

Corop News

"The Call of the Brolga"

Issue No. 10 – December 2003.

10th Edition!

Welcome to our tenth edition of Corop News! Given this milestone we thought it apt to reflect on how the newsletter has developed and grown since it began and remember some of the highlights as evident by the enthusiastic responses of our readers.

In March 2001, Carmel Pearson, Pat Kennedy and Katrina Hall met to begin planning the first edition of Corop News. This initiative was largely in response to the formation of the Corop Community Action Group (CCAG) in September 2000. It was felt that we needed some form of communication with the broader community about the CCAG's activities and the opportunity to share other information relevant to people in Corop. The first issue was released in May that year, as a 4-page newsletter, thanks to the production assistance of Bill Barkla and Rochester Secondary College.

This first edition established the essence of what the newsletter strives to be about:

- reporting on the actions of the local CCAG and other local community events or developments,
- presenting a local family profile (past or present);
- presenting articles of historical interest;
- having articles of environmental interest and relevance to the Corop community.

Articles in this first edition included the Freeman family history, one on sustainability in tomato growing, and various reports on the CCAG activities, Campaspe Heritage Advisory service, South Campaspe Rural Women's Group, Corop Cemetery, and the Back to Elmore float exhibited by Corop children.

By the second edition, in August 2001, we had the expertise of Christina Atley on board to assist with graphics. The name of the newsletter was determined by the CCAG based on the suggestions put forward, so it became confirmed as Corop News – Call of the Brolga. The brolga logo was added, courtesy of Christina with the format further developed to an eight-page newsletter. The feature articles from this edition included the Obituary of Clive Speer and accompanying history of the Speer family, profile of the Atley family, an article by Matthew Herring on the brolgas of Corop, Frogs of the Corop Lakes and reports from Rosemount vineyards and Lake Cooper Estate.

Highlights of edition number three in November 2001 were a centrespread focus on the history of sport in Corop, the Johnson family history and Clark family profile, and several people contributing articles on the bird-life in the Corop area, including Matthew Herring, Ron Grinter, Jane Furphy and Marc Bellette.

In addition to the regular CCAG update, issue number four (March 2002) included information on the Cornella Local Area Plan, profile of Bernie Kerlin and the Kerlin families in Corop, past and present history of the Corop store, an article on Men's Health, a vineyard update, the success of the Cornella Creek bus trip and Clean Up Australia Day.

By our fifth edition in June 2002 the CCAG was celebrating the \$50 000 Envirofund grant from Regional Solutions funding. Dr Sharman Stone presented this grant in a special ceremony held at the Ski Clubrooms. The CCAG participated in a grape harvest fundraising event at Gerry McCarg's Lake Cooper Estate Vineyard. The focus this edition was on Lake Cooper with a sketch of the lake as the centrespread. People's memories of Lake Cooper seemed particularly poignant as the lake had all but completely dried up. However, the upside was also noted as several rare and beautiful native plants were found to have emerged from the dry lakebed, including the purple flowering Downy Swainson-pea. The Corop Cemetery reported on a grant of \$1500, and the Campaspe Run tourist attraction in Elmore was promoted.

Edition number six, in October 2002, proved to be very popular with over 300 copies now in circulation. The lift-out streetscape sketch of Corop around 1908-1920, as remembered by Reg Mara, and superbly drawn by Christina Atley provoked unprecedented response. Many of the older Corop residents remarked that the buildings were as they remembered them. Reg Mara's recollections of life in Corop and the people who lived here during his childhood and his personal family history added life to the edition.

Other articles included the history of the Furphy family; CCAG reporting on the progress of the walking track at Lake Cooper; photo of the Corop Gun Club Hare shoot in 1892; articles on the effect of the drought; Cornella Local Area Plan's Federal Landcare Award and a report on the play by the local theatre group, Gobarup Players.

