

BLUFF HUT RISES FROM THE ASHES.

Work is well underway to rebuild the burnt Bluff Hut and it will be completed this summer.

The project is being co coordinated by the Stoney family and many local volunteers are generously giving their time and other assistance. Building supervisor for the job is David Stoney and the volunteers are mostly connected to the Hut in some way or are friends of the Stoney family.

Parks Victoria is the land agency and has contributed some funding, logistics and cleaning up the site together with the Australian Navy last autumn.

The High Country Huts Association local representative Chris Clarke has assisted at several working Bees.

Three working bees in December installed the snowgum posts and one half of the mountain ash beams. This timber was sourced from near Matlock after being salvaged from the construction of the Thomson Dam Catchment Fire line.

During the Christmas break, the poles, the roof beams and the chimney rock work was completed. The roof and walls will go on soon.

Stoneys were very involved in building the original Bluff Hut in 1956 and mustered their cattle from the hut until 2005 when cattle grazing in the National Park was banned. For many years the Bluff Hut was also used as a base to run Stoney's cross country ski tours and horse trail rides. The hut was burnt to the ground in the January 2007 bushfires

Graeme Stoney said this week that the new hut will not be an exact replica of the original hut but just a genuine bush hut which will provide safety in a remote area and one that people will continue to enjoy visiting.

"You should see the new rock chimney, constructed by Don Gaudion and Russell Dingle." he said

"I would take a guess that outside Mt Buller, day visitation to the Bluff Hut has been only second to Craig's Hut and probably close to the leader for local Alpine National Park destinations in summer. The day traffic is extraordinary as visitors come up from around Sheeppark and Mansfield for the views and look at the hut."

"A popular round trip takes in Mt Stirling, Craig's Hut, Bindaree, the Bluff Hut, Sheeppark and then back to Mansfield. This keeps visitors in the district another day and we are pleased that the new hut will continue to make a valuable contribution to local tourism. The rebuild also keeps the spirit and heritage of the Mountain Cattlemen alive" Mr Stoney said.

It is known that over the years the original hut saved several lives and was regarded by the authorities as an important safety facility.

“The weather at the Bluff can be treacherous and it can turn from being a lovely day to a situation that is life threatening, in an hour” Mr Stoney explained.

Graeme Stoney said that at the moment the Hut site is off limits to the public because of the building and safety requirements but soon the Bluff Hut will once again be an interesting destination for four wheel drive enthusiasts, horse riders and hikers.

The project has been made possible due to major donations from sponsors including ARB, Silcar, Mr David Muir and the Chum Creek Sawmill. A building trailer full of sponsored tools including a generator has been of great assistance. This was organised by John Dowdle on behalf of the Mountain Cattlemen and the lobby group “Push for the Bush” to rebuild Alpine huts lost in the fires. There have been many other significant donations of materials and cartage and many hours of volunteer work willingly given, with more to be offered.

The Stoney family said the rebuild was a true community project and it wishes to thank the sponsors and volunteers for their ongoing support.

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