

THE BULLOCKIES' BELL



Journal: **THE AUSTRALIAN BULLOCK DRIVERS LEAGUE INC**

Winter 2017



PATRON: Graham Young

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COVER: Lew Pickens and his team.

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for the

AUSTRALIAN BULLOCK DRIVERS' LEAGUE Inc

Chief Teamster's Report 22/5/2017

I won't report much on the NZ trip as others will do that very well, only to say it was extremely well organized and the weather and venue were excellent. When Cathie and I left we visited a leach farm in an old dairy on the way to the airport. The people there knew Lew and Julie. They have many thousands of leaches at various stages and they get fed on blood every 2 months. They don't feed them all at once because they have to have some hungry all the time ready to be sent to a hospital to suck the bad blood out of a patient.

Corryong was excellent as usual. On the 22nd and 23rd of April I took 6 of my bullocks to the Kangaroo Valley Historical Museum for an open weekend along with grandsons Dusty and Riley and of course Carlotto (my camel) and her co-owner Kristina Espadeano aged 10. Each day we yoked up for the large crowd and towed a sled around. All went well. The boys gave whip-cracking demos. On the first morning the volunteers presented me with a brand new yoke they had made from a nice piece of well seasoned river red gum I had got off the old Gundagai bridge. I thought it significant as the League was formed in Gundagai and the town grew out of a bullock drivers' camp many moons ago. It fitted my leaders nicely that day. In the afternoon we (not the bullocks) went down to the river for a bath, very refreshing, then to the pub for dinner then slept under the stars with the bullocks.

At 7.30 as planned on the Sunday morning we took the bullocks across the historic Hampton Bridge and back for photographs. I had ridden a push bike across this bridge to primary school in the early 60s. Yes, I did go to school for a while. My dad and I drove 99 head across this bridge when I was about 11 on our way to a property in Beaumont. The kids took Carlotto across and back. They also took her across the George Walker suspension bridge at the rear of the museum park. This bridge has been relocated to this site as a pedestrian bridge from its former site as a vehicle bridge across the Brogers Creek in Wattamulla KV. My grandfather, George Walker, died in 1956 when he put his truck over the side of the bridge in to the river while taking the milk cans out to the main road.



Last weekend I went to Cowra with my son Tim and two of his boys to the National Ploughing Championships. There were competitors from NSW, Vic and Tas, one of whom knew Brian Fish. It was interesting to see how things used to be done but I will be sticking with my bullocks. This year I have taken to driving the team while riding a pony as my knees and heart can't keep up with them over a distance. It is working better than expected. Philip and Donna spent a day with me between NZ and Corryong which was great.

Carlotto was awarded Grand Champion in the pet show at the annual Robertson show paraded by Kristina. Ron had his bullocks there (not in the pet show) and Garry and Robyn Nelson rode their pair of Brahman steers around trying to get attention !!

Seasonal conditions in the Shoalhaven have been mixed with 100 mm rain over 4 days in early Feb followed the next day by a 35 degree fine day with extremely high humidity. Over 60 milking cows died in the district including some of ours, something we had never seen before. The next day was 44 degrees with a hot west wind and low humidity and no cows died. It rained nearly every day in March making it so wet that no paddock work could be done until mid April including getting corn off. April was a beautiful dry month.

It is a great honour for me to be made chief teamster. I hope I don't let you down. Plans are well under way for the get-together in the Shoalhaven with plans for 2 or 3 days with bullock teams, visits to a goat dairy and scenic sites. I would like to hold the whip cracking comp at the cattle sale where we would have a good "rent a crowd". We have not got a facility like Lew had but we will make do.

As I write this I am in the Intensive Care ward at Shoalhaven Hospital where I have been for nearly a week after an altercation with a bull. I am being over serviced and over fussed by the nursing staff and have nearly had enough of it. I expect to be back on the pony in a few days !!

Ge-off Cochrane

Chief Teamster, Australian Bullock drivers League, Mule Whisperer, Cameleer, Winner of the Great Charity Camel race Nowra Show 2016, Winner of the inaugural Ute Barrel race Nowra show 2005

Off-sider's Snippets

Firstly, I want to thank Lew and Julie Pickens for all the work they put into making the Get-Together in Waimiha so good. We had a great time, and really enjoyed the lovely weather, good company and the opportunity to see the way the New Zealanders train and work their bullocks, as well as something of the country itself. Lew and Julie's property is quite beautiful with Julie's garden being especially lovely. We were all extremely well looked after with great food, mostly from the feral deer, goats and pigs that are abundant locally. The bacon we had for breakfast most mornings was the tastiest I've ever had! We were treated to an interesting and informative week of varied experiences. The visit to the Kiwi House was one of many highlights. I was intrigued to see how big they are, and how vicious! And I really enjoyed Hamilton Gardens with the astonishing number of glorious garden spaces. The pine logging was just staggering in its scale and the old sawmill with all the workers cottages and other buildings was fascinating.

