

Extract from "The Sun", Monday, 6th April, 1970.

# SEC SUED FOR

**S**IXTEEN Supreme Court writs, taken out by farmers against the State Electricity Commission, claim a total of \$195,495 damages.

# FIRE LOSSES

The writs claim that the SEC was negligent in the placing of wires and in upkeep of them in the Mudgegonga and Dederang area.

The 16 farmers say they lost property in a fire that swept through the Dederang and Mudgegonga area on February 1 and 2, 1968.

All writs claim loss of income, loss of fences, trees and timber in the fire.

Some also claim for the loss of houses and sheds and vegetable crops.

## Jury trial

## sought

The writs were issued by Harnett, Nevin and Co., solicitors, of Myrtleford, ask for trial by judge and six-man jury.

Those suing are: Kenneth Samuel Walker, of Dederang — \$38,903; Arthur Douglas Green, of Dederang — \$29,991; Victor Peter De Piazza, of Mudgegonga — \$21,406; Henry Leo Brewer and Annie Mary Brewer, of Mudgegonga — \$17,720; Sekula Zdero, of Mudgegonga — \$13,770; Beverley Lauren Hicks, James Raymond Hicks (both personally and as executor of the estate of Charles Henry Hicks, deceased) and Doris Jean Hicks, of Mudgegonga — \$13,192.

James Carroll, of Mudgegonga — \$9740; Ronald James O'Keefe and Joyce O'Keefe, of Dederang — \$9603; Batista Bruce De Piazza, of Mudgegonga — \$9412; Alexander Roland Hamilton and Roma Layton Hamilton, of Dederang — \$6958; Henry Goonan, Thomas Goonan and Monica Agnes Goonan, of Mudgegonga — \$6125.

John Frederick Wood and Gweneth Mary Wood, of Mudgegonga — \$4527; Frank Maurice Clutterbuck and Beryl Jean Clutterbuck, of Towonga — \$4112; Ellen Prior and David Prior, of Mudgegonga — \$3697; Vivienne Anderson Ball (both personally and as administratrix of the estate of Ronald William Ball deceased), Gundowring South — \$3431; Keith Thomas Hamant, of Mudgegonga — \$2000.

Having shown that twigs and small branches can burn through under contact with a powerline, and are able to remain smouldering for twenty minutes at least on the ground, there surely can be no doubt that these under critical weather conditions and in favourable fuels could start a fire.

We have the familiar example of spotting - a major characteristic of Australian bushfires. Spotting is mostly caused by smouldering pieces of bark being carried some distance ahead of a fire and igniting fresh litter. In the case of the Myrtleford fire in question, the furthest spotting ever recorded was experienced - namely 18 miles. Fires caused by lightning frequently commence as smouldering sections of a tree lying on the ground, and it may not be for several hours that these are successful in lighting up the litter around them.

Two main factors controlling ignition from glowing embers such as this are weather conditions and fuel type.

Obviously, the more severe the weather the greater the chances of successful ignition. The finer fuels progressively dry out as temperatures rise and humidities drop and are thereby brought nearer to ignition point. Winds are also helpful in assisting the drying process and in fanning the embers. Weather conditions on the day in question were unusually severe. Mt. Beauty, for instance, recorded its highest temperature ever on that day.

Fuels vary considerably, but for simplicity can be divided into grasses and forest litter (fine bark, wood, leaves, etc.) Experiments in Australia have indicated that fires are almost impossible to start in grasses with smouldering cigarettes; whilst are ignited 50% of the time in litter, particularly pine needles, stringybark and similar materials.

Whilst a fire is more likely to start from a flaming match than from a glowing ember, the latter is still sufficiently hot to start a fire - in the vicinity of 1200°f (compared to 1600°f - 1800°f in the case of a flame). If glowing is accepted as evidence of ignition, then the ignition temperature required from a fire cause ranges from 400°f - 700°f which corresponds to the ignition point of flammable gases distilled from the fuel.

VICTORIA



POLICE

W. DISTRICT OFFICE WANGARATTA
File No. <u>8-2-11</u>
Dated _____

W District

9th. February 1968

CHIEF COMMISSIONER

MILDURINE.

SUBJECT: Bush fire, Mudgegonga on 1.2.68 - Report re investigations as to cause of fire.

1. At my directions the cause of the fire which commenced at Mudgegonga on 1.2.68 was investigated by Detective First Constable Waters and Detective Deitzel of Wangaratta.
2. The report of Detective First Constable Waters regarding the inquiries made is attached.
3. The result of these inquiries and the probable cause of the fire were telephoned by me to Assistant Commissioner Wilby on 7.2.68.
4. Police have not released the details enumerated in the attached report for publication but according to press and radio these details have been released by Mr. A. Haynes Regional Officer C. F. A. 24 Region, Wodonga.
5. Duplicate report, together with a copy attached, is forwarded for your information. The original duplicate file could be returned, when same will be attached to the report covering this fire when submitted by Inspector North.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'A. Peach'.

A. Peach  
Superintendent.

VICTORIA



POLICE

C. I. Branch  
MANGARATTA

Superintendent

February 8, 1968

9th DISTRICT.

SUBJECT: Result of Police investigation as to cause of a bush fire started at Mudgegonga, via Myrtleford, on 1.2.68.

1. Shortly after 2 p.m. on the afternoon of 1.2.68 a fire started on the property of James Raymond HICKS at Mudgegonga, about 10 miles from Myrtleford. With the temperature at the time approximately 107 degrees, and fanned by a strong north wind, the fire rapidly became uncontrolled, with the result that some 50,000 acres of bush and grazing country were burnt, together with some hundreds of sheep and a smaller number of cattle. An estimate of the extent of the fire, together with details of loss of stock, property etc., will be the result of a separate report furnished by Inspector NORTH at a later date.
2. On the morning of 2.2.68, with Detective BEITZEL, I visited the scene of this fire for the purpose of endeavouring to establish the exact cause, and how and where it started. From inquiries it was found that the fire was first sighted by Donald WALPOLE of Rosowhite, at about 2.5 p.m., who proceeded to the scene on the Rosowhite Fire Unit arriving there some 8 minutes later. The fire was then burning in a small area in James Raymond HICKS property, and fanned by a north wind appeared to be burning up out of a gully in the direction of a property owned by John WOOD. Other units arrived shortly after but were unable to control the fire.
3. Detective BEITZEL and myself made a thorough search of the area and inquiries with local residents, without ascertaining any definite information as to the cause. Later we returned to the scene with members of the Forests Commission, Country Fire Authority and local residents. The following is the result of these investigations.
4. In the vicinity of where the fire was sighted by Donald WALPOLE there is a power line, carrying some 12,700 volts, extending across paddocks between HICKS and WOODS property. One span, some 1,970 feet between poles, passes over this gully and it was almost directly under this cable where the fire was first sighted. Growing up out of the gully were at least two green blue gum trees, approximately 90 feet in height. By use of binoculars it could be seen that this electric cable was making contact with the top branches and leaves. In view of this it was agreed to fall these two trees for further examination.
5. Arrangements were made to meet at this spot at 10 a.m. on 7.2.68 with representatives from various Government departments, and local bodies concerned with the cause of this fire. The following were present:-

Forest Commission of Victoria

Kenneth George HARROP, District Forrester, Myrtleford.  
Druce Armons SQUIRE, Assistant Divisional Forrester, Mangaratta.

Country Fire Authority

Arthur HAYNES, Regional Officer, 24 Region, Wodonga  
David JORDON, Trainee Regional Officer, Melbourne.

