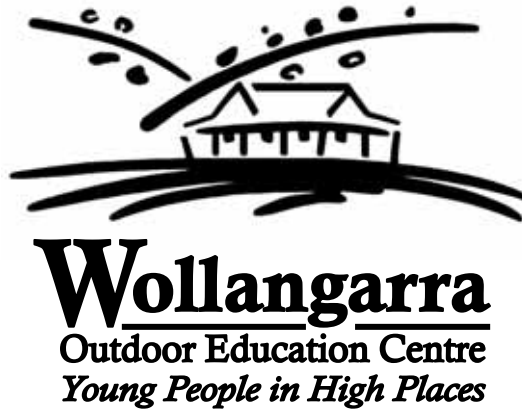


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www.wollangarra.org

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Licola 3858

Patron: John Landy,  
AC, MBE

Autumn is here. Funny how you long for summer, and no sooner do you get used to it, than it disappears and you're back into the crisp mornings. This time last year we were regularly swimming in the river and running around to warm up. Now that the Macalister water looks more like a café latte than a swimming pool, we tend to not dunk ourselves as much.

The last few months have altered the flat, the river, our hike routes, and, for some of us, our very selves. Although we still don't have running drinking water, there was a time when we couldn't swim in the river and couldn't even shower. But none of the staff seemed to notice that life was difficult. It took an outsider to make that observation. Funny how you adapt to things.

And the fire season didn't end with last year, either. Mid January the fire near the Thomson dam spotted and set a fire racing up towards Medowra, our neighbour to the the south. Nick from last year and Tess Macrae went over to help out—Tess seeing her first fire action, and Nick seeing a strange follow up to the melodrama of 2006.

But Medowra survived, and the rains that came that weekend meant we could go and see our friends at Mittagundi, albeit nearly 12 hours drive each way.

And the floods have changed the river in other ways. The erosion around the place is staggering. Waterfalls

and gullies where before there was nothing. Water running off the hills in great slabs, like lakes themselves sliding over the hydrophobic soil to the turbid Macalister below. And the rock piles and land slips and sharp rocks that have replaced the smooth river rocks. A place of change, all right.

At least the Mitchell River National Park is being kind to us. We have found a place to hike which means we can still operate. It involves a complicated water drop and vehicle shuffle, but at least we have a place to take young people.

But this year's staff are yet another amazing lot. They've handled maintenance and building programs, new hikes to learn,

and helping neighbours with fire and flood. Another great team that love one another and Wollangarra.

And as for me, well I am moving on in July. Into an uncertain but exciting future, with Billy and Gemma by my side. With such great companions, things can't be that bad.

- Ross



*The crew of 2007—Gareth, Tessa, Ross, Jo and Tess. The start of this year has been a bit different to others, but handled with confidence and great industry.*

## Wood Chop

Queen's Birthday Long Weekend

June 9, 10 and 11

Be there! Bring something for the pot.



# W e l c o m e t o t h e



*Tessa Lee gives us the big thumbs up, but as far as we're concerned, we give her the big thumbs up. Tessa has since burned this T-shirt, as that's not what Woll is about.*

**Tessa** Tessa arrived at Wollangarra just after cycling her way through Canada and the States. Whilst she was on her travels she had a brainy idea and thought she might just come to Woll and waft her magic here. Tessa has been coming to Wollangarra for a bout 10 years as a young person, so has a strong connection and understanding of the place. Tessa hails from the small coastal town of Barwon Heads, and since leaving has studied a Bachelor of Music at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, in her final year she produced a fantastic CD – check it out!

Whilst at Wollangarra you will most probably see Tessa strumming her guitar, playing her flute or serenading us with her beautiful voice. If Tessa is not practising her music she is usually otherwise occupied in the garden inspiring the weeds to disappear. Or in the kitchen concocting a mean curry for all of us to enjoy.

During all this she PUNishes us with her humour and always makes the most of every opportunity to interject with her obscure comments.

