the jolly thing

STEELS CREEK COMMUNITY NOTES - NO. 137 February - March

'FIND OUT WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE VALLEY' www.steelscreek.vic.au

Past, Present, Future.

This edition of *The Jolly Thing* includes a supplement commemorating the 10 year anniversary of the Black Saturday Fires that so deeply affected our community and many others further afield. The supplement acknowledges this past, now woven into the rich tapestry of Steels Creek.

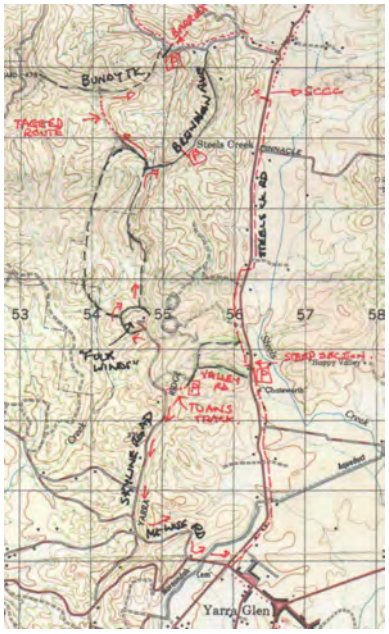
With time, happiness, achievement and hope have returned. Today we can see completed projects such as the refurbishment of the Steels Creek Community Centre and Tennis Club, and the creation of the Steels Creek Walking Track that links this Valley from north to south. Frequent community events that bring together the old and new folk of the Valley are not-to-be-missed highlights on all our calendars.

Today we are together with each other.
The future is unknown but bright and exciting.

Surrounding the supplement is life in Steels Creek as we know it. Rich with story tellers, artists, gardeners, tennis players, hikers, bikers, horse riders, tinkerers, collectors, old folk, new folk, kids, more kids and even more kids… *this is the spirit of Steels Creek.*

GET OUT THERE! *Exploring our local environment and nearby places with Peta Whitford.*

This edition takes you to #2 <u>Tuans Track</u> Where is this, how come the track exists?



Tuans Track is located at the southern end of Uplands Rd (off Valley Rd) and ascends to Skyline Road. The track was established by the Dymond family, who own the land on which the track has been built. It was constructed by the family in the memory of their son, Michael, who died in 2002, who was the main track builder. The family allow public access of the track enabling the public to easily travel between Uplands Rd and Skyline Rd. The track is approx. 600m long, winding upwards for easy walking to Skyline Rd. Local residents help with regular maintenance of this track to keep it open and well looked after. It is named Tuans Track after the small brush-tailed Phascogales, known in Victoria as Tuans, which are found in this immediate area. **Accessing Tuans track opens some good loops for walking.** There is limited parking at the start of the track (3 cars max) on Uplands Rd, so you may choose to leave the car at Valley Rd/ Steels Creek, walk up Valley Rd, turn left into Uplands Rd and walk up the steepish road to the start of the track. Then walk up Tuans Track to Skyline Rd

Option #1 from Skyline Rd
Turn left and walk along Skyline Rd enjoying the magnificent views eastwards across the Yarra Valley towards Healesville and southwards towards Mt Dandenong. Mt Wise Rd is a good route to descend down to the Eltham - Yarra Glen Road and at Steels Creek Rd join the Steels Creek Track and walk north to your car at Valley Road.

Option #2 from Skyline Rd
Turn right and walk along Skyline Rd northwards. After approx. 1km there is a locked gate, walkers can move around the gate and continue along the driveway another 200m. Here there is the steep driveway to the Private property of “Four Winds” and to the left is the walking track contouring around “Four Winds”. Take this track which eventually meets up with the National Park 4WD track along the ridgeline, as a continuation of Skyline Rd. After approx. 2.3km the road curves to the left and there is a gate on the RHS, take this track as it leads to the top of Brennans Avenue…where you may have parked a car shuffle vehicle, or you can continue downhill (steep) to the Old Kinglake Rd.

Option #2 extension.
From the gate leading to Brennans Ave, follow the road to the left. After approx. 500m you will find the beginning of the taped route - fluro pink tapes on trees (1 km) through the open bush, to Bundys Track. Once on Bundys Track turn right and go down the steep foot-track to the car parking area on the Old Kinglake Rd.

Contact me, the intrepid local explorer, for map advice and how to ’get started’ - piwhitford@bigpond.com

Steels Creek Book Group Review

Julie Riddell

December - *The Whites* Richard Price

Only three of us managed to finish reading this book. We all know that if you persevere through the beginning of a non-engaging story, you nearly always end up finding the story improves and can end up thoroughly enjoying it. However, hardly anyone was motivated to persevere with this one. According to the blurb on the cover it's an American crime novel. Maybe we could be polite and blame Christmas busy-ness for not finishing reading it.

November - *Fire In The Blood* Irene Nemirovksy

An already established French novelist wrote this story during the 1930s but it wasn't published until 2007. A result of a lost, then years later found manuscript, following the author's arrest and subsequent death at Auschwitz during WW2. It has many relationship twists, secrets and social get-togethers in a rural farming community. The writer's style includes interesting quotes about the progression of life from youthful energy and 'fire' through to 'quiet' years and old age. There are also beautifully worded descriptions of the natural countryside.

SCCC bookgroup currently has ONE VACANCY, please contact Julie - 0422 424 694 if you're interested in joining. In the meantime, all our books are available to borrow from Eastern Regional Library.

Yarra Glen Art Group

Malcolm Calder

The Art Group has started the new year enjoying the air conditioned luxury of the Community Centre on some rather hot Thursdays. In addition to our usual activity, January is the month we assemble the new "mini works" that are hung as a panel in the main hall. This project was started by Margaret Brewster several years ago and it has become an established tradition. Keep an eye out for the new panel.

Local Art and Exhibitions

Ivan Filsell

There is still time to catch the Patricia Piccinini / Joy Hester exhibition at Tarrawarra Museum of Art. The theme *Through Love* Showcases the work of these two contrasting modern artists. Joy who had a sad life and died in 1960 aged only 40 years, after four major exhibitions, never sold a painting in her lifetime. Patricia on the other hand is a highly sought after and successful current artist.