As you may have already realised, Geoff Cochrane is our new Chief Teamster so the 2018 Get-Together will be in the Shoalhaven - we were thinking about holding it later in the year but I was reading the Victorian Incorporation Act (good bed-time reading!) and I noticed that there is a requirement to "hold your AGM within 5 months of the end of your association's financial year" and as November 30th is the end of our year we need to hold the AGM before April 30th. At this stage, as we aren't taking the bullocks to the Man from Snowy River Festival next year, the Get-Together will be from about the 6th - 13th April. There is still an outside chance that they may still need us to come back to the MFSR festival - if that happens, there'll be a change of dates, but either way we'll let you know the definite dates in the next Bell. Geoff is planning a lot of interesting things to do, but as always we'll make sure there's plenty of time with the bullocks in the program.

As you may have read in Geoff Cochrane's report, he had a very nasty encounter with a bull and spent a week in the Intensive Care Unit at Shoalhaven Hospital. The bull pushed him through a yard panel, breaking a lot of Geoff's ribs in the process. But Geoff got his revenge - he had been planning on taking the bull to some heifers, but instead, in his words, "the bull has been charged with attempted murder, found guilty and sentenced to death by hanging on the butcher's hook next Friday".

Later this year from 29th September to 1st October the annual Barellan Clydesdales Good Old Days weekend will have an exciting "Tribute to the Teams" featuring teams of draught animals including horses, bullocks, camels, donkeys and mules. They'll all be arriving in Barellan, NSW on Friday 29th September from 11.00 am. Then the next 2 days will be even bigger and better than the usual Good Old Days weekend. Philip Thomson will be bringing his bullock team from Queensland over a period of weeks, stopping along the way to give demonstrations. Ron will have his team at Barellan already to meet all the other teams as they come into town and, assuming that Geoff Cochrane manages to stay out of trouble between now and then, he'll have his team there too. Tim Peel will be there also and hopefully he'll be bringing our 2 old leaders who are in retirement at Tim's property near Wagga. So all up we'll probably have about 40 bullocks there as well as all the other draught animal teams - definitely not to be missed! To book camping/caravan sites ring Norma Zingel 0447 736856 (email - normaz48@bigpond.com) or you can join us at our (unpowered) bullocky camp. Philip can be contacted for more information on 0408 336121 or email - phillipjthomson@bigpond.com.

Cheers,

Ruth

New Zealand Get-Together



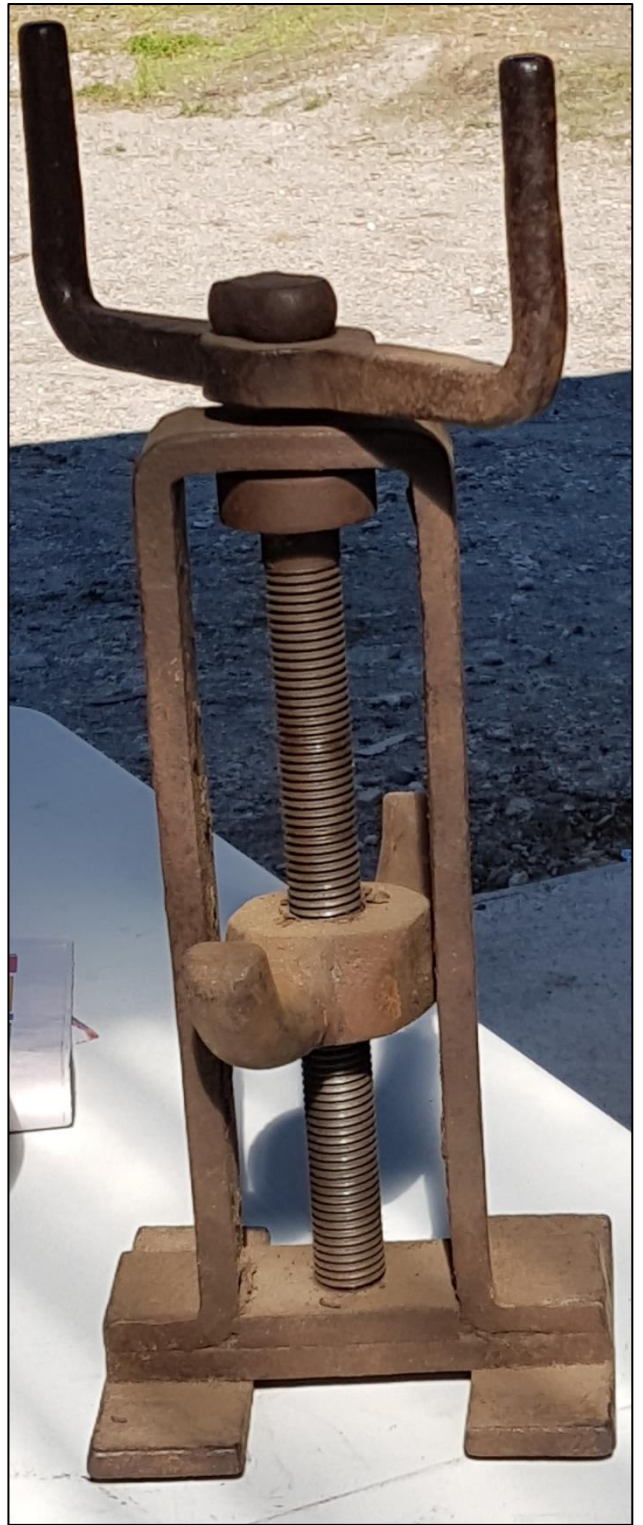
Lew Pickens, Brian Fish and Philip Thomson