What I have seen of Tessa so far is that she is going to bring so much to this year, each day I'm greeted with her warm smile and observe her positive energy. Tessa has the ability to relate to everyone and make people feel comfortable in any situation. She's even trying to teach me how to sing, but I might just leave that one up to her! Al-

though this year will bring some TESSt's Tessa will LEEve many happy campers in her wake. *By Jo.*

**Gareth** Gazza, G-Force, Garridio, Gazmatron, Ginormous, G-man, G1 Gazamatz, G-dog... None of these names can quite do justice to the personality and presence that is our Gareth. Coming from Outdoor Ed in Bendigo interspersed with travel and living in Mexico, he has adjusted remarkably well to being the only male staff member at Woll this year- sometimes you would swear he was even enjoying it.

Although on first meeting Gaz, one is struck by his massive guns, it's not long before you notice a big, slow smile that beams out from under a big brown hat.

Although he can be quite the punster, Gaz also possesses that uncommon ability of making you feel safe and comfortable in his presence. You could say there's no one quite like him this side of the black stump.

Gaz has oodles of talents, and can be found looking manly and hardcore in chaps with a chainsaw one moment, and in the kitchen kneading amazing bread the next. He is full of gems of knowledge about the garden and is also becoming the vehicular guru of the team. Whatever he is doing, you can be sure he's doing it well and working his guts out.

In the three months we've been here, we have shared many varied experiences- negotiating the Macalister in flash flood, watching fireworks beside the Monash freeway, building an extremely beautiful sludge pit cover, reviving some unconscious dude in Pakenham, and of course after work swims. Each experience with Gazza leaves me enriched and feeling very lucky that I get to spend a whole year living and working with such a beautiful bloke.

The young people that come up to Woll this year will undoubtedly leave with a fair dinkum role model. There's no two ways about it- Gaz is a bot-tler.—*By Tess*



*Gareth is this year's only man on staff. As such, he feels compelled to grow a beard and play with tools, like the ratchet, pictured.*

# Staff of 2007



*Tess Macrae and Neville.. Both are cute, playful and a bit of a handful, but only one of them eats pooh.*

**Tess** Apart from being the sunbeam of the Wollangarra crew this year, (perhaps because she's the youngest her worldview hasn't yet been tainted by the bitter cynicism a few extra heartbreaking years will bring?!) Tess Macrae is a bit of an adventuring go-getter. To say the least. Firefighting, swimming flooded rivers on hike, chainsawing, four-wheel-driving... you name it, Tess is the one with her boots on and into it before you can say Jimini Cricket. In this way, I would argue that appearances can be deceptive. She may look like a blushing blonde bombshell with perfect nails and a nervous giggle, but the real Tess Macrae is a hard-working, self-sacrificing, extremely intelligent, crazy wacko with a penchant for machinery and pain.

I've known Tess since we first arrived here this year. Some of you have known her for longer: she's been involved with the Wollangarra community for the past five or so years. In fact, the whole wonderful Macrae clan have followed in her wake! Paddy and Hamish joined the ranks of stage twos and threes soon after their big sister discovered Wollangarra and this year Clare and Alistair arrived with their youngest

daughter Fiona, and discovered their forgotten passion for bottling fruit.

As well as being Australia's female answer to Steve Irwin, Tess is a lovely lovely lovely almost-too-lovely-to-believe-it type of person. The kind that makes five river crossings and enough mud to lose your dog in all worth while. Speaking of dogs, Tess recently procured a beautiful baby Border Collie Kelpie cross (which we named Neville). Neville enjoys chewing everything, chasing chickens and LAUNCHING himself at your face if you so much as ask for a cuddle. So there you have it: two more flavoursome spirits to add to the stew of the Wollangarra pot.—*By Tessa*

**Jo** Well let's begin with the good stuff seeing as at Wollangarra we believe in making people feel good before we hit 'em with the bad. The first time I met Jo I thought "this is the type of person I'd like to spend a year with in a confined space" (as in Wollangarra, not the dug out). Since then Jo has brought more to the group than she realises. Her quiet, thoughtful nature gives respite from the relentless torrent of puns. She comes from a long lineage of outdoor education dating as far back as last century and remembers fondly walking amongst the pyramids of Egypt, hanging out in the bazaars of Turkey, nude massages in Romania, tossing the kyber in Scotland, impersonating Julie Andrews in Switzerland, milking cows on King Island, flamenco dancing in Spain, hanging out in bars wearing a false beard in Ireland, to name but a few. When I asked her how she ended up at such a place as Wollangarra, she just smiled with that knowing smile and responded, 'I don't know Gaz, it just seemed right'. 'Too right Jo', I thought, 'you were made for this place like Jack was for Jill!' We both nodded and continued scrubbing the last of the oily dust from the chainsaws. The almost three months have certainly not been without their challenges but I know her resilience, born on the high seas with her parents as they sailed the world for eight years, will overcome any adversity. And the bad...well unfortunately I haven't discovered that yet but we do have another nine exciting months to collect dirt.—*By Gareth*



