



'BIDGEE BULLDUST' WINTER 2017

MANAGER'S PROPERTY REPORT

By Peter Schofield

Property conditions are okay at the moment due to 57mm of rain in April and more rain falling at the time of writing. The stockowners are happy with their stock and there are more available for agistment depending on property conditions.

The property is cleaning up really fantastically and I am personally happy with how everything is coming along. Over the past few weeks I have removed the horse yards, and moved all the cars back at the dump. I have cleaned up a lot of rubbish and debris with the help from the Tolley, Bowden & Horsey crews and pushed it into piles from around the house and burnt off. A new firebreak has been put in on the Boyong side of the camp ground.

The fencing crew are in and the campground and house fence are under way. They're hoping to do about 4 kms per day of the dorper fence subject to the weather.

The Murrumbidgee has been up and down but pretty constant at the moment. The Lachlan gave us another burst after Easter, which is enough to put water back into Clear Lake and about 500 metres up the channel. Dry Lake is holding well. There has been a slight frost out around Dry Lake and Boyong paddocks which I have been monitoring.

Over the past several weeks I have managed to grade most major tracks and fence lines, which have come up well. Need to just keep people off them during these wetter months to preserve the roads.

The Tupra pump shed is almost complete and at this stage the Nooran boundary fence is due for completion at the end of June / July.

Shareholder visits from the 04.04.17 are as follows:

- Shareholders - 38 / Spouses & under 21s - 28 / Visitors – 31

On the weather front Mick we suggest you forget about the BOM & just ask the ‘rainmakers’ the Crofts to visit the farm! Each time they come they have to escape early because of impending rain!

37ml made sure a few shareholders were stuck for a few extra days after Easter. They just managed to get out (being depleted of alcohol) before the heavens opened again!

The farm is looking a treat following the rains & lovely autumn weather.



Photos by John & Judy Tolley

SHARE OFFER

There are currently four shares in Toopuntul for sale.

If anyone is interested or has a friend who is interested they should contact
Rod Jouning at jouning56@optusnet.com.au

MESSAGE FROM THE NEW CHAIRMAN



My name is Clint Comelli, and I am your new Chairman for Toopuntul. It gives me great honour to hold this position, and I look forward to leading the company in its next phase of farming and shareholder activity.

Now for a little bit of history about me! I am from the large Comelli empire, that started with Arthur Comelli

(pictured above). Still fit and well at 96 years of age, Arthur was best friends with Leo Callanan, who formed part of the first shareholders and visitors to the property way back when it started in 1978/1979.

As a young boy, I grew up on the Mornington Peninsula, in a place called Tyabb. Our family had 56 acres of land, where we used to have a hobby farm with Red, Elk and Fallow Deer.

We used this farm to harvest the Velvet from the horns and to sell to the Asian markets. I went to school at The Peninsula School in Mt Eliza, and following my Graduation from there, I went on to achieve a Bachelor of Science at Monash University, majoring in Statistical Mathematics.

In between all of this, there were many trips up to Toopuntul, and surrounding areas like Booligal with my father Allan and the Callanan Family, including Mick, on many duck shoots and hunts. This is where I think I fell I love with the outdoors and enjoyed my time spent on the land. Mick showed myself and my best friend Clarke how to shoot ducks, how to build hides and cover to increase our bag size.



Although back then we were armed with semi-automatic shotguns, Dad and Mick with only under and over shotguns, they still showed us up every time with their bigger bag of ducks than ours. I learnt so much about hunting and had a great respect for farm life. *(cont.)*

During my university life, I didn't have much time for hunting, but following that and being married to Justine (*below*) in 2009, I started frequenting the property a lot more, and getting back to enjoying my time away from the big smoke.



In 2010 I purchased a share, and in 2012 I was asked by the existing board to come to a meeting to see if I was interested in coming on and assisting in the duties of running the company. I accepted, and have been there ever since.