Lew Pickens and his leaders



Pickens Family in the forest



A mystery item from Lew

News from Tomerong

Since the last Bell we've had a busy time. Our local Nowra Show was a very uncomfortable time - not, I should hasten to say, because anything went wrong with the bullocks. The weather was the problem with the temperature both days being 44 degrees, making anything we did with the bullocks very hard work and with few people attending the show. On the Friday night Bonnie, our Kelpie, won the dog high jump again. Saturday night was slightly cooler and the crowd numbers picked up. I'd organised a demonstration of precision tree-falling with a chainsaw by some of our Rural Fire Service volunteers. We stood 9m poles up and the operators were given a 10cm target to hit 9m away. One operator hit the target; the next one, Walter Stannard, Josh's older brother just missed. The final contestant was my brother Steve (who some of you might remember from the first Get-Together we had at Tomerong years ago, when he gave a demonstration of woodchopping). Using an axe instead of a chainsaw, Steve missed the target by the narrowest of margins. The display was a hit and we'll be doing it again, possibly at other Shows as well. The display was videoed and was watched over 40,000 times on Facebook and YouTube. A few weeks later we took the bullocks to Robertson Show and had no problems. Bonnie won the dog high jump again, Geoff Cochrane took his camel and Garry and Robyn Nelson took Charlie and Harley their saddle-broken Brahman bullocks.

Our trip to New Zealand was just great. Every day was interesting and Lew's bullocks were impressive; a very even team of bullocks that all pulled very well. Lew had been unable to do much work with them pulling a bit of weight, but they took to it like professionals; I was impressed! The New Zealand yokes and bows, though a little different from ours, seemed very comfortable for the bullocks. One afternoon after we'd finished working the bullocks a few of us enjoyed some feral goat eradication using Lew's very powerful rifles. We also saw a massive pine logging operation on Lew and Julie's boundary and I found the visit to the old sawmill that had closed down years ago, with everything left just as it was, fascinating. We were catered for every day with amazing food and hospitality and the Pickens' vast museum, able to be studied for days, was a great venue. Every day was great - the Kiwis certainly know how to put on a show!

Back home again, the Man from Snowy River Festival at Corryong, Victoria was another big weekend. We took 14 bullocks, a wagon and a dray, and once again all went well. We were up before sunrise for the re-enactment (of the poem) show which is conducted about 5km out of Corryong in front of an audience of over 4,000. We took 6 bullocks and the dray. Our part in the show was bringing the dray to the homestead with 4 bullocks. On the back of the dray was Australian bullock whip-cracking champion Emaliqua East. She stood on the dray and did a whip-cracking demonstration with 2 stockwhips over the backs of my 2 polers. They didn't move an inch! Em then did a champion display of bullock whip-cracking, firstly with my old whip and then with her favourite competition whip - amazing! When she learnt that my whip had been made by Albie Campbell she was very moved - she knew Albie and said that was a highlight for her to have used one of his whips. Philip then yoked up the other 2 bullocks that we'd left loose in the yard next to the homestead and after dropping off the dray, we hooked onto a log with the 6 and towed it away. We loaded our 6 bullocks on to the truck, went back to town, yoked up the other 8 and did a demonstration in the main arena before walking back up to the main street for the street parade with the log wagon - a very big day!! After a good sleep in our bullocky camp we entered our Bonnie in the working dog high jump in the Corryong main street. This was a very serious event with a lot of serious looking dogs and she won it! This makes 10 wins in a row - still undefeated!

