



# Echo from the Mountains

Victorian High Country Huts Association Inc – A0043804Y

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT...

I can hardly believe that we are about to have our second AGM, it seems that the last one was only a short while ago.

Over the past twelve months, the association has grown in numbers, strength and stature. Strong relationships have been forged with Parks Victoria and DSE, without which we would not get very far with our endeavours. To have representatives of these organisations attend our committee meetings assists us to understand each others point of view, and points of difference can be easily resolved. The committee are continuing to explore the possibility of forming a national body, in conjunction with KHA and the Tasmanian hut association.

Of course we must not forget the achievements of our hut building crews and supporters who came together in Omeo on the Australia Day weekend to build Rough Riders Hut, and later at Easter, rebuilt McNamara's Hut at Buckety Plain, our first rebuild on public land.

Barry Hazeldine and his team of Hut Maintenance Officers have also been busy undertaking hut assessments and further developing the Hut Maintenance procedures which will assist us in caretaking the stock of existing huts.

During the year, Lee & I purchased a business in Dinner Plain and have moved to the village permanently. In getting on our feet as small business operators, I stood aside as President for several months, and once again, Dianne Carroll kept hold of the reins and kept everything running as efficiently as she always does. My thanks go to Dianne for her assistance and persistence, without which, our list of achievements would surely have been much smaller.

I will be stepping down as President at the AGM, but do wish to remain on the committee, as well as taking on an HMO role for my local area. For those of you who cannot attend the AGM, I would like to thank you for your continued support and interest in the association and encourage you be as active as you can be in caretaking and rebuilding activities. I'm sure that this summer, there will be plenty of opportunities to get involved; of course all this snow up here has to melt first.

Regards,  
Fiona Magnussen

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## AGM - NEW DATE

**SATURDAY 16 OCTOBER 2004**

**Where: Mansfield Shire Hall**

**Time: 2.00 pm**

**After: Dinner at Mansfield Hotel**

**Accommodation:** ring 1800 039 049  
or visit [www.mansfield-mtbuller.com.au](http://www.mansfield-mtbuller.com.au)

## THANKS FOR MAC'S

The work done in re-building McNamara's Hut, which is used by the Mittagundi Outdoor Education Centre, has been appreciated far and wide. The following was received by Dianne Carroll:

From some students of St Philips College Alice Springs:

*"...we have spent the last week at Mittagundi. During our time at Mittagundi we went on a 3 day expedition to the snow and spent 2 nights at McNamara's Hut.*

*We had many great memories inside the hut including stories, games and hot cocoa. We have just heard about your great contributions towards the project. It was worth all the effort that you put in and we would like to thank you for all of your help and support."*

From Pete at Mittagundi:

*"...Well winter is well upon us and we are into our 'flat out – full on – 300 kids' winter... We've had 50 kids up there already and there's been great times with them all. The hut has been great. Food stored in the back and everyone squashed in around the seats. The atmosphere has been great with it being warmer and cosier than out in the tents.*

*So thanks for all your efforts in getting it up and running. It's certainly made a difference to us."*



## STROBRIDGE HUTS - BROOKVILLE

On January 8<sup>th</sup> 2004, one year after the start of the 2003 fires, Fiona Magnussen met with Rob Stewart, Forest Manager Tambo DSE, and Chris Smith, Consulting Architect, at the Strobridge Huts, Charlotte's Spur Track, Brookville. The outcome of that meeting was an Existing Conditions Survey and a Schedule of Works, prepared for DSE by Chris Smith, and a commitment by DSE to conserve these huts.

In his report, Chris stated that the rear hut appears to date from the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, is potentially one of the earliest huts on public land in Victoria and is possibly associated with the mining township of Brookville, which was located a few hundred meters upstream from these two huts. Chris also gives historical significance to the occupation of these huts by Lucy Strobridge and her mother, and Lucy's efforts to maintain the huts, unassisted for almost 30 years.

But who was Lucy Strobridge, and how did she come to live her life as a recluse, in two old huts, in a state forest?

There is some discussion as to where Lucy was born and exactly when the family came to live at the Brookville huts. After attending school at the Brookville School, then located on the Carroll property at Middle Creek, Lucy Strobridge went to Melbourne as a young woman and is believed to have obtained an education in music. She returned to Swifts Creek where she worked as a housemaid at the Albion Hotel, before her parents decided she should return to the family home at Brookville.