Just before this in 2010, we had our first child Cooper, second child Alice in 2012 and finally Edwina in 2015

(*pictured above*). As our kids began to grow up, we started bringing them to Toopuntul for the Easter weekend and Easter clay target shoot. This is now an annual trip, and it is so fantastic to see the children and how they learn about the outdoors, understand farming life, and enjoy the activities that Toopuntul puts on for that weekend. It is not often that children get to do and see what we have in this great land, and in my eyes, every child should experience what my kids do.

As chairman, and a family man, I would like to encourage you all to engage and enjoy Toopuntul for what it is.

As well as being on the board at Toopuntul, and a busy family life, I own and operate the largest Hummer Limousine Company in Australia. We have recently developed a new Limousine that is just about to hit the streets of Melbourne. The H4. All these things keep me busy and active which is probably why I enjoy Toopuntul so much and being away from the riff raff of the city.



I am a very open person and here for anyone who would like a chat, have a gripe or groan, or just want to share an experience at Toopuntul. I would like to thank the Farm Managers, Mick and Kate, the current board and previous board members for their hard work. It wouldn't be here without them. I look forward to leading Toopuntul forward.



EASTER 2017

Stories and photos by John & Judy Tolley

2017 Easter could not come around quick enough for shareholders to get together at the farm after the floods closed the property for 6 months last year. Although numbers were down on previous years a great time was had by all.

With the new shed up & running, (thanks to Jim & his crew for the concreting & Russell Cook's guest Clyde Pryn for all the electrical works and especially Jude for all the cleaning and re-arranging of the kitchen area), the fun kicked off with 5 o'clock happy hour on the Thursday and continued for the rest of Easter.



Mel McCullen, Josh Pingiaro, Neil Bakker, Dennis Comelli, Jim Gowty (John Healy absent) with Chairman Clint Comelli

The Good Friday shoot kicked off the events (under the watchful eye of Mick, welcome back!) with the men being challenged with three women shooters joining in this year.

The event was keenly contested with the overall winner (after a shoot out) going to Jim Gowty (*pictured left*).

Friday fish night commenced with Leonie, Jess and Darrin's big smiles showing their excitement of having a real kitchen to work out of (*right*).

The evening was a great success with shareholders, guests and children all enjoying one another's company.



One of the great things was seeing the four generations of Comelli's together at Toopuntul again with Arthur (*left*) recently celebrating his 96th birthday.

(cont.)

Clint spoke of his & the board's thanks for the work put into building the new 'shed' by John, Bob, Russell & their team of helpers. It is a great asset to Toopuntul for many generations to enjoy in the future.



Saturday's fishing comp run by Pete was a new addition to Easter activities. This was keenly contested and the winner of the fishing rod was Paul Doumtsias (*pictured left*). Followed by more drinks at the 'shed'!!!

Sunday started with the eagerly awaited Easter egg hunt putting big smiles on the faces of kids (little and BIG) gathering the eggs.

This was followed by the games - egg and spoon race, musical chairs, sack races, tug'o'war (kids and parents) etc... Lots of fun as always. *(cont.)*



The 2017 annual 'Duck Race' saw controversy when a rogue black duck entered the event, but apparently not a great swimmer as it came a dismal last!!! The race went right to the line in a photo finish when No:29 proudly bred by Bob Bowden (*below*) won by a short half beak.



Thanks to Chris, Mandy, Jess, Georgia, Josh and all other helpers for making Easter 2017 another great success for Toopuntul.

It was great to see Mick and Kate back at the farm for a few days enjoying the company of the shareholders and guests. Good luck Mick with your continuing improvement in health.

MICK'S 70TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

On Saturday 19th November many of Mick's family and friends travelled from far and wide to celebrate his 70th birthday.

It was a hot summer afternoon but the Echuca Race Club provided an oasis of comfort and no shortage of cold beverages and tasty food to celebrate this great occasion.

The speeches were testament to Mick's full life and his fighting spirit to tackle everything life has thrown at him. His stamina showing in the fact that he was the last man standing – once again outlasting everyone else!



EASTER HIGHLIGHTS



WATER PURCHASE FOR TOOPUNTUL



“Water is the mother of the vine, the nurse and foundation of fecundity, the adorning and refresher of the world.”

