



# PITCHFORK

## Pappinbarra Valley Monthly News

Pappinbarra Progress Association

March 2017

**Pappinbarra** has entered the national consciousness, though not in a way we would have chosen. For details of Pappinbarra's Black Weekend read on. We are still reeling from the fires and their aftermath. Pappinbarra Progress Association (PPA) and the community it represents thank all involved in the response to what could have been truly catastrophic events if not for the Rural Fire Service and other agencies.

## Valley Happenings

PPA welcomes new members wherever they live. For only \$5 per adult, avail yourself of the pleasure of belonging to a group that is welcoming, pro-active and there to support its community.

**First Friday get-together** is on from 6 pm at Hollisdale Hall, Pappinbarra Road on 3 March. Come along and enjoy the company. Don't worry if you don't know anyone - we make all feel welcome! Cooks will be Suzanne, Paul, Christine and Damian. Vegetarian and gluten-free options included in a tasty low cost menu. Soft drinks available. BYOG. [Volunteers for the barbecue team at future FFs are needed.]

**Beekeeping:** We had a meeting at *Pythonwood* on Saturday 18 February, surrounded by blackened earth and amazed to find that the bees and their garden had - just - survived. Thanks to Trish for hosting, Patrick for coordinating and Leo for his assistance at this difficult time. Contact the editor to add your name for notification of the next workshop, to be held at Bellangry.

**February First Friday** saw the members' draw won by Tom Cowen. The cooks did a great job. Many thanks to all who helped in any way during the evening.

PPA thanks the **Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR)** for a grant of \$4020 towards a 'Mow and Grow' shed. This will be built adjacent to the Hollisdale Hall toilets to house the ride-on mower and the equipment needed to establish and maintain our gardens. Interested in being involved? Contact Christine Nolan at the market or First Friday.

**All Saints' Pappinbarra:** Service on Sunday March 26 at 2 pm with afternoon tea around 2.45 off the



back of Murphys' ute. All welcome. Bring a plate to share.



**Rural Fire Brigade training** for Pappinbarra and Hollisdale members is on the second Saturday of the month: 11 March 8-10 am. Meet at the hall in full uniform.

**Port Macquarie Hastings Heritage Festival** will be celebrated from 16-30 April. A special heritage service will be held at All Saints with vintage cars bringing interested folk out from Wauchope and afternoon tea at Hollisdale Hall. Contact Jeannette Rainbow (0424 226 258) to participate. For other Heritage Week events, see the April *Pitchfork* and local media.

**Pappinbarra Community Market - Grown and Gathered** is on Sunday 5 March. Come along and bring the family from 9 am to 1 pm for a country experience with beautiful food and coffee and live music! Proceeds of the March PPA charity stall will go to the bushfire fund. Stall enquiries to Lisa on 0418 220 138.  
[facebook.com/grownandgatheredcommunitymarket/](https://facebook.com/grownandgatheredcommunitymarket/)

# What a difference a day makes

On Thursday 9 February a fire started on Ocean Valley Road. With the help of a dozer and more than 50 RFB trucks over the next three days, it was contained.

Because of fires all over the state, on Saturday morning a 'Section 44' - a state of emergency - was declared. Helicopters, fixed wing aircraft and the large air water tanker were on standby. With bad weather predicted on Sunday with westerly winds and high temperatures, there was great concern that the Ocean Valley Road fire would jump its containment lines and make a run towards Beechwood.



Photo: Cathy Eggert

RFS headquarters had strike teams from as far away as Sydney and the far north coast. RFS, Forestry and Fire and Rescue teams were on standby close to our area.

When a fire started near 1087 Pappinbarra Road on Sunday afternoon, the westerly winds moved it with lightning speed. Nearly 1200 hectares were burnt out and several houses lost. But for the dedicated work of all agencies, and the fact that they responded very quickly, the catastrophe would have been much greater.