State Electricity Commission of Victoria

Ian McPHERSON, Officer in Charge, State Electricity Office, Myrtleford

(Continuation of Report)

- Page 2. -

Also present were:-

William DUNCOMBE	Captain of Rosewhite Rural Fire Brigade
Donald WALPOLE	Rosewhite Rural Fire Brigade
John MAGUIRE	Rosewhite Rural Fire Brigade
James Raymond HICKS	Owner of the property
John WOOD	Owner of adjoining property
Inspector NORTH, Wodonga, and myself.	

6. After a short conference and viewing the scene, it was agreed that the two trees referred to be felled so closer examination could be made. When felled both trees showed severe burning on leaves and small branches at the heads where contact was being made with the electric cable. The trees themselves had not been burnt and immediately below the leaves were still green. Pieces of burnt branches were taken possession of by myself, representatives of the Country Fire Authority and Forest Commission.

7. Having thoroughly investigated this matter, and after consultation with experienced representatives of other Departments and Organizations concerned, I am of the opinion that the possible or probable cause of the fire was the contact made by this electric cable with the top branches of these two green blue gum trees. This caused charred or burnt pieces of wood or twigs to fall to the ground on the area where the fire was first located. This in turn igniting the dry grass and old leaves in the vicinity.

8. I feel another very relevant factor was the climatic condition on that day. Temperature in the vicinity of 107 degrees with strong north winds blowing.

9. Apart from this probable explanation, I have been unable to find any other likely cause of this fire.

10. Requested that this file be forwarded to the Chief Commissioner for his information and a copy to Inspector North at Wodonga for attachment to his file when completed.



T. J. Waters  
Det. 1/3 9628

2924

21st February, 1968.

The Melbourne Manager,  
Gray Daves Australia Pty. Ltd.,  
550 Bourke Street,  
Melbourne. 3000

Dear Sir,

BUSH FIRE, MYRTLEFORD DISTRICT  
1ST TO 4TH FEBRUARY, 1968.

At about 2.00 p.m. on Thursday, 1st February, 1968, a fire broke out on farming property at Mudgegonga, about 10 miles north-east of Myrtleford, and by night-time had spread through the forests of neighbouring hills and mountains to the Dederang and Tawonga districts in the Kiewa Valley. The fire was, ultimately, rendered safe on 4th February, 1968.

From newspaper reports it appears that up to 50,000 acres of country were covered by the fire and considerable grazing pasture was involved. Approximately six houses, numerous outbuildings, hay, machinery and equipment, fencing and stock were, also, reported destroyed or damaged.


Allegations have been made in the country press by Country Fire Authority and Fire Brigade officials that the cause of this fire was a 12.7 kV conductor of the Commission sagging into a gum tree and causing foliage to char, eventually giving rise to grass below the tree catching on fire.

Extreme heat at the time, approximately 110°, would have given rise to abnormal sagging in the span of the conductor allegedly involved.

The Commission is investigating the allegations, although no claims have arisen to date.

I shall advise developments in due course.

Yours faithfully,

  
A. G. McKennie,  
CHIEF CLAIMS OFFICER

7  
1/2/68

221-440-1-0

DEPARTMENTAL

CT:SP

STATE ELECTRICITY COMMISSION OF VICTORIA

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL. FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COMMISSION AND ITS LEGAL ADVISERS.

TELEPHONE: EXTENSION No. 2924

ASSISTANT CHIEF CLAIMS OFFICER

To CHIEF CLAIMS OFFICER

Date 19th February, 1968.

*Adrian 2.2.68*

BUSH FIRE - MUDGEGONGA, DEDERANG AND TAWONGA DISTRICTS,  
1ST TO 4TH FEBRUARY, 1968.

As directed and in company with the Commission's Solicitor, Mr. D.R. Dooley, and Mr. W. Brown, Assistant Distribution Engineer, North-Eastern Branch, Electricity Supply Department, I visited the above districts on 12th and 13th February, 1968, to investigate this fire. Mr. G. Lincolne of Messrs. Lincolne, Demaine and Scott, Consulting Engineers, attended independently and was party to enquiries at the commencing point of the fire.

Mr. I. McPherson, Officer-in-Charge at Myrtleford, informed us that the fire commenced at about 2.05 p.m. on Thursday, 1st February, 1968, at a time when the temperature was approaching 110°. The previous day similar heat had been experienced. The commencing point of the fire was observed and reported from look-outs at Mount Porepunkah and Mount Stanley, and local residents, a Mrs. Hicks, Mrs. Woods and Mr. Walpole, also pinpointed the commencing site as close to Twin Gullies under the Commission's 3/12 steel 12.7 kV s.w.e.r. line, known as Hicks Spur, at Mudgegonga.

Although the fire burnt back a short distance, its major spread was easterly through farming country. Newspaper reports attached refer to the latter pattern of the fire through the forests of the mountains preceding the Kiewa Valley, and it reached the Dederang and Tawonga districts by early evening - a distance of about 20 miles. It jumped the Kiewa Road about 14 miles north of Tawonga and, subsequently, entered the forests east of the Kiewa River. It was finally considered safe on Sunday, 4th February, 1968.

Considerable manpower fought the fire and at least 100 fire fighting units from central and eastern Victoria were involved.

Mr. McPherson also reported that at the request of local Police he attended the Police Station and later the above commencing point of the fire in company with Police, Forestry and Fire Brigade officials on Wednesday, 7th February, 1968. On arrival, he observed that the conductor of the s.w.e.r. line was about five feet above the foliage of gum trees (blue gums) growing in the gullies under and adjacent to the line. He also noted that there was a gap at the head of one tree under the line. During this inquiry several of the highest trees were cut down at the direction of the Police, and at the gap in the tree referred to earlier a deal of charred foliage was found and taken possession of by the Police. The temperature at the time of these enquiries was about 80°. The following day Commission employees cut down further gum trees in the gullies.

Our attendance at the scene revealed the gullies to be about central of a 2,591 foot span of conductor between poles. The gum tree involved was measured at 89 feet 7 inches from ground level, but this was about 12 feet down the side of one gully. The area where the charred foliage had been removed was practically clear of this evidence. Several pieces were found.

The gap gave the impression of being about three feet into the foliage. There is no doubt in the minds of the investigatory party that the conductor under the excessive heat of the 31st January and 1st February sagged into this tree and caused this charring. Mr. McPherson considers that the breeze on these days of excessive heat would have been light but sufficient to swing the conductor. Inspection through binoculars did not reveal any damage on the conductor, but this is not definite. No arrangement has been made to closely inspect or remove any part of the conductor. Mr. Dooley has arranged for Mr. Lincoln to report his opinions to the Commission.

Newspapers report the area covered by the fire at 35,000 to 50,000 acres. In the course of attempting to gauge the damage involved, we travelled about 150 miles but, certainly, did not see all farming land and fencing which could have been involved. However, considerable acreage of grazing/dairying land and many miles of fencing were destroyed and/or damaged. Most hay in these areas would have been cut last November and December and supplies in hay sheds not touched by the fire varied between half to almost full. The grass remaining on the ground after the fire, although dry, would have been generally reasonable for stock requirements at the present.

We were conducted to about 20 farms by Messrs. McPherson and N. Gilbert, District Assistant, Wodonga, and these inspections should have covered most of the buildings and contents damaged. In most cases buildings were burnt to the ground and original sizes, construction and contents could not be checked. Generally, the occupants were not present. In the attached schedule I have merely summarised what was apparent, with other appropriate comments, and this is in no way complete.

Police at Myrtleford and Dederang have been directed by Inspector North of Wodonga to arrange a complete summary of loss.

We did not see one dead item of stock, merely some evidence of burial, but newspapers suggest that about 100 cattle, 1,700 sheep, some pigs and poultry were destroyed.

