

# ***THE BULLOCKIES' BELL***



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

**Autumn 2016**

# AUSTRALIAN BULLOCK



## DRIVERS LEAGUE

PATRON: Graham Young

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COVER: Gaye Sawyer, Cheryl Eatts, Amy Eatts and Ruth McKinnon preparing lunch in the bush at Edith Creek.

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AUSTRALIAN BULLOCK DRIVERS' LEAGUE Inc.

## Chief Teamster's Report

Thanks to Ritchie, Brian and the rest of the Tasmanian Bullockies for such a great trip. We thought Ritchie's bullocks and the demonstrations that he gave were superb and the other four young teams in the Stanley area are a credit to their handlers. Brian Fish's wagons, shed and blacksmith gear was a treat to see and a damn shame his bullocks were all out doing shows etc. Today is Anzac day the 25 April and we are going down to our local Sports Club to a 11.am service, 2015 saw myself, Ross and Kate attending a dawn service with Ted and Mary Scriveners son while we were staying a couple of days there with them. Anzac day is a day when one feels sadness, sorrow and pride for who and what we are and what Anzac stands for. We have had the bullocks in and spent some time working them but it seems always jobs to do before the winter sets in. Reading back through the old Bells to see what "The Chief Teamster's" write about there seems to be a lot of shows and gatherings of interest to keep people interested in bullocks etc. Here in New Zealand where there is a lack of teams (to our knowledge there is just the two of us Ross Battensby and ourselves), we need to be more proactive and get out there and try to increase interest. It was up in the North of New Zealand where most of the teams were pulling the Kauri, because of the shape of New Zealand the rivers, harbours and the sea were our roads. Kauri which would float was flushed down rivers by water from timber dams, flash floods to the tide. Because most of the towns were on the coast they relied on shipping for transport. I would think 90% of the teams were involved in pulling timber only a mile or two to the first river, whereas in Australia teams were on the road for weeks, New Zealand teams were only short hauls. By the 1920s – 30s when the Kauri ran out in the North, steam was in. Where we now farm in what is call the King Country it was not opened up for settlement until 1900.. Our farm was worked by steam train and steam hauler in the 1920s – 30s. Rimu and Totara were the main species. Once it is harvested it takes 200-300 years before it can be worked again. After seeing the Gum trees and the speed that they grow and how they can be harvested every 40 or so years, I appreciate Australian timbers. Photos show big teams in the bush working were on average 7 pair, bigger teams 12 to 14 pairs would have been two teams hooked up for big pulls.

Lately the weather has been kind - rain often at night and lovely warm sunny days and no frost (still mowing the lawns every 5 or 6 days). We've just sent some 2 1/2 year bullocks away and averaged 311kg @\$5.25, down on last year. Weaner sales have been really strong and good beef calves straight off Mum have fetched up to \$1,000. Sheep are still not as good as they predicated and at the moment a 17kg fat lamb at the works are fetching \$84. Luckily wool is holding its own and the ewes are going to the ram in great condition. Due to a great season we have enough potatoes and pumpkins (140) to last out the year and give away. The sweet corn was extra sweet this year and the beekeepers are all looking for farms to place their hives paying approx. \$60 per hive about 25 hives in a yard.(luckily we don't have to drench or break fed them) so it is a nice little perk to have.

The Roar is almost over and we have had several hunters from Northland down staying with us and they have all gone home with meat and had a great time in the bush. I still need to get time to go and get some venison myself to top up the freezer. Luckily we got extra fire wood in last year when we had help staying as firewood has not been a priority as yet but Julie has organised and had the chimney cleaned ready. We have had grandchildren staying for the last 2 weeks in the school holidays which has slowed us up and takes twice as long to move stock and put up breaks but its almost over but we have enjoyed looking for frogs, morning teas outside and collecting wild flowers so guess its nice to take time to smell the roses. Hope everyone has had some warm rain and the grass has come away, Tasmania does remind us very much of home. The dates for the 2017 New Zealand Get-together will be Wednesday May 15 – Thursday March 23.

Regards to you all, Lew and Julie.