Tim Peel and his son Mark came down for the day and Tim did his usual spotted dog for lunch and tea as well as a good yarn with a cup of Tim's billy tea in hand. Life doesn't get much better. Many thanks to all the off-siders who helped enormously to make another successful event - Philip Thomson, Ritchie Wells, Donna Evans, Geoff Cochrane, Tim & Mark Peel and Henry Goodall (our truck driver for this trip and also an excellent camp cook!). Ruth also came to Corryong for the first time this year and made everything possible as she always does - it was just great that she saw the end result of the organisation that she puts into our trips away. We probably won't be going to MFSR, Corryong next year - they'll let us know for sure in the next few weeks - apparently they usually only have "acts" like ours there for one year and we've been there for three years running.

Recently I travelled to Queensland to help Philip Thomson with his bullocks at the 40th anniversary Gatton Heavy Horse Field Days where Philip is the Ringmaster. We took 8 bullocks and one of Philip's wagons and, as well as displaying the team with the wagon, Philip took part in the ploughing. Tim Peel was there too, judging the heavy horses. A very special part of the official opening ceremony was the awarding of life membership to Philip. It was a very popular award as Philip has been involved in the field Days since the very beginning. To top off a great weekend Philip's bullocks behaved perfectly!

On a promising note for the future of the Bullock Drivers' League I've been helping 3 new "bullockies" getting their young teams started. I met Ryan Honor from Queensland at Gatton - he's a young bloke who has 2 Droughtmaster steers started. I'm giving him some advice on how to break them in and I'll make and send him a little yoke to get him going.

Another new bullocky is Beau Mullin - now living on King Island, Tasmania. Beau is a top dog trainer and has a lot of experience with cattle - several years ago he came down from the Hunter Valley, where he was living at the time, to our place to buy one of our Kelpie pups and while he was here I showed him the bullock team. He and some of his mates have taken more of our Kelpie pups since then and bred some useful dogs from them as well. We've become good mates and I was very pleased when he rang me and said that he had 2 Ayrshire steers and wanted to break them in. I've sent him down a little yoke so he can take them to the next level (it's amazing what you can send through Australia Post!). I'm sure he'll do well with them - he's a top dog trainer and he'll have the same ability with his steers.

Back here, at home, our vets, Andrew and Alison Havadjia have also started on the path to being bullockies. They have 2 pairs of young steers coupled and on the way. I made a little yoke for them too and Ruth and I spent a day with them showing them how to start training their steers. Alison and Andrew bred (and gave us) our Ayrshire bullocks, Jimmy, Charlie, Ernie and a young one, Robbie.

I urge all in the Australian Bullock Drivers' League to encourage the next generation of bullock drivers. Without them the League will be a thing of the past.

I've done a bit of work with my young Illawarra steers (and Robbie) but not enough! The shorter days of winter make it hard as I still have to earn a living in the daylight hours, but when I can find more time for them, they'll be a great team. Ron McKinnon



Gleneden News

Hello everyone. Sounds like you had a great time in New Zealand. I was sorry to miss the get-together but it's a busy and tight time for us. Fiona and I have been working hard organising ourselves on our new farm and getting our various enterprises established so we can pay for it. We have been delivering meat into Brisbane, Toowoomba and Warwick and attending farmers' markets. On the farm our network of electric fence and water pipes is slowly spreading, we seem to have plenty of grass for winter, the creek is running well and the cattle look happy.

Eden and Jethro are growing fast. Eden has taken over looking after most of our poultry. Jethro has discovered wood chopping and has started selling firewood to our campers. Fiona has had the excitement getting our accounts in order, she's nearly up to date and will be able to get outside to start growing fruit and vegetables. She has been making lots of goats' milk cheese and sourdough bread which disappears quickly.

I've been exploring the ridges and have found enough dead Ironbarks to keep the bullocks busy for a long time carting them home to rebuild our dysfunctional cattle yards. I've been teaching a bit to bring in some money and driving the bullocks when I can. We have scheduled five working days in the bush these school holidays, I will enjoy yoking the bullocks whether people turn up or not. We're off to a slow start but there are positive signs for us, our customers enjoy our produce and their visits to the farm, we just have to get better at marketing to reach more people. Anyone passing through is welcome to call in and see us and our new place. I have started weekly email newsletter to show people what is happening on the farm and market our produce and open days. If anyone would like to see what we have been doing, you can email me and I'll add you to the list.

I enjoyed a day with Philip and Ron at the Gatton Heavy Horse Days and was very pleased for Philip that he was awarded a life membership. A nice reward for long service. Rohan





High-vis bullockies in New Zealand



Geoff Cochrane driving from his pony

Thank you to all our contributors to this issue.