



# Behind the Log

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[www.bsar.org](http://www.bsar.org)

## In this issue:

A Note from the Convener	1
Welcome to A New BSAR Member	1
Bogong 1 – Rescue on the Staircase, 5-6 July	2
Bogong 2 – Search on the Eskdale Spur, 13-15 July	2
Bogong 3 – Evacuation from Eskdale Spur, 2 Sept.	3
BSAR Searcher Pick-up Points	4
Steep Snow and Ice Training – a participant's view	4
BSAR Competes in Emergency Services Games	5



Editor of Behind the Log – Ren Millsom  
Next issue May 2015 - deadline 30 April

## A NOTE FROM THE CONVENER.

It was a busy winter for Bush Search and Rescue in the North East with two big searches involving both local and general BSAR call-outs. BSAR members in the North East responding to the local call-outs were rapidly deployed by Police on several occasions. A North East BSAR team located two missing skiers on Mount Bogong in early July and provided them with shelter and first aid then assisted with their evacuation the following day.

The second Mount Bogong search had a tragic outcome when two missing snowboarders were found deceased, both trapped by an avalanche. This accident highlighted the danger of avalanches in Australia's high alpine regions. We published this article on the BSAR site about avalanches in Australia and how to avoid them <http://bsar.org/avalanchesafety>.

I would like to thank all the BSAR members, particularly those in the North East, who have very significant contributions to search and rescue operations this winter.

With summer approaching we now need to be prepared for possible searches in bush terrain.

Rik Head has stepped down as a Field Organiser this year. I would like to thank Rik for his many years of service as a Field Organiser and his very considerable contribution to Bush Search and Rescue. Rik will remain active with BSAR.

*Peter Campbell, BSAR Convener*

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## Welcome to A New BSAR Member

BSAR warmly welcomes the following new member:-

Craig Horne      BWV

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## **BOGONG 1 – MT BOGONG RESCUE ON THE STAIRCASE SPUR, 5-6 JULY**

A triple 0 call from 2 men lost on Mt Bogong at 4.30pm on Saturday 5 July 2014 resulted in a local North East BSAR callout, and later that night a full BSAR callout.

In response to the local callout, 5 BSAR members from the BNSC (Birkies); David Panozzo, Roger Blackwell, Bob Flower, Matt O'Keefe and Marty Eriksson, along with Mt Beauty paramedic Ian Ross, were initially taken to Camp Creek Gap by police transport, ready to ascend Eskdale Spur. On arrival we were re-directed by Police (who had by now received additional information from others on the mountain) to drive back to Mountain Creek then start up the Staircase Spur. The ascent with full packs including gear to warm the lost personnel began in constant drizzle before 11pm. There was a stop at Bivouac Hut around 1:30am to eat, drink and rearrange gear for expected blizzard conditions above the snowline. The paramedic remained at Bivouac Hut and kept in contact with the group from there.

After emerging from the trees the five BSAR members spread out to search along the pole line about 20m wide and began calling and whistling. At around 3:30am a dark patch on the snow in the saddle beside Castor and Pollux rock outcrops proved to be the lost men.

They were thoroughly soaked and seriously hypothermic. Matt (a Falls Creek Ski Patroller) quickly assessed their conditions whilst the rest of the team

prepared the tent with dry bedding and heated water for warming bottles. The men were carried to the tent and warmed over the next few hours, with Matt monitoring their condition and other team members offering them encouragement and keeping them awake. They were seriously dehydrated, having earlier run out of water, but could only take very small amounts of water and warm soup.

Soon after daybreak, the better of the two was accompanied down to Bivouac Hut by two of the BSAR group. Eight members of the Police Search and Rescue Squad had by this time arrived at Bivouac Hut and were making their way up to the rescue point. They sent ahead some dry clothes for the second lost man, and he was then led down to Bivouac by Matt and the remaining BSAR members. Both men were further warmed and treated for dehydration by paramedic Ian Ross at Bivouac Hut. Police S&R assisted with bringing down all their gear from the spur to Bivouac Hut.

