



# Behind the Log

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Bush Search And Rescue Victoria, P O Box 1007, Templestowe Vic 3106

[www.bsar.org](http://www.bsar.org)

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BSAR appreciates the annual funding from the Department for Victorian Communities to Bushwalking Victoria, a component of which is put towards BSAR administration and training activities.

Editor of Behind the Log – Ren Millsom  
Next issue May 2010 - deadline 30 April

## Weekend Search Practice, Wombat State Forest, 10-11 October

BSAR is holding its annual practice weekend on the 10th and 11th of October this year. All members of Bushwalking Victoria who are of reasonable fitness, are competent with their navigation skills and are capable of pack carrying for four days or more are invited to attend the weekend.

This weekend provides those attending with training in the essential skills of bush searching through a series of workshops and a search scenario.

The event will take place in the Wombat State Forest, north-west of Melbourne. Transport for the weekend is provided by the Police Transport Branch. Seats will be allocated on receipt of application. Pick up point and parking is at the Police Bands Compound, Green Street, North-

cote at 0700 hrs Saturday morning. The bus will return to the pick up point at approximately 1800 hrs on Sunday.

If you wish to attend or if you have any questions about the weekend, please don't hesitate to ring or email Ross McKinnon on 03 9807 8774 (h) or [rmk@gwsc.vic.edu.au](mailto:rmk@gwsc.vic.edu.au).

Further details on the weekend are on the BSAR website at [www.bsar.org](http://www.bsar.org).

Members of clubs that are already involved in BSAR are asked to make arrangements with their club delegate rather than individually contact Ross directly.

**Closing date for those interested in attending is 2<sup>nd</sup> October.**

*Frank Zgoznic, Field Organiser*

## The Media contact with BSAR Members when on Searches

BSAR members attending a search are reminded to avoid discussing the search with media representatives without approval from the Field Organiser. Searchers are privy to sensitive and confidential information regarding the search and the persons missing. Discussions with the

media should then generally focus on the conditions and weather experienced by the group and avoid operational details and information or opinions about the missing person and their chances of survival.

*Frank Zgoznic, Convenor*

## BSAR searches for Government Minister Holding on Mt Feathertop

Twenty-four volunteer Bush Search and Rescue (BSAR) members were amongst the eighty searchers looking for Tim Holding, the Victorian Minister for Water, Tourism and Finance who failed to return after two days in rugged terrain at Mt Feathertop on 30 August 2009.

Conditions on the mountain were very cold, wet, snowy and windy with poor visibility. The snow level was at about 1350m. Tim was well equipped with protective clothing and bushwalking gear including food, tent sleeping bag, etc

At 0830hrs on the Sunday Tim Holding was approaching the summit when he slipped some 1-200m down a steep slope to the north-west. He declined assistance from a group who observed his fall, told them he was ok and indicated he would work his way around to the Bungalow Spur track and then off the mountain. He was reported overdue at about 2130hrs on the Sunday night.

BSAR was called out early on the Monday morning with members from north-east Victoria and Melbourne responding. The NE BSAR groups climbed up Bungalow Spur and searched in the vicinity of Federation Hut and camped overnight.

Once they arrived at Bright two of the Melbourne BSAR groups proceeded to Federation Hut ready to commence searching on the Tuesday morning. At around 1900hrs on the Monday night the weather conditions at Mt Feathertop were so severe and the terrain sufficiently dangerous that the combined PoliceS&R/BSAR steep snow and ice group coming in from Razorback North backed off the summit and camped overnight. In the morning they crossed the summit using ice-axe and crampons.

In the early hours of Tuesday morning Minister Holding's likely location was identified by an AFP surveillance plane. With improved weather conditions in the morning he was spotted by a media helicopter and an SES group high on North-West Spur. Shortly thereafter at around 1000hrs he was winched by Police helicopter from the rugged terrain below the snowline. After being reunited with his family and a check up by ambulance paramedics he was transferred by helicopter ambulance to the Alfred for observation overnight. Given his two nights out in the cold and wet conditions Tim Holding was hypothermic but otherwise in good condition.

