



' BIDGEE BULLDUST WINTER 2018

MANAGER'S REPORT (MAY 2018)

PETER SCHOFIELD

RIVERS

Property conditions have started falling away due lack of rain in this period and what the property has seen is really not worthy reporting upon inspection of the rain gauges as nothing really has been enough to register.

The river conditions are not much better and anyone who has been at the property will have seen how low the Murrumbidgee River has been and for how long. To give you an idea there is growth along the edge of the water which I have not seen for a long time.



The Lachlan River has been going back constantly for the last few months until last week when a gentle flow came through and put a puddle in Nooran Lake.

Unfortunately, not enough to get to the old Wooden Bridge yet. Toopuntul overall is extremely dry and in desperate need for water.

Most tracks around the property have been smudged to extend our grader work from 12 months ago. (cont.)





STOCK

Dorpers have started lambing. So far, more twins than singles which is a great sign. Currently the Dorpers are all still in pump frontage and they are enjoying the cover.

Agistees have tightened up their herds due to the conditions but are happy with the way their stock left the property. Jeff Smith sold off 100 head recently when he brought in 123 in July last year

in one truck and his 100 head went out on 2 trucks', so he was very happy with the end result (same truck that brought them in).

Owen Waller has just mustered and tighten up his herd as well removing 199 head but once again very happy with the way they left the property. Matt Way still has his full herd here 424 assisted cows and calves, in total we have 550 head on agistment currently on Toopuntul.

MAINTENANCE

We had 2 trees fall in on our rhino tank pumps foot valve which broke it so panic station for a few days. With the assistance of Steve at Boyong who sent over a large machine we removed them and got them going again. I would like to thank Rodney J and Geoff G for cleaning up the trees. Well done. I would also like to thank Chris and Kat from the Horsey clan for work on the airstrip and fire shed, a job well done.



EASTER

For my first year at the helm for Easter I think the result was fantastic. It was really great to see so many friends and families all come together and that the Toopuntul Easter Tradition is alive and kicking. We had approximately 107 attend the property and the general consensus was that everyone enjoyed themselves immensely.

Thank you to John & Jude Tolley and Bobby Bowden for collecting the fish from Balranald, Clyde Pryn and Allan Comelli for their BBQ know-how. I would also like to make a special mention to all the ladies who made salads and crumbed the mountains of fish; without you all helping out we would not have had such a successful Easter Extravaganza. The Lamble's and Pingiaro's for collecting Easter eggs and Christine for Sunday morning events. Ray Horsey for his work with the fishing comp; they tell me it went off like a fire cracker. Now talking about fire crackers what a great show of fireworks Colin Quick put on! Well done Colin, Josh and Paul.

Rain Update: Since this report there has been 28.5 mm over five showers (largest fall 17mm)

CHANGE IN BUSINESS MODEL (MAY 2018)

CLINT COMELLI (CHAIRMAN)

The business model at Toopuntul has changed since the company was founded in 1979. Cattle breeding, agistment, rice farming, woodcutting, water sales, rent, investment and campground income have all been part of the revenue stream of the company.

Mick Callanan and Jim Gowty were the architects of the move to dorpers and agistment. Peter has implemented the first stage of dorpers and managed the transition to agistment of cattle. All of this has gone well as the presence of little dorpers and of fat cattle attest.

The Board also undertook a review of the wood cutting seeking tenders from three operators. The impact of this has been that the father and son operators have departed and Toopuntul has an agreement with the timber cutters from Boyong.

This process has led to an increase in the royalty from \$15 per tonne (with an allowance for cleanup) to \$44 per tonne including cleanup, the wood taken will include smaller sizes than before, reducing the need for cleanup and increasing the volume. The new wood cutters have significantly larger and newer plant and are planning on taking around 2,500 tonne per month, subject of course to weather conditions.



The operations will be under the supervision of management and can be halted at any time if we are not happy with the standard of operations.

The benefit to Toopuntul of woodcutting extends beyond revenue, although we need that, to exposing new areas for grazing as can be seen in the area on the north east of the Dry Lake to Clear Lake channel.

A revenue stream of potentially \$110,000 per month will provide the company with greater certainty and opportunity in expanding the dorper project from the first stage should it continue to be successful with further fencing and management options for the dorpers being planned.

It would also help to rebuild existing infrastructure that has been outstanding for some time – fencing, grading & excavation equipment, sheds, workshop facilities and so on.

While the Board is excited to share this new development with you it has yet to be put into practice and one thing farming teaches you is that it is best not to count your chickens before they hatch.

The Board will keep you informed through Manager's Reports and 'Bidgee Bulldust.

WESTERN RIVERINA PIG PROGRAM UPDATE

ROBERT STURZAKER

Two years into the federally funded pig control program along the Lachlan, from Booligal to the Great Cumbungi Swamp, NSW Local Land Services Riverina officer Suzie Holbery reports:

“There has been 10,226 pigs reported to me destroyed for 2017. This includes aerial shoots completed by the National Parks and in the Nimmie-Caira region. Combine this with the 7,764 destroyed in 2016 there has been a total of 17,990. [Note: the initial aerial survey estimated 14,500 pigs in total!]

Unfortunately despite our efforts and some favourable seasonal conditions pig numbers have risen based on preliminary results of the second aerial survey completed in 2017.

Peter has been doing an excellent job trapping and I appreciate that this can be a labour intensive process.”



As reported in the Manager’s May Report pig numbers for 2017/18 are 1319. In total 961 were shot and 358 trapped. Considering that the initial aerial survey estimated 168 pigs on Toopuntul this is a startling result. The aerial surveys are accurate at the time but pigs move to follow feed and water and Toopuntul is a thoroughfare.