Once at Bivouac Hut there were additional BSAR personnel from Melbourne and Mt Beauty, as well as local SES personnel, to assist with the transport from there to Mountain Creek. Both men had arrived at Mt Beauty by around 5.30pm and were admitted to hospital. They were re-joined by the other 4 men from their original party and discharged later in the evening.

*Bob Flower*  
*BSAR member, Mt Beauty*

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## **BOGONG 2 - SEARCH FOR SNOWBOARDERS, ESKDALE SPUR, 13-15 JULY**

Two experienced and well equipped snowboarders, Martie Buckland and Daniel Kerr, failed to return home as expected from their trip to Mt Bogong on Saturday evening 12 July. Their trip had commenced the previous Wednesday 9 July, and their last telephone contact had been Thursday evening. Police requested a full BSAR callout, of both North East and Melbourne members early on Sunday morning.

The missing men's tent and gear was found at Michell Hut on the Eskdale Spur, covered in a good fall of fresh snow on Sunday morning by people already on Mt Bogong. Most of the missing men's gear was in the tent or the hut, indicating that they had not intended to go far.

Three North East BSAR members from Mt Beauty responded quickly to the callout and climbed to the hut. They commenced searching, supported by other local searchers and a Police Search and Rescue member who had flown in by Police helicopter.

The site of a recent avalanche was located off the east side of the upper Eskdale Spur, with a large debris field in Snowy Creek.

On Sunday evening a large team of Police Search and Rescue, and an additional 7 BSAR members from Melbourne climbed to Michell hut and camped, in readiness for a large scale search effort on Monday 14 July. Fortunately, weather conditions were excellent. The following morning ski patrollers from Falls Creek and Mt Hotham were flown in to assist.

Searching of the avalanche debris on Monday utilising avalanche transceivers and probes located one victim. Recovery was by helicopter. As the fate of both men was now tragically clear, on Monday evening all BSAR searchers were flown off Mt Bogong by Police helicopter.

The following day, Police SAR located the second victim. Poor weather prevented helicopter operations, so another call was made on BSAR members in the Birkies

Club, eight of whom returned to Michell Hut to assist in the recovery operation down to Camp Creek Gap.

Bush Search and Rescue Victoria extends condolences to the families and friends of Martie Buckland and Daniel Kerr.

*Duncan Brookes and Jim Gargan*  
*Field Organisers*



Searchers above the avalanche site, Eskdale Spur

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## **BOGONG 3 – EVACUATION OF INJURED SKIER, ESKDALE SPUR, 2 SEPT.**

On Tuesday 2nd September at 12:53 pm a call-out text message was sent out for a carry-out of an injured person from Eskdale Spur. Rob Boland and myself met at the Mt Beauty Police station at just after 1 pm. We waited for Bright and Tallangatta S.E.S.

We were briefed that the local police, ski patroller for Falls Creek (Matt O'Keeffe who is also a Birkenbeiner Nordic Ski Club Member) and a paramedic were with an injured skier at Michell Hut. The police air wing had tried to extract the injured skier but the bad weather stopped them from doing this.

We left the Mt Beauty police station at about 2pm for Camp Creek. After arriving at Camp Creek we started to walk up Eskdale Spur. There were a few light snow flurries as we walked up the Spur. We met up with the injured person and the carry-out team just above the snow line. We then assisted them.

A 'Ferno' stretcher with a single mountain bike wheel attached to the centre was used to transport the patient. The wheel took a lot of the weight and made the task a lot easier. There were a few trees across the track that we had to lift the stretcher over. We got back to Camp Creek at about 5 pm and the patient was transferred to an ambulance.

*Ian Franzke,*  
*BSAR member, Mt Beauty*



The Ferno with wheel, photo from The Border Mail, where the photo attributed to Kylie Esler

Bordermail article:

<http://www.bordermail.com.au/story/2532888/injured-skier-rescued-from-mt-bogong/?cs=2452#slide=3>

## BSAR SEARCHER PICK UP POINTS FOR CALL-OUTS

The BSAR Committee has recently approved a list of designated 'pick up' points. The reason behind this is to provide Searchers with defined locations from which they will be picked up when attending a search.