Once the Minister has been evacuated, all BSAR groups lunched and moved off the mountain either via North-West Spur or via Bungalow Spur. A small number of members were lifted out by helicopter from Federation Hut.

BSAR members performed well in the severe weather conditions, poor visibility and steep terrain. The new lime yellow vests improved our visibility both at base and in the field. It is noted that a significant number of other members were available if a second callout was required.

As a result of this search BSAR will upgrade some equipment, is looking to purchase some additional group equipment and some specialist gear for use in snow searches. BSAR will also be focusing ongoing training to ensure all members are up-to-date with current procedures and use of equipment.



Packing at Northcote Monday morning.



Crossing the summit on Tuesday morning.

## Reminders for BSAR Members arising from the Mount Feathertop Search

- ◆ All members must formally sign on upon arrival at a search and sign off with the on-duty Field Organiser prior to departing for home. In some circumstances a phone call to the FO may be appropriate. This is a mandatory BSAR and Police requirement.
- ◆ Always check that you and your fellow group members have all necessary group equipment prior to leaving search base. This will include at least one CB radio, at least one HCx GPS, appropriate tentage within your group, etc. For a snow search this may include snowshoes and ski poles. Group Leaders have the responsibility to also check their Group.
- ◆ All members when going into the field overnight must have food sufficient for three days.
- ◆ If you are not confident in snow or have not previously camped in the snow then do not turn out for a snow search.
- ◆ BSAR members must not talk to the media during a search without first clearing it with the Field Organiser, who will in turn clear it with the Police. The Police Liaison Officer is responsible for issuing Press Releases and communicating with the media in Melbourne. All non-search media contact is coordinated via the BSAR Convener.
- ◆ The need to use mobile phone by Group Leaders from the field on a search highlights phone limitation in battery capacity. It is suggested that Group Leader members consider purchase of an AA battery charger for their phone to allow field recharging, if required. Typically they cost \$15-\$30 and are available for most phones
- ◆ For snow searches where snowshoes are likely to be used, members are encouraged to bring their collapsible ski poles if they have them. BSAR will also be purchasing some ski poles for snowshoes.
- ◆ Members must be practiced and competent in the use of all personal and group equipment, particularly in bad weather and steep terrain. This especially applies to snowshoes, GPS units and radios.
- ◆ Members are encouraged to bring and use their own GPS to a search. However, if they are to be used as the official GPS for the group they must have the same map data, have personal tracks and waypoints removed and be setup similar to the standard BSAR configuration. This ensures the correct datum, compatibility and ease of use by others in the group, if required. Also, the

tracks must be downloaded upon return to the search base. If there is any doubt or concerns take a BSAR HCx GPS as well.

- ◆ For accredited Steep Snow and Ice members it is important to bring all equipment you may require and only consider what field equipment you will actually need when on site, once you have a better idea of the task at hand. The weight of the equipment must be balanced against potential need.

*Rik Head, Field Organiser*

(A pair of Goretex gloves was found by Victoria Police after the search and is likely to be from one of the BSAR searchers. If the gloves are yours please contact Frank Zgoznic 0418 544 800.)



BSAR 5 camp north of the summit of Mt Feathertop



Police catering appreciated upon return to Bright.

## STEEP SNOW AND ICE TRAINING Mt Hotham 18 & 19 July 200

The 2009 steep snow and ice rescue training was conducted at Mount Hotham, with a focus on using the new BSAR avalanche transceivers. The weather was overcast and windy on both Saturday and Sunday.

Leaving Northcote at 0600hrs, we travelled in a Police bus to Mount Hotham, arriving late on Saturday morning. We utilized the garage at the new Mount Hotham Police Station as a staging and briefing location.

