



4th January 2020, Photo: Mark Makings

THE SUMMER OF 2019-2020

**How Araluen and surrounding areas
survived a season of drought, fire and flood.**

EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

Exhibition organised by the Araluen Progress Association with support from "The Araloonies", The Queanbeyan Palerang Regional Council, the NSW Rural Adversity Mental Health Program South Eastern Primary Health Network, Braidwood Community Association, Araluen Sports Day Association, and the NSW Department of Primary Industries.

Catalogue compiled by Sally Matthews and Laurann Yen in October 2020 as a record of the stories behind the photos in the exhibition held 24th to 31st October 2020.
Thanks to all who so generously shared their photos and their stories.

DROUGHT



Photo 1: Drought. Dec 2019, Tracey Harrison

These are Limousin/ Angas cross- The Limousins can be temperamental, and Kenneth has been trying to breed them across Angas for a calmer beast- any that break down the fences, we sell. We were running out of silage and we had run out of water, and we had to decide whether to water the orchard or the cattle that's why we were coming unstuck - it was just hard. This was recorded as the hottest drought on record- other ones are the longest, but this has been the hottest. Decisions were made on a daily basis- we had gone through plans a,b, and c and we were up to plan x, y, and z- fortunately we had learnt from previous droughts: we weren't going to buy feed, but would de-stock instead; we'd be better selling hay than hand feeding cattle, and we would stock more lightly and re-buy later. We ran out of hay, and emptied the silage pit that we hadn't used for years. We sold cattle, and lambs younger than we usually would. It was hard.



Photos 2 and 3: Dust Storm over Ken's paddock, 19.1.20,

Laurann Yen

I couldn't believe how this hit us- raging winds as though the end of the world had come and we were all gone. I'm still cleaning up after it.



Photo 4: Ken's paddock containment lines, 30.12.19,

Tracey Harrison

This must have been before the 1st- the shire came twice, and made the containment lines wider. Donnie Collett came to our door in the RFS vehicle to ask Ken where he thought would be the best place to go and Ken went out with him to take him around the boundaries. Because we had time, we could go through the gates, so there was less damage to the fences than when people just went through the paddocks.

He told the RFS where he thought they should go on the 4th, but the fire came from all directions, every which way. Seeing the containment lines you didn't feel so deserted, you felt people were helping you. I don't know how much the RFS had to do with it or whether it was the shire, or local people. It was so dry that there was nothing to burn, but there was still moisture in the orchard and the bush and it just went up.





Photo 5: Kangaroos drinking, Jan 2020, Rob Cowan

Late on a 50° day these kangaroos drank continuously for 15 minutes without lifting their heads. Others stood in the shade nearby, cords of saliva hanging from their mouths. Nothing is evolved to thrive in these conditions.

ARALUEN FIRE FIGHTERS GO NORTH

Photo 6: Remote Fire Fighting, 31.10.19, Luke Watson

Tim and I went to Moree/Narrabri in late October. We had 12 hour days on the fire ground. They looked after us like kings there. They put us up in the Bingara Hotel, and there was always a tab on the bar for us when we got back. But we were too tired and dehydrated to have anything more than a schooner at night.



Photo 7: Hopping on a plane at Fairburn to go to Glen Innes, 23.11.19, Luke Watson

In November most of the fires were still in Northern NSW. Volunteers from local brigades were asked to go to Glen Innis. We were there for a week. Almost all of the people in this picture later came to fight fires in the Araluen area. I learnt a lot from them as most of them had a lot of fire fighting experience. Blokes with a lot of practical knowledge about fires.



Photo 8: Fire Fighter Accommodation at Glen Innes Showground, 23.11.19, Luke Watson

We had a 40 metre walk to the mess hall. It took about an hour and twenty minutes to get to the fires. We worked for 12-14 hours a day on the fire fields so it was a really long day by the time we got back to our camp beds.

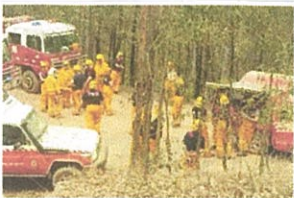


Photo 9: Mustering point near Glenn Innes, 24.11.19, Luke Watson

I went with Peter Babington, our Group Leader, to Glenn Innes. There were lots of people from Lake George Zone brigades. I was there for a week. It was bad up there. The drought was really terrible. No water anywhere and cattle were suffering. They were really suffering up there.



Photo 10: Fire front coming near Glenn Innes, 24.11.19,

Luke Watson

The fire front was coming towards us and we were sent out to do back burning. We sat on a top of a hill and watched the fire walk up the mountain. Defensive fire fighting.

FIRES GETTING CLOSER



Photo 11: Looking towards Reidsdale, Toby, Mollie, Ellie Mundy, 29.11.19, Erin Cooper



Photo 12: Currowan Fire across Reidsdale, 28.12.2019, Laurann Yen
I couldn't get home on the last weekend in November because of the Tallanganda fire, and once I got home I stayed put. We were watching all the news feeds, but this was the first time I was really aware of how huge the Currowan fire was, and how close to us.



Photo 13: Black Range Fire 8.12 pm, 5.12.2019, Ashley Williams
From Mt Gillamatong we could see the many fires surrounding Braidwood. During the days the sky was full of smoke with an orange tinge, at night the orange glow was unpromising and intense, reminding the town folk of the fire fighters risking their lives as we sheltered in our homes late at night.



Photo 14: Fire Meeting at Reidsdale, Dec, 2019, Laurann Yen

People came from all over the area to this meeting where the message was clear- these are big fires, and they are all around us and you need to be able to look out for yourselves.

Everyone was so calm and so focused on getting any information to try and make decisions, but the reality was starting to hit.

Photo 15: Black Range Fire, 11.00pm, 3.12.20, Luke Watson

This was about the third day of the fire and it was heading towards Braidwood. We were trying to stop it crossing Cooma Road and getting to Majors Creek and Araluen. There were two Araluen trucks there, along with other Lake George brigade trucks.



Photo 16: At Justin's Place, Reidsdale, 4.21 pm, 4.1. 20, Luke Watson

There were oil cans in the back of the van and they exploded; balls of flame shooting out. This photo was taken from the house we were protecting. We saved the house, but two caravans were engulfed and went in a few seconds- they just melted. We were one truck and a few Mozzies at his place.

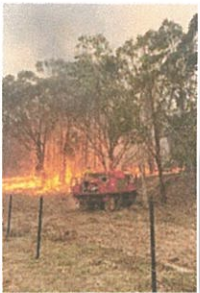


Photo 17: Fighting Fire with Fire, 31.1.20, Ashley Williams

FRS and Mosquitoes zooming around to face the fire whenever it would sneak out of the bush- making the whole situation more comforting, knowing that we weren't alone and had help to fight the fire. This photo shows the Krawaree Brigade doing a back burn to slow down the fire from coming out to the cleared country which worked. The RFS did an incredible job with keeping the community up to date and safe.

PREPARING FOR FIRES



Photo 18: Morning Briefing, 29.12.19, Angela Casey

When I look at this photo, I immediately think of the incredible amount of fire fighting experience standing at that whiteboard- many years of fire experience briefing the community on what is going on. (Left to right: Bev Feehan, Tim Raynolds, Vladimir Bohdan).