*Jo beaming her usual beaming smile. Always a voice of calm reason in the tumult of Wollangarra.*

## A r o u n d



Two and a half months since we got here. I'm learning that Wollangarra's work absolutely never ends. You might think you got some stuff done, and truly yes, you probably did, but then there's always more. People say this all the time, back in the "normal" world, but not many of them have to contend with the aftermath of bushfire, flashflooding, an unreliable water supply etc... So without further ado, here's a brief rundown on what's been happening in Wolly world...



Soon after we arrived and were busy freaking out and settling in and getting used to the rhythm of Woll life ("What do you mean I can't wear my watch Ross?!") than catastrophe almost struck once again. The 2006 crew were hanging out with us, showing us how to do our new jobs, when suddenly a MASSIVE yellow and orange and black cloud reared its colourful head over the top of the hill behind the shower. It was a Thursday, the day we were supposed to make our 12 hour epic mission up to Mittagundi for their annual bush dance and Pioneer Skills day. We all opted instead to stay at Woll and make preparations for defending the homestead, should the flames happen to come roaring down the valley. But, to our relief, the sky to the north of us stayed blue and the cloud passed from the northwest to the southwest as the day faded into evening. Danger had passed but not before Tess Macrae and Nick had the chance to head over to our neighbor's (Medowra) place where "flames were licking at the house," and experience the funfunfun of mopping up after a fire front has run amok. Sightings of Elvis were reported that day. We set off VERY EARLY the next morning to make it to Mittagundi just in time for a quick band rehearsal (Ross, Gareth and I making up three eighths of the bush band) and then a vigorous night of dancing and debauchery.



# The Traps



We had our first staff hike along the local walk (out the back of Woll, following the river to Orchid Flat and then on to Burgoyne's Hut and back over THAT hill: so long, so unrelenting, so long...) accompanied by lovely summery conditions. Until the second day when we were pelted with hail and rain continuously. That's when we realised we'd forgotten our groundsheets and Ross realised he'd forgotten his pack liner. All along the walk, we'd been chainsawing and rakehoeing our way through the fire damaged bush and were thoroughly tuckered out. We arrived home at Woll on the third rainy day, exhausted and ecstatic to be home again, to find a foot of mud had invaded our state-of-the-art shower block. The river, by this stage, had turned to a thick pulpy stew, logs and animals were to be seen floating along on the tide. And that's when it started. Two weeks later the mud really hit the town (literally) when an inch of rain in a quarter of an hour (according to varying sources) caused Licola's version of Hurricane Katrina. Ralph Barraclough, a long time supporter of Wollan-garra and sewing machine expert, who lives above Licola, along Target Creek road, lost his house to mud. We spent a few days sifting through his shed to salvage his valuable mechanical parts, alongside local SES and CFA volunteers.

Since the river lost its water-like properties, we've been drinking rainwater (thankgod for the big tank on the south side of the homestead) and showering and swimming a lot less. The upside to all this rain at Woll is that the flat (as well as the surrounding landscape) is looking iridescently green, a welcome change to the yellow, drought-stricken country Australians have become accustomed to.

In between all the excitement and natural disasters, we've settled in well. Hanging in Hey-field, either at the Bowling Club with Alby Drew or down at Aerial Motors with Dave and the gang, is a favourite pastime. We've even been known to brave the local rally car track and go out for a spin. Neville Pup has joined the team, as well as a new lamb, some alpacas and a couple of ducks. Plans are underway for a new fence down by the ford to keep cattle out and also for a verandah reconstruction (not unlike a knee reconstruction, but for the verandah). And then of course, we might run some courses... but that's a whole other article!