By Christmas 2002, the drought had really set in. Edition number seven featured photos of the sand lunettes forming on the dry lakebed of Lake Cooper. The CCAG began to look at ideas for a town feature. The Wileman family history was presented, along with a centrespread on the geology and origins of Mount Burramboot and the Mount Camel range. There were delightful poems from Charlie Furphy written during the Second World War and a report on the first RMIT Student visit program.

In 2003, due to other commitments, the editorial team decided to move from quarterly newsletters to three times a year, with edition number eight coming out in April. We lost the artistic talents of Christina Atley, but were fortunate to have Katherine Weeks willing to take over the role of graphics and illustrations. (Katherine is a past Corop resident who currently teaches Art at Rochester Secondary College). Bill Barkla extended his role from helping with the production of the newsletter to becoming a more active part of the editorial team, adding a male perspective (he also ensures the ladies are well fed with tea and scones served at any meeting). Many people commented on the interesting range of articles including: Farmers Markets, patchwork quilting, Corop's Classic Machinery, Stevens family history, The Inside Story of the Branson's vineyard and cellar door opening at Mt Burramboot Estate, Clean Up Australia Day and the Grape picking fundraiser.

The highlight of edition number nine in August 2003 were the reports and photos from the Leisurely Lunch on Lake Cooper, held on the dry lakebed on Anzac day. As many of you will be aware, this was a great success and continues to be a talking point both locally and further afield. Extracts of Clem Furphy's excellent address as MC on the day were included, along with a centrespread of photos. Past activities and events on Lake Cooper were contributed, including Miss Lake Cooper, the Lake Cooper Water Ski club, New Years Sports day and duck shooting on the lake. A very interesting history of the Lucas family was presented, along with reports on Shenanigan's Wake (Gobarup Players Theatre Group), developments at the Corop Cemetery, and the newly erected public toilet in Corop.

The editorial team of Corop News feels that it has come a long way since its inception. We produced 60 copies for our first newsletter, focusing on the Corop mail run; however, we now aim to produce between 250 and 300 copies as the newsletter has become an item of interest around the surrounding district and with many copies being mailed off to past residents living throughout Victoria and interstate.

Contributions are always sought and welcome. Emails to Pat Kennedy at kenagri@macmedia.com.au allow for easier collation on a central computer. Formatting, editing and then reproduction by photocopying at Rochester Secondary College – provides a cheap form of multiple copies compared to printing.

Many of our readers now recognise that the Corop News is an integral and vital component to our small community and make donations. Any correspondence or donations (by cheque to the Corop Community Action Group) should be mailed to PO Box 15, Corop 3559.

Bold Bobby takes out Corop Cup

Held on Melbourne Cup day at the Victorian Ski Association headquarters on Lake Cooper, the Corop Cup field of contenders were a little different from the usual equine variety. Instead of horses six local identities were put through their paces. These included Bold Bobby, Classy Carmel, Instant Ian, Perfect Pat, Kat-reen-ah, and Tiny Tim.

MC Bill Barkla provided details on the form of each contender prior to the running of the Cup, which delighted the crowd, as did the commentary throughout the race. Although Perfect Pat was the hot favourite, Bold Bobby stole the show in his usual form! Other race sweeps and competitions were held throughout the afternoon.

Race-goers attended from around the district including Stanhope, Colbinabbin, Elmore and Rochester. A sumptuous luncheon was provided, courtesy of the Corop Community Action Group, while the Ski Club operated the bar at the clubrooms. Many ladies came dressed in 'fashion of the field' attire, with the judges deciding that Robyn Ryan was the most outstanding contestant. Robyn took home a bottle of wine donated by Tim Orr from the Ormon Hill vineyard.

Over 60 people attended with much enthusiasm generated to continue this as a regular event. The CCAG plans to run it every second year.

The CCAG wishes to thank all those who attended and contributed to making it a successful and enjoyable day.

Watson Family History

Twenty-five year old Timothy Watson is the fourth generation of Watson's to farm 'Valley View' in the Parish of North Corop and district of Bonn.

Joseph Watson, Tim's great, great grandfather, came to Australia with his father in the mid 1850s and they settled in Rochester, where his father had a bakery on the corner of Bridge Road and High Street. Joseph then selected land in Timmering before settling in Nanneella at Gladfield Farm.

