

CHANGE OF CAMP Thursday 18th July 2013

Our time at the Mulgowie camp has come to an end. Today 20 volunteers packed up the camp and transported it to the showgrounds at Laidley. The move was necessary due to excessive over booking of the Mulgowie hall on the weekends for the next 4 weeks. This is because the Mulgowie hall committee have got over greedy double booking their hall and expecting us to move out to the fire shed to allow others to use the hall at our expense. With Blaze aid paying over \$1000 a week in hall and van site hire something had to give and with the Laidley Agriculture show over last weekend we took the opportunity to relocate there and halve our rental costs. Yes, Blazeaid gets charged for the pleasure of helping the surrounding outlying Flood affected area farms.

Enough of the negative stuff, we are here to help the flood affected farmers and to see the smiles of appreciation on the faces of those we have helped makes it all worthwhile. No amount of money can replicate the humble gratitude of these people and the stories they have to tell. Some can supply the necessary materials that are required to rebuild their fences, some cannot. For those unable to supply any or all of the materials they require, there are a number of benefactors who have donated supplies or monies for us to purchase and supply on their behalf. We are given a heads up from a number of government and community representatives as to the individual's circumstances and their ability to finance their requirements. ABC radio's MACCA is the Patron of Blazeaid and regularly on his Sunday morning program advises on the needs of the affected and regularly asks for donations of materials and or monetary kind to help them. This is a very effective way for Blazeaid to assist.

A number of able farmers and community members have made monetary donations to Blazeaid. Some have given donations of food and produce for the camp to use. To date Blazeaid in this camp has spent over \$25,000 in Laidley and the surrounding areas for the daily running of the camp, this does not include any of the materials supplied for fencing or any purchases by the volunteers in town or the surrounding areas so you can see that not only are we helping with the fencing recovery but also helping with financial benefits' to the rural town.

The Lockier Valleys are a group of narrow valleys surrounded by the Great Dividing Range. The countryside is of a rich alluvial soil, suitable for the growing of all types of fresh vegetables for the Australian and export markets. This soil has an average depth of 20 metres and has one of the richest fertile substructures in the world. These valleys also support a large grazing beef industry.

To say that Nature along with water is the most destructive force in the world is an understatement, you have to see its effects to believe what this force can do. The past floods in our King and Ovens Valleys river systems are only a fraction of what has occurred to the Mt Silvia, Junction View Valley areas. To see how the top soil has been ripped away for hundreds and hundreds of metres wide across the valley floor exposing large football size polished river stones is something to be seen. Properties along this valley have lost hundreds of acres of top soil and have redefined their boundaries.

The latest stats to date are 135 volunteers through camp with 1384 volunteer days in the field. We now have 75 registered properties on our books with 60 completed and 5 currently being worked on. We have cleared 21.7 Klms of damaged fence and rebuilt 23.9 Klms making a total of 44.6 Klms.

The weather here at the moment is very mild, even for the areas standards with the nights averaging 10 degrees and with a day time average high of 22. Most weeks there has been a day lost to rain with a few isolated showers occasionally on others. From what I've been told about the weather at home I think we will stay here a bit longer.

Sunday 21st July 2013

Sue and I are invited by George and Brenda Day, whose farm we have rebuilt a number of flood damaged fences on, to have a look at a house that is built on a property that they lease. It is an all timber constructed open air dwelling that has many upright local tree posts holding up the walls and roof. Timber lines all the external and internal walls as well as internal lining for the roof. There is only one totally enclosed room which is used as a kitchen and living area and all other rooms including the bedrooms have open exposure to the elements. There is a 2 inch poly water pipe running 2Ks from upstream diverting water to the dwelling driving a water driven generator supplying 12 volt power to the house. As well as the generation of power, this water can be diverted for domestic use and for the irrigation of the vegetable garden and stock watering, before being discharged back into the creek downstream. This structure was constructed with a lot of artistic imagination and well before its time as it was built in the early 60's. The couple that built this marvellous building have been deceased for many years and their adult children now have it on the market along with the 2000 acres it is on for \$1.2 million.



Graham and George Day inspecting the open house.

Wednesday 23rd July 2013

Today we took a drive to the other Blazaid Camp at Junction View, 2 valleys to the north of us. As the crow fly's its only approx 25 Klms away but by road we have to travel 65Klms through Gatton to get there. The valley starts about 8 Klms out of Gatton heading in a westerly direction following the Lockyer Creek. Another 15 Klms up the valley and you can start to see the evidence of the floods. The closer you get to Junction View the more the devastation becomes apparent. This camp has been going now for 4 weeks and the effort that the volunteers have put in so far has to be seen to be believed. The strainer post holes have to be dug by backhoe as they are straight into large river gravel as all the top soil has been washed away, the steel star pickets are driven in by a mechanical wacker packer and any split posts that are to be used are generally driven by mechanical means including the use of an excavator using its bucket to ram the posts straight in. Again you really have to see it to believe what the flood waters can do.



Riverbed in the Junction View area

A drive into the hill country away from the creek and river flat area and you are in another world with little evidence of the torrential rains in January that caused the devastating floods. Locals say that they received up to 800 millimetres of rain in the high country in 24 hours.

This afternoon 5 new volunteers, 2 couples and a single male arrived in camp to work for various periods of time of up to 2 weeks and we are losing 2 couples, 1 Wednesday and the other on Thursday after 3 and 1 week durations respectively.