At a recent visit to the NGV Ian Potter Centre, I was pleased to find that the 18th century and 19th century Australian art galleries and the DR Brown collection have all been revamped and modified. One highlight was *Celebration* by William Barrack, which was prominently displayed.

Currently on display at Art at Linden Gate is work by Chinese-Australian contemporary artists (left "Geisha" by Hong FU. This is great work and on until 11th Feb. Later from 8th March until 15th April is Craig Penny, described as a master colourist. He will be showing his delightful travel scenes. ***Enjoy our art.***

Yarra Glen Art Show 2019 Call for entries

March 9 - 11 2019

The Yarra Glen Art Show committee is now accepting online entries for the 2019 Art Show to be held at the Yarra Glen Memorial Hall March 9-11 2019 www.yarraglenartshow.com.au There are 4 prizes: **Best 2D**, Judged by Aimee Frodsham, **Best 3D**, Judged by Savaad Felich, **Youth Prize** (15 – 25) Judged by Reggie Clark and **People's Choice** award. If you need help with an online application, please let us know at info@yarraglenartshow.com.au **Entries close February 5, 2019 or sooner if capacity is reached.**

THE JOLLY JNRs

#Screekylife

Schools back and so is Uni...
It's time to set some goals!

Having goals for things we want to do and working towards them is an important part of being human. The path towards our goals may not always run smoothly or be easy, but having goals, whether big or small, is part of what makes life good. It gives us a sense of meaning and purpose, points us in the direction we want to go and gets us interested and engaged, all of which are good for our overall well-being.

Soooo, what are your goals for semester one? What are your goals for semester two, and what could you do in semester one to reach it? How will you celebrate when you achieve it?

Decide. Write it down. Share it with your folks. Give it a go. Keep going. Celebrate!

What can you throw but can't catch?

*Answer on Page 19

Term 1: 30 January (students) - 5 April

A reminder to those who will be turning **18 years** of age in the coming months… The federal election is flagged for April or May, that means it's your time to step up. Follow the link below and get your name on the electoral roll.

www.aec.gov.au/Voting/files/guide-enrolling-voting-large-print.pdf

We made a new friend on our trip up Old Kinglake Road.
A good thing to come out of a punctured tyre! Tom C

What are you into? What's happening in your backyard? Let us know! scjollything@gmail.com

The Fox Conundrum

Keith Montell

Since reading Roald Dahl's children's book 'Fantastic Mr Fox" I've felt a certain empathy for this beautiful but predatory animal.

The fox was introduced to Southern Victoria in 1871 to provide sport and to help keep rabbit numbers under control. It has since spread across the continent and, like the rabbit, is considered a pest. Since its introduction the fox has caused considerable damage to the sheep industry and to the natural environment. We've witnessed two foxes running down a wallaby. Fortunately, when the car stopped the foxes ran off. The wallaby was able to regain its strength and move to a safer location. Fox numbers vary from time to time but at the moment they seem to be quite prevalent. They are occasionally seen slinking stealthily around the boundaries of our paddocks. This little specimen was a recent visitor to our property. It behaved just like a puppy, tugging at trouser legs and snuffling shoes. It was timid but not afraid and we wonder if it had been hand-reared. Not wanting to encourage it we shooed it away speculating on the likelihood of its survival.

A few days later we were driving down the driveway keeping a look out for kangaroos. The roos usually gather along the side of the road, making the most of the fairly lush green grass that grows there (a rare phenomenon around here!). A number of kangaroos of various sizes bounded across in front of the car leaving in their wake this same little fox. It had clearly been part of the grazing mob. A very confused little creature!

Steels Creek Tennis Club

Ed Bartosh

Pizza Lovin' Screekians!! They're back! Justine and Damian are back in 2019 with their ginormous pizza truck to serve up a feast for the pizza lovin' folks of Steels Creek at the Steels Creek Tennis Club.
Saturday March 30 RSVP to Maree by Friday March 22
Saturday May 11 RSVP to Maree by Friday May 3
$10 adult / $5 primary school-aged kids / 6pm **/** All you can eat! - BYO Drinks
Maree Rothwell - maree@rothwells.com.au - 0414 278 649

Thursday Night Social Tennis: Now open for the Summer for the new season. Come have a social hit or practice with the new ball machine. It's all there at your Club. From 7:30pm.

Membership: The membership year runs from July through June the following year. Please consider renewing your membership or joining for the new year. Fees are the most reasonable around - we just want the Club to remain viable and a treasured community asset. Membership forms are on the web site and FB page.

Competition tennis: The Saturday tennis team is doing very well. If you have an interest in a competitive hit on Saturday afternoons, contact Kate Bray at 0447 148 718.

SC4 Reel Film Club

March 15 Dinner 6pm \ Film 7:30pm

The 2019 Film Club kicks off again on **Friday March 15**, Keith is keeping us in suspense so you'll have to come along and find out what's on the big screen. We look forward to you joining us for guaranteed laughs; suspense; and drama together with fine food; good company and a movie in our Gold Class venue. $10 per person plus $4 for the Centre. For those able to provide food it's just $4 donation for the Centre. Please RSVP for catering purposes and please also let me know if you are able to supply a main course, salad or dessert. Lindy - 5965 2202

Steels Creek Landcare Group CALL FOR MEMBERS

Angie Lloyd

The SCLG Committee is looking to refresh and reinvigorate our Landcare Group in 2019, so we are sending a hearty call out to all current SCLG members to take a more active involvement this year!

What do we need? We need more Committee Members! We are currently running with just a handful of committee members and whilst we are keeping up, we desperately need some new ideas and input from enthusiastic landcarers willing to help strengthen our committee.

What's in it for you?

- ➔ Contribute to the decision making process
- ➔ Make new friendships and strengthen old ones
- ➔ Be involved in the ongoing development of SCLG
- ➔ Make a difference to your community!

What's in it for us?

- ➔ Your skills, enthusiasm and point-of-view
- ➔ New ideas and projects
- ➔ Your attendance at just 5 short (1hour) meetings a year
- ➔ Broader representation of our membership base.