Joseph married Christina Reid in 1876 and they had 10 children, the majority who married and lived in the Rochester district.

Son, George, remained at Gladfield Farm, whilst another son, James L Watson, purchased 160 acres of land on the Bonn School Road, when he married Catherine Johnstone in 1906.

James named his farm 'Valley View' as it is on the last rise of the Mt Camel Range.

James and Catherine had 6 children – Arthur, Catherine (Kitty), Gordon, Millicent, Marion and James (Jim). Arthur and Jim farmed with their father until his death in 1969.

When Jim's sons, Graeme and Ian, left school they too came home to farm. They grew up with family names of Corop such as the Speer and Johnson boys.

Over the years the Watson's have purchased land, as it came on the market. Two well known Corop family names to have land pass on to the Watson's, were the Burley's and Mustey's. Part of the Corop Village Settlement is also now part of the Watson farm.

On the Southern end of the Settlement the Bonn State School No. 2191 was opened on 16th September 1879 with an average attendance of 26 pupils out of the net enrolment of 40. The school closed on 14th May 1942. Many of the teachers of the school boarded with the Watson family. Some of the families to attend the school were—Watson, Mustey, Bourke, Reid, Ayson, Bickley, Barwood, Buckle, Davis Cook, Tehan, Juffs, Watt, Williams, Munro, Keenan.

In what is now known as 'The Bush Paddock' there is the mark of the 'Cobb and Co' route from Echuca to Corop.

Because James lived on the northern boundary of Corop it was more convenient for him to commute to Rochester. He and Kate were very community minded people. James was an active member of the Presbyterian Church and served nearly 30 years as a member of the Board of Management; he was a staunch supporter of the Rochester Agricultural and Pastoral Association, for which his service earned him a Life Governorship. He was also President of the Association. He joined the Rochester Volunteer Fire Brigade in 1939 and was an active member for 37 years.

Other organisations to be served, were the I.O.O.F. and Masonic Lodges, the Cemetery Trust, Wheat and Wool Grower, Dads and Mums Association and the Soldiers' Land Settlement Committee.

Kate was ever ready to do her bit towards the welfare of all—her service to the community included the Presbyterian Church, Red Cross, C.W.A. (foundation member), Ladies Show Committee Women's Auxiliaries of the R.S.L. and Fathers' Association and supported James in his many public duties.

In their younger days, Arthur and Gordon Watson, formed the 'Merrymakers' Orchestra and often played at the dances in the Corop Hall. Nearly all the Watson family members are musically inclined, either playing an instrument

or vocally. Arthur was the organist at the Rochester Presbyterian Church for more than fifty years.

All have continued their parents' community mindedness and taken on roles in the V.F.F., Wheat growers Association, Masonic Lodge, Rochester Agricultural and Pastoral Association, Cemetery Trust, Fire Brigade to name a few.

Gordon and Jim both served in New Guinea during World War Two. On their return home they both continued farming. Arthur was required to stay at home to work the farm and to entertain the local citizens with his music.

Watson's played for the Bonn Tennis team against the Corop Tennis team in the Rochester and District Tennis Association.

Jim married Joyce Prigg and they built their family home across the paddock from James and Catherine. Their family is Graeme, Glenys, Margaret, Diane and Ian. Graeme and Ian continue to run the farm and Tim has now joined them.

Graeme married Heather and they have Catherine, Timothy and Brooke. Community interest continues to run in the family as does the music and singing. Graeme is currently the president of the Echuca Musical Theatre Company has been secretary of the Rochester Fire Brigade for 15 years and was named Rochester Citizen of the year for 1999. Heather played tennis for the Corop Tennis Team in the late 1970s / early 1980s.

Volunteer Small Equipment Grants 2003

The Corop Community Action Group has been successful in gaining \$1964 from the Volunteer Small Equipment Grants 2003 funded by the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services.