On the 27th December, or thereabouts, Tim (our Captain) told us we all "needed to step things up- that things weren't looking too good." We felt our way into "stepping things up". One of the first things we did was to identify local water sources and mark them with clearly visible red and white tape. We also went to Braidwood RFS to collect supplies. Luke and Sue brought their coffee machine to the fire shed, and Wolfgang and Liz bought their portable cool room.

We tried to make the fire shed a welcoming and functional community hub, as well as a fire fighting operations centre. Part of this was inviting the whole community to briefings and breakfast in the fire shed every morning. We opened the shed up at 6.30am for about 3 – 4 weeks- breakfast, great coffee and briefings for anyone who wanted to come. A lot of people worked to make this happen.

We tried to welcome fire fighters, Mozzies and everyone else with a smile. It helped, I think, to have women as part of the profile working in the fire shed. Our roles in the shed, sort of, grew organically. Organic structures emerged, and we learnt how to play to our strengths, take on different roles according to need and experience, and to look after each other. We all learnt to use the coffee machine for instance- several people could have completed their barista certificates in our fire shed! Some people worked on breakfasts and fire fighter food and snacks. Others took on responsibility for monitoring and relaying information, keeping maps up-dated, fire fighting communication, community liaison, cleaning trucks and equipment etc. Where someone had a particular skill, they stepped up big time. It was, in some ways, invigorating and empowering. At the end of the day there was satisfaction in knowing that this was an extraordinary community, and we were able to step up and take charge of those things that we had control over. Lots of other brigades said: “What is going on here? How can we do this at our shed? This is so good.”

It wasn't all beer and skittles of course. There were lots of feelings in the air. People were under pressure. We definitely had our moments. There were lots of opinions- some of it expressed strongly, and some of it rooted in misinformation. There are still some strong feelings around- close to the surface. Corona virus hasn't helped either.

In retrospect, there were some things that we might have done differently. But if I look back and say, “Could we have done better, knowing what we knew at that time?”, there isn't a lot. The fires were unprecedented in their scale and ferocity. We did our best knowing what we knew at the time and with the resources available.

I learnt a lot from that time. The reality is that there are some things over which you have no control- no matter how much you plan or prepare. That it is important to step up as much as possible at the local level- to give people as much information and a sense of agency so that they can bring their skills and experience to the table. I took this back to my work in dealing with challenges arising from Coronavirus.

But I do worry about what is going to happen in the future. We are in a long slow burn. There is no real planning for climate change. There is no strategic policy work on climate change. We know that fire seasons like these will happen more frequently in the future, and the impacts will be profound.

Many of our experienced fire fighters and support staff are burnt out, or getting older, and won't be willing or able to fight fires in the way that we did last summer. We definitely need some more serious thinking and planning at more strategic levels.



Photo 19: The Council Grader making the containment lines at the Rec Ground, 1.01.20, 11.05am, Elaine Collins

The Rec ground was our place of safety. You can hardly see the poplar trees through the smoke. Some people had started putting things near the shed.



Photo 20: Coffee tutorial at the fire shed, 30.12.19, Laurann Yen

Robin and I came back to Araluen just after New Year- the Fire Shed was doing breakfasts, and organising lunches and snacks for the trucks to take out. People loved having a good coffee to go with bacon and eggs in the morning, or when they could get back to the shed. The fire shed was the heart of the preparation for all the food and sustenance- Liz and Wolfgang had lent mobile fridges, Bev was co-ordinating dozens of meals a day, Ange was masterminding the logistics of supporting the fire teams, Anne was bringing in her date and walnut loaves, Nancy Rose and Elaine were making lunches with the support of Norm, and everyone found a job to do that would help- learning how to froth the milk for coffee was THIS photo- though we never got as good as Luke!



Photo 21: Morning Briefing at the Fire Shed, 8.30am, 9.1.20, Robin Cavalier

Community members and Mozzie fighters were invited to briefings at the fire shed every morning throughout the peak fire threat period. On this occasion, Natasha Murphy provides the update.

Left to Right: Natasha Murphy, Laurann Yen, Chris Stone, Toni Robinson, Robyn Clubb, Lin Irving, Nancy Rose, Bernice Copper, Bev Bateman, Mick Pritzler (Mozzie), Barry Thomas.

Photo 22: Morning Briefing, 3.01.20, Tracey Harrison

Tash Murphy, giving the briefing, with Lin Irving, Bernice Cropper, Jamie Camilla, Greg Robinson, Patrick Conway, Mark Makings, Ryan Smithers, Dave West, Mick Pritzler

We had a briefing every morning at the fire shed, and breakfast. I thought they were helpful, and it was good to be involved with the community and see how everyone else was feeling and to share with everyone- see who was there, and who was there to support us. Reidsdale came down - they felt out of touch, and they weren't up to date with what was happening- they didn't have their own RFS.



Photo 23: Morning Briefing at the Fire Shed 2 8.30am, 9.1. 20,
Robin Cavalier

Left to Right: Darren Gillard, Barry Thomas, Natasha Murphy.



**Photo 24: Fire Preparations at the Old Post Office, Nov-
Dec 2019, Sally Matthews**

In mid November, Tim and Mark (Araluen RFS) came to advise on fire preparations at the Old Post Office. They said my house was a tinderbox- no matter what I did, it could be difficult to save. They said the RFS would do the best it could, but there were no guarantees that there would be fire trucks available to defend my 118 year old property. I decided I would evacuate if it came to a "stay or go" advice, but in the meantime I would take fire preparations more seriously. With help from friends, I spent weeks hacking back bushes and trees, raking back mulch, moving furniture off verandas, covering windows with fire resistant sarking, and putting valuables in the car for a quick get away. On the 1st December, it was 45 degrees, with 60km per hour winds. It looked as though the fire was coming from Majors Creek. Robin C helped me hammer corrugated iron around the back veranda to help prevent ember attack. Finally, I put a SWS (Still Water Source) sign on the gate for the Fireies. Then I waited and watched. On December 31st the RFS advised people to leave now if that was what they had decided to do.



**Photo 25: Watching and worrying in Canberra, 1.1.2020, Sally
Matthews**

On December 31st we were told that if you planned to evacuate, you needed to go now. I headed to Canberra to stay with friends Pip and Ang. For the next four days we watched and worried and tried to follow what was happening with the fires at home: Braidwood Community Radio, Fires Near Me App, ABC News Radio, Braidwood Bugle all provided some information, but it was the calls or emails from friends in the valley that we most looked forward to. It was an anxious time.

Canberra was hot and stinking too. On January 1st it was reported that Canberra's air quality was the worst of any city in the world due to south coast fire smoke. The sky was orange and visibility was poor. The air quality rating peaked at 5185 ppm on January 1 - a rating above 200 is considered hazardous. I could only imagine how bad it was in Araluen, and what these ratings meant for the people at the fire front.