To join or for further information please contact us by email: steelscreeklandcare@gmail.com

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Steels Creek Garden Club

Jill Hess

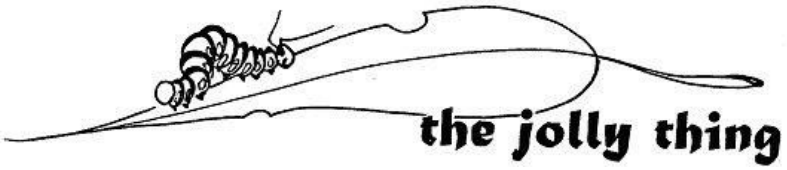
Steels Creek Garden Club will begin 2019 with a BBQ on Tuesday 12th February at Shirley and Andrew Cleaveley's home, 67 Uplands Road Yarra Glen, starting at 5:30 pm. BYO chair, plates cutlery, drinks, meat and salad or dessert to share.

NOW IS THE TIME TO… This extreme weather is likely to continue, so it's hard to know what one should be doing in the garden in February. Generally, this is a busy month in the garden and it's best to garden in the early morning. Keeping water up to plants is time consuming, but it is a pleasant occupation in the cool of evening or at break of day for gardeners in dry areas. Please don't forget to fill the bird-baths as you go. Keep the colourful part of your garden blooming longer by snipping off dead flower heads - you can do this while watering. Do not water roses overhead in warm or humid weather, as this can encourage fungus diseases such as Black Spot and Mildew. You can prune pelargoniums hard this month, but do not water for a few days beforehand, as this could cause a rush of sap to the cut area and perhaps set up rot in the stem end. **Water, mulch, water, mulch, water, mulch**……. this should get you through this blistering period. Plants can get sunburnt and/or wind-burnt too! We can't slap sunscreen on them, so we must find other ways to protect them. Shade cloth, sails, old umbrellas – anything that can easily be put up and down as the weather fluctuates from day to day. Once a plant has been burnt, leave it as you would leave frost-burnt plants. *Thanks Noela!*

A REMINDER… We're still in Fire Danger Period

During the CFA Declared Fire Danger Period, property owners can apply to the Municipal Fire Prevention Officer for a permit to burn, for fire hazard reduction purposes only. Applications will only be considered where there are extenuating circumstances and the material is presenting a significant fire risk and where there is no alternative. In other words, get yourself a permit if you need to burn off!

BLACK SATURDAY STEELS CREEK COMMUNITY COMMEMORATES 10 YEARS



Commemorative Supplement 07.02.2009

Reflections on the 10th Anniversary of Black Saturday

Rob Gordon

As we approach the decade after Black Saturday, our thoughts turn to how to remember and what to do to mark the time. We gain a sense of time from the markers showing its passing – minutes, hours, days, anniversaries – especially the 10th anniversary, because the decade is a unit of time and marks the completion of a cycle and the beginning of another.

Disaster brings irreversible changes. Although there is talk of recovery as though you can "return to normal" anyone who has been through a trauma knows there is no returning to life as it was. Life is irreversibly changed by it and this is what has to be accepted. The event is like a watershed – when you cross it, all the flows go in a new direction.

After such an event, the task is to make the new life express what was and still is important, valuable and meaningful, since these are what give life its purpose and joy. Black Saturday broke the flow for many people and disrupted their quality of life. What came after cannot carry what was there before. That is when we have to find what has not been destroyed, what has been found and build a new life around it.

Tragedy threatens to fall out of time and keep returning all the fear and pain by the reminders, by hot summers, by smoke. The only solution is to feel it becomes part of history; then it gradually recedes into the past. But it is not forgotten – how could it be? History is a story constructed to put the events together. The story tells us something important about who we are – the tragedy then becomes part of our survival and our identity as survivors.

Identity is the idea (or story) we have of ourselves. It is not a single, definable idea, it includes all the experiences' events, relationships, feelings, values that make up the fabric of our lives. But these elements only become an identity when they are formed into a whole that combines the elements into something in which we can recognize ourselves.

Part of this combining happens in the background as we live on and things settle. Another part comes about as time passes when we revisit and remember, tell the stories about the important events and consequences again and again from different vantage points. We do that whenever we are reminded but an important means of doing it is whenever the anniversaries come round and another year has passed. We can ask "where are we now? What have we lost? What have we retained? What have we created?"

We can do part of this in our own minds. But an essential part is how we knead together these elements – memories, feelings, thoughts, ideals, hopes – in conversation with our communities – our families and friends who know us intimately, but also with those who are not such intimate parts of our lives, but live in the same place or went through it too. The 10th anniversary becomes a marker – the completion of a cycle that shows a new watershed as the flow is towards the future of the next decade.

Identity has so many facets we need many ways if combining experiences to from a whole. Any sort of personal or public commemorations, memorials and gatherings help, because they are symbolic, and symbols touch a deep layer of our being beyond our everyday awareness. They touch the place where dreams and creativity come from – dreams and images that amalgamate our feelings and experiences so that we can feel whole. Participating in whatever events we feel comfortable with as the 10th anniversary comes upon us gives us a sense of accepting it and being active about it. Talking, sharing, being together with those who make our lives meaningful help forge our new identities.

Although it may be painful to remember and revisit what happened 10 years ago, there are benefits from doing it in a supportive community. Forming our identity might be like kneading dough for bread – we tackle it and push it this way and that and make sure everything is included and blended; then the loaf hangs together and rises and nourishes us.

Black Saturday Commemorative Events

A few events, very much in Steels Creek's vibe we might add, have been organised for those who would like to get together. *Our community are encouraged to commemorate this day as it feels best for them individually or as a family.* Here are a few dates to put into your diary:

Wednesday February 6 Rob Gordon Talk. **7pm at SCCC**. Rob Gordon, a local resident, and internationally renowned psychologist and disaster recovery consultant, will talk once again to our community. This year about long term recovery, adjusting to big things in the past and how we adjust our sense of identity with them. Rob's talks following the few months after Black Saturday were very much valued and reassuring. We encourage new and existing families, especially our teenagers and young adults to come along. We will conclude the session with a light supper.