The Group nominated the following items in the application:

- filing cabinet and suspension files
- cassette note-taker
- digital camera
- three Tree planters
- two spray units
- spades and shovels

The equipment is to be used for:

- Collection, organization and storage of information
- production of the local newsletter
- collection of oral histories
- development and maintenance of revegetation projects.

Corop Legends - Wally & Grandma Brown

This tale was told by Bob Bartlett. He had his audience highly amused as he told this story at a recent social engagement.

This is what I can remember about the Brown family who lived in Corop. The house was about 100m west of the Corop store. There was Wally, his wife, whom we knew as Grandma, their daughter Elma and of course Great Grandma. Wally used to own the property from the Midland Highway to the lake on the right hand side. They used to milk a few cows and run some sheep. Wally had a jersey bull, which used to wait at the lake end when we were riding to school and would follow us down the fence as far as he could, roaring and digging up the dirt with its feet. The same thing would happen on our way home. I hated that bull.

They used kerosene lanterns until the end. Great Grandma lived to over 103 but the lucky escape for her was when the back duals came off a semi-trailer and took off in a south-easterly direction, crossing the service road, getting airborne after going through the table drain, jumped the fence,

went through two small doors - exactly the same size as the duals - into the bedroom, knocked the end off the iron posted bed, hit the wall and brought down grandfather's photo and broke the glass. Grandma Brown slept through the whole ordeal. She was 102 at the time.

Pyrography the saga (or how I got conned)

It started with a trip to the Epsom market with Lyn and Rebeka. At the market, Brian Day was demonstrating the ancient art of pyrography, pokerwork, or burning designs/pictures on wood. Lyn said to Rebeka, "You could do that, you're very good at drawing." Brian, who is there to get people to learn drawing and pyrography, supplied Lyn with all the information, what to bring to classes etc.

Lyn was more excited about the classes than Rebeka. Rebeka said, "I'll go if you come with me." I wasn't too excited about going but to get Rebeka started, I agreed to go with her. The first lesson went well. The next week, Rebeka had a doctor's appointment and couldn't go, so I went on my own. The first lesson was the only one Rebeka went to. I am still going two and half years later, although lessons are now held at the Bendigo wood turners' clubrooms and up to twenty-five people are doing pyrography on Saturdays or Tuesdays.

The first drawing I did was the log cabin - a lesson on perspectives - the Corop store in the mid sixties was next. This was followed by the Store in the late 1800s. By this time I was getting tired of perspectives so I had a go at a portrait. Jack Watts was the Bendigo town clerk. Brian had a photograph of him working at Men In Sheds, which I used for his portrait. When Jack's portrait was finished, I started on the Barnadown church. It was in the set-out stage when the Strathfieldsaye CFA Art show came up. I entered the two stores and Jack's portrait in the show. Brian was demonstrating there and took the Barnadown church along as a work in progress sample. He marked every brick on that drawing, then said burn every one of them. Well, if I never see another red brick church again it will be too soon! The Barnadown church was sold at the Bendigo Woodies Easter Fair last year, to a man whose grandparents were the first people married in the church.

I started the Bullocky and then the Cocky, and then I started the Swaggie. While it was in progress I started to do the portrait of Bernie Kerlin. It seemed to take forever to get the check shirt right, so check shirts and red bricks are in the same class! About this time, as a member of the Wood Turners of the Goulburn Valley, I was invited to demonstrate at their wood show. From there I got the commission to do The Bride, the wife of one of the Shepparton members. As a result of the demonstration at Shepparton, I have been invited to demonstrate at Horsham Wood Show and at the St Arnaud Wood Show.

Around the time of the Horsham show, I did two works for Tom Dutton of his great grandmother and father. Bernie is now finished and hanging on the wall in the shop. The Swaggie needs a frame made and he also can go on the wall. Bernie and the Swaggie will be entered in the Bendigo Pyrographers end of year competition. I am now working on a commission from the Horsham show.

Pyrography is not as hard as it looks. Once the outline and detail is done, you just colour in with the hot nib. It does take time and patience.