FIRE ARRIVES IN THE VALLEY



Photo 26: Fire coming, 31.1.20, Margaret Stone

We were just trying to be prepared. We were looking south, then we turned around and it was coming from the North- Reidsdale and Bells Creek. The smoke dwarfed everything. It was so big what we were facing.



Photo 27: Fire cloud over the hill, 4.1.20, Les Mundy

That's the fire that came and got me! It had been threatening down the river for a week or so. Then the wind changed and it came over the hill and into the valley....pyro-cloud developed and crashed over the hill with a wind at 80-100km per hour. It was well above 45 degrees too. We couldn't get to the creek for water because everything was burning like crazy. We had to draw water from the pool and we fought the fires until about 4.00am. I was up at 6.00am again to cut burning casuarinas and deal with spot fires. We fought spot fires for 2-3 weeks because things kept re-igniting- but it wasn't as bad as that first night because the surrounding areas had been burnt. I really don't know how the four of us managed to save our house and my neighbour's house, but somehow we did. I will never forget how our house paddock had not even a blade of grass because of the drought, but when that cloud came down it just turned red with a wave of fire, and the cowpats in the bare paddock next door were burning.



Photo 28: Clouds of smoke, Jan, 2020, Ben McEvoy

That was the second time- that was why I went down to see Les and Debby- I wanted to make sure they were all right. That cloud- that was incredible- but fortunately it didn't hit.

My other half- Leanne- the other tumour's back- it's been a hard one- it went from the fires to the flood and then with this virus, you'd never believe what's happened with our life- she's going to get another one removed next

Friday- she went through all that- and then radiation. She's powered on- she's a soldier.



Photo 29: Mozzie Utes near Neringla Road Bridge, 11.13 pm, 4.1.20, Peter Sorensen

It was bloody hot that night. I had bright yellow, heavy cotton overalls on, and I didn't mind getting wet I can tell you. I certainly didn't stay away from the hose spray. The temperature was still in the low forties at 11.00pm.



Photo 30: Determined Man, 11.15 pm, 4.1.20, Peter Sorensen

This is Chris on a Mozzie fire hose. We were mopping up near the pile of stones near the Neringla Road Bridge- trying to stop the fires getting into the large trees or spreading through the paddocks. There were 8 people with four mozzie trucks. I was driving the ute and operating the pump. Chris was on the hose. It was really smoky and really hot. Chris had a hand held radio so we could talk with each other. We had to fill up twice from the Dargues Reef water truck that was up near the Recreation Ground.



Photo 31: Fire truck in a firestorm, 6.47 pm, 4.1.20, Meagan Donnelly

Don Collett's experience predicted the dire need for a southern containment line to protect the valley from a coast fire front. The teams attacking the fire along this containment line were critical in preventing fire spreading through the residential village.



Photo 32: The fire storm from Pauline and David's, 4.1.20, Ben McEvoy

That was when basically... it was game on- it built up on top and all the guys at the pub thought it was going to come from that way and then the wind changed- where Dave's farm was- it was just rolling fire- wind was the biggest problem and when it hit it just went crazy- day went to night- that's when the Mozzie boys basically saved the town.

I was with a guy named Don with a ute near Helen Harrison's. The fire was like waves across the paddock- absolute chaos- Don turned up and I said - "Mate I'm here to help."

The other guys who were there were incredible- everything they did together was amazing – they were silent heroes. One guy pulled in front and said: “OK- 2 m sweeps”. I’ll never forget it for the rest of my life.

When I drove down I was just doing traffic control. One of the QPRC guys in the truck turned to me and said “Get Out”- and I turned to the others and said “Get out”- “It was starting to come down the mountain- I couldn’t believe it. I couldn’t leave. The adrenalin was amazing- near Helen’s there was a huge strainer post on fire going into her trees and I just jumped over the fence- I couldn’t believe I’d done it.

When it hit- day’s gone to night- it went everywhere- shot left and the straight ahead and then on the right- Pauline and David- we helped them out first- their posts were on fire. I don’t even know their names. I went and put the ute down at the pub, and Don in the white ute, heart of gold, the pump had cut out a few times and he put the effort in- the heart of gold people.

That was the first hand of being there- I couldn’t just turn around and leave- I’m from a small town up north- Paterson. After all this I said to my other half- and said to Tom at the pub- I’d love to go there with a band and put a thousand on the bar- those guys saved the town. I’ll never forget it. All those local guys- you never forget, they were unbelievable, they were amazing.

I don’t know how Harrison’s peach farm didn’t burn. And Les and Debby- you see how it shot up there near the creek- they were so lucky they had their young guys- another incredible story- and they saved that farm. I went and saw Nola- we got her ready to leave and tried to warn her, and I set up the radio channel for her so she’d know when she had to leave.

The Mozzies were so tactical- they were all over it- I went with Donnie. Every time I see them it puts a smile on my face. It’s something I’ll never forget.

The hard part of it was to see Conrad- and Amy- incredible- she was up there in the fire-shed in Braidwood feeding everybody- that what’s impressed me- the way people were helping each other, not just looking after themselves- the people were great.

I’ll never forget Araluen- where I come from, people stand by each other there = the same with Araluen; stand together and have a go. Like I said- what we did was bugger all- but what I said to Donnie was “You’re having a go- it’s all good buddy- we’ll sort this out”. With the fire I had to make sure I didn’t get in their road- the way they went about it, getting out of the road, and when it was all over, there we all were in the pub having a beer.

By the time we got back to Tarago to the farm I was still SO full of adrenalin. I’ve always wanted to go back and shake their hands.



Photo 33: Armageddon Begins, 6.29pm, 4.1.20, Nancy Rose

We were watching the fire come down through Kenny's paddock when suddenly it arrived from the south. Three minutes of horror and then I walked to the pub to see if everyone was OK. Came back and spent the night checking for embers and listening to the RFS scanner app. Later I was told that if the winds hadn't dropped, the village would have gone.



Photo 34: The new normal, 4.1.20, Cath Harrison

It was so hard to know where the fire was, it was like this every day- we could only see the flames at night and it was really hard to gauge how far away the fire actually was. We had nothing different for a month or more, it was like this every day. Horrible.

Huge angry looking pyro cumulus formed every day, it was so scary and hot- all in all a very stressful time.

The day I took this photo, it was 45 deg by 10 in the morning, and by 1pm, it was heading to 48 with zero humidity. Today was the day we were going to burn; it was inevitable.

AFTERMATH



Photo 35: Paula and Vlad just after the fire, 6.1.20, Vlad Bodhan on the self-timer.

We took this picture on the 6th because that was the first time we could relax enough to take any pictures. It was on the verandah of our house that we saved. We were only the two fire fighters but with over 50 years of combined fire fighting experience which is the only reason the house is still standing. We had all the protective gear, so we were prepared.

Everything in the front of the house was still burning at 2 o'clock in the morning. Les had left just before and Vlad kept on getting up to make sure it was all right. I still haven't digested it completely. The worst thing was, we were told in the fire shed in the morning- 'don't worry, if you need us we will come, but they didn't- they left us'.

Those boots nearly melted on my feet. Next morning I put them on and they felt wobbly and I thought what's wrong with my shoes, and I found out that they had melted.