**Chris Roelandts**  
Captain, Hollisdale RFB

# Quick response saved lives

Kerry Rowley was hanging blankets on her windows to keep out the sun in the early afternoon of Sunday 12 February when she spotted a slim column of smoke across the road. She immediately rang 000, and the two properties up that small side valley, while her mother, Dale Goldfinch, rang Helen Riek,

just down Pappinbarra Road. Helen's fence was cut to allow her six endurance horses to flee. She and her son, who had been sheltering inside, away from the day's extreme heat, fled the fire by car. They managed to escape down the narrow drive in an easterly direction. Had the drive headed west from the



house to Pappinbarra Road, their exit would have been problematic. The lovely old timber house succumbed to the approaching inferno.

Helen's horses, confused by smoke, fire and swirling winds, suffered burns and one had to be put down a couple of days later. The condition of another is cause for concern. There has been a fantastic response to the funding campaign to assist Helen; the horses were burnt and require ongoing treatment. Offers of agistment for horses and other animals affected by the fires from many in the wider community are being actioned by PPA. At the time of printing, details are yet to be finalised, but it is certain that Helen, her son and horses will be cared for by their Pappinbarra friends and generous folk from the wider community.

Cattle are glad for some generously donated hay

JH

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## Saving two properties: a case study

In September of last year, Pappinbarra and Hollisdale Rural Fire Brigades hosted a community bushfire safety meeting at Hollisdale Hall. Attendees were urged to complete a fire survival plan and to lodge a copy with the RFS. Such action means that response teams can go into properties aware of the access, space to turn vehicles and availability of water for recharge. Many of us left the hall resolving to act on the recommendations [and many of us haven't done it yet and have just had a huge wake-up call.]

The meeting sowed at least one seed: Trevor Smith and his neighbours, Greg and Cathy Johnston, got together and the three planned what they would do if fire threatened. As well, Greg and Cathy started their fire training this year. The Johnstons' place is a wildlife refuge, so shrubby



The road just before Trevor's



Photos: Sophie Aplin

Trevor Smith's place after the fire

undergrowth is important for survival of small birds. Trevor makes nest boxes and other objects from wood and has stores of timber close to his small house. He keeps the surrounding area clear and green as far as possible.

Trevor is at pains to point out that he was part of a team - he, Greg, Cathy, their son Nathan and the fireies who turned up to lend a hand. He emphasises that they had water available to fight the fire and managed it because the location in relation to the fire gave them time to carry out their plan. With a different scenario they may have been obliged to evacuate. He also said they were fortunate in having a petrol pump; people with electric pumps were stuffed when the power went off unless they had a generator at hand.

Tanks above Trevor's are kept full using a petrol-powered pump from the river. Greg and Trevor had put a standpipe into the line with a fire hose which Trevor manned and Greg had another tank down at his place with a standpipe hooked onto a fire-fighting hose. Nathan and Cathy had joined lengths of garden hose hooked into the pressurised line so they could throw water some distance down in the area along the river - inaccessible to vehicles. Trevor wet everything down at the top and the others were down at the bottom with a sprinkler. When a spot fire started up between Greg's house and the river and went up into the canopy, they all moved down there to deal with it. Mark from next door came to help. At this stage the

fire front wasn't even in sight; Paul Pollet could see spot fires starting up well ahead of the front from his high vantage point at *Inshallah*.

Trevor had been wetting down around his place before the fire reached them, and it burnt up to where he had doused the ground. The heat browned off all leaves

although the flames didn't reach the canopy. He had put on a sprinkler to the west of his stored timber about mid-day, an hour before the fire started. The front went past on the upper side of Pappinbarra Road well before it came down their side. They ensured that the (plastic) tanks were full and hosed down. A 6hp pump was at the river with hose and fittings already in situ. The Bonny Hills fire truck arrived as the front approached on the second side. When the fireies realised the party had unlimited water at their disposal they hosed round the top and filled up twice from the tanks. *Storz* valves had been fitted to all the tanks as per plan. Greg used half his big tank - 50,000 litres of water. The rest of the water - a huge volume - came out of the river.