Thursday February 7 Reflection Walk. **9:30am Start. Meet at SCCC.** A short morning walk along Steels Creek track, followed by refreshments at SCCC, a gentle walk for those who would like to be together.
Yarra Glen Commemoration. **5:30-7:00pm** McKenzie Reserve

Saturday February 9 Market Day. **10am start at SCCC, no formalities or silences, our Steels Creek Market gathering and luncheon - bring a plate to share!** This is a market not to miss and we invite everyone who currently lives here, those who have moved away, and those who have had a deep connection with this community to come and share this day together. Sckreekians, near and far, are asked to bring a piece of their Steels Creek history to display in the old school. We would love these to be donated so they can form part of a more permanent display. *Example: a photo of their property then and now, a piece of artwork, or old school pics from the Steels Creek School or perhaps you have a pile of newspaper clippings... make it part of our display.* All event enquiries to Maree Rothwell - maree@rothwells.com.au - 0414 278 649

At the first post-fire market, burnt potatoes and apples were auctioned raising $150
- Jane Calder

'Once the bush had started to regenerate in earnest I would walk along the Brock Spur Track that towered above our property at Dixons Creek. There was so much regrowth that as I walked butterflies would emerge from the bush and dance in front of me as I walked. It was both beautiful and amazing and showed how nature has everything under control. The millions of saplings could not all grow so caterpillars eating fresh growth would eventually allow only the survival of the fittest trees and shrubs.'
Words and Artwork -Robyn Henchel

Remembering the Kindness of Strangers, the Support of Friends - Lindy Montell

The other day we ordered a delivery of water which always reminds me of the days immediately following the bushfires. Dave, the local water carrier, was our first visitor. We had ordered water on the Friday – the day prior to Black Saturday. As he knew we were short of water and had heard we were still here, he was determined to find a way through. On the Monday he loaded up with water, passed through the police road blocks, around fallen trees, avoided fallen wires

and debris and took short-cuts, where necessary, across paddocks. The sound of his truck chugging up the hill was a most welcome surprise and after feeling somewhat isolated we felt reconnected to the outside world.

Once we were able to leave the property our friends in Yarra Glen provided the luxury of a shower after days making do with a bucket. In the immediate aftermath of the fires the Yarra Glen Cafes refused payment for coffees and the bakery generously provided biscuits and cakes for our hastily convened Steels Creek community market gathering. Strangers offered us the use of their homes.

Colleagues from Keith's place of employment organised working bees to remove burnt fencing posts and wire, as did friends from the Morris car club. They then helped us clean up the paddocks and rebuild the fences. These occasions were a great relief and provided companionship and fun in a time of sadness and need. Yarra Valley Council workers who had come to inspect damage to properties in the area came back in their own time to help contain animals on neighbouring properties and clean up some of the mess. Friends and relatives assisted with cleaning smoke damage inside the house.

Local vets toured the area providing assistance to domestic and native animals where they could. Hay for the surviving domestic animals and pet food for dogs and cats was provided by donation.

Our Community Centre was rebuilt with funds from the Pipeline Authority but was designed and the build overseen by Lyn Matthews, a local retired architect.

These acts of kindness and practical support will not be forgotten and I'm sure were a common experience to all communities affected by the fires. The enormous generosity of the wider Australian community, for those who lost their properties, was also greatly appreciated.

On 7th February

- Confronted Us
- Frightened Us
- challenged Us
- Extended Us

Over the next few days

- Shocked Us
- Saddened Us
- Depressed Us
- Questioned Us

Over the following weeks

- United Us
- Organised Us
- Motivated Us
- Inspired Us
- Humbled Us

Now

- Reminds Us
- Haunts Us
- Taunts Us

Forever

- Changed Us

But Never

- Defeated Us

Stephen Shortis

Dixons Creek PS Nationally Awarded for Firestick Project

Brett Ellis

"Fire, grass, kangaroos and human inhabitants, seem all dependent on each other for existence in Australia; for any one of these being wanting, the others could no longer continue. Fire is necessary to burn the grass, and form those open forests.... But for this simple process, the Australian woods had probably continued as thick a jungle as those of New Zealand or America." Sir Thomas Mitchell, January 1847

In 2016, two parents from Dixons Creek Primary School attended the National Indigenous Fire Workshop in Cape York, QLD along with Wurundjeri elders and other aboriginal communities from across Australia. The aim to support Wurundjeri in finding out more about indigenous burning methodology and returning this knowledge to Victoria. The trip seeded the return of the Firestick Project and along with it the engagement of the school to help the local community. The school students, their parents, siblings, teachers and local aboriginal people and an indigenous fire specialist from Queensland were involved in the project.

With the knowledge of local elder, Uncle Dave Wandin, the school community went on Country and were educated about ancient indigenous land management methods and how it can heal community and land through the use of traditional burning methods. Once our school community was aware, the students were able to educate other students and adults at the Coastal Ambassadors Program and also present their findings at a Disaster Resilience Australia and New Zealand Education Network meeting in late 2017. They worked with Yarra Ranges Council to author and create a book "Shh the Parent Trees are Talking", which is about the Firestick experience which is helping to communicate their findings to many schools throughout Victoria. Four of our students presented their findings at the Reconciliation Day celebrations in Healesville, in June 2018. It was an enormous privilege and honour to be asked to present alongside prominent indigenous community members such as author and historian Bruce Pascoe.

With this traditional learning and sharing of knowledge, Dixons Creek Primary School was awarded the National Resilient Australia Award for 2018.

The school will continue to work with the local indigenous communities on programs that educate the students on the indigenous culture and continue efforts to increase the resilience of our students and the local community.

Photo L-R: Jennie Schoof, Uncle David Wandin, Lily Ellis, Kylie Scharble, Shanice Banks, Brett Ellis.

'The fires continue to bring up so many memories – of the absolute devastation, the loss of beloved community, animals, environment and property. There are many negative memories however my focus is on the way community pulled together in their grief and cared for each other. In a time of immense tragedy, the community showed both fortitude and shared grieving. Although not a 'true' Screekian I feel like I have been embraced, nurtured by, and included within this community. For me this was no more evident with the email tree set up after the fires to establish whether people were okay. I was gratified that I was able to advise of the new location of one of the residents – and it was also quite humbling to see that I was included. Later on the amazing women of Steels Creek Stitchers totally surprised me with a beautiful gift of a quilt which I have always treasured. A learning that I would like to contribute is that it is vital that the community own their recovery – however long it takes and that this need be respected and acknowledged by all. Walk alongside.' - Jeanette McRae

Still Full & Plenty Up The Creek

Erin-Maree O'Neil

We'd moved to Steels Creek from St Kilda, 10 months before the fires came. We'd chosen to live in Steels Creek because we had a sense that it was a lovely community, and that indeed is why we stayed. We're surprised at how long it has taken to rebuild and recover. It's been a deep and formative experience. The land regrew first. Then Henry who turns nine this February! This month we're building a machinery shed where one used to be. We think we're finally sorted!