-Tessa



*Clockwise from top left: Ross looking pleased with himself; the crew and Alby; asleep during the 12 hour trip to Mittagundi; Gareth and Chris; Ross infuriating others; Ross again—who does he think he is?; the girls at the race track; things are bad when you go for a shower; Dave being his usual modest, calm, understanding self; the 2007 crew in front of Dave's rally car; the 2007 staff on the bull bar of Gretel—Aerial's very heavy tow truck.*

## *S t a f f*



Our initiation into the Wollangarra lifestyle has been a busy but satisfying one. There has been so much to learn- alongside the official courses we have had vital training in important areas such as puns, fencing, reverse sarcasm, animal husbandry and mixed metaphors.

We were all geared up for our first load of training, and were pumped for a wheely good week with Russell White. After stalling for a while, it was with a low trainer to trainee ratio that we headed out to the tracks around the area. With plenty of brakes to keep our fluids up, we clutched our hats to our heads and got belted around our seats in the trusty LJ. What with burning logs over the tracks and driving bang up the middle of the Macalister, it was a pretty tiring experience, but it only fuelled our desire to learn more about the mysteries of the 4WD. Mountain or river- there was no diff. We were hooked. Woll was a hub of activity that week, with Whitey bringing up some beautiful fish and some of his dad's finest brew.

Although not our first official training, Wilderness First Aid proved to be fairly full on for all of us. With twenty five people following hot on the heels of the fruit bottling helpers, we attacked the week with gusto in order to stay on top of all our jobs, training and study. With blistering speed, and a burning thirst for knowledge, we spent hours over at the gear store taking in all Lyn and Ritcho could throw at us. At meal times we sampled the delightful delights that Gaz, Steph and Loz patiently created in the kitchen. Their aid was vital, and they really rescued us- thanks guys! The mood during the week was infectious, and despite our first response was to be a bit shocked by the amount of information we were to ingest, we really enjoyed hanging out with so many cool people- it really was medicine for the soul. We've been bitten by the first aid bug and have already used our newfound skills in order to reduce the possibility of evacuations in our courses.

In Feb we took a bit of a road trip to Alexandra, where we met up with the very awesome Mitta crew and spent a lovely evening with Cathalene and Yannica, who offered us their house for the night. The next morning we were up early and ate our breakfast pretty rapidly before driving to the OEG headquarters in Eildon. Murray Tucker was there to meet us, and after being flooded by some pretty swift theory we donned wetsuits and headed down to dive into the Goulburn. After a few rocky starts, we were all rescued from the heat

# T r a i n i n g

by the cool water, although we almost reached the end of our rope during throw-bag practise. As far as swift water rescue, was started off a bit wet behind the ears, but the day flowed along beautifully, and before we knew it, we were tuckered out and it was time to paddle off. Thanks to the Gundis for a heap of fun, and to Murray, who really wetted out appetite for all things water.

Early March saw Whitey return to the flat armed with more moonshine, more fresh fish and plenty of Cheyne'saw gear. We all branched out, donning chaps and helmets, and taking a cut lunch set about sharpening our skills on the 'screaming axe.' After a few days of chipping away, the ford was littered with the foot block remnants of the trees that had bitten the dust, and our voices were all a bit husqi. Before we had got a real handle on it we were all pretty saw, but stihl we kept going in order to hone our skills and make them a cut above the rest. By the end of the week we were rooted, and stumped as to what more we could learn, and had created more sawdust than you could poke a burnt stick at. As far as Cheyne'saw use at Woll, we have definitely raised the bar, and seem to be running like a well oiled machine. We were all sorry to see Whitey leaf, but wood be using what he had taught us before we got too long in the tooth. Ross certainly wasn't barking up the wrong tree when he introduced the course to Wollangarra.