# Tasmanian Get-together



**Amy Eatts, Alex Eatts & Donna Evens with their young teams on Tatlow's Beach, Stanley.**



**Ritchie Wells' team in the bush at Edith Creek**



**Ritchie's team also on Tatlow's Beach.**





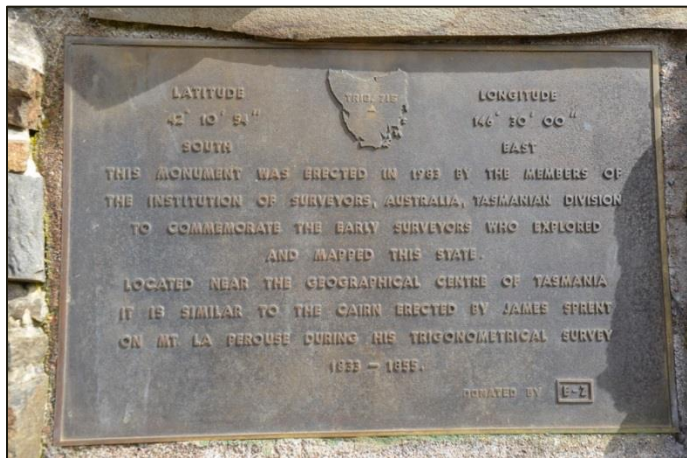
**Donna & Seamus air a saw point**



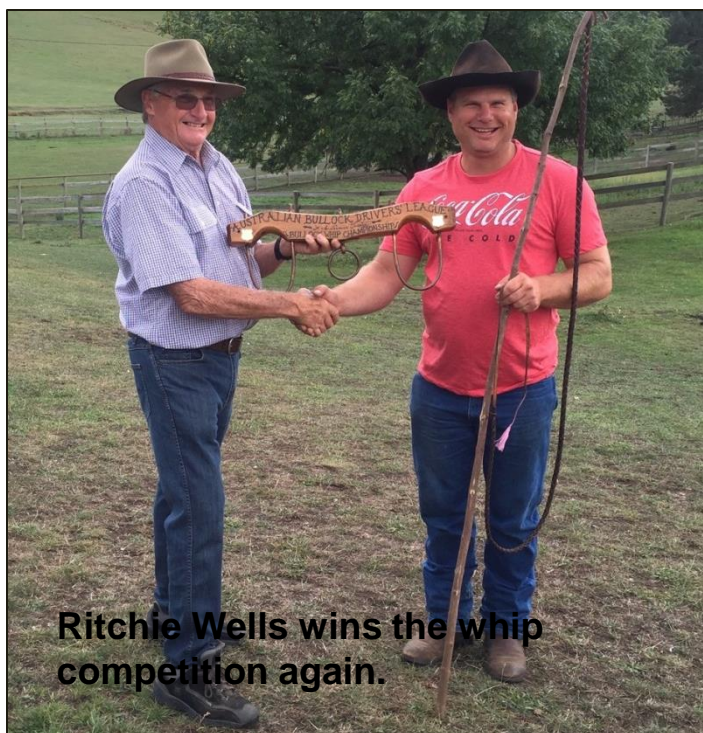
**Brian Fish's bullocks at King Island**