Obviously many miles of fencing and many acres of pasture were damaged or destroyed, but I have not included these on the summary: also, many thousands of bales of hay would have been involved. The damage will require some owners to arrange agistment for stock till early spring and this could involve considerable expense based on fees alleged to be between 50 cents and \$1.00 per animal per week. We were also informed that replacement fences will cost of the order of 800 dollars per mile, and the question of new for old will raise the usual problems in valuation of loss.

Photographs taken at the commencing point of the fire and of the damage are attached to the file.

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This s.w.e.r. line was constructed in 1961 and Mr. McPherson believes that it would have been inspected at about yearly intervals since. The only records of inspections would be field diaries, and I have requested that these be checked and any specific information available reported back to you.

  
ASSISTANT CHIEF CLAIMS OFFICER



LINCOLNE, DEMAINE AND SCOTT  
CONSULTING ENGINEERS  
Melbourne and Perth

Gerald B. Lincoln, M.I.E.E., M.I.E. AUST.  
Alan T. Scott, B. MECH. E. A.M.I. MECH. E., A.M.I.E. AUST.  
K. Gerald Lincoln.

R. Branton, A.M.I.E. AUST.  
D. C. Emery, B.E., A.M.I.E.E., A.M.I.E. AUST.

TELEPHONE  
67-5052

Telegram & Cable Address  
LINKONMAIN

REF. L/i.

13th February, 1968.

*Normanby Chambers,  
430 Little Collins Street,  
Melbourne.*

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL FOR THE INFORMATION  
OF THE COMMISSION AND ITS LEGAL ADVISERS.

The State Electricity Commission of Victoria,  
15-27 William Street,  
MELBOURNE.

3000.

**CONFIDENTIAL**

Attention Mr. David Dooley.

Dear Sir,

-re Grass Fire - Myrtleford-

Following my visit of 12th inst. in your company, to the site of a grass fire which occurred in the vicinity of Myrtleford, I now submit the following.

The fire occurred on 1st inst. and started at about 2.30 p.m. The day was hot but there was not a strong wind. The fire apparently started in fairly close proximity to some trees growing in a gully. One of these trees was over eighty feet high. It has since been felled.

An 11 kV transmission line passes over the site of this tree and the span between supports is some 2,600 ft. The line is normally well above the tree top but, on a hot day, the expansion of the metal due to increased temperature would so increase the sag that it would lie within the top of the tree. As the tree had been felled, I could not say to what extent this would occur but burnt marks on the tree showed that it must have extended some feet. The single line consists of three strands of No. 12 gauge steel.

While the wind was not strong there was sufficient breeze to cause the line to swing and in doing so it would come in contact with the young growth at the top of the tree. This would involve contact with the leaves and also the twigs and when this happened flashes would be caused due to the electricity flowing to earth through the tree.

It has been claimed that the dry grass was ignited by falling leaves or twigs which had thus been burnt off and became alight.

LINCOLNE, DEMAINE AND SCOTT TO State Electricity Commission 13/2/68 SHEET No. 2.  
of Victoria

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COMMISSION AND ITS LEGAL ADVISERS.

My previous experience convinces me that the fire could not have been caused by falling leaves. In every case I have found that, when contact is made with the line, the leaf immediately burns off at the stem and falls before the leaf itself can ignite. The stem is only about 1/16" in diameter and, though still glowing when it reaches the ground it is quenched almost immediately and I have found it quite impracticable to ignite even dry grass from it.

I may add that these tests were taken from trees which were not more than thirty feet high. In the case now under consideration, the tree was some eighty feet high and the leaves would take more than twice as long to reach the ground. It is doubtful if they would then be even glowing.

A different set of conditions arises in regard to twigs. These are not burnt off immediately upon contact with the line.

In this case the line will remain in contact during the completion of its swing. In doing so it will bend the twig and move along its surface. As in the case of a leaf, an arc will be formed and will char the twig as it moves along.

A very thin twig could thus be burnt off by a single contact but, like the leaf, it would be cooled before it reached the ground.

A thicker twig could not be burnt through at once and it would require several contacts to affect this. Such contacts would certainly be made and it is evident that twigs were burnt off and fell to the ground.

While it is not possible at this juncture to say whether or not such a twig would retain sufficient heat to ignite the grass, I find it hard to believe so.

We have a condition where the twig is undoubtedly burnt through but this has been a gradual process and there would be an interval between each contact as the line swung away. During this interval the twig would cool down and, while ultimately burnt through, this would be the result of attrition rather than of ignition. The falling piece would certainly be red hot at its end but, like the leaf, this would tend to cool off when falling eighty feet.

While I am not prepared to say that it would be impossible for the fire to be so started, I do suggest that such a possibility is remote.

Yours faithfully,  
LINCOLNE, DEMAINE & SCOTT,

*C. R. L.*  
per.....

CT:SP

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL FOR THE INFORMATION  
OF THE COMMISSION AND ITS LEGAL ADVISERS.

2924

CHIEF CLAIMS OFFICER

SECRETARY

14th February, 1968.

BUSH FIRE - MUDGEONGA, DEDERANG AND TAWONGA DISTRICTS,  
1ST TO 4TH FEBRUARY, 1968.

At approximately 2.00 p.m. on Thursday, 1st February, 1968, fire broke out on farming property at Mudgegonga (about 10 miles north-east of Myrtleford) and spread rapidly in, generally, an easterly direction over farming country into the forests of the hills and mountains preceding the Kiewa Valley. By evening the fire was involving the farms of the Dederang and Tawonga Districts. After crossing the Kiewa River the fire entered the forests east of Tawonga and was finally brought under control on Sunday, 4th February, 1968.

The fire was fought by considerable manpower and at least 100 fire fighting units brought from central and eastern Victoria.

The temperature for the day of the fire and the preceding day for the area approached 110°.

There is little doubt that the commencement of the fire was below a 12.7 kV S.W.E.R. line of the Commission known as Hicks Spur. The conductor of this line is 3/12 steel. This location was reported by observers at Mount Forepunkah and Mount Stanley; also there were local witnesses. At this site twin gullies run, roughly, at right angles under the line and this is close to the centre of a span of conductor of 2,591 feet between poles. At the time of the commencement of the fire a number of blue gum trees were growing in the gullies under and close to the line.

On Wednesday, 7th February, 1968, Mr. I. McPherson, the Commission's Officer-in-Charge at Myrtleford, was requested by the Police to attend an inquiry involving the Police, Forestry and Fire Brigade officials at this location, and he observed, on arrival, that the conductor was approximately five feet above the uppermost foliage of these gum trees (temperature approximately 80°), but there was a clearly defined gap at the head of one tree under the conductor. This tree and other trees were felled and the surrounding foliage and minor branches revealed evidence of extensive charring. Again there is little doubt that the charring resulted under higher temperatures when the line would have sagged into this tree and been subject of wind and tree movement. This gum tree was 89 feet high, but growing 12 feet below paddock level in one of the gullies. The extent of the charring into the head of the tree appeared to be, roughly, three feet.

Local newspapers have given a deal of publicity to allegations by Country Fire Authority and Brigade officials that the fire resulted from the charring effect of the Commission conductor in this tree with burning or heated material falling and finally igniting grass below. These allegations are the subject of current investigation by the Commission.

2.

Apart from loss to forests, considerable private loss occurred in the fire, but the extent is difficult to estimate. Newspapers suggest the overall area involved as 50,000 acres. It is known that four small farm buildings and contents were completely destroyed, also many farm outbuildings, some of which were large and included thousands of bales of hay, dairy equipment, sundry vehicles, machinery and other equipment. Loss and damage also included miles of fencing of various types and clumps of shade trees. Stock losses are stated by the papers at about 1,700 head of sheep, 100 head of cattle, sundry pigs and poultry.

I shall report further developments in due course.