Looking back now, I'm very happy we saved the house, but with all the health problems I have now, I think they are all connected to the stress of that night. If we had lost the house, it would have been a different sadness. And probably different health problems!



Photo 36: Spare Water Cube, 5.1.20, Vlad Bodhan

That's the water cube- not the one we use for firefighting, but a spare one and it only had a little bit of water in it- you can see where the water came up to on the cube. Today- it's gone- I saw it today being loaded onto the trucks. The colours in this are amazing- just the colouring caused by the smoke and the fire- probably something was standing close to it but we just don't know.



Photo 37: Fire fighting gear, 9.1.20 Robin Cavalier

The clothing worn by Vlad and Paula Bodhan who fought the fires without outside assistance. The gear is hanging on their verandah.



Photo 38: The new water tank, 5.1.20, Vlad Bodhan

This water tank was brand new and waiting to be installed!



Photo 39: The Red Pajero, 5.1. 20, Vlad Bodhan

You couldn't believe it- when Laing O'Rourke were cleaning up today (3rd July 2020) they couldn't break this car- they folded the other ones in half, but this one was a tough one. We were going to restore it. It was the car that moved us to Araluen 1994. Most of our stuff we moved in a cage on a trailer. Our son-in-law saved the front number plate- the special centenary number plate. We had just put new tires on! We finally parted with it today.

AFTERMATH DOWN THE DEUA



Photo 40: The Shire Border on Araluen Rd looking towards Moruya, 7.15 am, 12.1.20, Peter Sorensen

The road along the Deua was closed to everyone except locals. I went down to have a look. It was like a moonscape. I was totally astonished about how black it was. Some of the burnt trees that had fallen on the road had been cleared by then.



Photo 41: Pigeon Gully Bridge, 12.1.20, Peter Sorensen

Not far away from this bridge I saw a big stump that was still smouldering. It had already been checked by the mop-up trucks, but I put 700 litres of water on it because I was worried about the fire flaring up in the wind.



Photo 42: Road is definitely closed, 11.1.20, Cath Harrison

Well- there it is- the road is DEFINITELY closed- the council didn't realise that this had happened until at least a week after the fire. The road went straight ahead into a bloody big hole. It took Eurobodalla Shire nearly 5 months to get that bridge back in, they lost a total of 18 wooden bridges in the fire - I've got another photo of the side track they constructed, but then we had the huge flood, everything washed away and we were back to square one.

I still find it very upsetting driving up and down the road, it looks like we've been nuked -we were all pretty lucky we didn't die that night, it rattled us all; if the less prepared residents had stayed that night, they wouldn't have survived.

It could have taken Araluen village out that night- that fire was travelling so fast - we were totally surrounded by huge flames in an instant- we describe it as being in the dragon's mouth- it came up out of the river at us, three fires had merged and we copped it- we were pelted with horizontal embers for 7 hours and they just kept on coming- it burnt my shirt and I didn't even know I was on fire. Everything was out of control by then. In the days prior to impact we had no chance of pinpointing the front. There was no intel coming our way, there were no resources and we couldn't see anything but smoke. In Eurobodalla, once the power went out they were siphoning fuel out of school buses just to keep the fire trucks going. There was no water in the Deua. The shit had hit the fan. Our calls to fire control were pointless, they couldn't help us. We knew what we were going to have to do to survive.



Photo 43: Down the Deua: a changed landscape, 18.1.20, Angela Casey

Mark and I went down the Deua Road to visit friends. This is what we saw on the way.



Photo 44: Down the Deua: varying fuel loads, 18.1.20, Angela Casey

Some areas were fully burnt out. Then, even close by, some areas still had a heavy fuel load..



Photo 45: Ghost – the day after, 5.1.20, Cath Harrison

This is a good indication of how hot that fire was- this was a big tree and burnt to nothing in an instant- just a ghost remaining. From my post at the front of our house all I could see were flames in every direction, we were totally surrounded - the fire was on a mission, it was unpredictable, extremely hot with giant flames incinerating everything in their path. We could hear explosions over the roar of the fire, it was totally dark and we got hammered - a hail storm of horizontal embers, some were huge chunks of burning bark and every place they dropped ignited instantly, it was intense. The wind was over 100km per hour, the fire was running so hard and was spotting way ahead of the front, this was a fire storm.

With sheer guts and determination we managed to steer that beast around our place our seven hour ordeal was worth enduring. It was truly unbelievable and absolutely terrifying.



Photo 46: One burnt snake 11.1.20, Cath Harrison

This was about a week after the fire and we were starting to clean up the huge mess - the more I walked around the more animal remains I found. I think it was so hot nothing would have escaped it anyway. That snake would have been about a metre long- I saw its remains laying there- and thought god- look at that- incinerated in an instant. It was another victim of the fire, like the turtles with the big holes burnt in their shells- all the wallabies I was looking after have disappeared, its highly probable they became the wild dogs dinner - the dogs and other ferals have become the dominant species here since the fire, they survive and thrive in this situation and they're breeding up. The injured wallabies and other creatures that were here have little chance of surviving.

It's going to be a long time for anything to recover, the bush is struggling, the trees dead and the native animals absent.

A couple of days before the front hit, residents who saw the volcanoes - (the trees on the mountains spraying huge plumes of embers) changed their minds and left, most returned to find their homes gone, totally destroyed. If we'd have evacuated we'd have nothing left either.

Evacuation was totally out of the question we would have been running from one fire ground to another- that's what happens- people panic and then they get cooked driving away. The month of waiting to burn was the most stressful time ever. Every night we'd discuss the situation and write a list of what we had to do the following day- it was just Tony and I, we were a team. We had done an enormous amount of preparation, we had strategy and a plan, but when it hits nothing could ever prepare you for that.

In the weeks leading up to the fire I was so worried that I wouldn't be able to get home from work, and Tony would be there by himself. The anxiety and stress was overwhelming.

We hadn't seen the stars or the sun for 6 weeks- smoke, all day every day. The Currowan/Clyde fire, the Deua fire and the Badja merged and unleashed its fury upon us as one intense firestorm.

We burnt 3 times in the course of 6 weeks. By then we were exhausted and wanted it all to be over.

AFTERMATH - ARALUEN



Photo 47: Burnt citrus, 5.1.20, Tracey Harrison.

These were nearly ready to pick when the fire hit- we went out on the 5th to have a look but didn't stay long, but we didn't go back until the 15th so we could see what we needed to do. We still haven't turned on the irrigation to know whether the pipes and taps will still work.



Photo 48: Peach orchard, 5.1.20, Tracey Harrison

Part of the issue was just before the fire came, Ken planned to turn the irrigation on so that the trees would have more moisture, but the fire came before then.

In the orchard, we have trees where there is nothing left; some are scorched and we don't know yet whether some of these will recover. We wonder whether some of the nutrients that were in the trees made them shoot out blossom, but we don't know whether it is going to come back- it is really hard to get information. Certain trees in the bush stayed green - Maybe we need more trees like that.

Ken has been saying for the last couple of weeks that we should start pruning, but we haven't yet. There is a grant now for orchards and forests. Ken's idea now is, because there is nothing up in the bush for things to eat, any fruit we have will be eaten- we have to have nets, so we've applied for help with the trees. Trees from the bush have fallen into the orchard, all the fences have been burnt. It's a big job.