By having agreed defined locations there are a number of benefits:-

- they remove the need for PLOs to arrange specific pick up locations during a callout,
- Searchers will know the location of the pick up points and the options for leaving cars,
- FOs will know which Searchers to expect at each location, as advised by the PLO from the information provided by Searchers in response to the callout, and
- the FO and Coach Driver will know the exact location of the pick up point and will be able to identify the location easily.

Obviously, not all locations will be used for every search. For example, the coach will not be travelling through Gippsland when the search is in the North East.

The callout sms and email notifications will list the pick up points to be used for that particular search. Searchers who are able to attend will be requested to reply to the call with their Name, Club and Pick up point. The pick up points selected by the PLO and advised in the notifications will be the only ones used for that particular search.

The BSAR website ([www.bsar.org](http://www.bsar.org)) has a list of the locations under the 'Callouts' tab. Each location indicates the area of the State where that particular location might be used and notes providing directions to the specific point for pick up. Some locations have an accompanying map.

Some parking locations are within Shopping Centre, Hospital and Tertiary Campus car parks. The appropriate parking location is very defined and parking outside the location may lead to parking infringement fines. BSAR cannot be responsible for any fines incurred.

All Searchers are advised to check out the locations – see [bsar.org/callouts](http://bsar.org/callouts).

*Merv Trease PLO*

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## 2014 BSAR STEEP SNOW AND ICE TRAINING – 31 August and 5-7 Sept. A Participant's View from Stephen Malins

I joined BSAR in 2011 from the VMTC.

My background is as an abseiler and army reservist (paratrooper). Most of my experience is in the mountains of England and Wales. I considered myself an intermediate skier in the European Alps and since arriving in Australia, I have started cross-country skiing and snow-camping in the Victorian Alps. As such I am a generalist.

On September 6-7 2014, BSAR conducted its annual SSI training on the Razorback at Mt Hotham following a day of dryland training at Williamstown with some 20 attendees, either unrated, or with a "C" Competent or "T" Technical rating.

After a Friday night departure from Northcote, and camp at Bright Caravan Park, Saturday morning found us setting up camp on the high ground behind the Diamantina Hut with commanding views over the Razorback Ridge to Mt Feathertop and back down the snow line to the lower ground. The weather was perfect – a bluebird day with many of us stripping down to our yellow long-sleeved polos or soft-shells as the day progressed.

The training was conducted by Peter Campbell and Eric Krista with John and Mark, our Victoria Police Search and Rescue Squad mentors.

In the first session, we practised ice-axe self-arrest techniques in various positions: on our backs, feet pointing down - before eventually switching over to going down backwards. We also self-arrested with our ice axes in our 'goofy hand' as a fall may occur when traversing a slope while holding the axe on our 'goofy' side.

John was an Australian Army soldier and instructor. His instruction was precise and knowledgeable. Mark provided an epee to Jim's foil with some insight and humour.

We then progressed to 'roping up in pairs' and moving across snow slopes. This was an opportunity to not only practise rope coil techniques and knots but to see whether we could hold a partner fall from a "bucket seat" in the snow with heels kicked in; or from an ice axe.

We then moved off along just below the Razorback ridge on crampons moving in bounds, ensuring the person following was not under the leader's fall-line.

The training day concluded with lowering and hauling a stretcher using a steep angle setup. This is 'bread and butter' SSI: The two principal components are a system for lowering and hauling, and a backup safety line. The system for lowering and hauling uses a z-pulley setup to use mechanical advantage when hauling. We used a Multipurpose Purpose Device (MPD), a new piece of equipment this year, as a combined pulley, friction device and lock-off holding device. The MPD acts as a Progress Capture Device and replaces the two Jumars (ascenders) and pulley previously used.

John also showed us a T-slot trench anchor built using skis laid in a slit trench backed up by an ice-axe and clove hitch.