CHIEF CLAIMS OFFICER *8*

Myrtleford  
Times  
13 February 1968  
(lead story,  
front page)

# FIRE STARTED IN TREE TOP

**OFFICERS** in charge at the fire at Mudgegonga and Rosewhite now believe that the fire was caused by a high voltage electricity cable which had ignited leaves and twigs on a large tree.

This opinion was expressed last week by Regional Officer, Mr. A. Haynes, and Group Officer, Cr. J. W. Browne, and also by Mr. W. Duncombe, Captain of the Rosewhite Rural Fire Brigade.

Members of the Rosewhite Brigade noticed burnt traces in the tops of the trees last Monday, following which an inspection was made on Tuesday by Mr. Haynes, Cr. Browne, other Fire Brigade officials and members of other Government Departments.

The burnt traces had been verified through field glasses and the trees felled.

Mr. Haynes said that an 11,000 volt electricity cable ran close to the tops of the trees. (The cable supplies domestic electricity to properties in the area, each of which has a transformer to convert the current to 230 volts).

Mr. Haynes said that investigations had led to the belief that the single wire power cable slackened in the hot weather, and touched the upper branches.

Clean burn marks were noticed on the examined trees, he added.

He said that the trees stood 88 feet high. They were located in a gully and Mr Haynes said it was possible that the burzing twigs from either of the trees had fallen to the ground, starting the fire.

He pointed out that a spark would not have fallen that distance and remained alive.

### BEYOND DOUBT

Reporting to last week's Council meeting, Cr. J. W. Browne (who is also Group Officer of the Myrtleford Fire Brigade's Group), said that in his opinion this was the cause of the fire beyond doubt.

He said the wires had apparently been touching the trees during high winds for some time, and had dried out leaves and twigs. "Last Thursday's weather conditions were just right, and apparently burning leaves or twigs fell to the ground and started the fire."

"The trees are where the fire started, and the evidence is pretty conclusive," he added.

### BETTER ACCESS NEEDED

Continuing his report on the fire, Cr. Browne said it was essential that farmers should provide some sort of access across difficult gullies, to enable fire units to travel from one paddock to another. He said the Shire

should ensure that all unused roads are trafficable before the fire season starts.

"This was a difficult fire, and a fire of many rumours," said Cr. Browne. He added that a public meeting would be convened shortly to enable all concerned to discuss various aspects of the fire.

Speaking on communications, Cr. Browne said the fire emphasised the fact that the C.F.A. and the local group would have to improve their radio equipment. He also believed that the Shire should have radios installed in their vehicles. "Other Shires have had radio control for some years," he said.

Cr. Browne spoke highly of the co-operation of all sections of the community during the course of the fire, and he voiced his appreciation to all concerned.

On behalf of the Shire, the president, Cr. L. G. Ablett, commended all those connected with the fire on their splendid efforts. "As a Shire we owe them all a great debt of gratitude," he said.

### FIRE NOW SAFE

Meanwhile, fire fighters have kept up a constant vigil to contain the fire within its original boundaries. Many burning stumps and trees have been extinguished close to the edge of the fire, which now appears to be reasonably safe. However, it will require a good fall of rain to completely extinguish it.

## Who h

### Complications o

LATEST reports of

221-463-10

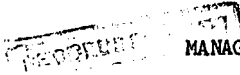
STATE ELECTRICITY COMMISSION OF VICTORIA

HJA:MR  
C2-6-0

Copy

For CLAIMS OFFICER

10



MANAGER, NORTH EASTERN BRANCH

ENGINEER AND MANAGER

12th February, 1968.

Copy to: CO, C2-6-8

FIRE IN THE MUDGEONGA AREA

Further to my letter of the 8th February, 1968, I have sent to you, under separate cover, an issue of the "Border Morning Mail," dated 9th February, 1968, which carries on page 4 a photograph of portion of the tree which is said to be the probable cause of the fire in the Mudgegonga - Rosewhite area. A copy of the paper was handed to the Assistant Claims Officer on 12th February, 1968.

H. J. ANCHER

MANAGER, NORTH EASTERN BRANCH

U.S.C.

...out of Judaism, do this, then would

● AFTERMATH OF FIRES

# FARMERS' LOSSES, DAMAGE IS NOT YET CLARIFIED

BOLDER MORNING MAIL 14.2.68

(By a "Mail" writer)

No clear picture has yet emerged of the loss caused to individual farmers by the Mudgegonga-Kiewa Valley fires, and no estimate of the extent of the damage has yet been made public.

This absence of information is likely to cause would-be contributors to an appeal for help to delay their response until they know more about the need.

The fire burnt from the east of Myrtleford through thousands of acres of high ground to the Kiewa Valley, jumped the river and spread over a large area of Mt. Tawonga.

Houses, hay sheds, fencing, stock, grass and much timber were destroyed.

The damage is divided between the shires of Myrtleford and Yackandandah, and covers big areas of Crown land.

Some farmers are known to have suffered the gravest loss, others to have escaped lightly.

There have been indefinite estimates of the extent of the loss or the degree to which individual people have suffered. Mention has been made of 25,000 acres, 30,000 acres, 35,000 acres and even more burnt but there has been no disclosure of what area is Crown land and what privately owned.

In the Kiewa Valley a committee was quickly formed and an appeal launched for agistment, hay, funds, fencing material and other needs, but it was made clear that the benefits were to be limited to Yackandandah Shire.

In Myrtleford area the shire secretary, Mr. E.

Lane, said yesterday that no plans were in hand to call a meeting, but he was to see Shire President Cr. L. G. Ablett this morning.

Mr. Lane said that a "couple of dozen" farms had suffered in the fire.

Naturally, the degree of loss and the need for help differed greatly. One farmer, not long on his property, saved only the clothes he wore.

On another farm which suffered badly, the father-husband was killed in a riding accident a year ago. The wife and children still had battled on.

At the other end of the scale were men who had held their land for many years, were bound to have been well insured, and therefore had provided for the contingency of fire.

### JOINT APPEAL

Yesterday the "Mail" put it to Mr. Lane and also to Cr. A. R. McKibbin, president of Yackandandah Shire, that the two shires make a joint appeal, and with the help of district men already appointed, and others co-opted as required, contributions be disbursed according to need.

Cr. McKibbin agreed to have talks with Kiewa Valley men and the Myrtleford shire president.

In Yackandandah Shire the Kiewa Valley appeal committee secretary, Mr. R. W.

Harbinson, said 32 farms suffered in the fire.

His committee, he said, foresaw difficulties in a combined fund, and for the time being had decided to carry on with the original plan to confine its activities to Yackandandah Shire.

Inquiries by the "Mail" disclosed a wish among potential contributors for more information. Questions asked were how much of the loss was in private and how much on Crown land. What was the degree of damage and of need among the heaviest losers. What is likely to be the

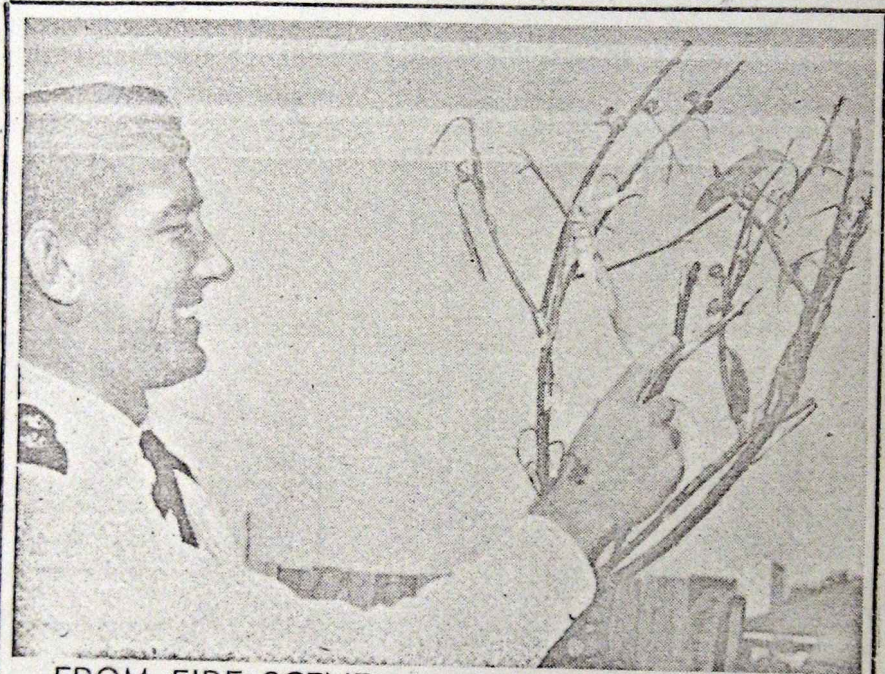
extent of Government help.