We had a lot of support from the farmer's market, and Rotary. Some of our customers were in tears, and offering to come and help, and it makes you feel a bit that you can't let them down. The GG visited, and he's rung Ken afterwards, which made him feel that it really mattered. The GG and Mrs Hurley sat with and talked to everyone- they'd just had a grandchild and

shared that- and we talked about Caitlyn and Kenny's wedding- something to look forward to- they were very down to earth- it was very special.



Photo 49: Grapes, 5.1.20, Tracey Harrison
(Photo 50:)



Photo 51: Courthouse mailbox after the fire, 9.00am, 5.1.20,
Pauline Cavalinis

Filled tubs of water doused by hand and a Mosquito truck stopped the fire at the courthouse entrance – a desperate measure when your hoses don't reach!

SUPPORT FROM ALL OVER



Photo 52: Carwoola Brigade, 6.1.20, photographer tbc

This photo is taken on the day that we had the feast at the fire shed- the curries provided by the Sikh and Muslim communities of Canberra and Queanbeyan, and other delicious food provided locally. The Carwoola Brigade came to Araluen several times during January, as did fire fighters from Braidwood, Majors Creek, Captains Flat and Farringdon brigades, along with Remote Area Fire Team (RAFT), New Zealand fire fighters, Tasmanian fire fighters, Queensland fire fighters and even a couple of Canadians. We had lots and lots of support.



Photo 53: Queensland Fire Fighters, 13.1.20, Robin Cavalier

The Queensland crews had just arrived and were preparing to head out to the Neringla fires while the Governor General was still visiting.



Photo 54: Mark at the end of a long shift, 6.1.20, Lin Irving



Photo 55: Delicious Generosity at the Araluen Fire Shed,
6.1.20, Sally Matthews

Ang and Bev sent me a list of things to collect from the RFS in Queanbeyan. I was taken to the showground where there was a huge pavilion crammed with donated goods: nappies, make up, clothing, shoes, cooking utensils, camping gear, chairs, tables, tinned food, toilet paper- everything you could possibly imagine and more. Tables overflowing with the generosity of strangers.

There was a kitchen next door in which there were huge cauldrons of steaming curries that had been donated by the Muslim and Sikh communities of Canberra and Queanbeyan. I was told I had to take at least 60 containers of chickpea and other curries for the Firies and the people of Araluen to enjoy. While the containers were being filled, I was taken to a large mobile cool room- it too was packed with donations: ham, chicken, trays of mangoes, boxes of mushrooms, strawberries, cheeses, milk, butter, lamb...it was overwhelming. Before I knew it, my car was jammed with food and other goods- to the extent that when I opened the door, things fell out.

That night we had a huge feast in the fire shed. Nancy Rose cooked up a tray of the mangoes to make a mango and cashew curry. Laurann provided a gigantic roast leg of lamb for the carnivores. It all went down a treat. I couldn't believe the generosity of all the people involved.

(Lin Irving caption) They were just so exhausted when they came in- you could just tell by their clothes and the way they slumped into their chairs that they'd had a really hard day. All the visiting firies wanted to talk, but they were just so tired and so grateful for the meals that were there. They were just ravenous, they just set upon it- it was good! It was such a generous offer received at the end of such a long day- the days were so long for everyone- it lifted their spirits- and it did- they came in and had company and somebody to talk to and a full tummy to go home on and be ready for the next day.



Photos 56 and 57: The love of family, 01/20, Matilda Raynolds
Ben, George, Jack and Matilda in gear. It was a moment I knew we needed to capture- we're rarely all together, and so it was an important moment for us, but also for the country - Globally the World was acknowledging the fires in Australia and it was directly affecting little old Araluen.

That's what we used to do all the time when we were young teens, spending the Summer fighting fires - I was just really surprised that we were all together, just the sibilies - when I heard that Ben was coming back for a second time from Cowra and then George coming all the way down from



Roma in Far North QLD, accompanied by Jack from Katherine in the Northern Territory, and I knew I needed to go back too and flew in from Melbourne.”

Really we were all there to support Mum and Dad, to ensure Dad stayed safe and well, as well as doing what we could to protect the farm and surrounding areas that have shaped our lives.



Photo 58: Donated fodder arrives by the truckload, 16.01.20, Margaret Stone

Chris organised with Canberra Pet Rescue to get truckloads of hay bought down for farm animals, and bags of native animal food too. Dave collected a second load in Braidwood. People came from Neringla, the Deua, Majors Creek and Reidsdale to collect it.



Photo 59: “Have you seen the stuff at the pub?” 12.1.20, Sally Matthews

Several truckloads of donated good were unloaded at the Araluen pub. There was huge amount of stuff! Box after box of goodies in towering and tottering stacks and piles: chook food, tinned food, pasta, clothing, baby goods, buckets and cleaning gear, bedding, toilet paper, dog kennels, toys, soap, tampons, eskies, drink bottles, cutlery, handbags....All donated by people who cared. Over the next few weeks, Norm, Tom and others distributed the goods to people who had been impacted by drought and fires.

FIRES SURROUNDING NERINGLA AND ARALUEN



Photo 60: Merricumbene Mountain From Grungally on Neringla Rd, 20.1.20, Maree Horder

I had been too busy to worry too much until about 6.00pm when the wind blew up. The fire suddenly bloomed about a km from our house and I started to panic. I had been in fires before, but this was beyond a bushfire. It was an emergency. The fire got into the oaks and the smoke was like a pile of tires burning – thick black smoke. The RFS guys had to move on to Malcolm and Julie’s, so we worked with the Mozzies.

That night, the fire came to within 100 m of our house. The Mozzies kept the fire at bay that night, but the fire kept going on and on. Whenever the wind

picked up fires would pick up and burnt trees would come crashing down. It was so unpredictable.

We were blessed really. I'm not too good at fighting fires but we had plenty of help, and I am pretty good at making a cup of tea. During quieter periods we had a few cups of tea on our veranda as a bit of respite- a bit of a rest.



Photo 61: Night Patrol on Neringla Rd 1, 8.30pm, 23.1.20, Luke Watson



Photo 62: View behind Salvia Lane, 12.1.20, Margaret Stone
That was the hill behind our place. We were lying in bed at night and every so often we would wake up, look out the window and say: "No it's still in the same spot." Tim had said if the wind changes and came from the East, we would watch those fires run down the hill and we were in direct line. The fires in the hills kept burning for weeks. Chris climbed the hill and found the spot fires and guided the Kiwis to them.



Photo 61: Night Patrol on Neringla Rd 2, 24.1.20, Luke Watson

NERINGLA AND WOOLLA BURNING

Photo 64: Mozzie and water trucks at Grungally on Neringla Rd, Afternoon of 20.1.20, Maree Horder

The fires were visible from our veranda for about a week before this photo was taken.

Before lunch on the 20th, Tim and Jamie came to assess the situation, and they helped us set up the pumps and hoses. It was really hot. We moved our cattle. At about 3.00pm in the afternoon the Mozzies came and set up in two rows- one on the other side of the creek and one close to the house. The idea was to have a fall back position to save the house if the fire couldn't be held across the creek.





