



STEELS CREEK COMMUNITY NOTES – Special Edition February 2009

### **Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> February**

**Innumerable homes destroyed, stock lost, friends killed, our community savaged.**

An unbelievably hot northerly sweeping over tinder dry forest and grasslands ignited by embers from the Kilmore fire 60 kilometres away exploded into the furious disaster that consumed Steel Creek. The southerly change which in the past gave welcome relief did not arrive with rain but just turned the fire around on a widened front speeding back up the valley.

Miraculous escapes were made as embers fell, trees burned and crashed onto roads cutting off escape paths. The Allans, Leckies, Stewarts, and Fredrickson's fiery drive via Hunts Lane, John and Lynne Derwins flight from Roundstone, Erin O'Neil and John Brand's drive back from Yarra Glen with the fire keeping pace with their car, Darichas dramatic rescue by Helicopter.

Some stayed and won the Houstons, Maurovics, Montells and Watkins; others stayed and survived but lost their houses, Eddie and Amanda Williams, Bruce and Rita Maskell.

As you drive up the road you wonder why some things were untouched, the Leckies 2,000 bale hay shed for one. The intact Community Centre with houses each side gone, wooden tables and chairs standing, sections of fence in place and at our place a string hammock unscathed.

The Age had a touching look at how the fire affected people in a report on Sunday 15 February. It can be read at <http://www.theage.com.au/national/listen-to-that-roar-its-coming-20090215-87y8.html>

A Community's strength can grow from overcoming adversity and the show of spirit has been inspiring eventually we will all gain from this disaster but we will always count the cost and remember those we lost

**Andrew Chapman**



**Community Meeting** Please pass the word that we are having a Community BBQ for **Sunday, February 22<sup>nd</sup> starting at midday**. The location will be the **still standing** Community Centre. All community members are invited, so please pass the word. This community means so much to all of us, and this will be a National Day of Mourning for sharing or silence or whatever - just to be together and to remember those who enriched our lives but did not survive the fire:

**Vale: Greg and Gail Leonard - Leigh & Charm Ahern - John & Jenny Barnett - Lyn James**

### **Steels Creek Focus for Global Generosity**

Dozens of people from around the world have responded to informational emails and horrible headlines because of their association with the Steels Creek Community and the Jolly Thing. We have our right donations from near and far ranging from money to tea and equipment; replacement spectacles; use of an automobile; and custom prestige jewellery for auction. Dozens of others have offered to open their cheque books to directly help The Steels Creek Community. The Committee is working on a plan to harness this generosity and to focus those who want to help as well as those who need help.

Contact **Mike Watkins** [mike.watkins@vic.australis.com.au](mailto:mike.watkins@vic.australis.com.au)



## ***S4Reel Film Club***

Screening on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> February:

Super Meal and company at 6pm. Films starts 7.30pm. All in Air-conditioned comfort

**The 39 Steps (1935) B&W** preceded by an Episode of **"Buck Rogers"**

Annabelle is running away from secret agents- she meets Richard- she ends up deceased and Richard is on the run trying to prove his innocence but everything is going wrong. Starring Robert Donat (Mr Chips) surely it couldn't have been him!

## ***Steels Creek Tennis Club:***

Another of our community assets was spared by the fires. The Tennis Club seems to have miraculously escaped – except for the water tank that burned and emptied to save the clubhouse. The Shire worked overtime to replace the tank, and added a couple of showers for those who don't have water or power at home. Competition was resumed on Saturday the 14<sup>th</sup> to provide a hint of normalcy. **Fran Bailey** and **Malcolm Turnbull** happened by while viewing the fire ravaged area and listened to stories from those who are working to save the heart of our community. Several merchants have donated rackets, shoes, shirts, and shorts to those who need replacements to get going again. Social tennis is continuing. Come and relax and get away from it for an hour or two.



## ***Help Available to Those Who Need It...***

We have to stand together and rebuild our community – but not just the buildings and fences. Many of our friends and neighbors are traumatized by their horrific experience and personal losses. Many of us have heard a neighbor who lost their house and all possessions say they don't need help – to "give it to someone who needs it." Well, time to do it in a neighbor. The Yarra Glen Memorial Hall is filled with people from government and aid agencies as well as insurance and utility companies with the purpose of giving a helping hand to those who need just a hand up to get going. Friends with nothing but the clothes on their back, perhaps understandably in shock at it all, need us to get them to the relief center at the old IGA for new shirts, pants, shoes, etc, and even a few toys for the kids who lost it all. It is easy to stand together in the good and easy times, but our true community will shine in this hour of hardship – where we must look after those who need a hand or a hug.

Many other resources are available and building. The Shire has placed a water tank across the street from the tennis club for free (recycled) water for stock. Perhaps a hay drop will be going in there to feed stock in barren pastures.

The Shire of Yarra Ranges announced that residents who lost their home in the bushfires will not have to pay rates this year, and the council will also refund any installments that had already been paid. Any permits for rebuilding will be fast-tracked with fees waived for bushfire related reconstruction.

An extensive Post-Bushfire Information and Assistance Resource List was compiled by the Port Phillip & Westernport Catchments Management Authority. It can be viewed at: <http://www.yarraglen.com/bushfire/>.

## ***Remembrances...***

**AHERN** - A Memorial Service in celebration of the lives of Leigh Desmond Ahern and Charmian Patricia Ahern will be held at the George Wood Performing Arts Centre, Yarra Valley Grammar School, Kalinda Rd, Ringwood on MONDAY (Feb. 23, 2009) at 12 noon. A private family funeral will be held. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Victorian National Parks Association. Envelopes will be available at the Service.

**LEONARD:** *From Marcus Leonard:* "I would also be pleased to inform you of all details in relation to our upcoming memorial service (for Greg and Gail), as I am sure there will be many of mum and dad's friends keen to celebrate their lives with us.

Details are confirmed for the memorial service for Greg and Gail Leonard,

Date: Tuesday February 24th

Time: 10.30am

Location: Yarra Glen Racecourse, Yarra View Room" The family asks that all media requests be passed onto them.

**BARNETT:** The memorial service for John and Jenny Barnett will be held at 3pm, next Thursday, February 26 at Melba Hall, University of Melbourne (Building 141, tram stops adjacent) MEL. REF: 75A, B4

## ***Be Informed***

Do you want to be kept up on Local Steels Creek happenings at this eventful time? Let me know and I will put you on the *Grape Vine* so you are informed.

**Andrew Chapman** [achapman@woodards.com.au](mailto:achapman@woodards.com.au)