Likely donors who live at a distance from both shires, and who would have no way of knowing where the need was greatest, would prefer a combined fund, locally administered. They would be glad to co-operate in organising relief, preferably in a combined fund, and subscribe to two funds.

The "Mail" has informed both shires that it would be glad to co-operate in organising relief, preferably in a combined fund, and when the extent of the devastation and personal loss is revealed, would readily join with others in subscribing to an appeal.

## DAUGHTER OF FORMER

BORDER MORNING MAIL  
FRIDAY 9 2 68



**FROM FIRE SCENE**

Chief officer for C.F.A. Region 24, Mr. Arthur Haynes, of Wodonga, inspects burn marks on twigs taken from a gum tree near where the Rosewhite fire is believed to have started last week.

Mr. Haynes said yesterday it was probable that a high voltage electricity cable had touched the tree, burning foliage and starting the fire.

A spokesman for the State Electricity Commission refused to make any comment on the scorched twigs.



# Border Morning Mail

Reg. at G.P.O., Sydney, N.S.W., for transmission by post as a newspaper

TELEPHONE : 21 1555 ALBURY, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 1968

## Big fire: power cable burnt twigs

— C.F.A. OFFICER

A high voltage electricity cable is reported the probable cause of the Rosewhite fire which destroyed 35,000 acres of grass and forest last week.

*This opinion was expressed last night by Mr. Arthur Haynes, chief fire officer for C.F.A. region 24.*

Mr. Haynes said that Mr. Bill Duncombe, captain of the Rosewhite bush fire brigade, had discovered burnt traces in a tree top while investigating the cause of the fire.

The traces had been verified through field glasses and the tree had been felled.

Mr. Haynes, with officers from other Government departments, had examined the burnt branches and had felled a neighboring tree with similar marks.

Mr. Haynes said that an 11,000 volt electricity cable ran close to the tops of the two felled trees.

(The cable supplies domestic electricity to properties in the area, each of which has a transformer to convert the current to 230 volts.)

Mr. Haynes said that investigations had led to the finding that the single wire power cable slackened in the hot weather and touched the upper branches.

Clear burn marks were visible on the examined trees, said Mr. Haynes.

He said that the trees stood 88 ft. high. They were located in a gully and Mr. Haynes said it was possible that burning twigs from either of the trees had fallen to the ground starting the fire.

### "SPELL" FOR FIREMEN

Meanwhile, fire fighters in Victoria had a welcome local "spell" from serious outbreaks today for the first time in a week.

Seven minor fires broke out in various districts this afternoon, but all but one were out or under control late today.

At Erica, in Gippsland, Country Fire Authority units were tonight fighting a medium-sized blaze in virtually inaccessible country.

A C.F.A. official said there had been no property or stock losses and the fire had caused little concern although it was still out of control.

It had burned through about 100 acres, but it was hoped to have it under control tonight.

The C.F.A. and Forests Commission today began moving men and equipment from the scene of Monday's disastrous blaze at Lorne.

The fire was under control tonight, but it was not considered completely safe.

PUBLISHED EVERY TUESDAY PHONE 58  
**Myrtleford Times**  
And Ovens Valley Advertiser  
AUDIT BUREAU OF CIRCULATIONS P.O. BOX 24 MYRTLEFORD

(Registered at the General Post Office, Melbourne for Transmission by Post as a Newspaper)

No. 1937

TUESDAY, 6th FEBRUARY, 1968

SINGLE COPY, 5 Cent

# BIG FIRE NOW CONTAINED

## WEARY FIRE-FIGHTERS WIN LONG BATTLE

HUNDREDS of weary firefighters have won a long battle to subdue the bush fire which roared through thousands of acres in the Rosewhite, Mudgegonga and Kiewa Valley districts, leaving a blackened trail of devastation behind it.

It is estimated that 50,000 acres of grass and bush-lands have been burnt, plus thousands of bales of hay, countless miles of fencing, about 1700 head of sheep, over 100 head of cattle, a few pigs and some poultry.

Many farmers are still counting their losses and it will be some time before an accurate assessment is made.

On the Mudgegonga side of the fire, the only home lost was that of Mr. S. Zdero, but in the Kiewa Valley, three homes went before the flames.

In addition, many hay sheds and outbuildings were burnt, leaving only the blackened ruins. How the homes were not burnt is a miracle. In many instances, the fire burnt right to the door step of houses, and then by some trick of fate left the house undamaged.

### ROARING INFERNO

The fire was first reported at about 2.15 p.m. on Thursday, in the property of Mr. R. Hicks, in Carroll's road, which links Mudgegonga and Rosewhite. The Rosewhite fire unit and a tanker

unit mounted by the Myrtleford Urban Fire Brigade were quickly on the scene, and the Shire grader which was operating in the area, attempted to grade a trail around the fire. However, the men were unable to contain the fire. It crept through a gully into grasslands on Hicks' property.

Then all hell broke loose. Fanned by a strong, hot wind, and with the temperature well over the century mark, the fire became a raging inferno with flames several feet high.

A hay shed suddenly became a ball of fire, showering sparks in all directions. The fire units raced to save two homes on Hicks' property. "Spot" fires were breaking out in all directions and the fire fighters had to battle to save their own lives on several occasions. How the two homes were saved is a miracle, but this was the pattern of the fire in several other instances.

### PANDEMONIUM

The next few hours were sheer pandemonium. The

fire spread with frightening speed, often jumping hundreds of yards at a time. By 6 p.m., it had roared through several farms at Mudgegonga and was into the foothills, heading for Dederang in one direction and Rosewhite in the other. Soon after, it had swept down into Dederang, leaving a trail of blackened ruins behind it. It jumped the Kiewa river and roared into the hills on the other side.

By this time the original firefighters were almost exhausted, but they still had days and nights of hard, slogging battle before the flames were brought under control.

At Rosewhite, the going was rugged as men battled against the flames in rugged hill country. A "back burn" on Friday night proved to be an effective counter, and by midnight that night, the entire valley looked like a fairyland with millions of lights.

Over 100 fire units and hundreds of men were thrown into the battle, and it was not until late on Sunday that the last trail of some 3,000 acres was burnt at the Tunnel Gap end that the fire was made reasonably safe. Even now, the entire area will have to be constantly patrolled for a long time to ensure that it does not escape from its perimeter, and it will not be completely safe until substantial rains have fallen.

### PERSONAL

Mr. and Mrs. S. H. (nee Heather McIlroy) being congratulated birth of a daughter Frankston Comm. pital. Vanessa born on January Mrs. K. Robe ing Myrtleford take up rest new home a Road, Hawth friends will come at any

The enga nounced daughter J. A. Whi to Daryl, and Mrs. Whorouly Congratu and Mrs. l Whorouly, a daughter, Congratulati.