Photo 65: Helicopter over fires from Grungally on Neringla Rd, January, 2020, Maree Horder

The Deua River next to our house was not flowing due to the drought, but the deep Royal Hole kept replenishing itself which was great because for the about 2 weeks we had four helicopters lining up a few times a day to refill at the Royal. The helicopters' job was to protect housing and property- but they had to stop whenever the smoke got too bad, so they weren't with us on the night of the 20th because the smoke was so thick.

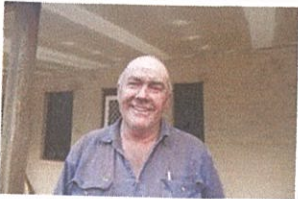


Photo 66: Portrait of Terry Hart, January 2020, Peter Smith



Photos 67 and 68: Fire storm at Woolla 1 (2.59pm) and 2 (3.00pm), 1.2.20 Luke Watson

Here we are trying to defend buildings on Woolla. Johnny Griggs was on the inside of a new building spraying the walls and ceiling using water from a small tank on his quad bike. The building was full of hay and stuff. Obviously it wasn't good.



We were told that there was a front coming through, and that we needed to get out. But not long afterwards a pyro-cumulous cloud collapsed on top of us and the bush and buildings all around us just exploded. Everything was on fire – it was like....sheets of fire.

We managed to save the house but all the outbuildings and stockyards were lost.

We were trapped for about 4 hours, but later we followed a bobcat out. It scraped a path for us to get out. Tim said the Woolla fire storm was the worst he had ever seen in 50 years of fire fighting.



Photo 69: The old big shed at Woolla is lost, from a Matt Rigg video, taken mid afternoon, 1 Feb 2020

Chris Peters from Araluen is lying on the ground to avoid the intense heat while hosing the solar panels on the new shed. To enable him to keep in place another hosed him. As embers flew over the top of the roller doors of the new shed Johnny Griggs was inside with a hose putting out anything that caught alight as well as hosing the walls as they buckled under the heat.

They saved the new shed and all its contents. Photo Matt Rigg part of a video mid-afternoon 1 February 2020.



Photo 70: The old big shed at Woolla is lost, 1.2.20, Peter Smith
The adjoining stockyards were charred, but saved, as was the new shed and its contents.



Photo 71: Shed at Woolla burning, Peter Smith, 30.12.20

Image 72: Braidwood Bugle article



Photo 73: Remains of Cooranbene Huts, Woolla, 21.2.20, Peter Smith
Eight year old Jackson Rowland Smith inspecting the ruins including the remnants of his go-kart.



Photo 73: The day after, Woolla, 21.2.20, Peter Smith



Photo 75: Old Woolla Stock Yard Ruins, 2.2.20, Peter Smith
The yards were a showpiece of the hard work and toil by the Davis women who built them in the 1950s out of red gum which they cut, snigged, split and erected with hand tools. Some of the rails were 600mm thick and so heavy that two men would struggle to lift. Black lines on the ground are all that's left.

FLASH FLOOD AND FLOODING



Photo 76: Creek flooding near Dave's, 20.1.20, Ben McEvoy

After two weeks, you'd never know it had happened. From one extreme to the other. Harrison's fence it all went through there. Sam was in there and trying to sort it all out- not just that but all the wire. I jumped on the back of Dave's ute and we ended up snipping it- the water that came through! There's another story - how Dave cleared all that out- it was amazing. Fires destroying the fences, and then we had to cut the wire out in the flood.

Those little things- it was amazing. Watching Amy while I was in Braidwood- I couldn't believe it- Amy, feeding everybody- Helen, and Elaine and Laurann- they were just amazing.

It's been unbelievable I couldn't turn my back and drive up the hill and leave seeing everything on fire.

I'm doing fire damage up in Tallong tomorrow- I've been doing a lot of the flood - drains and so on- now out the back of Tallong with vegetation clearing- the aftermath is huge- flood damage- it's unreal- the hardest thing for me was the losses- and they managed to keep their chin in the air. I was going to buy Conrad a carton- and he said I don't drink- so I went to the Boiled Lolly and got him a few sweet things. I was up in Braidwood when an old guy turned up and I asked: "Are you all right?" - he told me all his horses were at the fence and burning, his sheep burning, but when the roos were just racing out of the fire burning....

It's hard to come to grips with a lot of things.

The biggest thing is how quickly it can all happen- the fire- and then the flood! It was SO needed to replenish everything that had been used- but what a wild year.

It's not just dealing with the road closures, but dealing with the tragedies. What got me was how they stuck together. It's the story of how the local guys saved the town. No heroes on our side- what it's about is what everybody did. I just couldn't walk away. I started out at Falls Creek- it was like a bomb had hit us, and after that near Braidwood, and then Braidwood, and then Araluen.

I've been good- I'm the south east rural traffic manager- I've been to pretty much every one of the fires for this season, I've seen the bad of it all- all I was doing was my job- we're there to make sure people are safe.

When it got down to Araluen it came down the mountain- the Firies were stressing out big time, cars flying around everywhere. The Firies did an incredible job, but it was the Mozzies- one guy got on and said guys- pull it together- and they did. The biggest killer- my phone had moisture in it- and I've lost all my photos. I'm really looking forward to being able to relax.



Photo 77: Flash flood, 20.1.20, Tracey Harrison

Flash flood! We got 20ml. We went up to Wisby's and waited for the water to come down. That was exciting, until we saw all the stuff that came down- it was so messy. Great to receive the rain, but it caused a lot damage- Matt had had the dams cleaned out after this first one, and we have to have it done again- the silt kills off everything in there- all the eels- we were using everything, branches and hands to try to get out as much as we could.



Photo 78: Water over the paddock, 10.2.20, Sandra Raynolds

Wow – that's beautiful- I didn't even have a story for this- who could believe the heavens could open like this after all this time- it was inconceivable to me to suddenly see so much water. It was sort of surreal after all the smoke, and the dust- there was hail just before, and then the rain.



Photo 79: Deluge, 10.2.20, Cath Harrison

That's the Araluen Creek- this is usually just a little meandering stream. But what the fire hadn't destroyed, the flood did.

This flood just ripped its way through the landscape. We were quite lucky that the fire had burnt everything before- otherwise there would have been one hell of a log jam that could have had disastrous implications.

The ground has been sterilised from the heat and it's become hydrophobic so when that rain came, nothing went into the ground. I was fencing this morning and the earth still smells of fire- none of that water went in.

The whole of the valley down our way has changed forever- it's been 7 months now. You can see some green on the tops of the mature trees in the creek but I'm not sure they're really alive at all- the eucalypts have put out some epi-cormic growth, and now that's dying- when that goes, they won't survive. Not one candle bark tree survived the fire on our property.

This whole year has just been a big blur; it just keeps going on and on and you wonder "what's next?" We'll be back in the fire season before you know it. What didn't burn last season, will burn this coming season.