After the death of her father, John Strobridge in 1941, his wife Ella and daughter Lucy continued to live in the Brookville huts. Lucy and Ella would push an old pram to Tom & Jessie Carroll's property to get milk and their groceries, which were ordered from Swifts Creek. They would also chop down trees with just an axe, drag the logs back to the house and cut them up for firewood. Even the wheelbarrows were homemade, the wheels from old prams.

Lucy would run away and hide when strangers neared the huts even when her mother was alive, learning to mimic the bush sounds to frighten people away. She could mimic the sounds of a wild dog and a wild bull so well that even the local farmers could not tell the difference. This was Lucy's security system and it worked well. Without Lucy's ability to deter visitors, these huts may not have survived the onslaught of the government buy back program.

Lucy's mother died in 1972, and although she had a sister living elsewhere in the district, Lucy stayed at Brookville. As her only other local friends, the Carroll's had also died, Lucy's grocery order was delivered by a variety of people over the next thirty years, including the local minister, logging truck drivers, the Boucher family, and in the last few years of her life, the Home Care ladies from the Bush Nursing Center.

Despite the fact that Lucy's home was now in a State Park, any suggestions of evicting her were apparently met with a very negative response from the locals and Lucy was allowed to remain in her bush haven. Very few of these people ever saw Lucy. Many people passing her home heard her playing music, and she bought many battery powered musical instruments over the years.

In 2000, Chips Boucher was passing Lucy's home one morning, and noticed that she was not as well groomed as usual. He was concerned as Lucy took pride in her appearance. Chips noticed that Lucy had a limp and had difficulty walking. She had a wound to her foot, that eventually proved to be fatal and she passed away in Omeo Hospital. She was 80 years old.

Lucy is an inspiration to us all, for without her efforts during the last 30 years of her life, we would not have the hut to conserve, only another site for an interpretation board.



On a visit to the hut on 18<sup>th</sup> August this year, Fiona was elated to see that DSE had commenced the conservation work by propping up the hut, and restricting vehicle access to the site. Now the hard work begins.

The Committee of the VHCHA lists Lucy Strobridge's hut with a high priority for restoration.



## HUTS DATABASE

Roger Sievwright lives at a little dot on the map called Lima. He is the epitome of those sayings “the way to hell is paved with good intentions” and “fools rush in where angels fear to tread” because, in his words “*I have taken on the job of running the Association’s database of huts*”. Roger will present a full report at the AGM, but here’s the story so far.

The database Roger received was cobbled together from a variety of sources, largely from the good work of Fiona Magnussen, but was still an inaccurate document. It now has four sections.

1. Huts that were burnt in Jan 2003
2. Huts that exist on Crown Land
3. Huts that exist on private property
4. A list of sites where huts used to be on both Crown land and Private Property.

Roger is working in a format that allows huts to be readily moved from one section to another.

He has clocked up a few kilometres moving around the State talking to Parks Vic (PV) and DSE people, and to HMO’s, gathering information about huts to ensure the final database is as accurate and credible as possible. Realistically this could take up to two years because all the detail will have to be verified on the ground.

Roger and Barry Hazeldine (HMG) have divided the High Country into eleven areas based on ease of access, purely so we have a model to work with.

All known huts have been plotted onto maps to see which huts are in what areas. Now they need to identify which huts still exist, which are on private land, and PV/DSE plans for individual huts.

The database is one of the VHCHA’s most important tools because we need knowledge to make plans. In keeping with our Statement of Purpose, the VHCHA will have to make decisions on our attitude to individual huts and hut sites.

Roger also needs information on huts, particularly accurate GPS references in UTM, WGS84 with full Eastings and Northings.

If you feel you can help please contact Roger Sievwright on **Ph:** (03) 5768 2383 or  
**Email:** siev@netc.net.au.

## HUTS MAINTENANCE GROUP

The work being done on the huts database has made it obvious that our existing HMO areas (5) are far too large for one HMO to cover. We now have 11 areas. More about this at the AGM.

**Huts Maintenance Group Leader, Barry Hazeldine**  
**Phone** 02 6020 8595 OR 0407 109 950  
**Email** [BARRY.G.H@bigpond.com.au](mailto:BARRY.G.H@bigpond.com.au)

## FROM THE PROJECTS MANAGER

Winter is nearing an end and the committee has worked tirelessly over the last few months to bring a solid structure to the VHCHA and preparation for the forthcoming season. It is hoped that we will be able to implement works to spruce up some of the huts and do some repairs to ensure their preservation.

The entire committee need to be commended for their voluntary time and effort in bring the association to where it is today, and I am sure our members and users of the huts will see this at our AGM in October.

Following the success of our Parks Victoria grant application, we are hoping to install logbook holders, logbooks and have a general cleanup of a many of the huts over the summer.