There has been a general turnover of volunteers over the past 3 months that our camp has been going. The average stay is 10 days with 4 long termers apart from Bob, Ruth, Sue and myself, being here for approx 6 weeks. For the 3 months so far Sue and I returned home for 3 weeks with Bob and Ruth taking 2 weeks for a stay at Rainbow Beach.

There is now light at the end of the tunnel with an approx end of camp date in late August. We are starting on a property tomorrow which will probably be our biggest project so far with 2 teams assigned to it to get the job done. I'll be leading a team to carry on their current project while their team leader has a couple of days off.

Until next time,

Graham & Sue

THE LAST FEW WEEKS 10th August 2013

We've now been coordinating and installing the fencing in the Lockyer Valley since the 23rd of April.

Statistics are, Volunteers to date 143; Volunteer days worked 1694; Farms registered 84; Farms finished 75; Farms in progress 4; Kilometres cleared 29.5 kms; Kilometres new or rebuilt 30.7 kms; Total Kilometres to date 60.2 kms. This all equates to a massive total of in kind value @ \$25.00 per hour of \$300,000.00 of free volunteer labour into the local community. This figure doesn't include any costs of materials that have been used or the value of fuel and food purchases that are needed to run the camp.

After so many weeks tempers and attitudes are a bit strained. Nothing major at this point but one has to remind one's self that it's the farmers we are here to help. Putting in 12 hour plus days with only 1 day off a week doesn't help either. To say to run a camp of volunteers is easy is an understatement, with some people being vegetarians, some gluten intolerant and some just fussy in how their meals should be cooked keeps the kitchen staff on their toes, then there are the volunteers that don't want to help with the clearing of tables or help with the dishes, these people are reminded that maybe this isn't the camp for them.

We have a number of long term stayers that have been with us for a number of weeks and familiarity sometimes does fuel contempt.

WE have been fencing our biggest project so far now for the past 2 weeks.

The total property's fencing was almost all destroyed and so far we have fenced half of the destroyed fencing.

We are at the moment taking a week away from the property to re energize ourselves and will return to complete the project next week.



Rob and David boring a post hole

Last week saw 300 camp closure notices sent out by post for the surrounding areas letting property owners know that our camp will be closing on the 19th August and that any not yet registered should do so or miss out. Most of our workers are looking forward to the closure but for a few, this camp is a life line for them.

We had a BBQ last Saturday and 10 families that had work done on their farms enjoyed a meal with us, we hold a farmer BBQ on a regular basis to keep our relationship ongoing with the families.



Some of the farmers at our BBQ

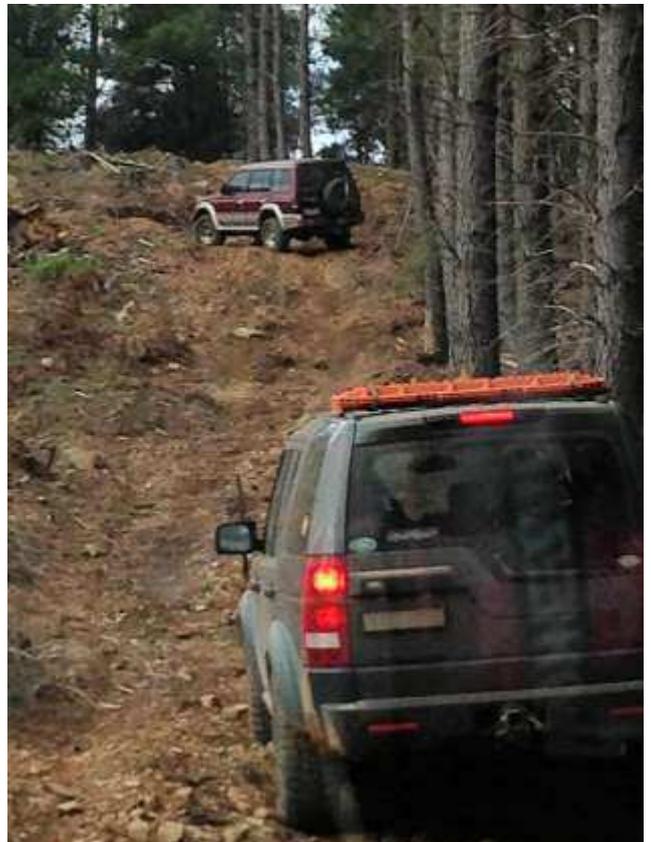
Once the camp has come to an end all the tools will be packed into our four trailers and transported to Tamworth where they will be mothballed and stored awaiting the next call to help somewhere in a community, we all hope that day is awhile off.

Till next time...
Cheers,
Graham and Sue



Club Trips

Editor: Here are a couple of extra photos from the Wombat State forest Recci...



Ed: This looks like a great place to check out.....

Ed: Also a big welcome back from their Kimberley jaunt... Bruce and John, who I've heard are still washing the red dust off their vehicles! P.S. Thanks for your updates along the way... now where are those other people who have gone North?

A blue rectangular advertisement for 'HOT CAR WASH'. On the left, there is a red vintage-style car with a white top. The text 'HOT' is written in large, white, italicized letters above the car. Below the car, the words 'CAR WASH' are written in large, white, bold letters. To the right of the car, the following services are listed in white, bold, uppercase letters: 'UPHOLSTERY CLEANER', 'VACUUM CLEANERS', '4WD RAMP', and 'BENALLA'. At the bottom right, the phone number '0428 622 823' is listed.