Even after the rain since Black Sunday, Trevor found 'a huge log burning like a bloody furnace' the following Saturday afternoon when he went for a walk up the river. It took forty buckets of water to put it out. Then he had to deal with another flare-up. He says they were very lucky that the fire didn't come down both sides of Pappinbarra Road at the same time - the task would have been much bigger. When we spoke the next day, he and Greg had been busy installing a 9hp pump instead of the 6hp one used to save the place. "It was a learning experience all right!" "A real baptism of fire," added Cathy.

JH

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# The Rural Fire Service and the Pappinbarra fires

RFS Wauchope put out a newsletter to notify Pappinbarra residents of a community disaster response meeting to be held at Hollisdale Hall at 7 pm on Thursday 16 February. A barbecue before the meeting was run by volunteers from Beechwood P&C. Thanks to all who helped and/or donated food and drinks. The response came from everywhere and was really appreciated. PPA organised gathering information from those affected so that, in cooperation with the agencies, we could coordinate and target the response, directing all offers of help to those in need.

At the meeting, Superintendent Kam Baker told us that there was an unprecedented lead-up to the fire situation, especially for the mid north coast. "Never before had there been such forest fuel dryness and a significant lightning event the previous weekend had started 20 fires of which seven or so were still cause for concern the next weekend, [Pappinbarra's Black Weekend 11-12 February 2017]. On the evening of Wednesday 8 February the prospect was potentially catastrophic fire weather to an extent never before seen here. The Saturday afternoon to Sunday forecast was very significant and concerning - 43°C, low humidity and gusty winds. In these conditions there was absolutely no chance of controlling fire once it took hold."

According to Kam, "The Weather Bureau got it right: the catastrophic conditions did eventuate.

"Significant planning by all agencies started on the Wednesday - Local Land Services, Forestry, National Parks, RFS. It was a cooperative effort with myself designated in charge. Strike teams were pre-positioned with an inter-agency management team based at Wauchope. On Saturday morning the team was in place and warnings were sent out. [Local RFBs had been asked on Thursday to ascertain readiness of their volunteers and to be ready.] Plenty of people heeded the warnings and evacuated.

"The primary objective was to protect lives and warn the community. At 1300 hours on Sunday a fire was reported and



Paul Koch

primary response crews were diverted from Ocean Valley Road. Twelve minutes later they were on the scene; 5-10 hectares were alight and blazing.

"The fire is now [Thursday 16 February] contained. Without all agencies working together we couldn't have done it. Forestry expertise was instrumental. The burnt area is 1234 hectares with a 28 k perimeter. 700 ha were burnt in the first hour. The response was super-human. We had strike teams staged up and pre-positioned to supplement local resources. 'Just keep sending trucks till we say stop.'

"Fire conditions were catastrophic. Pappinbarra Road is one way in, same way out. With tankers and response vehicles coming in we didn't want people on the road going out.

"Six homes were lost and fourteen sheds. Forty-five houses survived, three with some sort of damage. Losses were significantly limited by preparations and people defending their property. You could tell which people had a bushfire survival plan."

Kam was blown away by stories of people who heeded warnings and left before there was a fire. He had nothing but utmost admiration for all the team and the firefighters.

JH

**Susan Ashton RN**



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**From Letitia Fitzpatrick on the Wauchope Gazette:**

Weary Pappinbarra people met at Hollisdale hall last night (Thursday 16 February) to thank the firefighters who saved 45 homes from destruction in the devastating bushfires. They shared their experiences of the catastrophic blazes, and talked to agencies that could help them.

Lisa McLeod, president of the Pappinbarra Progress Association, said the meeting, which began with a barbecue, went very well.

"It was very positive. A lot of stories were shared; a lot of people reconnected with people they hadn't seen for a while," she said.

228 people attended, with a multitude of agencies ready to help. They included the RFS; Police; PMHC; DPI; Forestcorp; LLS; Human Services; North Coast Health, Family and Community Services and Lifeline.

The Association has a big weekend ahead, collecting everyone's data.