Charles Mackay

With the above quote in mind the Board of Toopuntul have recently purchased 250 megs (1 meg = 1,000,000 litres) of temporary water to refresh a large part of the Station after a long hot and dry summer.

The water was purchased for a price of \$10 per meg. Our aim is to pump this water onto the lignum country along the Murrumbidgee River, up from the pump station. It is anticipated that this water will reach the bridge near the homestead.

The overall benefit of the water is difficult to measure but it should give the country a general lift, leading to extra feed for our dorper program and/or agistment program.

The water will also attract game to the area and give our visitors plenty to hunt over the next 3-4 months.

The cost of this exercise is shared equally between shareholder fees and the farm.

Rohan Stone
DS Accounting

KEEP A JOURNAL OF YOUR ADVENTURES

By Robert Sturzaker

A clever move some twenty years ago was creating a journal for our adventures at Toopuntul. The Journal starts as follows:

“This journal is a record of the adventures of Graham Kemp and Rob Sturzaker, and their guests, at Toopuntul Station.

If you are making an entry in this journal please record the following:

- *Dates of arrival and departure,*
- *Names of all party members,*
- *Weather conditions,*
- *River conditions*
- *Game caught or shot,*
- *Results of any clay targets shoots, and*
- *Any other observations you think are relevant.”*



An excerpt follows:

21st December 1996 Saturday

Jane, Robert, with dogs Kelly and Kate. Temp 30deg. River low but navigable.

Arrived 8.30pm. Unpacked and broached a champagne. Long trip after 3 hours packing. Can't wait to try the mountain bikes! No sign of people or wildlife except for a few bunnies and some mad Brittany spaniels.

22nd December - 37deg and inside hot.

Remembered boat, rods, oars, petrol, chain, net, gaff etc. NO BAIT!! Fishing without Bait? We caught 3 shrimp in a net and then Jane caught 5 carp while Rob caught 3 carp (inc. the biggest). Our outboard motor played up and Rob became angry and yelled at Jane and the dogs for which he is sorry. He went and put in 10 yabby nets while Jane fished at camp. Jane saw 3 pigs on opposite bank to the Royal (our cabin). Rob shot two rabbits for dog's tea. Rob saw 2 pigs at Five Mile Bridge.

23th December - 36deg indoors but cool morning.

Saw the rice paddies, very impressive but no ducks. Went bush bashing in the old bomb and saw one pig. Got a feed of large bad tempered (must be related to Rob) yabbies. Now having a cool beer under the gum trees.

Jane rode to Five Mile Bridge and back on a bike (pedal power).

Rob went to shoot on the rice. Saw about 40 ducks but none to shoot at. Saw two medium sized pigs at Five Mile Bridge! Now 10.30 pm Jane asleep. Rob drinking 16 yr old single malt. Temp with AC on 24deg.

24th December 1996 - Rob Xmas Eve - YABBY RECORD

Rob drove to pump house and Jane rode the bike. Checked yabby nets and got a feed – only 24 but big. Biggest 11 1/4 inches! Fished at the point and swam. Caught 3 carp (Rob) and saw emus. Ate yabbies and mastered the art of getting the meat from the claws using Rob's new chompers



Back at camp 98 deg F. AC on and woofing dogs notified us of a pig on the opposite bank. Jane thinks it is HOT!

Rob shot a roo and loaded pig trap on way to rice. Shot 2 woodies and saw 2 cats.

25th December 1996 Xmas Day '96

River low, overcast and cool.

Jane made acquaintance of a large frog in the toilet bowl. She seems impressed! Taitinger champagne for breakfast. Off to check yabby nets. Catch down but still a few 10 3/4 inch long. About to have turkey, ham, yabbies and salad for xmas lunch.

26th December 1996

Cool, river low.

Fished at the beach. Rob - 3, Jane - 0 carp. Spied a fox at the pig trap. Tried the hoop nets with no success. The Quick's - Norm, Darren and Colin (from WA) turned up and so did Mick....? . Went to Maude as we ran out of beer. On the way back we stopped at Jack's shack and had a few with Jack, George, Kathy, Cassandra, Daisy, Donald, Sam, Kate, Kelly etc. Invited Jack to tea tomorrow for duck casserole. Note - since weather has cooled off - no pigs sighted!