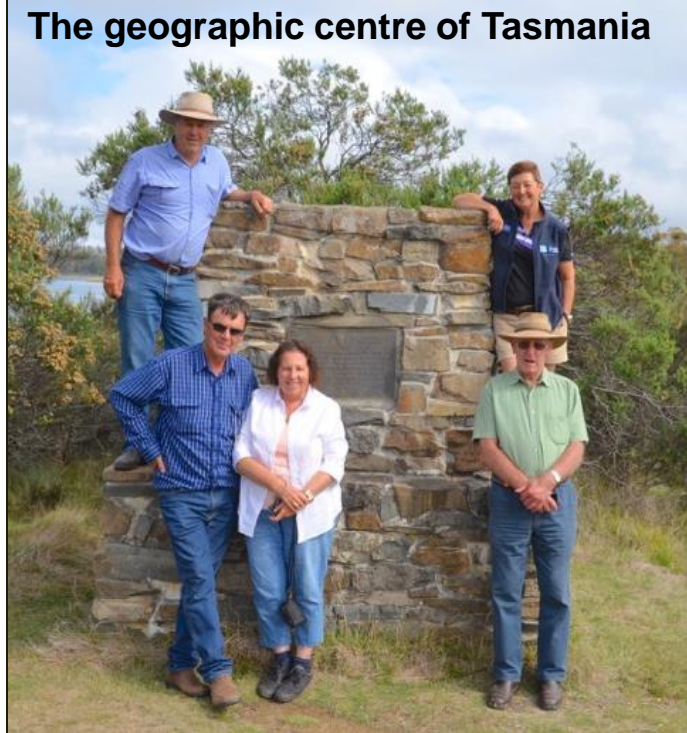
**In the bush at Edith Creek**



**The geographic centre of Tasmania**



**Ritchie Wells wins the whip competition again.**







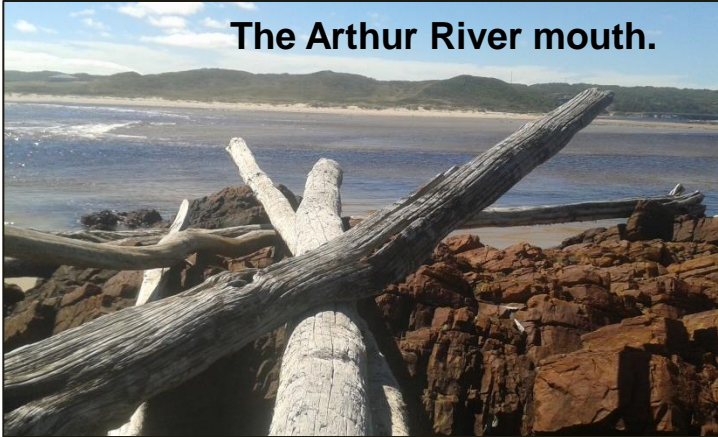
**Ross Battensby ploughing  
with Warren Purton.**



**Warren's 150  
year old stable**



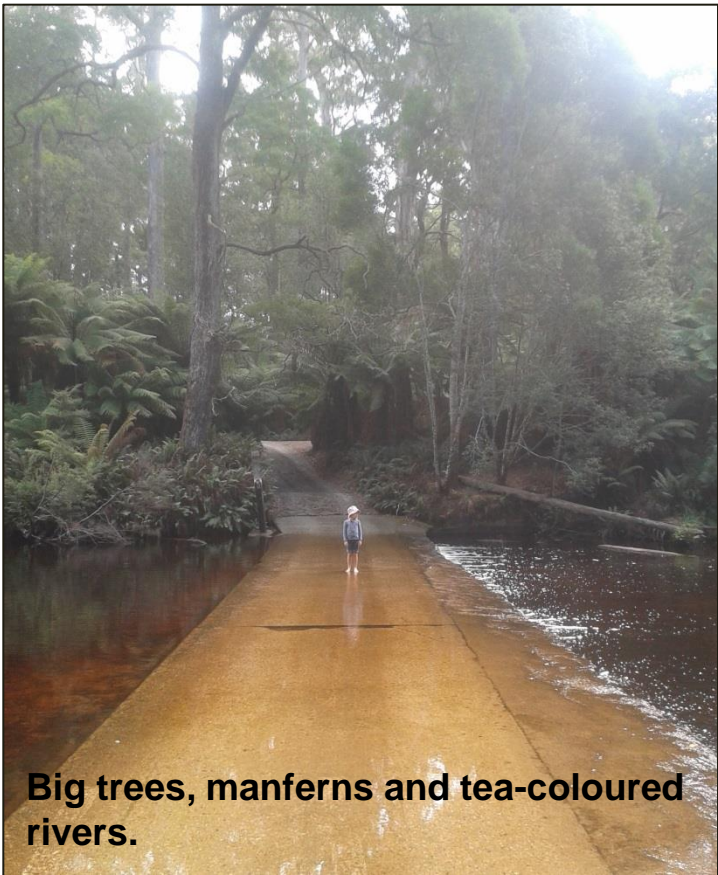
**Kelp  
drying at  
Marrawah**



**The Arthur River mouth.**



**Oatlands Mill**



**Big trees, manferns and tea-coloured  
rivers.**





Geoff Drury drives 24 bullocks down the main street of Milton to mark 100 years since the original picture was taken.

Well, another Get-Together has come and gone and it was great. I've been looking through the photos I took and in every one of them everyone looks happy! So, thank you all who helped organize such a good week of entertainment, good food and good company.

I enjoyed it all. Apart from all the teams of bullocks (five!!) and the good company I've taken away a few ideas which will find a place in our house or garden. I've already made a sign and put it on our front door, copied from Warren Purton's house - **"All who pass through this door bring joy, some by coming and some by going"**. So far no-one's been offended; they must all think they fall into the first category!

And I really liked the glass mushrooms in Lynne Bramich's garden, so I'm keeping an eye out at the second-hand shops for suitable bowls and vases. The rest of Dinks' and Lynne's garden was truly beautiful. I'm very envious of the vegetable garden and the wood heap and I liked the old man snoozing on the verandah. I might have a go at making one of them too. For those who weren't there I have photos to share.

Stanley made a very different backdrop for the teams, and even though the bushfires in the region meant a change of venue, I reckon it turned out well. The shed was perfect and we were nice and close to the beach. And we had the time in the bush as well, so it was the best of both worlds. I especially enjoyed the crayfish when we went out for dinner. It's many years since I've had such good crayfish.