P. G. Tracy, and Mrs. R. Tracy do Civil Engineering Melbourne University, ting on 19th February will be in residence at 1 ley College.

Relatives and friends Ian Browne, of Rosewhite and Geoff and Clive Jagoe of Ovens, wish these lads a happy bon voyage when they sail on the "Orsova" on Monday, 12th February, for Durban, South Africa. The lads plan a working tour, and hope to visit countries overseas.

### Temperatures High

Temperatures recorded at the Myrtleford Shire Office last week reached the highest for many years, with Thursday being the top temperature at 109 degrees.

On the last few days of the previous week, the temperature was around the 90 degrees mark. However, on Monday last, the mercury reached the 100 mark. On Tuesday it was 99 degrees; Wednesday, 108; Thursday, 109. Then came a cool change on Friday with the top temperature at 83 degrees. Since then it has gradually increased again. Saturday was 86 degrees and Sunday, 80 degrees.

# Myrtleford Times

## 6th February 1968

### Many Co-Operated at Fire

THE 1968 fire will go down in history as a splendid example of co-operation between hundreds of men and women and many organisations.

Many of these people worked side by side from Thursday afternoon until Sunday with very little rest or sleep. There were many heroic acts and unselfish deeds as the volunteers worked for a common cause of quelling the fire.

When the fire started at about 2.15 p.m. on Thursday, the handful of men and the couple of fire units first at the scene were soon joined by others who had noticed the blaze. The Forests Commission threw several units and a large work force into attack at short notice.

From his office in Wodonga, Regional Officer of the Country Fire Authority, Mr. A. Haynes, was immediately in radio contact with fire brigades all around the immediate districts. Hundreds of volunteers from Myrtleford were rushed to the scene, and in a short time, convoys of fire units were racing through Myrtleford to the fire. The local fire station was the scene of great activity, where men and equipment were quickly mustered and sent to the fire. The response was magnificent. Within two hours, every fire unit and private unit was at the fire. Petrol tankers, milk tankers and many other vehicles were used as water carts to keep the supply up to the fire units.

By this time, Mr. Haynes had set up headquarters at the Mudgegonga School, and the P.M.G. had installed an emergency switch board with several phones at the school and at the Mudgegonga Hall, which soon became a hive of activity.

Just before dark, a large

convoy of fire units from Shepparton, Benalla and Yarrowonga districts arrived on the scene. Forest Commission units from surrounding districts joined the local Commission units.

At daylight on Friday morning, another convoy of large, radio controlled fire units from Ballarat, Frankston, Dandenong and Springvale arrived at the fire and went straight into action. Several bulldozers were also taken to the fire to prepare fire breaks.

By this time, the Mudgegonga school was seething with activity. Maps of the area were prepared, radios were crackling constantly, and phones were ringing madly as messages were passed back and forth to the fire front.

A large team of police were on the scene to control traffic and to destroy cattle which had been caught in the flames; the S.E.C. were busily engaged in repairing damaged poles, and the P.M.G. kept up a constant vigil to ensure that messages got through without delay. On the tennis court at the rear of the school, a huge radio van was set up to maintain constant contact with headquarters.

Top ranking officials from the Forest Commission, the Police Department and the Country Fire Authority were on the scene to organise the mass attack on the fire.

Similar headquarters on a smaller scale were set up at Rosewhite, Kancoona and Dederang.

The Regional Officer was joined by other Regional Officers, and the Assistant Chief Officer of the Country Fire Authority, Mr. C. H. Howe, was also sent from Melbourne because of his

knowledge of the area. On Sunday, the Chairman of the C.F.A. (Brigadier Easton), and the Chief Officer (Mr. A. Pitfield) visited the area. Zone Officer, Mr. G. Stork, was also amongst the large contingent of C.F.A. officials.

Local police spent many hours on the job, and they were joined by Supt. North of Wodonga, and Supt. Peach and Det. Waters, of Wangaratta.

#### THE LADIES WERE MAGNIFICENT

The ladies of the district were magnificent. They prepared thousands of meals at the Mudgegonga Hall, the Rosewhite Hall, the Dederang Hall and a mobile kitchen in the Kiewa Valley.

Early on Thursday evening, the local Red Cross, the Myrtleford Fire Brigade Auxiliary, and the Mudgegonga ladies had set up shop in the Mudgegonga Hall. A spontaneous response for food by the townspeople enabled the ladies to have meals ready for the weary firefighters within an hour. Many other lady helpers joined in, and the voluntary effort snowballed until practically every service club and organisation in the district were helping in one way or another at either Mudgegonga or Rosewhite, where the local ladies had established their headquarters in the hall. District ladies from areas such as Gapsted, Murrumbidgee, Bright and Porepunkah also joined in.

At about 11 o'clock on Thursday evening the Red Cross arrived from Melbourne and set up medical and sleeping quarters at the Mudgegonga Hall, with huge supplies of tinned food and other goods.

A large team of St. John's Ambulance men also arrived on the scene to administer first aid to the firefighters.

Several Civil Defence men also joined in, and there were several other voluntary helpers involved. All of these toiled tirelessly throughout the days and nights which followed with only brief rests—and they are still there.

It was indeed a magnificent co-operative effort on the part of hundreds of voluntary workers, and all are to be commended for their unselfishness and their willingness to help others in distress.

#### WILD RUMOURS

During the course of the fire there were many wild rumours of firefighters being badly burnt, and of the fire escaping into other areas, but fortunately very few of these rumours were correct. There were certainly some cases of minor burns, and one man from Bright had the misfortune to crush his foot in an accident with a bulldozer, but for such a large work force and such a fierce fire, the number of serious cases were very few indeed.

Publicity media added momentum to the rumours, and it is unfortunate that newshounds do not get their facts correct before presenting it to the public.

One newspaper claimed that four homes in Myrtleford had been burnt.

A radio station reported that Eskdale and the Mitta Valley were being threatened.

A cameraman went to a great deal of trouble in setting up a "stretcher case" so that he could film an action shot for his viewers. It is doubtful if this one-act farce fooled anybody. Had the cameraman gone to the fire front he would have got plenty of authentic shots that would have had a greater impact on his viewers.

480-10

STATE ELECTRICITY COMMISSION OF VICTORIA

HJA:MR  
C2-6-0

**COPY**

for..... CLAIMS OFFICER *[Signature]* 10

CLAIMS 5 FEB 1968 MANAGER, NORTH EASTERN BRANCH
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ENGINEER AND MANAGER

8th February, 1968.

Copy to: CO

DAMAGE TO PRIVATE PROPERTY - FIRE IN THE MUDGEONGA AREA

Under separate cover I have forwarded you the "Border Morning Mail" of 8th February, 1968, which carries on the front page an article in which the opinion of Mr. Arthur Hayes, Chief Fire Officer of the Country Fire Authority's Region 24, is expressed that a high voltage electricity cable was the probable cause of the Rosewhite fire which destroyed 35,000 acres of grass and forest last week. Following my talk with you by telephone earlier today, I spoke with Mr. C. Thompson of the Claims Branch, giving him the following details.

Mr. McPherson, the Officer-in-Charge Myrtleford, attended a gathering between poles 11 and 12 on the Hicks Spur at Mudgegonga. He was there at the invitation of Detective Waters and there were also present a Mr. Bertsell, Forestry Officers - Messrs. Squires and Harrop and members of the Rosewhite Fire Brigade - Messrs. Duncombe, McQueen and Walpole. It was stated that a Mr. Hicks, Mrs. Woods and Mr. Walpole, who were said to be the first to reach the site of the fire, had all picked the area between poles 11 and 12 as the place where the fire started.

