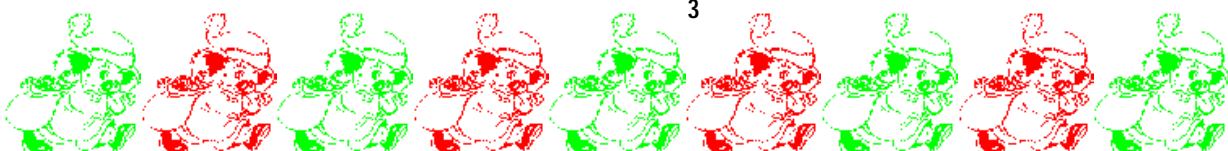
Camping is available at the Omeo Angling Club, which has toilet and shower facilities. There is a variety of accommodation palaces in Omeo from Backpackers to Motels, also a Caravan Park.

From the Omeo Township you will travel towards Mitta Mitta on the Omeo Highway – it is about 8 km from town. Signs will be erected to guide you to the camping site and the Workshop Site.

THERE WILL BE NO CAMPING AT THE WORKSHOP SITE.

If you have any queries or would like to register for the workshop please contact me:

Dianne Carroll
VHCHA: Vice President,
Publicity Officer and Projects Manager
Ph: 02-6036 3949
Email: highcountryheritage@dodo.com.au



VICTORIAN HIGH COUNTRY HUTS ASSOCIATION

presents

INAUGURAL BUSHFIRE AUSTRALIA DAY REVIVAL WEEKEND

THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY SINCE THE BUSHFIRES

**AUSTRALIA DAY WEEKEND
24th 25th & 26th January 2004**

***UNITE WITH THE PEOPLE OF BUSHFIRE EFFECTED AREAS
GIVE THEM THE OPPORTUNITY TO SAY THANKS
LEARN SOME UNIQUE SKILLS OR SHARE STORIES AND MEMORIES***

PIONEER SKILLS WORKSHOP

24th 25th & 26th January 2004 – 8.30 a.m. Sat & Mon - 5 a.m. Sun

HUT BUILDING, BROAD AXING, ADZING, SHINGLE SPLITTING, MORTISING, WHIP MAKING & CRACKING, BLACKSMITHING, HOT & COLD HORSE SHOEING, BUSH POETRY, STONE MASONRY, POST & RAIL CONSTRUCTION, CAMP OVEN COOKING AND MORE

Omeo Valley Rd – Omeo Valley

BUSH RECOVERY PICNIC

24th January 2004 – starts at 11 a.m.

GET-TOGETHER PICNIC – BYO EVERYTHING

BUSHFIRE PHOTO DISPLAY

24th 25th & 26th January 2004

PHOTOGRAPHIC & ART DISPLAY OF THE 2003 BUSHFIRES

OLD TIME HIGH COUNTRY DANCE

24th January 2004 – starts at 8 p.m.

DUST THOSE FROCKS AND GET ON THE DANCIN' SHOES FOR THE OLD TIME FAVOURITES

Benambra Hall, Benambra

"UP THE CREEK" RIDE ON LAWN MOWER RACES

25th January 2004 - starts at 11 a.m.

WATCH THE QUICKEST HIGH COUNTRY RIDE ON LAWN MOWERS CUT THEIR STUFF

Tambo Valley Race Course – Swifts Creek

"AUSSIE EVE" - LIVE BAND

25th January 2004 - starts at 9 p.m.

Live band will entertain you till the wee hours of the morning

Albion Hotel – Swifts Creek

visit the website for more details

www.vhcha.org.au