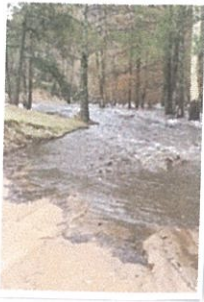


Photo 80: Access road to Grungally, 12.2.20, Maree Horder

After the big dry and the fire came the floods. But we didn't mind, it was such a relief that there was rain again and it helped put out the remaining fires. We watched the water come down over our access road and we felt relieved. Yes, we were sort of lucky. It was good. It showed how resilient we all are.

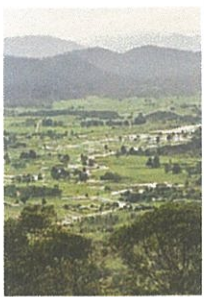


Photo 81: Flood from the lookout, 20.1.20, Laurann Yen

After all we'd had, here was the rain making the valley look as though there had never been drought, or fire, or dust- but I still wasn't sure I could get home!

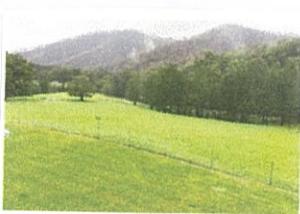


Photo 82: View from our Veranda, 5.3.20, Maree Horder

After all that! Green again!



Photo 83: After, Feb, 2020, Laurann Yen

I love this photo- with the tops of the hills clearly so devastated but the green below it gives me hope. It comes after the fires were finally out all around us- Tallanganda, Majors's Creek, Monga, Currowan, Deua, Neringla and the Badja- every one of which could have wiped us out.



ROAD TO RECOVERY BEGINS

Photo 84: Before and After- Dec 2019/ Feb 2020, Rob Cowan

The smoke and heat and ash were depressing and worrying. Not a blade of grass to be seen. Within 10 days of rain, the landscape and my garden were transformed. All it took was some water and our hopes were transformed along with the landscape.



Photo 85: When the River Runs Dry, 27th Jan 2019/ 30th Dec 2019, Ashley Williams

Usually, the Deua River provides comfort throughout the warm summers, a place to swim, fish and provide some farmers with water to keep livestock alive. It felt as though the dry, hot heat and lack of rain was dragging on forever. The majority of creeks were dry, but the Deua held on. Eleven

months was all it took to make the place unrecognizable; once with flowing water and then only dry river rocks.



Photo 86: Yoga Starts Again!, March 2020, Lin Irving

This was all of us meeting under normal circumstances again - getting back into a sense of normality and bringing people back together and moving on, rather than being out and making breakfasts every morning and making packed lunches for the firies. We were meeting just because we were doing normal things- not to listen to the latest fire report, or to get lunches ready. it was just a sense of the normal coming back to the valley.



Photo 87: A huge appreciation for the Firies- a visual thanks so they could see it, 13.1.20, Lin Irving

This one was when the New Zealand Firies joined us. The Green boys next door put this together and put it out on the road because they wanted to thank all the people who were..helping at the time. The family put it together and brought it down because they were so grateful for the extra support; not just Firies from our valley but from other brigades and the New Zealand team who came down. Down on the road every time they drove past they could see what appreciation there was. Quite often you didn't see them, because they were coming and going all the time, so not just the Firies seeing it, but letting everyone else see how the Firies were acknowledged. Not fancy, and just on something that they had. But it was very important because we DID have fire up behind us, and that was frightening for us all around here. Luckily it was meandering down the hill not racing up the hill.



Photos 89, 99: Bringing the community together, 16.1.20, Lin Irving

This a fundraiser, a way of people meeting new people, and a very positive way of bringing everyone together to share experiences and relax- although not everyone was ready to relax. All the money was donated back to the "After the smoke" appeal. The breakfasts were regular, and only stopped because of the NEXT disaster. It was a very positive way of bringing the community together- time to relax, take a deep breath and know that the money that was being made would come back into the community.





Photo 90 The creek at Badja, Ashley Williams (A3 to be printed)

PYRO-CUMULOUS



Photo 91: Pyro-cumulus from the Old Post Office, 6.55 pm, 30.12.19, Sally Matthews

The cloud had been developing all day. By lunch time the smoke was so terrible that I finally decided that I would have to drastically cut back the climbing roses on the front veranda in order to reduce the chance of ember attack. Those beautiful roses had to go! By sunset, the immensity, power and strange beauty of the cloud was simply awe inspiring. I couldn't bear to think of what was happening on the other side of that hill.



Photo 92: Inside the pub looking out at 5.46pm, 31.12.19, Elaine Collins

They'd called it all off. We'd had the shower of rain and the Braidwood boys had all gone home- they'd called off the watch and stood down. This photo was taken inside the pub- there's Bev Bateman's car. It was just a red glow- really smoky. I was just amazed at it. When you compare those with the ones taken the night the fire really did hit, it was similar.



Photo 93: Fire over our hill, 3.1.20, Laurann Yen

This fire had been keeping us up at night- we could see flames in the hills behind Ken and Dave's places, and each night it got a bit closer, with more fire spots and we started to be able to hear trees falling. Late afternoon at the end of that week the cloud had built to the south into this nuclear bomb of a cloud- you couldn't hear anything, or smell anything, but you could start to see the colour of it.



Photo 94: Waiting and preparing, 2.28 pm, 4.1.20, Luke Watson
About 20 of us were at the fire shed- Firies, Mozzies and people helping out in the shed. We were watching the smoke to the South and preparing our

trucks and equipment. We were told to conserve our energy and be ready for a change of wind later in the afternoon. Reidsdale had gone off, so we had been there all morning. We were down to one truck from another brigade and two of our trucks. One of our trucks was broken down. This photo is taken from in front of the Araluen Fire Shed in the early afternoon. Later that day, all hell broke loose.



Photo 95: The View from Collins' Yard, 2.39 pm, 4.1.20, Elaine Collins

I can't believe how that came up. That's unreal in that photo. That little peak there, that's Kelly's peak- we've always called it that. That morning looking down the valley you could see the little bit of smoke on the top of the hill near Kelly's peak. At 9.36, it hadn't come over, but by 2.30 this is what it looked like. People were saying, oh, it'll be another day at least before it comes down the Valley. Dave said it's got to be a huge fire to be making its own cloud like that.



Photo 96: Waiting in Suspense, 4.21 pm, 4.1.20, Peter Sorensen

I only stayed half an hour for the morning fire shed briefing as I had to go to work. I kept my phone very close by that morning. Then a call came from Bev at around 11.00 am. "Here we go" I thought, but no, it was Captain Bev needing Dolphin torches and batteries for the Brigade trucks. ... the things you find you need for last minute checks....I'm back in the valley by 1.15 pm- straight to the fire shed to get up to speed and deliver torches. At home by 2.00 pm.- have a big lunch and get changed but no shower cos the power was off. Do my own last minute checks like run the fire fighting pump, chat with neighbours, listen for news on two way radio... OH SHIT...I haven't checked my house gutters...

All the while the smoke is getting higher and closer. By 5.30 pm my guttering is clear, the huge grader is cutting a firebreak in the paddock opposite, next to Donnie Collett's house. By 6pm I had wet down mine and my neighbour Tanya's front yard with my water. At 6.30 pm our valley turned an other-worldly orange colour...GAME ON!!!! At the same time, OH SHIT, I need water. Thank goodness the Dargues Reef Gold Mine water truck was parked at the Rec Ground.