Many sounds, smells, and how the wind blows hasn't changed. We still hear frogs in the billabong, and when we mow the lawn, can smell the lemon verbena where it was planted before. The magnificent pink sunsets have continued, with the preceding iridescent glow. We've changed though. We're more aware, and when we hear the wind blow we look and listen. We respectfully remember lives lost 10 years ago, and prematurely since. Now, as well as the dear life-long friends we've made in the unusual post-fire circumstances, new people have moved to Steels Creek, and oh what fun we have. Wine, music, tennis, community centre with a welcome nod to history. Wish the tiger snakes and blackberry wouldn't have found their way back, but hey, there's room for all.

Immeasurable and eternal thanks to all Screekians, friends down the road, in the next valleys; from near and far who have been with us over the past 10 years. We propose a deep and positive cheers (pinot noir of course) to the next 10 years in this beautiful place.

P.S. So many stories... Hoping this one will bring a wry smile remembering. When talking to telco not wanting to pay phone rental fee: There's no phone. The phone is melted. There's no house. We're not using the phone. Yes, there is still a phone number. Yes we want to keep that number, that number still works. But no, we can't answer the phone. There's no phone <repeat from start and continue repeating>.

I really enjoy reading *The Jolly Thing*, it brings back very happy memories of when I made regular visits to my brother and sister-in-law, John and Jenny Barnett. They lived very happily at Steels Creek until they perished on Black Saturday. I cannot believe it is 10 years, I remember so many happy times with them.

I'm so glad Steels Creek have moved on. Steels Creek and its memories, really good memories, will always be part of my life.

John had been in Australia for nearly all of his adult life, along with Jenny, a wonderfully beautiful lady with a great environmental mind which she shared with John. If two people were meant to be, it was John and Jenny or Jenny and John! They certainly went too early, as did many of their friends. I loved visiting Steels Creek. The people we would meet there and in Yarra Glen were always so friendly with us and were so understanding when I managed to fly out within days of the tragedy. It wasn't real when I saw it on the news at home and it still wasn't real until I went up the hill to John and Jenny's house – then it was real – too real. The image of their burnt-out Toyota stays imprinted in my head.

-Mark Barnett, UK 'John, Jenny and me'

Black Saturday in Kolkata

Peter Stanley

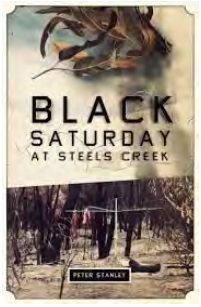
Because I'd written *Black Saturday at Steels Creek*, telling the story of how the people of Steels Creek faced the February 2009 bushfire, the events of ten years ago in your valley will always be a part of me. *Black Saturday* is one of the few of the books I've written not on military history of one sort or another, and the one in which I learned most about our Australia. It was also the one that was hardest to write – the people of Steels Creek trusted me to tell their stories, to explain a catastrophe that they had experienced but not understood. I found that the main sources for that understanding were the memories of those who had survived the fire, so writing a history of such a chaotic event, in which people only saw their tiny part of it, was demanding. The findings of the Royal Commission and especially the work of bushfire researcher Dr Kevin Tolhurst gave me the invaluable context to make sense of the mosaic of memories with which I was working.

One of my main interests in history is British India. Late last year I returned to India, to Jadavpur University, in Kolkata (formerly Calcutta), the capital of West Bengal. I had visited Jadavpur before – it's one of the very few Indian universities to research military history. I returned for a week-long fellowship, in which I'd present several lectures and workshops for its history students. But my hosts didn't just want military history: 'What else can you do?', they asked. I asked what they specialised in, and it turned out that Jadavpur's other strength was environmental history. 'Well, I said, let me tell you about a little place called Steels Creek …'

So, on a warm afternoon in November (Kolkata's 'cold weather' really isn't) in a run-down classroom crowded with wooden desks, speaking against the thrum of overhead fans, I talked about Steels Creek. Bengal has 'brushfires' in its hot, dry summer, but something like the vast inferno that swept through Victoria on Black Saturday was quite new to them. I spoke about the physical reality of the fire; how it started, how fast it moved, how furiously it burned and how much it destroyed. But mostly (because I'm at heart a social historian and not a bushfire expert) I spoke about the way people in Steels Creek experienced and remembered the fire, how it killed 11 people in the valley and how after it was over people who survived the fire in isolated houses and properties came together to recover from it as a community.

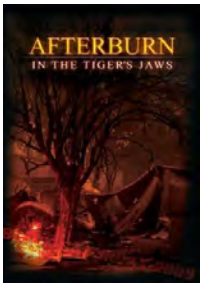
The students, who knew little about Australia and its environment, were (it seemed) curious – the photograph that aroused the biggest response was one of kangaroos in the valley. They tried to compare Steels Creek with Bengal's very different environment – its well-off retirees, wineries and B&Bs were hard for them to grasp. One striking absence in Steels Creek was the dearth of people – I was speaking in one of the most densely populated regions of the world about a community of a couple of hundred people in a valley ten kilometres long! And the reality of country so starved of water it that it burned was difficult to comprehend in a place that is flooded by an annual monsoon. But for an hour or so, Steels Creek's greatest ordeal became the subject of discussion in a classroom in Kolkata, not the strangest of connections I've made in a career in history.

In the years following Black Saturday, three publications were produced - two books and a documentary DVD. These are available for loan from the Steels Creek Community Centre:



Historian Peter Stanley tells the dramatic stories of this small piece of country on that one terrifying evening, of a community and the weeks and years that followed.

Historians Tom Griffiths and Christine Hansen trace both the history of fire in the region and the human history of the Steels Creek valley in a series of essays which examine the relationship between people and place.



Moira Fahy's remarkable film Afterburn, which traces the emotional experiences of three families as they rebuild their lives in the wake of Black Saturday.

Learning From Fire - Garden Design

Margaret McLoughlin

Black Saturday will be forever imbedded in our memories, we take nothing for granted and acknowledge all that we have learnt, and how much our garden has benefited from being formally landscaped since. We had our house designed with this type of event in mind, moving out to the country from comfortable suburbia, where the threat of a bushfire was never a serious problem. Fortunately we were in a position to defend, inexperienced as we were.