"We have deliveries of fodder coming up the road and by late Sunday, we hope to match everyone up with the services they need - food, fodder, fences, equipment," said Lisa.

"The community response is phenomenal. There are high emotions running, and some exhausted people in the valley offering their services. People are really tired, and we are re-grouping.

"The RFS were in position the Wednesday before, getting ready, because they knew something was going to happen, and that's why the impact was lessened, so we lost six dwellings rather than 45.

"Our community is growing in tightness and people will make life-long friends," added Lisa.

**More from Lisa:** "It's at times like this that we come together and open our hearts to all our community members. Everyone still needs to be really vigilant and look after each other."

"Good old Hollisdale Hall is a community lifeline. And such is the case in Pappinbarra right now [Monday after the fires]. There's a barbecue tonight; the hall's open all day and support services are available."

PPA received a grant of \$3500 last year from Australia Post to 'ready our hall for refuge'. The work will commence shortly. We've also applied for a grant to upgrade kitchen facilities to enhance the community's capacity to cope with disasters.

## A message from Hastings Co-op

**Hastings Co-op** Chief Executive Allan Gordon: "Our thoughts and prayers are with all those affected by the devastating fires, including the brave men and women working tirelessly to keep our community safe.

"It's hard to know what we can do to help, but now is the time to rally together and Hastings Co-op will do all we can.

"Over the coming days, we will be talking with emergency services and related authorities to determine the best way to assist affected families, whether that be in the form of groceries, clothing, bedding, stock feed or farm supplies.

"It has been heart-warming to witness the swell of community spirit this weekend. We are so proud to be part of the Hastings community and will be standing right beside you in the tough times."

## Essential Energy

On the Monday after the fire 274 customers were without power west of Wauchope, primarily in the Pappinbarra area. Essential Energy received clearance from the RFS that morning to access the fire affected areas to commence line patrols. Crews promptly started some repairs with more than 20 power poles (and associated infrastructure) destroyed and requiring replacement.

Extra crews from Taree assisted local teams. Essential Energy text messaged all affected customers and provided updates via social media.



George Hegarty

New poles

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# The Pappinbarra community acknowledges with gratitude the following organizations and individuals:

**For selfless devotion to firefighting:** All the brigades from near and far who responded; all other agencies including Forestcorp and LLS.

**For donations of food and/or drink** for fires, affected families, relief agencies, support staff and the disaster response meeting: Uniting Church Wauchope; Beechwood P&C; Port Macquarie Hastings Council; Hastings Co-op IGA; Wauchope Primary P&C; Wingham Beef; Coppy's Butcher; Fuzzy Duck Wauchope; Wauchope Show Society and all the individuals who have dug deep to help those in need.

**For emergency accommodation** for those affected, firefighters and support teams: Wauchope Show Society; Timbertown Resort and all those who took in their distressed friends and family members.

**For prompt replacement of the 20 burnt out poles:** Essential Energy

**For organizing the relief appeal:** Wauchope Rotary HCCU BSB 721-000 A/C # 100 167 674

**For cooling/emergency power** - cool room, ice, Esky and/or generators: Red Shed Hire; Mick Prott; Harvey Smith and his friends; PMHC

**For cooking at the meetings:** Beechwood P&C; PPA members

**For caring for affected wildlife:** FAWNA

**For emergency animal treatment:** Wauchope Veterinary Hospital; Timbertown Vets

**For donations of feed and hay:** Wauchope Rural; DPI; Todd Barnes

**For coordinating stockfeed relief:** Cathy Eggert; Wauchope Rural

**For use of feed shed in Beechwood:** Esma Waldron

**For coordinating agistment:** Cathy Eggert and Cathy Relf

**For media coverage:** ABC and 2WAY FM; Letitia Fitzpatrick at Wauchope Gazette; Heather Smith; Chay Khamstone

**For being there when needed:** Lifeline

**For coordinating donations of whitegoods, furniture, clothing, tools, etc:** Jenny Wall, Phil Kempers; **household items:** Suzanne Leigh (no more for now please).