The Police had provided a theoretical training session at Williamstown prior to the weekend so that Saturday's training focused on the practical operational use of the new avalanche transceivers, probes and shovels. Two transceivers in "send" mode were buried in the snow to simulate buried victims. The search party then descended the slope spaced at 10 to 15 metres apart. Using the transceivers to home in on the "sending" units and then using the probes and snow shovels, the first search located the two transceivers in 12 minutes. The limit for finding victims alive is considered to be 15 minutes. The exercise was repeated a second time with a noticeable improvement in recovery time of 7.5 minutes.



This highlights the need for regular training with the avalanche transceivers to acquire and maintain proficiency in their use.

On Sunday after instruction from Sgt Simon Brand of Police S&R in the shelter of the garage, we set up and operated recreational z-pulley rescue systems. After lunch we moved to a steep slope on Mt Higginbotham to practice self-arrests outside the ski run area. On a slope with a good run-out, we practiced self-arresting when (a) sliding face down, (b) sliding face down and head first, and (c) sliding on the back and head first.

The participants were keen to learn to use the new avalanche transceivers, which will be used on searches

in high avalanche hazard situations. However, it must be noted that the transceivers do not actually provide protection from avalanches. The new avalanche transceivers performed very well during this training. They have several features that make them easier and quicker to use than previous models.

We camped overnight in the snow in a sheltered site on the secluded western side of the Mount Higginbotham. It was a good opportunity to demonstrate how secluded some of the alpine terrain on Mount Hotham is considering its proximity to the ski resort.

Conducting this training in winter meant that snow conditions were good. The briefing and dryland training session held earlier in Melbourne meant that some participants were able to engage in more activity in the field and spend less time on theory. Mount Hotham is a good venue for this training, with sheltered slopes available when inclement weather is encountered on the higher peaks.

*Peter Campbell, Field Organiser  
(adapted from Peter's report by Ren Millsom)*



Left: searching the slope. Above: using probes and shovels. Below: self-arrest with ice-axe.



More photos on page 8

## BSAR members assist in evacuation from Mount Bogong

In mid August Rik Head and myself were up on Mt Bogong for a week's skiing with friends and family. We arrived at Cleve Cole hut late one evening where we found that one young lady (Keira) had managed to damage her knee ligaments a few days earlier. She was spending her days hobbling around the hut, hoping for the weather to clear so that a helicopter could get her out.

Due to poor weather there was no helicopter forthcoming, so the Police Search and Rescue Squad, led by James Bate, arrived during the night to stretcher her out to awaiting vehicles.

On the morning of the 14th August a team of 8 policemen and 6 civilians (Rik, his son, myself and our friends) assembled outside Cleve Cole hut to begin a stretcher haul. We use the Ferno stretcher that resides at Cleve Cole for emergency purposes (it is similar to the one that BSAR used to keep for rescues until last year). With good snow cover that wasn't too icy and heavy clouds well below the us in

the valleys, we made good time across the Bogong landscape to the top of Eskdale Spur.

All rescuers were on skis or snow shoes. At the top of Eskdale Spur, we transferred to crampons and ice axes as the slope was steep and icy.

The police set up a snow pole belay and gently lowered the patient down the steep slope. At the intersection of Eskdale and Granite Flat spurs we transferred Keira to a packable stretcher called a Sked (BSAR still has one of these). The Police then used the Sked to slide and carry Keira the remaining two kilometres to their vehicles, while the rest of us returned to Cleve Cole with the Ferno stretcher.

It was a great effort for all involved. Keira got to hospital by mid afternoon and back in the hut we had a hearty lunch and dinner to make up for the morning's effort. We then followed this up with several days of great skiing.

Frank Zgoznic



## BUSHWALKING VICTORIA HONOURS BSAR MEMBERS

Bushwalking Victoria has recently honored eight persons for their contributions towards recreational walking in Victoria. The awards are in two categories, the first to individuals for Distinguished Service to walking generally and particularly to Bushwalking Victoria (previously known as the Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs) and to their own clubs.