Drawings cost between \$125-\$200, depending on size and detail. They take between 40 to 80 hours to do, so I am not going to get rich doing it! I forgot about the portrait of Geoff Wright. He was pleased as punch with it and called it his woodenhead in his Weekly Times column. It is hanging in

his daughter's home. The two Corop Stores, Log Cabin, Bullocky, Cocky, Jack and Bernie are hanging in the Corop Store if you wish to see them.

Alan (Toby) Edwards.

(Late news: the Bullocky and Bernie won second and third place at the Bendigo wood turners pyrography show.)
Congratulations Alan

RMIT Student Visit

On Thursday evening, the 18th of November, over eighty people attended the Victorian Water Skiing Association Clubrooms at Corop. They sat down to a community dinner where they were treated to an entertaining and educational presentation by 22 RMIT students, studying the Community Links Program as part of their university course. The South Campaspe Rural Group and Yaso Nadarajah from RMIT University worked together to bring these students to our area. The students were an enthusiastic and delightful group of young people, who came from many different countries and represented both city and country living.

Eleven students worked in the local schools, namely Rushworth P-12, St Mary's Rushworth, Colbinabbin, Stanhope, Girgarre, St Joseph's Rochester, Rochester Secondary and Rochester Primary. These students participated in school life by working with students in daily activities and teaching them about their culture, language, interests and life at university, through specially prepared activities.

Eleven students worked with local farmers representing the dairy, deer or pig industries. The task they had to carry out was to come up with answers to the following:-

"How can we positively promote the Dairy, Deer & Pig industries both locally & globally?"

The students spent Wednesday getting background information on the industry they were studying. Colleen Huntington organised the dairy program, where the students visited The Golden Cow – Dairy Education centre in Tongala, Breakfast Milk in Kyabram and Bonlac in Stanhope.

Glenda Smith co-ordinated the deer program. The students saw deer up close and learnt about how they are farmed. They also listened to Bob Bennett talk about the industry and its promotion locally and overseas.

Cevii Fox Aburrow drove the students to Nathalia to visit David & Sally Miles piggery, where they learnt about pigs and their care. They were especially taken by their special diets. David spoke to them about pork promotion and its importance.

The dinner at Corop provided an opportunity for the students to present their findings. The students all felt the internet could be used to promote the various industries, reaching the international audience by using other languages on the web site. New products such as one planned by Breakfast Milk could also be advertised this way. The students studying the deer industry felt that the low production costs for deer and the leanness of the meat should be selling points in Australia, as well as overseas.

Information about raising pigs could be shared among pig farmers to make sure everyone is up to speed with the latest ideas. Retailers and the public, need to be educated to prepare and present pork in new and exciting ways to achieve its best potential and to make consumers aware of the low fat qualities.

It is worth mentioning that many of the students were studying Public Relations and delivered their presentations in

an extremely professional manner. Maybe our rural industries could look to employing students like these in the future to further promote our industries.

The students who worked in the schools had many wonderful memories of their time with the school children. Many marvelled at the freedom and spaciousness of the country way of life. One student from China was taken by the "family life" he experienced after coming from a one child culture. The school students were interested in the differences in their lives and asked many probing questions.

On Friday the students and their host families enjoyed a barbecue at Sue & Brendan Barlow's before they headed back to Melbourne by bus.

This program gives students an opportunity to experience family life in the country. Many of the International students throughout their time studying in Australia have never had the opportunity to mix with Australian families outside the city. Also, students brought up in cities and towns in Australia, don't always get the chance to visit farms. They thoroughly enjoyed this experience – one keen milker was discovered. On the other hand our families experienced meeting a great group of young people, both from overseas and other parts of Victoria. They were able to share information about their country and way of life, so we now have a greater understanding of each others lives. We now also have a greater understanding of the dairy, deer & pig industries

Thank you from the Rural Group, to all those who made the visit successful by giving your time generously. Also to the participating schools for hosting the students. Radio Australia was present on Thursday night so there may be a program on the visit in the future.