Mr. McPherson made no statement, but other people expressed the opinion that the cause of the fire was trees touching the conductors. The trees were inspected through field glasses, and it seemed as though some of the twigs were dead. When two trees were fallen, some twigs were found to be dead, and on one tree there were signs of burnt wood. Samples were taken by the police, Forestry officers, representatives of the Country Fire Authority and members of the Rosewhite Fire Brigade. The inspection took place on the 7th February. No samples were taken by the S.E.C.

The Officer-in-Charge said that the conductors appeared to be about 5 feet about the tree tops just prior to them being fallen, but he had not called anybody's attention to this. He further stated that the temperature the day the fire started was of the order of 110° F., and on the day the trees were felled, it was 80° F. It is believed that the normal sag for the span of 2,591 feet would be 70 feet at 120°.

Most of the country burnt was forest land but it is thought that some stock was lost. Inspector North of the Mudgegonga Police is submitting a report on the damage to the Chief Commissioner of Police.

*[Signature]*  
MANAGER, NORTH EASTERN BRANCH

The Myrtleford (Mudgegonga) Fire 1/2/68 VPRS.9823/P0002/2 "Myrtleford Fire - general"

AGMcK: SP

2923

CHIEF CLAIMS OFFICER

ASSISTANT SECRETARY

8th February, 1968.

Copies (6) of advices received today in connection with Myrtleford-Mudgegonga fires are attached, as requested.

I have arranged for Mr. Thompson to investigate and report on outbreak in company with Mr. Dooley and a representative of Electricity Supply Department.

  
CHIEF CLAIMS OFFICER

Attach.



Myrtleford - Mudgegonga fires.

ca Mr H Archer Mgr. N/S. On 9.50 AM 8/2/68

The 'Baker Morning Mail' of today carries lengthy report of above fires in which 25000 acres of grass & forests were burnt and alleged cause as SEC H.V. cable. Mr Harper O/C CFA Region No 24 quotes Bill Dunmore? Captain of Brigade as having <sup>observed</sup> burnt traces in a tree top where <sup>single wire</sup> ~~line~~ line was sagged due to extreme heat. voltage quoted as 11000 V.? Occurred in a gully where trees were 88' high. Brigade cut down two trees with burnt contact evidence in the foliage. - further stated that opinion of brigade is that burning began to ground O/C Myrtleford investigating immediately & expected to report back midday. Mr Archer to phone comments.

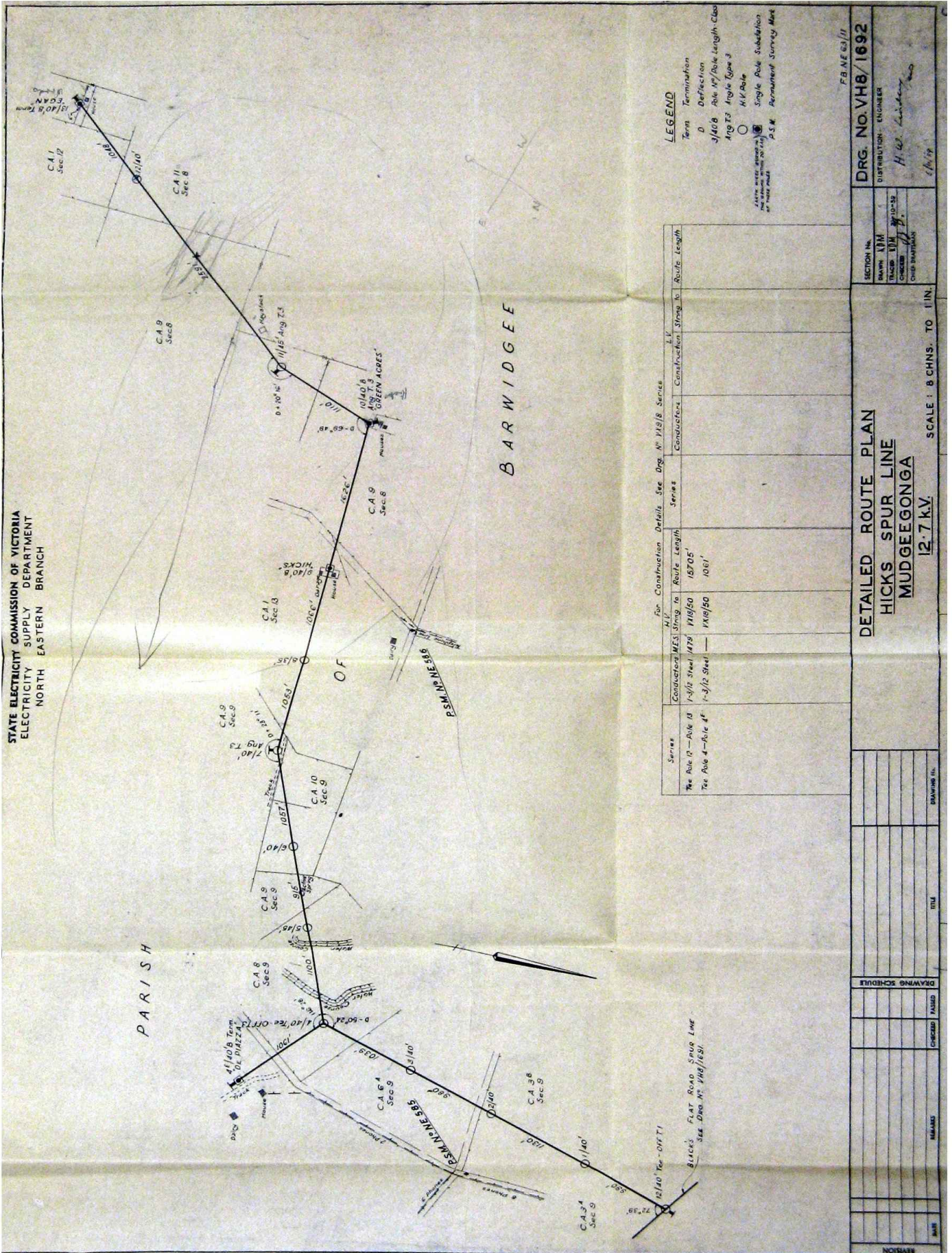
— most of the burnt area would be forests. — Mr Archer presumes line to SWER.

J.