**For donations of tools** William Able; Hope Shop and Port Macquarie Tender Centre.

**For materials to replace damaged fencing:** Hastings Co-op Mitre 10 Hardware; Rosewood Environmental

**For being a depot for donations:** Beechwood PO; Wauchope Show Society; Harvey and Heather Smith

**For tyre repairs:** Beaufepaires at Wauchope

**For vouchers:** Wauchope Laundromat

**For healing treatments:** Susan Ashton

**For pet food:** Hills Pet Nutrition via Timbertown Vets

Thanks to all who have donated household items, clothing and tools.

Thanks to all friends, neighbours, volunteers who have helped/are helping repair and rebuild fences.

Thanks to Timber Corner who will organize payment plans for those in need of their building materials.

And last but definitely not least, for her work on coordinating PPA's part in the response - the Monday debrief; the community disaster response meeting; compilation of registers and everything else - our amazing PPA President, Lisa McLeod!

**Pythonwood bee garden** survived despite assaults from both directions and a last furious attack when the southerly arrived. Trish fought the final battle by herself with a mattock to uncover the burning mulch so she could use water to effect. The jellybush planting close to the garden perished and the superstructure for her sewage treatment system was destroyed. Zoe's studio up the ridge suffered damage, but the house is fine, thanks to the wonderful fires.



Photo: Krissa Wilkinson

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## Do you need emergency stockfeed relief?

There is feed available from Harvey and Heather Smith's shed at 1024 Pappinbarra Road. An honesty system applies: take what you need and leave a note in the book. There's hay, cattle and horse nuts, molasses and lick blocks there. More feed donations are coming and large bales have been delivered to some paddocks. I'd hate to think that anyone is missing out but it is possible we haven't supplied everyone. It would also be handy to have access to another shed... I know that's a big ask, but we're going to need to supplementary feed animals for a while yet. I am happy to coordinate feed for a bit. If people need feed, have specific needs for their animals or want to contribute feed they can contact me on 0448 562 024.

Cathy Eggert

## Do you need agistment?

We all realise that donated feed will go a lot further if stock are agisted on greener pastures. Many concerned people have volunteered agistment for stock and horses displaced by the fires. Contact me on 0403 546 887 to indicate willingness to provide agistment or to discuss where your animals can be looked after till your property recovers.

Cathy Relf

## Do you need tools or equipment?

Contact Jenny Wall (Timber corner), who is sourcing donations and responding to requests for specific items with the assistance of Phil Kempers. **If you have tools, lawnmowers, etc. to donate please contact Timber Corner 65 852 385 in the first instance.**

At this stage Pappinbarra people do not need household items as those who have lost their homes need time to rebuild. Thanks to all who have offered.

## Are you concerned about wildlife?

FAWNA has established a pickup point for food for wildlife outside #844 Pappinbarra Road. Loss of vegetation will have a great impact on the local terrestrial and arboreal fauna. (A donation of \$50 for Pappinbarra wildlife food has come from Seattle, Washington in USA, from the son and family of a Beechwood resident!)

Meredith Ryan

Andrew Ryan (FAWNA), Christine Nolan and Ashley with the food for wildlife at #844 




## Do you want to make a donation of money?

PPA has set up an online fundraiser: <https://www.chuffed.org/project/rebuild-pappinbarra-farms>

Finding funds to replace fodder, fencing and farm gear which were finished off by flames in the ferocious fires in February. Donate online or directly to the special fund-raising HCCU account: Acct. name: PPA, BSB: 721 000, Acct no: 100187096

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# Pappinbarra Community Connect

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(Admin Damian Privett)

To find out more about our monthly 'Grown and Gathered' market (or to give us a 'like'!) go to [facebook.com/grownandgatheredcommunitymarket/](https://www.facebook.com/grownandgatheredcommunitymarket/) or google 'Grown and Gathered Market'

## *President's message to the firies - Lisa McLeod*

We are so lucky to have the Pappinbarra, Hollisdale and Beechwood Brigades nearby - wonderful men and women from the RFS willing to put their lives on the line to ensure the safety of our community. With the years of experience you have, you truly went above and beyond to save life and property. That so many other brigades responded to the call is absolutely awesome. We can never repay you all for your supreme efforts, but will be eternally grateful.