*Anti-clockwise from top left: Mittagundi and Wollangarra crew at swift water rescue; Tess Macrae in a post apocalyptic setting; Tessa Lee taking time out from carving up the bush—"Trees are so much easier hug when they're lying on the ground"; Tessa behind the wheel during the 4WD course; Jo showing she's Stihl got it; Jo and Tessa being very patient at Wilderness First Aid.*



## Stage 1 Courses

As many of you may already know, this year has been a little different from some in the past. Our usual haunts such as the Wellington High Plains and our local walk on the Macalister River have had 'quite a bit of heat' as described by one local. We think he was talking about the fires, yes that's right! Since the fires came sweeping through here late last year and early this one, the parks have been closed. At the time of the first Geelong College course back in February the local walk looked like a pearler after we spent a few days with a chainsaw and rakhos clearing it. Unbeknownst to us the effect of a fire followed by heavy rains is a Macalister River looking like a chocolate milkshake that's seen better days. To cut a long story short the group was separated by a raging torrent of logs and mud and each group spent the night on opposite banks calling out as-



*Keith and Brigitte Kat delivering the new additions to the Wollangarra family—Diego and Bollinger, our lovely alpacas.*



*Gareth looking very excited about the young people in his care from the Geelong College hike 1. He did have an eventful week, but you might like to talk to him about that.*

surances that everything would be ok. With more excitement than you could pack into a small lunch box, we realised that on one side were the pots and on the other, the food. Heroically, the leaders and young people ate a delicious mixture of 3 parts emergency rice, 2 parts mud and two parts curry powder. These adventures mixed with the breaking news that in fact even the local walk area was closed, made us question the wisdom of using the area for another walk.

With heads bowed and sorrow in our hearts we cancelled the next double course and ventured out into the wilds of the Mitchell River N.P. to find greener pastures. What we found gladdened our weary bones and with a spring in our step arrived home to impart the good news; 'she'll be apples mate'. And there it was; our next course was to be the Mitchell River.

By this stage, we'd all found our sailor's legs and it was all 'pretty smooth sailing' really. Ross stayed home to do what he does best and us four, bright eyed and bushy tailed, 'set sail'. Good weather with good young people with a good spot make for a good trip. And that's exactly what it was. We look forward to many more great hikes even if we have to wait for the High Country and our local walk to be reopened.

## W h a t i s W o l l a n g a r r a ?

*Wollangarra is an independent non-profit outdoor education project established in the firm belief that young people and mountains are natural partners with a great deal to offer each other. The pioneer-style homestead, which serves as our base camp, is situated on a small, remote river flat of the Macalister River, half way between the towns of Heyfield and Licola. Wollangarra is a unique and simple place. It has no electricity, is accessed only by flying fox and has been built by hundreds of enthusiastic volunteers using second hand recycled materials. Nearly 2000 old railway sleepers were used in the construction.*



*It allows young people the opportunity to discover the heart of Victoria's high country in small, well organised and supervised hiking groups, and shows them practical and important ways in which they can help the environment. The five staff and directors that live there balance education, environmental sustainability and the pioneering lifestyle through the development of the self, community and environmental awareness.*

# What's New At Woll



*Clockwise from top left: Gareth and Tessa Lee looking very serious as they take time out from digging holes and burying the termite boxes—the plan is that the white ants eat the boxes and not Wollangarra; Tess Macrae posing alongside the guttering that was removed from the side of the homestead. Because we can't drink the river water, we rely on the water tank on the side of the building. However, the verandah posts are sinking into the ground, resulting in the guttering not working. So, the posts are being fitted with steel stirrups (see below, bottom right) to get the verandah level so we can have a reliable and renewable water source. In other photos, Tess and Ross about to perform bush surgery on an unsuspecting lamb; Jo, Gareth and Tess pose next to some of the acro props that are used to hold the verandah up while the bottom is chainsawed off; Gareth tightening the bolts on the stirrups of the posts; and finally, the new addition to the canine aspect of the Wollangarra family—Neville. Neville came to us from Rob Gilder, and is a kelpie border collie cross.*



# Fruit Bottling



It was yet another big weekend when Fruit Bottling took over Wollangarra over the Australia Day long weekend. We go through a lot of fruit here each year, and all of it gets preserved in one fell swoop when every man and his dog (and a few females) comes back to Woll to cut, peel, clean, boil, seal, stack, stoke, and lots of other verbs that are associated with putting fruit in jars over hot water.