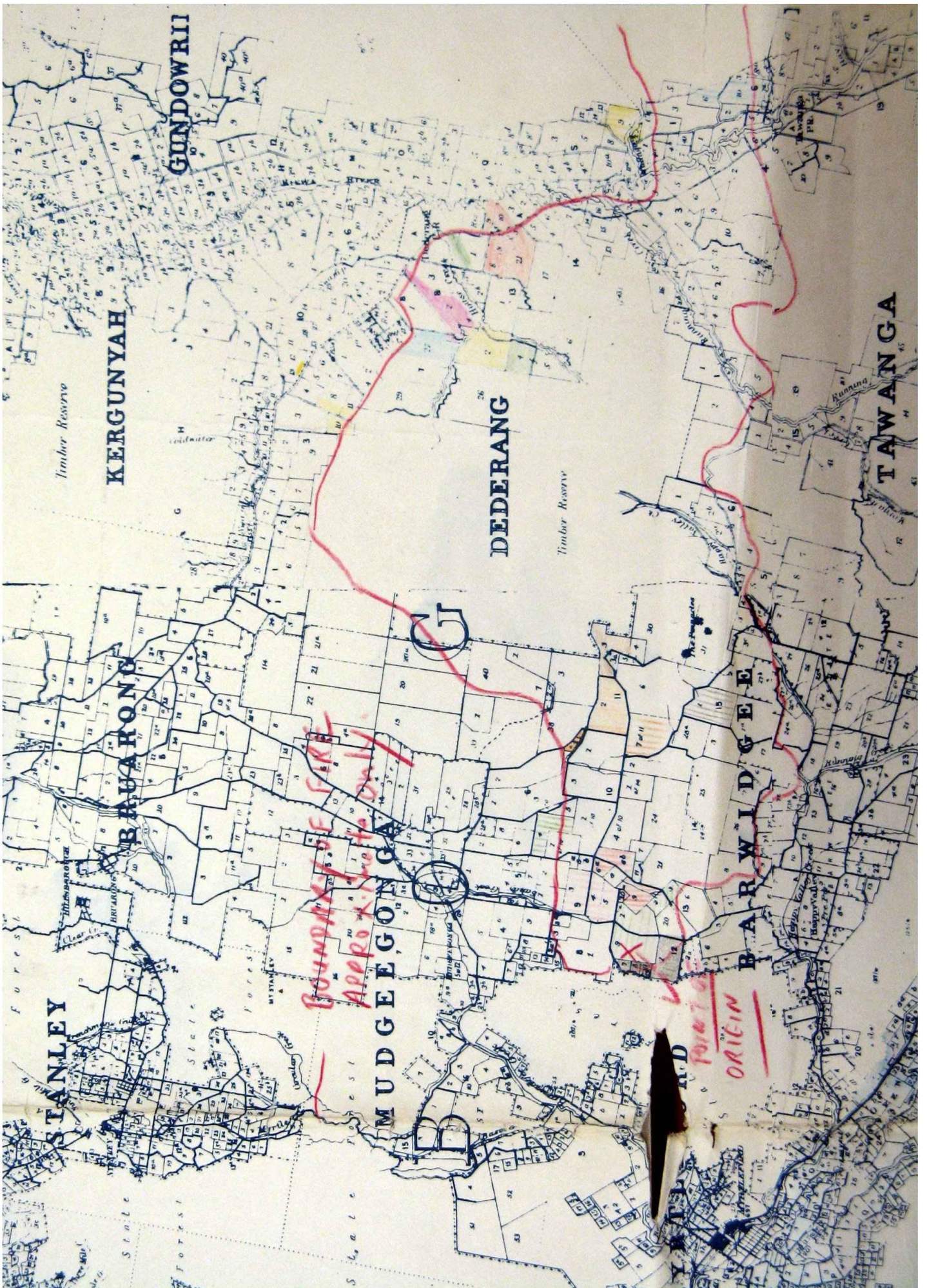
Mr H Archer NE. Oz 8.2.68  
Has discussed with OIC Myrtleford who now advises  
There is no doubt that fire commenced near the  
alleged point of contact between SWER line &  
trees. Three people who attempted to fight the  
fire when it commenced have stated this to Police  
etc. They are a Mrs Hicks, Mrs Woods & Mr Walpole  
Point of origin was in gully under long  
span of 12.7KV Swer known as HICKS SPAN  
(probably 3/2 steel) between poles 11 & 12.  
Length of span 254' - estimated sag 70'  
at 120° - temperature at time 110°. Tree tops  
burnt at 88' when inspected on  
Tuesday by OIC estimated conductor 5'  
above trees - temperature then 80°  
Mr Bethersson  
On Tuesday OIC was asked to go to  
conference at local Police Station involving  
Deakin Waters, Forestry Officers & members of  
the Roseville Fire Brigade. They visited site  
Trees showed through field grass & 'dead' twigs  
sighted. Mr ~~Waters~~ Bethersson was not prepared to  
comment or give opinion. Two trees cut  
down & evidence obtained of burnt area  
on the twigs. Samples taken by Police  
& OIC - none by OIC.  
Mr Archer was unaware of any property loss.  
but understands there are stock losses.  
Inspector North of the Police is reporting to  
the Chief Commissioner







The Myrtleford (Mudgegonga) Fire 1/2/68 VPRS.9823/P0002/2 "Myrtleford Fire - general"





**Annexure: Comment by M. Gunter.**

**What Mudgegonga 1968 might tell us about Kilmore East 2009**

1. The preceding pages contain evidence of a long SWER span (2591 feet or 790 metres) causing a major bushfire in 1968, when it sagged into a tree-top during a heatwave. So clearly the SECV knew since 1968 of this risk of long SWER spans. Due diligence on the part of the new private owners means that they should have retained proper historical records of their newly acquired assets, and should have known the risks also.
2. The 1968 fire was not a subject of the 1977 Board of Inquiry into Bush and Grass Fires in Victoria, by Sir Esler Barber. It was not referred to in Barber's historical references to the many fires caused by power line sparks on 8<sup>th</sup> January 1969, but occurred forty-nine weeks earlier, in 1968.
3. However, as it involves a very long SWER span which sagged into trees, it may have parallels with the 2009 Kilmore East fire ignition point, which killed 119 people.
4. The 2009 Bushfires Royal Commission found that the 2009 Kilmore East fire started ONLY at Pole 38's southern eye-bolt on the Pentadeen spur line<sup>[1]</sup>, within seconds of the **unserviceable** steel conductor breaking, a kilometre to the east, at Pole 39.
5. At the VBRC hearings, expert witness **Professor Rhys Jones** stated categorically to Jack Rush that the conductor broke at Pole 39 due to unspecified and unknown repeated stress events. Such failure, in his expert opinion, was the only sort of stress to account for the type of metal fatigue failure of the (two remaining) strands of high-tensile steel conductor.
6. Having myself walked Nanny's Gully beneath span 38-39 at Kilmore East since Black Saturday, I know that the conductor passes closely over a tree top about 350 metres east of pole 38. If the conductor had previously – including during the hours leading up to 1145hrs – been hitting against the (dead?) upper branches of that tree, then **travelling waves** would have repeatedly and frequently been sent in both directions along the wire to poles 38 and 39, where the “wagging effect” under the helical wrap termination could have been just the sort of repeated stressor required, according to Professor Jones, to cause metal fatigue failure. If Professor Jones is wrong about the type of fatigue, then decades of aeolian vibration become crucially relevant to the ultimate failure of the two rusty remaining strands, by way of (i) metal fatigue directly due to the vibration; and (ii) fretting wearing away the zinc coating, allowing accelerated rusting of the steel. The **clevis and thimble** being jammed with mis-aligned conductor have no relevance to this scenario, unless – as Professor Jones said – it can be shown to have somehow “focussed” energy from the travelling wave or aeolian vibration upon the ultimate point of failure.
7. I also know from local inquiries of a surveying business in the main street of Kilmore, that a detailed survey has been undertaken of span 38-39, and this should give accurate data as to the clearance between the (re-strung) conductor and the tree. The company name is Eric Salter Pty Ltd
8. VBRC witness Liz Jackson's detailed account of where she first saw smoke is significantly more consistent with fire having broken out at sites up to 300 metres east of Pole 38, in addition to the (fairly) good evidence of the fire having started at pole 38's eye bolt stay. Local landholders and CFA members should be asked if a fire has ever started near that tree in years prior to Black Saturday. A retired SECV employee who guided me on that walk is strongly of the opinion that the design of span 38-39 is inadequate and penny-pinching, and should have been made shorter by the use of an extra pole down in Nanny's Gully. His name is Kerry Shaw, and he is a submitter to the Royal Commission<sup>[2]</sup>. SPI Electricity, known as SP Ausnet on Black Saturday, should URGENTLY be required by Energy Safe Victoria to review the span's design, and prove that it cannot touch that tree under heatwave conditions. Stringing a new conductor and adding vibration dampers is a half-baked response to this \$3 billion man-made catastrophe.

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1 A Single Wire Earth Return (SWER) line operating at 12,700 volts

2 [http://royalcommission.vic.gov.au/Submissions/SubmissionDocuments/SUBM-002-051-0247\\_R.pdf](http://royalcommission.vic.gov.au/Submissions/SubmissionDocuments/SUBM-002-051-0247_R.pdf)