A second category was to recognize individuals who had made special contributions in the wider community.

A third category honored five clubs that have provided important service to the walking community and to Bushwalking Victoria.

Of interest to BSAR are the following six individual recipients who have been members of BSAR or continue to be so in several capacities. (We count Bill Brand as one of us.)

### **For Distinguished Service:-**

#### **Graeme Allen** (Geelong Bushwalking Club)

Graeme is a foundation member of the Geelong Bushwalking Club and was the editor/coordinator of the first edition of "Walking the Otways". He has participated in BSAR for 15 years.

#### **Bill Bewsher**

(Melbourne University Mountaineering Club)

Bill vigorously promoted bushwalking, bushwalking leadership and skills training, safety and search and rescue, for almost 40 years. After joining MUMC in 1947, Bill was involved in BSAR for 35 years, being at the first meetings in 1949 when the Search and Rescue Section of FVWC was established. He was the first Convenor of the Section's committee and the main Field Organiser in the early years.

Initially the Convenor was the Field Organiser and in that capacity in 1952 at Marysville, Bill had to organize the whole search for the Police whilst he nursed a broken arm! Bill was the FO for many of the early searches until he handed over to younger members in 1970. He was then Police Liaison Officer from 1976 to 1983 for another ten searches. (The Scroggin Eaters, 1991.)

Much of the basic organization of BSAR today started under Bill's guidance in those early years.

#### **Stuart Brookes** Victorian Mountain Tramping Club.

Stuart is probably best known for his maps of the Victorian high country and popular bushwalking destinations from the 1950s up to 2000. Apart from making notes as he did trips, Stuart had a network of

people feeding him update detail to keep the maps relevant. Stuart has had a long and direct involvement with BSAR from its inception, as a search leader, FO and PLO. He was one of those who assisted Bill Bewsher in developing BSAR procedures in the early days.

Stuart was awarded the Order of Australia Medal in 1988 for services to bushwalking.

#### **Tom Buykx** Catholic Walking Club of Victoria

Tom has been an active member of the Catholic Walking Club and served on its committee in every position over the last 50 years.

Tom organized the work parties during the construction of the Federation Hut at Mount Feathertop in 1972. He is still an active participant in Bush Search and Rescue (BSAR) and has only recently stepped down as the CWCV delegate to the BSAR Committee.

#### **John Van Gemert** Geelong Bushwalking Club

John was a major contributor to "Walking the Otways", preparing maps, scouting and writing up walks. John has participated in BSAR for many years.

### **Special Recognition Awards**

#### **Bill Brand Victoria Police**

Bill Brand was a foundation member of the Police Search and Rescue Squad, which was set up in the late 1950s as the specialist group to provide both searching expertise and search management. Bill led the S&R Squad for many years and through his efforts this branch of Victoria Police built strong ties with the bushwalking fraternity and in particular with BSAR. Through many searches and BSAR practices, Bill was highly regarded and popular with our members. Bill retired as Senior Sergeant Officer in Charge of Search and Rescue in 1987.

#### **John Chapman, Author and Publisher**

John has produced bushwalking guidebooks and track notes over many years that have increased awareness of the quality and abundance of bushwalking opportunities in Victoria and made bushwalking accessible to a wide audience. He has also regularly written gear surveys which help create a greater understanding of bushwalking and the equipment necessary to enjoy the activity safely. John is a member of Maroondah Bushwalking Club. He is also an active searcher with BSAR.

*Prepared by Ren Millsom from BV notes and from The Scroggin Eaters, 199,1 by Graeme Wheeler.*



Steep Snow and Ice participants, Mt Hotham



A Bothy shelter in action.

If undeliverable, please return to:  
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Bushwalking Victoria  
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Templestowe Vic 3106

### **Behind the Log**