Quote: *Challenges make life interesting, however, overcoming them is what makes life meaningful.*

## *Something to lift your spirits*

Calling actors, musicians, chorus girls (and boys), dancers, rouseabouts, oldies, young people, costume queens, prop makers, technicians and technicians-in-waiting (we will train you), heroes and heroines, wannabe stars, flagging divas, directors in the making, shy spear carriers, and anyone who wants a good laugh... we will find, we will make a place for you in our *tiny* play...even if it ends up bigger than BEN HUR!

### **At Winter's Turn – a mid-winter feast and a laugh Friday, Saturday and Sunday 14, 15 and 16 July 2017**

Eat, drink and be merry! A community celebration of the wonder of changing seasons... a special Pappinbarra Mystery Play. A completely low carbon footprint, fully recycled and biodegradable production by veteran director Adrian Guthrie and the fully fit-for-all-purposes Pappinbarra team.

Information session, meeting, expressions of interest and tryouts: 1 pm 18 March, Hollisdale Hall.

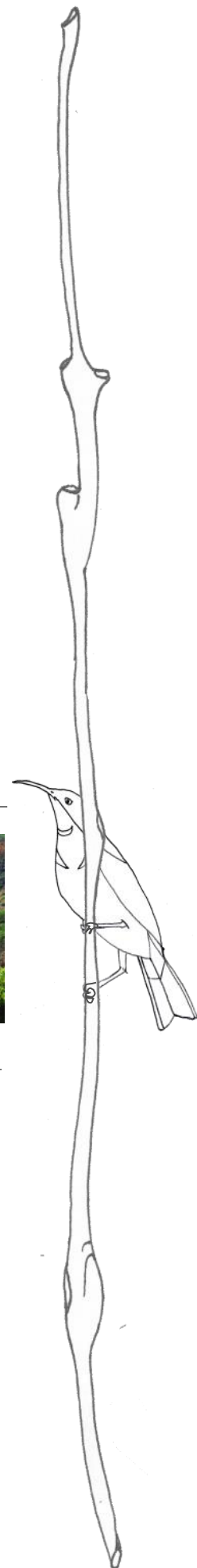
Rehearsals and preparations Saturday afternoons in April, May and June at Hollisdale Hall.

## **Wauchope Travel is running a Norfolk Island tour -**

escorted by James and myself from Port Macquarie - leaving on the 1<sup>st</sup> June and travelling over Bounty Week celebrations.

It would really suit anyone who had always wanted to go there. Now it is considered part of Australia a passport is no longer required, just photo ID such as a licence There are lots of inclusions. Ten people have booked so there are only a few spots remaining. It would suit nervous nellies who might not otherwise travel!

*Robyn Flanagan*



## PPA Matters

**PPA Committee meetings** – every third Friday of the month 6 pm at the Hall. Interested members welcome.

**Hollisdale Hall Hire** - booking essential. Contact George Hegarty 6587 6077.

**Upper Pappinbarra facilities and tennis court** - contact Lisa McLeod 0418 220 138 or Robyn Flanagan 6587 6011

### **Pitchfork**

Contributions welcome. Email to editor Jean Hegarty [jeanmay@activ8.net.au](mailto:jeanmay@activ8.net.au) by Thursday 23 March. (Copy may be edited for reasons of space or clarity. The views expressed in *Pitchfork* are not necessarily those of the PPA).

**Advertising** Contact Liz Gough [lizabeth52@hotmail.com](mailto:lizabeth52@hotmail.com) 0473 170 761 for info on both casual and regular ads.

If your business would like a one-off A4 advertising insert in Pitchfork, provide us with 300 copies and we will distribute for \$30. Deadline is 29 March for the April issue. Classified ads are free for members.

**Circulation:** 300 hard copies; over 100 by email. Comes out the weekend before First Friday.

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