Our property is very steep, so the garden has always been a challenge. After purchasing a paddock, we quickly learnt about Australian native plants, and the concept of buying 'tubes' of these, and planting them 'three deep' along the roadside. Then came trees, before we even thought about what sort of dwelling to build, as we used to come at weekends to plant the boundary. Each plant's hole was dug by us, so our garden has become very much part of us, and has given us huge pleasure. When the fire destroyed two thirds of it, we were devastated, but it meant we had to rethink our garden's design and plantings, discovering which plants survived and why. This began a year long construction of our retaining walls and pathways, areas which are vital, we learnt, for breaking a fire's path. Our succulent interest escalated, as we embraced these wondrous plants with enthusiasm, especially aloes, as these were memorable plants from our native South Africa. In fact our King Proteas also survived the fire, so they also rose in our estimation. Sedum has also remained a 'wonder plant', having survived too. As our terraces were constructed, surrounded by wide pathways, new areas were added down the hillside. Cuttings were mostly used from existing succulents, but we invested a lot in replanting the garden generally.

Kindness and thoughtfulness will be forever noted and treasured, in the case of my much loved BOOK CLUB, who each donated a fruit tree for our orchard, and came to plant it. These are now espaliered, a concept I hadn't even entertained pre-fire. How sensible it has been for us, in our narrow, very steep area of orchard. World weather seems to be changing, with global warming, so our choice of plants has managed to cope with seering heat, frosty cold weather and whatever comes in between. We were advised not to put mulch around the house, so did try to spread stones where possible. However, our garden is generally well mulched, or how else does one's garden survive? Mass plantings have been very effective in our garden, something that didn't occur to me before we moved. I have learnt so much from new friends in this area plus the Garden Club in Steels Creek. My babysitting and other demands have prevented me from becoming an active member of this wonderful club, so my support comes very sporadically.

We are 'in heaven' for eleven months of the year. It is only at this time, late January, when we feel vulnerable to a bushfire. May we never again encounter another day like Black Saturday!

Yarra Glen Ritchies IGA Celebrates 10 Years

Ritchies IGA sits very deeply with the Yarra Glen and surrounding communities, not only was Black Saturday their official opening, but also a refuge for many people 10 years ago. Fortuitous that it was their opening, as Fred (Ritchies CEO), was in town to 'celebrate' which made the decision to give people access to supplies, food and drinks, and memorably, creating an animal nursery in the fridge aisles, a snappy one! Thanks to Fred and Yarra Glen IGA staff for the generosity then and over the 10 years.
We congratulate them as they celebrate their 10th year in our community.

Denise and I had only recently moved to Steels Creek to take up residence in the former home of Henk and Sari Vandenberg. We had lost our only son, Aidan, to Cystic Fibrosis in November, 2006, and the need for a change – and our love of wine - drew us to the rolling hills and quiet valley, and to the road that was only used by people who knew about Steels Creek.

As a hobby, I used to have a second hand book store in Richmond, but realized soon enough that I actually wanted a library and not a bookstore, so closed that down. Of course, having the store enabled me to collect 6,000 first edition hardcover books of all shapes and sizes, and the move to the Valley allowed me to have the collection in the one place for the first time. The bushfire took care of that though. The house and all 6,000 books. All that remained of the collection was three or four partial pages now preserved in a box. I still can't resist buying a good book, especially signed cookbooks, but the collecting is no longer the same. With the move to Kindle, iPhone and iPad, my latest "book" collection has been predominantly electronic.

As a personal tribute to this anniversary, I created three canvas pieces that acknowledge the impact it had on my book collecting. When I was young, my first foray into collecting was matchbox labels. So I cut, copied and printed 120 of the latest books I had electronically downloaded and pasted the book covers onto the matchboxes. Using a fire tool to display book covers was deliberate and symbolic. I then attached three of the reading devices I have used over the last ten years, including my first Sony eBook Reader and first Kindle, to each canvas. Forty matchbox books were haphazardly arranged around each eBook device (whose book collection is ever an orderly one anyway!). As each book holds a story, each life holds a story. These canvases are not only a tribute to my lost collection, but also an acknowledgment to those who perished, whose stories ended on that day.

- Patrick McCann

Beannacht

On the day when
the weight deadens
on your shoulders
and you stumble,
may the clay dance
to balance you.

And when your eyes
freeze behind
the grey window
and the ghost of loss
gets in to you,
may a flock of colours,
indigo, red, green
and azure blue
come to awaken in you
a meadow of delight.

When the canvas frays
in the currach of thought
and the stain of ocean
blackens beneath you,
may there come across the waters
a path of yellow moonlight
to bring you safely home.

May the nourishment of the earth be yours,
may the clarity of light be yours,
may the fluency of the ocean be yours,
may the protection of the ancestors be yours.

And so may a slow wind work these words
of love around you,
an invisible cloak
to mind your life.

Written by John O'Donohue (b.1956)
Contributed by Julie, Rob, Connor and Harry Fallon

Grapevine Cottage - *Morning of 8th Feb '09 and the same view today.* - Laura Lindsay

Planning for Fire | Part 1

Ivan Filsell

Many families have moved into Steels Creek in the last 10 years. Having been through a major fire I would like to share some insight into planning for fire. At this stage of summer we are in the middle of the fire season so it is not the time for major changes to your fire plan. It is time to observe your property and your neighbours and note what they do and why they do it. There is always time for fine adjustment and there are a couple of things that I found to be very valuable in preventing and combating fire.

The most important items are “gutter Plugs”, these simple devices, available from local hardware, are inserted into the top of the downpipes from house and shed gutters. They come in a range of sizes and shapes to fit most standard sizes. The sort of plug that I used has an aluminium backing plate with a high density foam plug attached. The foam can be shaved with a sharp knife if necessary to give a snug fit. If fires are threatening, put the plugs in all downpipes and fill the gutters with water. Check to see that the water level is holding, sometimes a plug will need adjusting. Once the plugs are in at this time of year leave them in until the fire danger has passed, you do not want to be up and down ladders taking out and putting in in the heat. If there is a shower it will top up the gutters and any overflow will damp down the surrounds. If there is substantial rains on the way obviously remove the plugs.