If you have a group and a weekend to spare and would like to assist, please get in touch Barry Hazeldine or myself and we will put you in touch with the appropriate HMO.

We are endeavouring to secure one rebuild over this summer, this being Ropers Hut. Whilst it was never considered as a refuge hut, it was accepted under its status of a grazing licence. Due to the suspension of the licences, the hut has not been permitted to be rebuilt until the decision on the licences has been made.

We are requesting that Ropers be reconstructed as a refuge. In the process of this, if you have any letters detailing incidents that involved a hut as a refuge saviour, I would appreciate any details to assist us in our plight for not only this rebuild, but as a part of our collection of documents to assist in the preservation of our precious hut havens.

### CALL FOR WORKERS

**HEYFIELD AREA 27 & 28 November**  
**MT BAW BAW - MT ERICA 11 & 12 December**

Minor approved works on several huts in the Heyfield & Mt Baw Baw-Mt Erica areas, plus other work if time and numbers of volunteers permit.

HMO Mick has a list of tasks that will be finalised by that weekend with Parks Victoria.

There is a great camping area available with a drop shoot dunny and a super little river called Kelly’s Lane on Mt Tamboritha. Access in dry weather will be by 2x4 (with a little ground clearance). PV and DSE will provide trailers to pick up rubbish and take the full trailers away.

Start times and meeting points available closer to the time. If you can help **contact Mick Vanderzalm** on [mickv@net-tech.com.au](mailto:mickv@net-tech.com.au) (include VHCHA in email subject line).

**Dianne Carroll - VHCHA Projects Manager**  
**Email** [vhcha@dodo.com.au](mailto:vhcha@dodo.com.au)  
**Ph** 02 6036 3949



## \$8000 GRANT

The VHCHA has received a grant of \$8000 from the Parks Victoria 2004/2005 Community Grants Program (Volunteer Group Grants).

This money must be used in "Hut Restoration & Management in Victorian National Parks"

We thank Parks Victoria for their support of VHCHA as shown by the granting of these funds and we have until June 2005 to spend the money and it is proposed to use some of the money for log books and log book holders.

## NATIONAL FEDERATION ONE STEP CLOSER

Roger Sievwright, Fiona & Lee Magnussen and Dianne Carroll met with Mark Cleghorn and Maurice Sexton from KHA and had a long discussion. Many issues were discussed and shared and everyone felt that a lot came out of the meeting.

The prospect of a National Federation was discussed and it was resolved that that we pursue the options. KHA have appointed Olaf Moon and a small sub-committee has been formed to prepare a proposal for the huts organisations to consider.

It was decided that at this time there would be no shared memberships between KHA and VHCHA and the National Federation would ensure that we have more power when it comes to issues of a National interest and nature, enabling each independent association to join forces in an official manner.

We will commence cross communication between KHA & VHCHA through our respective newsletters from the next issue of Echo from the Mountain thus spreading the huts message across borders.

## INTERPRETATION BOARDS

The first batch of interpretation boards are nearly completed, with drafts prepared, and these will be installed this summer. There will be six installed at huts and six at hut sites, amongst them Frys Hut, Burnside (site) and Wallaces Hut.

It is hoped that there will be another round of funding for a further twelve to be installed at a later date.

## HELP! HELP! HELP!

Can't get to the hut maintenance weekends?  
Would like to make a contribution?

Here's how!

Our Secretary David Oldfield needs volunteers to help with the copying, enveloping and posting of newsletters.

There are only four issues a year so if you are able to help even with just one please contact David to volunteer your services.

## CONTACTING US

VHCHA Phone: 0428 591 964  
Visit our website: [www.vhcha.org.au](http://www.vhcha.org.au)

### Secretary David Oldfield:

Ph 03 9747 1411 Fx 03 9747 1418

Email [dsoldf@netconnect.com.au](mailto:dsoldf@netconnect.com.au)

### Dianne Carroll - VHCHA Projects Manager

Email [vhcha@dodo.com.au](mailto:vhcha@dodo.com.au)

Ph 02 6036 3949

## VHCHA MERCHANDISE

For information about purchasing any of the items see our website, [www.vhcha.org.au](http://www.vhcha.org.au) or phone 0428 591 964. Please note, we have limited sizes, those not in stock will take six weeks.



Caps (baseball style)	\$15	One size
Short sleeved polo shirts	\$35	XS-3XL
Cotton long sleeved shirts	\$45	S-2XL
Vests (red or yellow lining)	\$55	XS-3XL