Red Knead Dotterel

You may be interested to hear of a reckless Red Knead Dotterel that has made a nest amongst the gravel stones on the edge of Grinter road. It doesn't seem to appreciate the danger of passing tractors, trucks, milk tankers, farm machinery and cars. When I found the nest with two eggs in it, they were within 100 millimetres of the traffic marks. Anyone who did not keep to the straight and narrow would have smashed the eggs.

Having decided to educate this bird I shifted the eggs 100 mm nearer to safety. This stupid bird promptly shifted them to the original spot. Not to be outdone, they were put back to my site. Second time lucky, as a third egg appeared. The nest was still in a dangerous place and being an optimist I shifted the nest to the edge of the road, about another 300 mm. She now sits on her three eggs, slightly elevated from road level. She challenges passing vehicles by raising both wings in defiance!

Ron Grinter

The Revegetation of Mt Camel range

This article has been written by Peter Hamilton who was one of the first landholders to begin the important task of revegetating the denuded slopes of the Mt Camel range. Over time many landholders have taken up the challenge making a significant difference to the landscape.

The history of the tree plantation on my property at Chinaman's Bend, along the Mt Camel Range at Toolleen, commenced in the late 1970s. At this time, large salt patches began to appear on what is known as the midslopes of the range. To explain, you have high recharge on the top of the range, the midslopes are halfway down, then discharge at the bottom. In this case, the discharge had moved up to the midslopes – meaning the salt was surfacing higher up the range.

With advice from the Agricultural Department and trees supplied, I went ahead and planted the first 20 acres in 1987, planting on 8 metre grids, or 160 trees per acre. Two busloads of Girl Guides came from Bendigo one weekend and helped with the planting. The next year, another 20 acres were planted – this time a bus load of students from the Bendigo High School put in a day helping. Twenty acres were planted each year thereon, until the whole 100 acres were completed.

In 1991 – the last year of planting – prisoners from the Dhurringile Prison helped for two days (a very interesting two days). All the trees are natives of the district and include white, red and grey box, she-oaks and wattles. None of the trees were watered in, as it was too steep to cart water up the slopes. Most years I had about a 70% strike rate, so would have to replant the following year. Overall about 20 000 trees were planted and roughly 13 000 survived. Since the trees were planted the salt areas have disappeared and I would like to think planting the trees has been the reason but it may be because of the six dry winters we have experienced as well – maybe a bit of both.

Grape vines have been planted below the tree line and as the grapes are capable of using large amounts of water; this will also help keep the salt at bay. Much wildlife has returned to the top of the hill, including a family of eagles, which we haven't seen for years. I have had a lot of satisfaction from planting the trees and hope in time all will benefit.

Peter Hamilton

News from the Local Area Plan

The most fundamental thing to come out of the Local Area Plan (LAP) group has been the realisation among the Cornella Creek people of the 'connectedness' of everything that needs to be done.

We now have a corps of active members spread from Mt Ida to Lake Cooper, whose influence will hopefully set an example and show the way to those we have yet to engage.

For the past year, we have been working on refining our planning for future works projects in the upper catchment area around Lady's Pass to Mt Ida – where most of the worst erosion and steepest country is located. This is where the majority of our salt comes from... and the silt and gravels that block the creek and foul the lake. So it's our top priority at present.

Most people will be aware that over the last two years, we received several substantial waterways grants and that significant creek fencing and tree planting was done along the middle reaches of the main creeks, from Colbinabbin to the south. Around \$250 000 has been spent.

This year, we have won two grants from Federal Envirofunds. They are to assist in the survey and mapping of

the southern end and to increase communication efforts with the local landowners, who are mostly life-style people, living in Melbourne.

The survey has been done and the project mapping is nearly complete, which will enable us to break the jobs up into 'digestible size lumps' and to target priority areas.

The next big effort is to discover which landowners are willing to work with us and to get the funds. The partnership process of landowners, local, state and federal government, together with philanthropic organisations, demands thorough planning and execution of works.