Check your hoses! 12mm hoses are not much good, they just do not deliver enough water. Consider 20mm hoses or larger. The most important factor is that all the fittings are compatible. You need to be able to fit any hose to any tap at a moments notice without looking for other bits. The other thing is to be able to join hoses together to give a long length. Having several joins is a good thing so that you can use several short hoses or one long one. Long hoses get tangled around trees and objects, having joins helps with quick release. When you can, replace all screw on taps with ball valves, these have a simple 90 degree turn from full on to full off. You will also need a box of spares in a convenient location, nozzles, connectors and joiners.

If you have plugs in and gutters full and a good set of compatible hoses you are well on the way to being prepared. The next step is to practice. On a cool day, put your plugs in, fill the gutters, and deploy all hoses in turn. Each member of the household should have a go, you never know what you might have to do in a real fire situation. Remember if you have practised you are less likely to panic in an emergency.

Part 2 to come - Long Term Planning

Have a safe summer

Be Well In The Ranges

Kinglake Ranges Neighbourhood House

Local support for wellbeing are now in place.
The 10th Anniversary of the Black Saturday Bushfires can be a difficult time and Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR) have funded a program for the community. Media and other reporting might raise emotions just like hot and windy days. We want you to know support is available. If you need to talk to someone we have five wonderful professionals, men and women, therapists, social workers, counsellors and psychologists that you can talk with to offer you support. You do not need a referral from a doctor, make an appointment freely and confidentially.

Services are available to people who:

- Live in and around the Kinglake Ranges (Flowerdale, Toolangi, Castella, Kinglake West, Pheasant Creek, Whittlesea, Steels Creek and nearby townships)
- Anyone who lives or works in these areas

You can access one or multiple sessions (depending on your needs) it could be any of the following:

- one-on-one counselling
- a therapeutic chat
- group therapy sessions
- music therapy sessions
- a volunteer or staff debrief session

Bookings: Please visit www.kinglakeranges.com.au to book anytime or call 0429 774 310 Monday - Thursday

Are you arty, crafty, into sewing, knitting or crochet? Maybe you're into metal or wood... Jo's looking for expressions of interest in a monthly get-together to sell your wares. What do you think? Get in touch with Jo 0407 832 765 or have a chat with her at the Commemorative Market - Feb 9 10am. She'll have her fabric Tote Bags, complete with lining perfect for shopping, or kinda/prep library bags for $12 and Wheat Bags too, ideal for sore necks $6.

Saturday Morning Market is a perfect time to pick up some eggs, veggies, jams and preserves, freshly baked goodies and home-made goats cheese. all Enjoy a cuppa, fresh scones and catching up on the Valley's news. Need we say more? See you there. 2nd and 4th Saturday. Next Market: Sat Feb 9 10am

The Weather Report by Barry Sheffield

We ended 2018 with good rainfall in December being 28 mm above average for the month but the poor rainfall earlier in the year meant we were 118 mm below average for the year. But we have had a very poor start to 2019 with the January rainfall being 40 mm below average. Mean maximum temperatures for greater Melbourne for December were between 2.3° & 1.1° above average with Coldstream being 1.6° above. Coldstream also had the warmest days on average for greater Melbourne for December at 26.9°. Mean minimum temperatures for greater Melbourne for December were between 1.9° & 3.2° above average, with Coldstream being 3.2° above. For 2018 Coldstream had a mean maximum temperature 0.8° above average and mean minimum temperature 0.3° above average. 2018 was Victoria's third-warmest year on record overall, with the State's mean temperature 1.14 °C above average. 2018 was Australia's third-warmest year on record, with the annual national mean temperature 1.14 °C above average. The January mean maximum temperature for Coldstream was 4.2° above average & the minimum 1.3 above average. The Melbourne January mean maximum was 2.4° above average & the minimum 3.2° above average.

RAINFALL – December 2018 - January 2019

Station	December 2018 (mm)	January 2019 (mm)	Year to end of November 2018 (mm)	Year to end of November 2017 (mm)
'Blackwood Hill' **Pinnacle Lane Steels Creek**	96.9	8.8	676.2	794
'Highlea' **Dixons Creek**	101	13.4	752.6	891.4
Melbourne Water **Melba Hwy, *Dixons Creek***	84	9.4	633.6	777
'Wandearah' **Japonica Drive Yarra Glen**	88.5	9.5	647.2	783.6

As we are on the eve the 10 year anniversary of Black Saturday I have included a table comparing the rainfall in 2008 with that of 2018. 2008 was the lowest yearly rainfall total that I have recorded since my records began in 1977. It was not only the year prior to Black Saturday that contributed to the very dry conditions, but the four previous years were all dry years. Looking at my figures 2005 was 681 mm (83 mm below average), 2006 was 512 mm (252 mm below average), 2007 was 525 mm (239 mm below average) and 2008 was 478 mm (287 mm below average). This meant that we went into 2009 with a rainfall deficiency of 861 mm or more than a full years rainfall.

Year	'Blackwood Hill' (mm)	'Highlea' (mm)	'Wandearah' (mm)	Coldstream (mm)	Melbourne (mm)
2008	**605.9**	**707.8**	**478.2**	**579**	**449.4**
2018	**676.2**	**752.6**	**647**	**707**	**514.4**

The Steels Creek Calendar is also available to view at www.steelscreek.vic.au

February 2019

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4 R Women's Group	5 Stitchers Art Show Entries Close	6 Rob Gordon Talk	7 Tai Chi Art Social Tennis Commemorative Walk SCCC Commemoration Yarra Glen	8	9 Commemorative Market
10	11	12 Stitchers Garden Club	13	14 Tai Chi. Art Social Tennis	15	16 Tennis Comp
17	18 R	19 Stitchers Book Group	20	21 Tai Chi Art Social Tennis	22	23 Market Tennis Comp
24	25 Growing Group	26 Stitchers	27	28 Art Social Tennis SMB		

ART Malcolm Calder 5965 2372
Thursdays 1:30 PM – 4.30 PM SCCC - Bring your paints; discuss your art and share skills.

BOOK GROUP Julie Riddell 0422 424 694
3rd Tuesday – 7.30 PM; 10 members – limited by library book resources. Lively discussions at SCCC.

