

Trip Reports:

BLAZE AID MULGOWIE CAMP 2013

Friday 19th April was the departure date from home in Oxley to travel to Mulgowie in Queensland with appointed camp coordinators Bob and Ruth to set up and help run the Blazeaid camp in the Lockyer Valley.

The Lockyer Valley was one of the many valleys to be devastated by the January floods with many of the farming families being flooded for the second time in 3 years. The effect that 600 millimeters of rain in 24 hours in the surrounding mountainous catchment area can only be comprehended upon visual inspection where hundred of thousands of tons of top soil was washed away from newly cultivated cropping paddocks. The washed out fencing that was in many cases carried away by the flood waters and irretrievable.

We arrived at Mulgowie mid morning on Monday 22nd April. This will be the camp headquarters for the next few months. Mulgowie is a small rural town situated 11 Kms south of Laidley. A hotel, hall with cricket oval and turf wicket, fire shed and 6 houses make up our location. Bob, Ruth, Sue and I set up our vans at the fire shed. Early that afternoon the community farmer liaison representative Gordon arrived and after introductions we were taken on a visual inspection of the disaster areas in the valley. To say the area was a mess is an understatement.



Mulgowie Hall Camp Site



Tool Shed

For Blazeaid to set up a camp in an area various undertakings and commitments must be agreed to by the local Council, service groups and the community farmer representative. Tuesday saw Gordon introducing us to various service clubs, council, public, industry contributors, suppliers and representatives.

Wednesday was the beginning of our meetings and inspections of a number of the farming properties that needed to be worked on, the compiling and the start of setting up our works area for the tools and machinery that will be used in the months to come. During the afternoon we took delivery of 2 trailer loads of fencing tools and associated items that will need to be checked and maintained in good working order. We also had the first volunteers arriving.

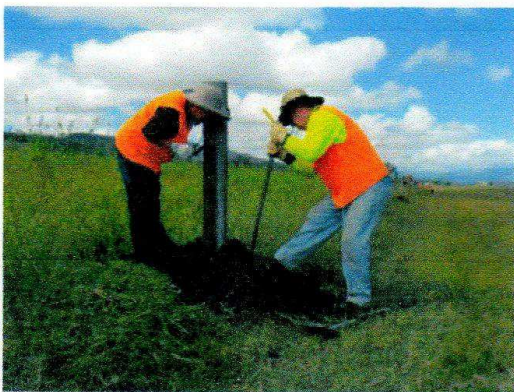
There was a wedding function booked in the hall on Saturday so we didn't have access to the hall until late Sunday afternoon. With more volunteers arriving over the weekend they were able to park their vans, motor homes and camper trailers a bit away from the hall

that we will be using. We celebrated the official opening of the camp with a BBQ for our volunteers.

The alarm went off just before 6am Monday morning, a shock to the system as I'm not accustomed to such an early arousal these days. This was to become the norm for the next 3 weeks. Off to the hall for breakfast as all meals are supplied. A 7.30am muster is held at the fire shed for the day's instructions as to what and where our work detail will be.

As I was the team leader for the next few days I explained to the team whose property we would be working on and what the work would entail, a safety briefing on the doo's and don'ts and the looking out for your buddy, first aid awareness and the dangers of handling the materials and installing the fences. The handing out of name tags, safety goggles, gloves and high vis vests. 8am saw 10 volunteers, a number who have never fenced before headed to Darren's farm for the start of our fencing work. Our first fencing run was a 200 metre 4 barb and steel post stretch that was washed away by the floods, this was achieved by lunchtime. We were just starting to warm up. The next section was a part pull down, replace, re erect and strain of 150 metres of barb, wooden and steel posts. This we accomplished by the knock off time of 4pm. Day 1 had been a success. Back to camp for a welcome shower as the days temperatures were still in the high 20's and the humidity still high. After tea a brief run down of the day's activities and the planning for tomorrow.

For the next 3 days we repeated our efforts at Darren's and completed another 300 metres of all timber post that had to be manually installed. Yes, part hand dug and hand backfilled and crowbar rammed; 4 strand barb including the strainers posts, and another 100 metres of pull down, replace, re erect and strain.



Ramming Posts

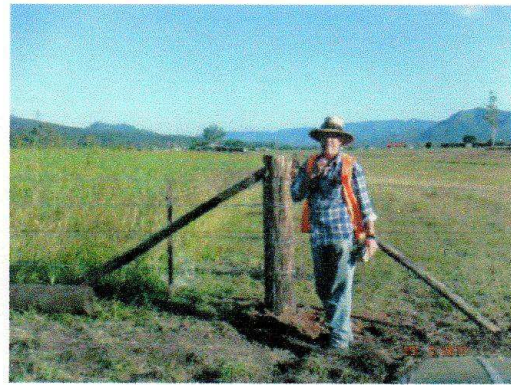


Finished Fence

After Darren's our volunteers numbers were increasing, we were able to split our volunteer's into a number of teams for the next 2 weeks with appointed team leaders. I was then able to devote more time into the organization of new work with Bob.



Volunteers at Work

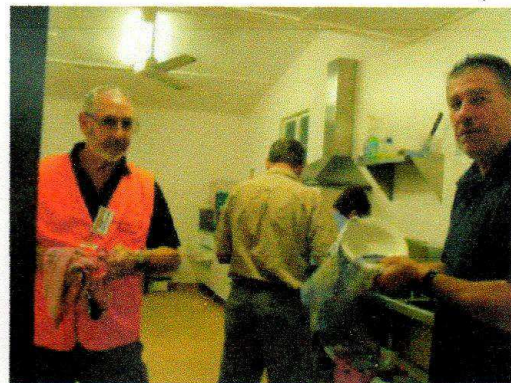


Team Leader

In the mean time Ruth and Sue had the responsibility of all the office computer work, the recording of all work done, and the running of the kitchen, which in the first week included cooking all of the meals and the purchase of all of the supplies needed to accommodate up to 40 volunteers and guests in camp.



Happy Cooks



Washing Up

Sue and I left the camp to return to Victoria on the 16th May for the anticipated arrival of our 4th grandchild.

When we left Mulgowie our teams had completed restoration work on 8 properties for the total clearing, re erecting and replacement of 8.5 Klms of fences. With 6 other properties in various stages of works in progress. We will be heading back to Mulgowie after the June Queen's birthday weekend to give Bob and Ruth a well deserved rest before continuing north for the winter.

I can recommend to anyone the values and satisfaction one gets being a volunteer and can highly recommend the Blaizaid organization.

Catch you on the track somewhere sometime.

Graham & Sue Abotomey