We've been lucky to have Doug Small appointed part-time co-ordinator. Doug brings valuable experience to our group and is funded five hours per week by Landcare. It makes all the difference to small groups like ours to have professional back-up and input that keeps things moving and better organised between meetings.

He really is the lubricant that keeps all the cogs nicely oiled; he knows the lingo, puts the bids together; and curbs the extravagance of some of our more exuberant members. Best of all, he does the paperwork and the reports that 'the system' loves so much.

Water quality monitoring in the creek is another plus for this year. We have four observation points from the bush to the lake and have involved the kids at Colbinabbin Primary School. We have only just started and were pleased to see the improved quality when it stopped raining; now we're waiting for the next flood.

We are looking forward to 2004...hopefully the worst of those dry seasons is behind us...and we are ready now to start the 'fix program' with help from John Hicks, Gerry Thiele, LAP members and local landowners.

John Avar.

Stiff Groundsel

Stiff Groundsel (*senecio behrianus*) was found in Carag Carag in May 1991. It was presumed to be extinct, as it had not been seen since 1925. It was found on an area of land - approximately one hectare - close to Gilmore and Wallenjoe Roads. This was thought to be the only population of this plant in Australia.

Since then it was discovered on our property in five different places, in an area of thirty hectares and also on a neighbouring property. Stock will graze this plant to ground level; our dairy heifers thought it was worth a try. It was also found on Grinter Road and Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) have since fenced three areas on this road for ongoing protection.

The plant grows to a height of 25 cm. Flowers are yellow and have five petals. It can flower during most of the year. DSE collected seed in 1991 and grew some plants but could not grow it from cuttings. (*Most of this information came from a leaflet sent to me and compiled by Noel Schoknecht and Paul Foreman 1997*)

Ron Grinter

Drought Proofing Corop

Frank Brown, a former resident of Corop and a local farmer of many years experience, has written his ideas on drought proofing the area. He provides many wise words.

When Hunters first came to the Corop area in the early 1900s, they had a couple of thousand acres of crop in around Elmore. They had twenty reapers and binders, which were used before the invention of grain harvesters.

The teams would come to Corop to harvest at Sunnyside. There would be 3000 acres, mostly oats, for horse feed. A thrasher and steam traction engine thrashed the grain from the sheaves, to make straw. They built large stacks of straw which were stored in the paddocks at Sunnyside – a row of straw stacks in each paddock.

In a dry year stock were fed from these straw stacks, which were expertly built so they were rain proof. Some straw was baled and sold to Melbourne horse owners. The stacks lasted for many years in the paddocks and were a valuable source of feed in a dry year. This ensured a permanent supply of feed.

Today's idea is to spray the straw with malt or urea. The practice of building straw stacks is no longer in place, although interest was shown in the recent drought, as farmers recognise the value of straw for fodder.

The thrasher and traction engine were contracted out around the district. In this way a purposeful attempt was made to drought proof an area. A team of 20 men were required to operate the traction engine and thrasher

The straw was also used to roof stables and sheds, which were re-topped each 4-5 years. Cane grass grown at Lake Cooper was also used for thatched roofs.

Wheat grass and strawberry clover are two grass crops which will grow on salty soil and so can also be used as a drought proofing strategy.

Local farms should be secured

Alan McLean, CEO of Crime Stoppers Victoria, recently addressed the South Campaspe Rural Group. He referred to many aspects of crime in rural areas. This article is an edited version of his remarks which related to farm security. In future editions we hope to feature his edited comments in relation to livestock theft, and the use of country properties to strip stolen cars or to produce illegal drugs.

Show me a farm and I'll show you a virtual smorgasbord of pumps, compressors, power tools, fuel, farm bikes, utility vehicles, trailers, chainsaws, sprays and implements.

The items are valuable and they are often unattended and unsecured. No wonder they are attractive and easy targets for those who practice the ten-finger discount.