FRIENDS OF YARRA FLATS BILLABONGS Kevin Heeley 9730 1704 kevinheeley@bigpond.com
Development of wetlands adjacent to Yarra Glen.

GARDEN CLUB at SCCC Jill Hess 9730 1960
Newsletter, outings 2nd Tuesdays, 60 members. Fourth Monday Growing Group, 9.30 am at SCCC– all welcome.

HEWI (Healesville Environment Watch Inc) Maureen Bond 5962 1224 hewisec@bigpond.com
Environmental issues at Healesville Living and Learning Centre, 1 Badger Creek Road.

HISTORY Helen Mann 9730 1875 www.yarraglenhistorical.websyte.com.au
The Yarra Glen & District Historical Society meets 2nd Sundays at 1:30 pm Yarra Glen Memorial Hall:

LANDCARE GROUP Angie Lloyd 0412 343 242, steelscreeklandcare@gmail.com
Ongoing projects and a great opportunity to obtain information and advice about tackling Landcare issues of significance to YOU! '

STEELS CREEK COMMUNITY CENTRE ONLINE BOOKINGS Or call Christine Tomlins 5965 2080
It's easy to check availability, fees, booking the Centre.

- Open the Steels Creek Community website www.steelscreek.vic.au
- Select the **SCCC** tab.
- Scroll down the page to find, **'Do you want to book the Centre for a function/event?'**
- Click on, **'Check availability and make an online booking enquiry here.'**
- Follow prompts for information, charges and to make a booking request.

March 2019						
Sun	**Mon**	**Tues**	**Wed**	**Thurs**	**Fri**	**Sat**
					1	**2**
3	**4 R** Women's Group	**5** Stitchers	**6**	**7** Tai Chi Art Social Tennis	**8**	**9** Market
10	**11** LABOUR DAY	**12** Stitchers Garden Club	**13**	**14** Tai Chi Art Social Tennis	**15** Movie Night	**16** Tennis Comp
17	**18 R**	**19** Stitchers Book Group	**20**	**21** Tai Chi Art Social Tennis	**22**	**23** Market Tennis Comp
24	**25** Growing Group	**26** Stitchers	**27**	**28** Art Social Tennis SMB	**29**	**30** Tennis Comp PIZZA NIGHT

MARKET Malcolm Calder 5965 2372
2nd and 4th Saturdays at SCCC, 10.00 AM Sharp! Community announcements, local fresh produce, preserves, baked goods.

MOVIES Keith Montell 5965 2202
2nd or 3rd Friday - March to November – 6.00 PM classy food followed by classic movies at SCCC.

SMB (really just a coffee and a chat, football and opera and anything in between!) Gordon Brown 9730 1937
Last Thursday 10.30 AM – 11.30 AM. Men's morning tea at Anita's Yarra Glen.

STITCHERS Jane Calder 5965 2372, Nola Matthews 0412 199 129
Every Tuesday, 1.30 PM - 4.00 PM at SCCC, since 1993. Bring own work – knit, patch, embroider, chat and friendship.

TAI CHI
Every Thursday in School Term time at SCCC. Hannah Sky 5965 2211

TENNIS Alby Leckie 5965 2354, Ed Bartosh 9739 1879, Lindy Montell 5965 2202
Since 1911.Newsletter, competitions, 60 active and social members. Monday or Wednesday 9am, ladies social tennis contact Lindy. Thursdays 7.30 PM* - Social tennis. Friday Locals Tennis - for adults and kids - 5pm last Friday of the month (Unless noted in calendar). Saturdays 1 to 5 PM regular competitions. ***Night tennis under the lights.**
Website: www.steelscreek.vic.au/community-groups/tennis-club

WOMEN'S GROUP - Evening Friendship Group Lindy Montell 5965 2202
1st Monday, 7.00 PM. Come for company, conversation, food and coffee. You'll be made most welcome for a pleasant evening of food and chat. Note: For current venue location, contact Lindy (5965 2202), or Christine (5965 2080).

R – Put out your recycle bin Government School Holidays / Public Holiday

THE STEELS CREEK GRAPEVINE

Want to be kept up to date on local Steels Creek events and offerings? *The Grape Vine* is an email only update on news and events that have missed the recent edition of the The Jolly Thing.
Go to www.steelscreek.vic.au/publications/the-steels-creek-grapevine/ to sign up.

*Answer: A party - Thanks Elin!

We'd love to hear from you

The Jolly Thing is a newsletter that captures the spirit of Steels Creeks community, it's got a long history of collecting and sharing every facet of what goes on in the valley.

Entertaining stories are always welcomed whether true or fictional as are **photos** of the area (preferably, together with a story) or to be used if they happen to suit the articles submitted.

Local groups' submissions are the backbone of The Jolly Thing and are very welcome.

Personal stories must be submitted by the person involved.

Promotion material will be considered for local businesses if there is value to the community.

Please email all pieces to scjollything@gmail.com
Thank you

The Jolly Thing Delivery

1. **Free e-mail subscription**. If you'd like to subscribe, **please visit** www.steelscreek.vic.au **to register your details**, or **use the link at the bottom of the email** and it will be included on the e-mail distribution list.
2. **Pick up a free copy** in the first week of the month of publication - (February; April; June; August; October; December). Available in Yarra Glen - Post Office, IGA, Newsagent, selected cafes and elsewhere and always at the Steels Creek Community Centre.
3. **By Post**. For an annual subscription of $6 we will post to you a copy in the week of publication. For this option please forward a $6 cheque and your full postal address to the following address:- Malcolm Calder, c/o the Steels Creek Community Centre, P.O. Box 72, Yarra Glen, VIC 3775.
4. By the **World Wide Web**. You can download T.J.T. from the web soon after the start of the month of publication. All editions from August 2003 are available. www.steelscreek.vic.au

200 Print / 270 Email / 13 Nations

DEADLINE for the next *Jolly Thing* is 27 March 2019

The Jolly Thing is published by and for the Steels Creek Community Centre Inc. (SCCC),
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Management Committee: President – Maree Rothwell Treasurer – Keith Montell Secretary – Christine Tomlins
Committee Members – Geoff Townsend, Mike Hardy-Dobney, John Brand, Morgan Calder, Mark Newell

We gratefully acknowledge Peter England (Hoogies), for support to the Steels Creek Community and *The Jolly Thing.*

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