Photo 97: 5.57pm, 4.1.20, Tracey Harrison

We were heading to the RFS meeting at the Fire shed- you could see the cloud of smoke building up, but we didn't realise how fast it was moving – I don't think any-one did. It was 47 degrees and we were just in shorts and thongs, and still without power.

At 6.09 within minutes of leaving home, the southerly hit, and we were surrounded by smoke- the meeting was aborted and it was a mad scramble to get home.

My sister messaged me and said they couldn't come down to help as it was all starting to happen at Reidsdale too.

Once we got home we just didn't know quite what to do first. The RFS had suggested that we buddy up and work in pairs. Ken and Kaitlyn were in one vehicle with a 1000L shuttle and Matt and Kenny were in another. Carrie stayed with Ray at the Emergency meeting point at the Rec. I spent the night driving between our house, the packing shed and the hay shed paddock looking for spot fires and embers- It was terrifying, and so dark and eerie – I didn't know where anyone was and relied on the 2-way radio to stay up to date.

I thought I would be able to check Laurann's house from the hay shed paddock, because I knew they had left, but I couldn't see anything. This is what I did all night, backward and forward all night, checking in the packing shed; due to all the cartons we were worried that it could catch alight from the embers. I also checked inside the hayshed to make sure there weren't any fires burning in the shed. About one or two in the morning it had eased, and I was able to go out to the back paddock with Ken and the kids. Chris Corcoran was in the mining truck and mentioned to that he felt he was useless not doing anything, but he was doing a great job keeping us all in water and keeping everyone safe at the Rec ground. I felt safer whenever I had power because that meant that I had access to more water at home. For most of that night the power was off, but when it came on, I was able to use the bore at home. I flooded the yard around the house which made me feel more secure and safer.



Photo 98: Pyro, 4.1.20, Tracey Harrison

I've never been so switched on with watching the weather and the satellite sites- Braidwood FM, and Braidwood Bugle. My aunties and my mum were also watching it, but I had been trying to downplay it. People didn't understand that the information couldn't be kept up to date if it was smoky. I had three warnings on my phone- for me, for my sister and my dad- with my dad the fire came not from where he was expecting it and his neighbours got

in touch to tell him to get out. He got stopped from coming back to the farm after he took my stepmother into town.



Photo 99: Clouds of smoke, 4.1.20, Ben McEvoy



Photo 100: Pyro-cloud, 4.1.20. Tracey Harrison

RECOVERY CONTINUES



Photos 101 and 102: Mick restores the Araluen Federal Hall, March – May 2020, Sally Matthews

Work on restoring the hall recommenced after the fires and floods had finished. Mick, with help from many others, undertook much needed work. The hall was substantially overhauled: new internal and external cladding; rewiring, new fans and lighting throughout; insulation; re-lining of ceiling, fresh painting-within a few weeks, the old hall was ready to host various community activities for the next 100 years. After Covid19 restrictions eased, various bushfire recovery events were held in the hall.



Photos 103 and 104: Bushfire recovery team at information sessions held in the Araluen Federal Hall, Lin Irving

The Queanbeyan Palerang Regional Council (QPRC) worked with Laurann to coordinate several information sessions at the Araluen Federal Hall. A wide range of Government agencies, Not for Profit and religious organisations came to the Valley to provide information about grants and other support that was available to assist in drought and bushfire recovery. The sessions were well attended by local residents as they gradually began to come to terms with the extreme season of drought, fire and flood.





Photos 105 and 106: RUOK? night at the Araluen Federal Hall, September 2020

In September, the Araloonies, the Queanbeyan Palerang Regional Council and the Araluen Progress Association worked together to hold an RUOK? get together at the Araluen Federal Hall. Lots of people came for a social evening of catching up with friends, eating good food and listening to music provided by local musicians.



GOVERNOR GENERAL VISIT

On January 13th 2020, the Governor General David Hurley, and his wife Linda, made an informal visit to Araluen to provide support and encouragement. Everyone bought something to share. The Ambos cooked the sausages so that the locals could talk to the Governor General and his wife. The local “behind the scenes” team did a wonderful job coordinating all the preparations.

The Vice Regal couple had been visiting bushfire-impacted areas since October, and proved to be good and sympathetic listeners. The event provided the opportunity to share stories, reflect on our experiences, and to provide each other with comfort and support.

Meanwhile, the fires around Neringla and Woolla were gathering pace.



Photo 107: Presentation to the Governor General, 13.1.20, Robin Cavalier

Vladimir Bohdan presents a copy of the Braidwood Hospital Auxiliary (fund raiser) Monopoly game to the Governor General. Nine days before, Vlad and Paula successfully saved their house, but lost sheds and other property in the fires. Left to Right: Paula Bohdan, David Hurley, Vlad Bohdan.



Photo 108: Conrad and Ang, 13.1.20, Robin Cavalier

Conrad Kindrachuck talking with Angela Casey at the Fire Shed, nine days after his home, gardens and sheds were consumed by fire.

Photo 109: Sharing Stories, 13.1.20, Robin Cavalier



Photo 109: Sharing Stories, 13.1.20, Robin Cavalier

Left to Right: Mark Moran (Araluen volunteer Fire Fighter), Jackie French, Laurann Yen.



Photo 110: Angela Relaxes, 13.1.20, Robin Cavalier

Angela Casey (Araluen volunteer Fire Fighter), having a short break after many days of working with Bev Feehan, Bev Bateman, and many others, to maintain and coordinate operations at the Araluen Fire Shed.



Photo 111: Elaine with Ambo Officers, 13.1.20, Robin Cavalier

Left to Right: Elaine Collins, and two ambulance officers who accompanied the Governor General to Araluen.



Photo 112: Serious Business, 13.1.20, Robin Cavalier

Left to Right: Luke Watson (Araluen Volunteer Fire Fighter), Mick Pritzler (Mozzie), John Barilaro (MP, Member for Monaro and Deputy Premier NSW).

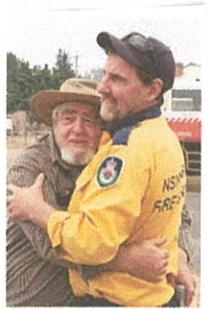


Photo 113: Comfort, 13.1.20, Robin Cavalier

Conrad Kindrachuck and Luke Watson.



Photo 114: Sharing, 13.1.20, Robin Cavalier

Left to right: Ken and Tracey Harrison, Sam and Tim Raynolds



Photo 115: Tim and Elaine, 13.1.20, Robin Cavalier



Photo 116: Mick and Mick, 13.1.20, Lin Irving

Photo 117: Still worried, 13.1.20, Lin Irving

Left to right: Angela, Mick, Bev, Nancy, Bernice





Photo 118: Bev Bateman performing more miracles, 13.1.20, Robin Cavalier



Photo 118: Fire fighters hydrating, 13.1.20, Robin Cavalier



Image 120: ABC facebook article about Tim Raynolds