On Sunday morning we consolidated our avalanche rescue skills by practising using transceivers: following a flux-line signal (and it might curve!) and then a 'fine' search to locate a person before digging. The recent experiences of BSAR and Victoria Police in the recovery of the lost snowboarders in July 2014 were fresh in everyone's mind. Roger Palmer recounted his personal experience of being buried and then rescued in the Canadian Rockies. We then rounded this off with an avalanche probing exercise.

Low angle Sked stretcher haulage was next - taking it in turns as teams to glide a sked over the snow, backed up by other rescuers ready to swap in. The importance of taking care of the casualty who may need eye

protection from the sun or warm layers to protect against hypothermia was stressed.

We concluded with a ski or a snowshoe. Regardless of choice, the 2 groups got some more experience and idea of where their personal comfort zone was by traversing some steep slopes.

We were away from the area by 2pm and we halted on the way back for a well-earned ice-cream which was a great aid to hydration!

A lot of thought had gone into the various exercises and it can be seen that each has evolved over time to the point where the message is clear and concise. It's also great that Peter and Eric are inviting feedback and for people to assist with training preparations for next year.

As a generalist, it was fascinating to be in such accomplished company of backcountry skiers, mountaineers and climbers. I learnt a lot on the weekend and consolidated some basic skills first learnt in 2012. I was pleased to show a marked improvement and degree of competency in roping up and belaying.

I would like to thank Peter and Eric, John and Mark for the hard work they put into for what I am sure was a rewarding weekend for all.

*Stephen Malins*

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## **BSAR MEMBERS COMPETE IN THE EMERGENCY SERVICES GAMES**

In April this year the Australasian Police and Emergency Services Games were held in Melbourne. As a registered Emergency Service, Bush Search and Rescue Victoria was eligible to participate. Three BSAR members entered events.

Peter Croxford, entered the Boxing Event, and gave this feedback:

“Please convey my appreciation to the organisational committee for the opportunity to compete in this year’s APES Games. It was fantastic to meet and mix with fellow competitors from various services across Australia and New Zealand.

The boxing event was exceptionally well organised and executed with great spirit and encouragement from the organisational team involved. Barry Michael presented me with the silver. I’ve attached a photo of yours truly with Barry working the cameras. I think they were more interested in Barry than me, but hey, you grab the moment when you can.”

Well done to Peter for taking out a Silver medal in Over 40’s male section!



Peter Croxford and Barry Michael

John McGauran and I entered the Stair Climb up 43 flights of the Rialto building stair wells. There was two categories to the event; Athletic Gear which we entered, and Full Fire-Fighting equipment which was open to fire fighters only. It was very interesting to see the fire fighters organising themselves prior to race, once they don boots, heavy jackets, overalls, breathing apparatus and tanks, they have around 20kgs of gear. This was similar to what I had when training for the event by giving my son a piggy back up the local hills and similar to when going out on bushwalk for a few days. The difference was that the fire fighters also had to use a mask and oxygen tank. As they finished the final flight of stairs it sounded like Darth Vader was coming up the stairs. As they crossed the line, there were marshals available to assist them with removing their mask to ensure they could quickly recover their breath.

After the firefighters completed their event it was time for John and I to join the other competitors in the lighter athletic gear category. John went 30 seconds before me and despite (and maybe because of) him having an extra 20 years on me I was not able to catch him. John was very happy having completed a very fast time of 9 minutes 34 seconds. This showed in the results with John taking home the gold medal for the 60-64 year old male section. He would have also would have been 3<sup>rd</sup> in the 40-44 year old section. I

felt I went too hard at the start and couldn't up my pace at the end of the race, but overall I was still happy with my time of 10 minutes 25 seconds.



John McGauran and Cameron Plant after climbing 43 floors of the Rialto.

The games are next held on the Sunshine Coast in October 2016, so I have plenty of time now to train to beat John next time. If you are looking for a holiday in the sun, mark it down on your calendar.

*Cameron Plant*

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**Behind the Log**