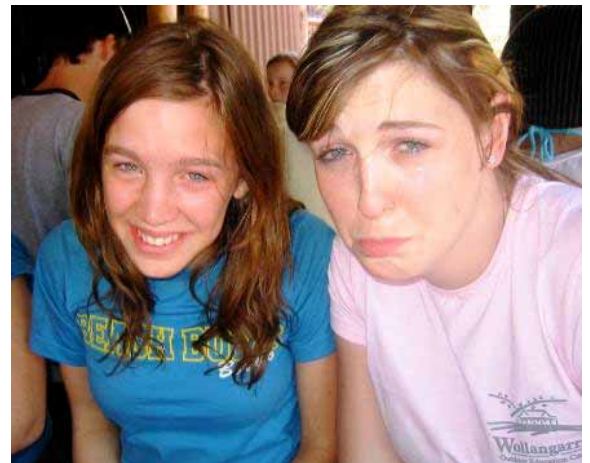
In addition to the fruit in jars, there were other projects around Woll worked on, and people fed, and a few new friendships made amongst our supporters.

One event worthy of note was the “Jam Off” between Tess Macrae’s father, Al, and Elaine. It was pretty hot in the kitchen at about that time, and I don’t think the heat was generated by the stove—Al was determined to hold his own in the face of year’s of preserving experience with our guru, Elaine. In the end, the winner was Wollangarra, because we kept all the jam anyway.



A special mention to the young people that filled in the track to Tussocky—thanks for the work, but the flood came along and washed it all away. Ironic, isn’t it. We’d been working on the crossing of Stinky Gully for a while, and only weeks after we complete it, the flood comes along and destroys it all.

Such is life.



# January 2007



*Opposite page, anti clockwise from top right: an unusual sight at Woll—girls in the kitchen. I'm sure the boys came back in soon. Last time Karen was here she was wielding drip torches and setting mountains on fire. Now she's back wielding knives. And note a few of the Macrae clan, whose family made up about 50% of the population of the fruit bottling weekend. Next, young people chopping away, with a look of anguish on one Alex Pontonio; Ted showing the fruit who is boss. This was to be Ted's last Fruit Bottling, which of course none of us knew at the time. See further in the newsletter. Next, an experiment to confirm a theory that sticking a spoon onto the end of your nose can reduce the tears from peeling onions; Ryan and a few fellas getting stuck into sticking fruit in jars—see, you can have males involved in the food production process! Next, some very teary eyes after the onions—I think this demonstrates the null hypothesis—that spoons don't do that much.*

*This page, from top left: Helen, Clare and Zoe putting in some elbow grease with the fruit; Aleks led a group of young people to re-build the track to Tussocky across Stinky Gully. A nice job, but washed away in the flood a few weeks later. And lastly, the obligatory group photo. Thanks to all of you for putting in such a big effort and helping Woll to provide Fruit Crumble for another 500 young people this year.*



## Vale: Ted Schaeche

It was with great sadness that we learned of the passing of Ted Schaeche on 15/4/2007. Ted and Elaine have both been huge supporters of Wollangarra for well over 10 years. In particular, Ted and Elaine have run Fruit Bottling, which has been a huge undertaking for the two of them.

Ted will be dearly missed by so many members of the Wollangarra community. We will miss his tales of road building up in the high country, and stories of when he used to play music, and we will certainly miss his eternal optimism. Ted always had time for everyone, and had so much energy.

In particular, our thoughts are with Elaine and the rest of her family, who have had other losses recently.

Ted, we will all miss you. Rest In Peace.



*Elaine, Ross and Ted at the last fruit bottling. Ted would always bring a leg of ham for the director each year.*

## Alpine Walk 2007

By the time you receive this, the Alpine Walk would have been completed. However, the walkers this year, from Wollangarra, are Nathan Segal, Tom Woods, Anna Calder, Hannah Wall and James Thompson. Usually, they walk from Woll to Mittagundi, or vice versa, but that has not been possible this year due to the fires. So, their route became a circuit that meandered around the high country around the Bogong High Plains and Mt Hotham areas.

It was still a challenging, demanding and onerous walk of over 140 km in 10 days. Hence, you should still give lots of money. The money raised is used to help do what Woll does—take young people into the mountains for a mutually beneficial experience. If so inspired, please support a walker by filling in this form.

n.b. If you would like your donation to be tax deductible, please phone Wollangarra to arrange this.