When we came back from Tasmania, Ron took his bullocks to Camden Show and then The Man from Snowy River Festival at Corryong and then went in to hospital for a long-planned operation on his leg. He needs a knee replacement but the surgeon said that he'd be too limited in what he could do afterwards and working in the bush like he does would be difficult. So he's had a different operation which will hopefully make his knee a lot more comfortable than it has been. It means he's on crutches for 6 weeks and he's slowly going crazy. He's read more than a book a day and is currently re-reading "Bullock Teams, The Building of a Nation" by Olaf Ruhen for about the 20th time. Somehow, he never gets tired of reading his bullock books. I'm his chauffeur as well and so far he's been very good as a back-seat driver. I warned him before he had the operation that if he criticised my driving he'd be walking everywhere and he's managed to keep his mouth shut so far.

Life is very busy with Ron out of action, but we'll get through the coming weeks and then there'll be no stopping him.

Could those who are planning on going to New Zealand next year, even if you're not absolutely certain, please either let me or Lew Pickens know as soon as possible so Lew and Julie can reserve accommodation.

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Till next "Bell"

Ruth McKinnon

### News from Tomerong

Well once again I reckon the Get-Together, this year in Tassie, was great! They always are. As you know, I believe they must revolve around bullocks and this one certainly did. With Donna and the Eatts's three little teams at Stanley, Ritchie's team at Edith Creek and back at Stanley and the great little team of Dinks Bramich I was kept entertained every day. It's a pity I couldn't see Brian Fish's team too, but they were still out on King Island after the K I Show, when I had to leave a day early to get back home to take my bullocks to Camden Show.



I spent a day with Donna and Dinks, working her 2 pairs and I learnt a lot. Dinks told me and demonstrated how he broke his steers in and it was very interesting. The great little team that he has shows that his technique works.

The day in the bush with Ritchie's team was just as I would have wished for - good location, good weather, good crowd, great catering and a top team of well behaved "proper" bullocks doing just about anything asked of them. The only thing wrong with his team is..... I didn't see enough of them. I know Ritchie is rightly proud of them.

On our way to Oatlands, we visited Warren Purton. He is regarded as one of the best ploughmen in Australia and we spent a morning in the paddock watching the expert at work. I had a go with him and then he gave me the reins to go alone; lucky the horses knew what to do!

Our time at Oatlands was too short, but as usual Brian and Lyn kept us entertained and I enjoyed Brian's auctioneering at his "clearing sale". We missed out on the last day, but I guess that just means we'll have to go back to Tassie again.

While the Get-Together was on, twelve of my bullocks and Geoff Cochrane's twelve went to Milton and re-enacted the 100 year old photo taken of a team of 24 bullocks in the main street of Milton (now the Princes Highway). The entire team of 24 was driven by Geoff Drury, who some of you will have met at our Get-Together in 2014. Geoff had visited us several times in the lead-up to the re-enactment to practice driving my bullocks and on the last practice day we took 12 to the bush and snigged a couple of bigger logs without a problem. I knew Geoff could handle the team of 24 easily and he did so ably assisted by Josh Stannard, Geoff Cochrane and Kevin Drury. They walked the main street where there was a very large crowd of on-lookers and then down to the showground where they gave the showgirls a ride in the Grand Parade. Geoff was very pleased with how it went and said that it wouldn't have been possible without, in particular, the help of Josh Stannard. Actually Josh would have been very busy; he yoked, unyoked and as well as keeping the body bullocks in line, he drove the team when Geoff needed a break.

This year we showed the bullocks at Nowra, Robertson and Camden Shows. I've got an 18 month old black Kelpie bitch from our last litter and I've been taking her along and entering her in the dog high jump events. She's won 5 out of 5 so far with her highest jump being 2.75 metres (9 ft). She's also shaping up nicely working the bullocks; she's got more heel than her mother, which is what we tried to get when choosing the sire.

Our return trip to Corryong in Victoria was a success. The crew was much the same as last year - Tim Peel, our very able camp cook (we had a bullockies/blacksmiths pudding again and it was delicious as usual), Philip Thomson, Josh Stannard, Geoff Cochrane, Garry Nelson (truck driver) and his wife, Robyn. We had a good camp and this year took 6 bullocks out to the re-enactment of the Man from Snowy River poem in the hills near Corryong. We did the street parade and other displays at the main venue using 14 bullocks. We'd taken the jinker and top-loader wagon, but didn't get to demonstrate log-loading as they'd forgotten to get us some logs, but it didn't matter; we had a good time anyway. They had record crowds (30,000 plus) and have invited us back next year. A big thankyou to Philip and Josh for their help in the demonstrations and to all for their good company - it's a big trip to organize, but made so much more enjoyable by the company of good mates.

And so next year we're off to New Zealand again (though for me it'll be the first time). In no time at all I'll be seeing you all again - I'm already looking forward to it.

Ron McKinnon

**Philip Thomson's Gilbert gives the bride a ride at a Canungra wedding.**



**Geoff Cochrane's team beside the Shoalhaven River..**

**The Australian Bullock Drivers' League thanks our contributors to this issue.**