Yabbies in red Thai curry for tea with cold beer. Jane says magnificent! Rob agrees! Decided to stay 'til Saturday - 28th.

27th December 1996 Friday

Temp 28deg C at 10.00am. Checked yabby nets and got a few large ones. Gave them to the Quicks in return for a rabbit for our stew. Cooked duck and rabbit casserole for Jack Glanville and Jane entertained him by catching 6 carp. Rob entertained him by braining him with a snagged sinker.

Drank 'til late under the stars. Note: saw 3 pigs (On 3 separate occasions) on the bank opposite us.

28th December 1996 Saturday

Checked night lines - one with yabby on was broken off! Great trip, currently packing up to go home (rats!).

* * * * *

NOTE: Jane typed up the journal and we have added photos. Officeworks have printed and bound copies of the “*Toopuntul Journal – the first twenty years*”. It is a great read and also helps settle any cases of who did what to whom and when!



BOAT FOR SALE

SAVAGE PUNT

3.4m and in good condition. \$500



Contact Rob Sturzaker for further details (0416 302 301)

TOOPUNTUL REFLECTION

By Simon Pratt

Toopuntul began for me in 1983 when I was 7 years old. My father John and my uncle Tony were instrumental in getting the Pratt's involved with Toopuntul the year earlier in 1982. This first trip was the beginning of a great relationship for me with Toopuntul, starting with shooting bunnies with a .22 calibre rifle. Years of family holidays were spent in the campgrounds and many adventures had. The times I spent with my grandmother and grandfather John Senior and Joyce are some of the most special times that I will cherish forever.

Over the years I have had some lasting memories etched into my mind. Countless mud baths / fights at the point with my brother and sisters, spot lighting and falling asleep in the wee hours of the morning. Tormenting my sisters with dead lizards & frogs, fishing up and down the rivers and taking a tremendous number of trips with anyone from the family who was prepared to drive the 6 hours from Melbourne. Endless trips shooting ducks with my grandfather, three uncles and brother accompanied by my trusted .410 double barrel. The farm was a place as kids we used to pray for it to rain so we would hopefully get stuck and not have to leave to come home. Not much has changed as I still pray for the same situation to occur some 33 years later!



Simon the "Bunny Buster"



The Whole Gang:
Em, Max, Archie Juno & Simon

Since then I have had years where I've not been able to get to the farm and other years where multiple trips were planned and enjoyed. It has been a place where I would get away on my own during my twenties and enjoy the property for all it had to offer whilst developing a true passion for hunting.

Luckily I am now married to Emily who thankfully is a bit trigger-happy and is just as eager to hold the spotlight for me. We have two young boys Maximus (6) and Archer (4) who along with our crazy German Shorthaired Pointer "Juno" are just as gung-ho as I was when I first came to Toopuntul.

The Pratt's are now four generations along and I am looking forward to helping the farm grow and secure its position for many years to come. I hope my kids create just as many amazing memories as I did growing up at Toopuntul.

NEW STATE CONSERVATION AREA

By Cathy Croft



Next time you are at Toopuntul you may like to take a trip out to visit “Kalyarr” – the State Conservation Area located just down the road. Lake Ita has water in it at the moment - apparently a rare occurrence. It was recommended to us by a few while at Toopuntul.

We weren't intending to visit (the final paint out of the van followed by a forecast for rain cut our visit short - again) but we soon changed our minds on the way out when we witnessed flocks of hundreds of pelicans bobbing across the plain, and all heading in the same direction. “They’ve got to be going to the lake” we said, so we doubled back and headed in, where we were treated to quite a sight, with the largest flocks of pelicans we have ever seen (*below*).

There weren't any signs at the entrance at Easter but shareholders may be familiar with the small white property sign “Norwood” on the right (beside the first grid, after you turn onto the Oxley road). The lake has easy access to the road so it's well worth the visit!