### *Alpine Walk Sponsorship Form*

Sponsor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsor's Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Walker to sponsor: \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsor at the rate of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per km for 140 km ...

... or \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for the entire trip.

I would like a receipt: Yes / No

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please make cheques payable to Wollangarra.*

## Stage 2 and 3

These have been some crazy old times of late, and as such we have not run any regular Stage 2 or 3 courses since last newsletter. The plan was for Stage 3 to rebuild the chimney on Guy's Hut, up near Bryces Gorge. Well, no-one in their right mind would have gone up there in December. As for Stage 2, we would have done some work up near Gantner Hut, near Mt Howitt and the Crosscut Saw. The hut, by the way, did not burn down, contrary to popular belief.

However, there was a bit of a fencing expedition that occurred. The fires caused major damage to people's fences, over 100km in some instances. So, it seemed fitting that if we couldn't get young people up into the mountains, we could get them at the base of the mountains helping to clean up some of our neighbour's burnt fences. For a few days they toiled and tidied and tugged to roll up sections of burnt wire and blackened stumps. It wasn't that much in the great scheme of things, but it was a bit.

Now, though, things are more back on track, so all you Stage 2 and Stage 3 folk, get back up here and get your back into it with some good old hard yakka. There's plenty to do, especially with the local walk, and we need your help. Once that job is done, it will be up into the higher reaches of the high country once more for some alpine action. See you then.

## Wish List

- Track pump and nozzle for inflating footies and bike tyres
- High quality allen keys (metric and imperial)
- Impact driver and bits
- Woolen gloves and mittens
- More woolen gloves and mittens (or polar fleece)
- Inner sheets, either cotton or silk, but not flannelette (too bulky for the packs)
- Nutella
- Fire fighting knap sacks
- Drill bits, small, and lots of them, for pre drilling holes before nailing
- Whistling kettle (no electric kettles, please)

## From the Visitor's Book

*I've had the best time of my life here! I've met some really nice people here. I can't stop laughing. Woll takes the best out of everyone and we see the best of life.—Tish.*

*The modern day society pays no heed to the diverse range of activities constantly occurring in remote locations where there are lower availability of resources, e.g. apricot jam. However, for the duration of our stay at Wollangarra our knowledge of the environment, Ryvitas, radioactive carrots and apricot jam has been enhanced... Only when a man is in the country, to they have the capacity to think about the important things of life, especially excessive consumption of apricot jam.—Anon from Melbourne Grammar.*

*The construction site where we are replacing the bases of the verandah posts. And next, if you thought this was a "Ken free" edition of the Wollangarra newsletter, well, you'd be wrong. Here is again, hard at it putting a cowl onto the flue at the outdoor kitchen. Ken has been going cowl crazy, with the Stage 3 building sporting a brand spanker, and in the background you can see some of Ken's earlier work. Can Ken be stopped? I don't think so.*



## The Staff Hike...

Traditionally, the staff hike is a chance to get to know one another while having a stroll around the countryside, taking in the sights and smells of the alpine area. Well, anyone that had that in mind would have been sorely disappointed with this year's Staff Hike... from Hell!

For one, it's hard to be peaceful and calm when we're all carrying rakehoes and a chainsaw. It's hard to be happy when you realise that you put the 2 stroke fuel and bar oil on the inside of your pack with all your gear. It's hard to be happy when you forget your pack liner, and you experience the prelude to a storm that ended up sending cars down the main street of Licola—without anybody in them.

You see, the staff hike was also a track repair mission—learn the hike, and do just “a bit” of maintenance. Well, there was more than a bit. The very start of it took ages, with a huge tree covering a massive section of the track on very steep terrain. We only made it as far as Orchard Flat that first night, and we were all pretty stonkered. From there, it all went downhill. We were caught out in the middle of the aforementioned storm—at least I had the chainsaw helmet to protect my head from the hail. Pity about everything in my pack getting wet, though. Things got bad the second night, when everyone was cold, wet and hungry. A few of us stayed to work on the track, while others went ahead. The fire took a long time to start, and Gareth's “drying out pile” became very dry indeed, and then we had a bonfire. Hard to cook on a bonfire. Oh, and the river flooded, and the water was the consistency of a chocolate milkshake. Filtering it through thermals helped, but not much. And then, who brought the ground-sheets? Out of the five of us, not one. It was a sloppy old ground by that time. And a sloppy old mood. Our darkest to date, I would say.