Theft from country properties has, for far too long, been regarded as a hazard of the farming job. It has been just so convenient to leave the key in the ignition, the shed unlocked. Once a special feature of rural life, and a subject of mild boasting "We never lock the house or the shed," the carefree attitude is fast disappearing. A national study has conservatively estimated the annual loss per farm, across Australia, at \$2690. Check. That's per farm in 2000-2001!

This burden need not be on that scale. Consider this checklist.

1. Are valuable farm tools stored under lock and key?
2. Are portable items chained and padlocked to immovable objects like shed uprights?
3. Are dog kennels located near sheds where valuable equipment and tools are stored?
4. Are farm bike and vehicle keys stored away from those vehicles?

5. Is fuel storage secure?
6. When leaving your property for an extended period, do you advise neighbouring farmers and ask them to call in if passing by?
7. If you see a strange vehicle near your property, do you make a note, including the registration number?
8. Have your valuable tools been marked with special pen, or engraved with your name or specific identification such as a driving licence?
9. Are you active in a local Neighbourhood Watch group?
10. If you have noted a theft from your property, did you report it, possibly helping police detect any pattern of thieves "working over" a district?
11. Have you investigated new video technology which may enable camera placement near farm gate, machinery shed, or other strategic point?
12. Have you assessed your property from the point of a would-be thief?

If you cannot answer a confident "yes" to all dozen questions, your property is a potential target. Unless you operate with an attitude of constant vigilance in all aspects of farming security, it is probably just a matter of time before your turn comes as a victim.

Congratulations Janet Webb

Campaspe News editor and reporter Janet Webb recently was awarded the prestigious ??? for her photo of our Leisurely Lunch on the Lake. The photo that she entered was the same one that adorns the front cover of the Rochester and District Telephone Directory. During the presentation in Melbourne the photo was on a large screen at a gathering of journalists and dignitaries from around the state.

Congratulations Janet on your award and thank you for your ongoing support of Corop.

Fire Season

Recently the Shire of Campaspe has provided the township of Corop with quite substantial fire breaks. The Corop CFA are continually upgrading their skills and are vigilant when it comes to fire hazards and risks. Our local area now has fire restrictions in force and with the incredible amount of vegetation growth this year, we are facing a potentially extreme danger period over the next few months.

We have already experienced several damaging fire outbreaks within the region and in recent years we have seen that with extreme conditions a fire is hard to stop and brings further but avoidable, hardship. It is everyone's responsibility to ensure risks are minimised and we believe it is fitting that a few reminders are outlined.

The following is a summary of precautions and further information can be obtained from the CFA or by visiting the website, www.cfa.vic.gov.au

Welding, grinding, soldering and cutting

These tasks can be undertaken throughout the fire season, providing several precautions are in place but they CANNOT be done on a day of Total Fire Ban without a special permit. Precautions include: shields, a fireproof bin for off-cuts, a cleared of wetted down radius of 1.5m and adequate water of fire extinguisher.

Burning off

Only with a permit and when you comply with the specified precautions. NO burning off or fires are allowed on days of Total Fire Ban.

Operation of machinery such as tractors, harvest equipment & chainsaws

These can be used throughout the period but engines must be fitted with a spark arrester that meets Australian Standards; there must be NO mechanical defects that would potentially cause sparks or extreme heat; and sufficient water or an extinguisher must be on hand. If possible, avoid operating machinery on days of Total Fire Ban.

Barbeques

Barbeques may be used but only by an adult; the area must be clear of combustible material for a radius of 3m; the wind speed is less than 10kph; and there is 10l water on hand and a hose connected to a water tap. On days of Total Fire Ban you may only use a gas or electric BBQ that is part of an existing structure or within 20m of a house and in either situation; the above precautions are in place.

Please be responsible with your fire prevention this summer as we may all have to pay for one little mistake.

Best Wishes for Christmas & the New Year!

This newsletter was compiled by Carmel Pearson, Pat Kennedy, Katrina Hall, Bill Barkla; graphics by Katherine Weeks. Thanks to everyone who contributed articles and to the Rochester Secondary College for their support in reproducing this newsletter.