But, we pulled through, each of us with 10 fingers and toes (that was a bit hit and miss after some “chainsaw fun”) and we survived to tell the tale.



*From top: an ominous sign—not really friendly, is it? The crew on the first section of track after leaving the flat, and that ended up being an easy one; Gareth and Jo having a bit of time out, on the night that we nearly all throttled each other; and Ross showing his taste in fashion that explains why he's out at Licola and not living in Melbourne anymore.*



## Masters in Education (Research) by Jen Willis— Invitation to Participate

Dear Wollangarra Ex Staff and Young People,

Since heading out into the world following on from our treasured years directing Wollangarra, I have been working on my Masters Degree in Education.

I am researching factors influencing young peoples' decision to return on Wollangarra programs, and am hoping to interview 5 ex-staff and 10 young people between now and the start of June.

These interviews will be conducted in person, and will require no more than about an hour of your time.

To participate, you must have either attended at least three Stage 2 programs or worked at Woll as a staff member for at least one year.

If you are willing and interested in being involved in this project please contact me asap via email: [jcwill@student.monash.edu](mailto:jcwill@student.monash.edu) or at work on- 03 5777 2208.

Looking forward to catching up with you and hi to everyone! Jen

### We Need A New Guy...

Group of five males and females WLTM male with GSOH for FTA. Must be DTE and preferably NS, but not OHAC. Willing to experiment with alternative living conditions, get pretty dirty and not get paid much. RSVP soon.

### *Ode to Mother Nature*

*Mother Nature*

*She's a funny old bod  
As far as this season's gone  
It's been quite odd*

*Fire then flood  
It's been a real hoot  
Make's me want to do circle work  
In my ute (if I had one)*

*December not a good time  
To go on hike  
Lucky I had my mates:  
Chris, Nick, Ross Davis, and Mike*

*We fought long and hard  
Hour after hour  
We were pretty smelly  
Good thing we saved the shower*

*Our eyes were teary  
And our legs a bit numb  
It was a bit of a pity  
We couldn't save the big Manna Gum*

*Then the rains came  
We were doing track work at the time  
Never before had I been*

*So covered in grime*

*This is why:  
The 2007 crew are hard to beat  
Except we were all a bit dull  
We didn't take a single ground sheet*

*We survived all that  
We stood the test  
Now we are still here  
To face the rest.*

*- Anon*

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*Note: new stock of shirts are regular sizes; old stock—order 2 sizes larger than normal.*

## Thankyou To...

- Dave and Chris—Rally driving
- The rest of Aerial, Yohann and Phil—for putting up with the Wollies
- Will, Tony and Robin Ford—new chainsaw, chaps and helmet
- Will Ford—New chaps to replace the ones he wrecked
- Loz and Steph—Cooking during Wilderness First Aid
- Karen MacKenzie—something about chocolates
- Clare Wall—Nice welcome card
- Rowan Lamont—Donation
- Masons—Big Donation (more next newsletter)
- Cathlene—Hospitality
- Alby Drew—Donation and watering can
- Neville and Carol Clarke—Donation
- Audrey Graham—Donation (which was spent in Heyfield, as requested!)
- Tim Macauley—Donation
- RL and DF Andrew—Donation
- Victor Borg—Donation and book
- All the supporters that came to the supporters dinner
- The MacCallum Family—for still putting up with us, another year down the track. And for taking on more battery charging.
- Brooke Warren—organising and conducting the Alpine Walk
- Ken and Helen—helping out with the route for the Alpine Walk
- Toby Billington—being staff on the Alpine walk at last minute
- All the Alpine Walkers, but more of that next issue.
- Mittagundi—doing the food and hosting of the Alpine Walk (we'll do a bit more next year!)
- Peter and Tryhorns Supermarket—food donations, especially the chocolate ones
- Ken and June Medew—for assistance and patience, when we tell June we've lost the bags she made, then we find them again.
- Helen Collins—Too much to mention here
- Ross Davis—Baby sitting



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