Wild pigs are eating fodder we could be turning into \$\$\$\$. They are a vector for diseases to stock, dogs and people and they do like lamb chops. To those who chase them well done and keep up the good work!



Usually photos of Toopuntul pigs feature deceased specimens with some primitive fellow (think Nick Pratt or Pinky Kemp) with their foot on its neck, but there are plenty of live ones out there as these photos show.

COD FISHING

ROBERT STURZAKER

One of my aims in retirement is to catch a legal size Murray cod. I have watched my wife and my brother in law catch them, I have heard stories of big ones from friends, I have a picture of a 54 lbs cod on the wall of my hut and I have even caught a few small ones from the bank in front of the cabin.

In April this year I thought I would take Jane up to Toopuntul for a week of fishing when the place was quiet and the heat of summer had passed.

Armed with depth sounder, GPS, yabby nets, boat, oars, two retrieving dogs, rods, reels, lures.... well you get the picture; I thought I was primed for success!

The first cause for concern was when we crossed the river at Maude. The weir was closed and the downstream view was appalling. As low as I have seen it. The second cause for concern was when we got out of the car. It was 37 degrees. Still we persisted and launched the boat.

Even with "shallow water drive" engaged it was a painful exercise and we hit every snag in the river.

Next morning we made a concerted effort to make it to the Boyong hole. After pushing off snag after snag, breaking an oar on one, we finally arrived at the boundary fence where I announced victory as the hole was around the bend.

Alas I was humbled by the sight of the largest set of snags in the whole river. There was no way to get across or around. Even getting out and pushing the boat over the snags was not advisable as they are extensive. Great for the cod - but really!



Beaten we limped back to camp, literally. I had to get out and tow the boat about 800m back upstream (as you can see). If there had been a cod there I would have sent the dog after it!

(cont.)

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Back at camp, where it was 41 degrees and climbing, we were greeted by the sight of William and Liam Schwarzenberg, who with some help from father William were hauling carp after carp out of the river.

They have a much larger boat than mine and decided that they would go where the water was, above the Maude weir. Smart move as the pics show. They caught several nice cod and yellowbelly.



Maybe I have left my run too late. Still, the saving grace was that we could eat the bait so maybe we had the last laugh after all!



As for the cod fishing I will let Biggles have the last word.....

TOOPUNTUL REFLECTIONS

ROHAN STONE



I was introduced to Toopuntul in 1997 by shareholder Graham Stanton who has been a longtime family friend.

I clearly remember our first trip there in early July 1997. There were five of us loaded up with guns, ammo, fishing boats, food, beer and tents just for one night at Toopuntul. After a BBQ dinner and a few beers, we headed out spotlighting. We ended up shooting nothing, getting lost and freezing our butts off in one of the coldest July nights recorded.

Not to be put off by our first experience the following year we returned for two nights with a crew of six. More beers and some camaraderie around the camp fire, plenty of delicious camp oven food and a little success with the hunting meant we were hooked.

From 1999 we have camped at Toopuntul in early May and our crew has grown to eleven (of which four are now shareholders). The only exception being 2017 when it was too wet to get in. In some years we have endured flooding at Toopuntul, requiring us to camp at the Maude pub and travel out to the north of the place daily to hunt.

Around the year 2003 we started a tradition of a family camp in the September school holidays. Numbers for this camp fluctuate between twenty-five and fifty-five people of all ages. As part of this tradition we cook a pig on the spit and camp oven veggies for the whole camp. The highlight being the sweet taste of the crackling.



The family camp involves teaching our kids and wives how to hunt, fish, cook and drive. Most mornings we are woken at sunrise by the young kids keen to go to Dry Lake or Nooran to see if they can shoot a pig or fox. It can be a bit tough getting out of bed after beers and red wine the night before. The mums are more than happy to see the kids out of the cabin at that time of the day. In between these camps I manage to visit Toopuntul with up to one or six of my kids who embrace what Toopuntul has to offer.

In closing I would summarize Toopuntul as one of my favourite places to visit. It's not just for the hunting and fishing but for the camaraderie that has been established there over the years around the camp fires and a few beers.

Yours in Toopuntul

EASTER 2018

JOHN & JUDY TOLLEY



WOW! Superb weather & the biggest crowd (107) in the last few years ensured a fantastic time was had by all with the whole weekend being a great success.

The new 'Community Shed' continues to be a hit with more and more shareholders using it on many occasions.

Good Friday once again began with the annual shoot which was well attended followed in the evening by the ever popular 'fish night'.

The karaoke machine donated by Danielle Tolley was a great hit keeping people entertained and the stragglers carried on well into the night.



(cont.)



Thanks to Neil Bakker for taking over the running of the Shoot. The winners were:

- AA – Dennis Comelli
- A – Clint Comelli
- B – Scott King
- C – Josh Pingiaro
- Junior – John Cavanough
- Hunter – Chris Horsey
- Overall Winner – Josh Pingiaro

Saturday saw Ray Horsey take over the running of the fishing comp with great numbers taking part. It's good to see so many young ones joining in & knocking off the oldies in the competition.

The new 'Brian Jouning Trophy' for the 'Largest Native Fish' was won by Zara McCullum who also won 'The Biggest Catch'. Ollie Horsey scored the 'Biggest Fish'. Josh Piangiario was the winner of the trophy last year.



Sunday started with the much anticipated Easter Egg Hunt, colouring completion, games and the ever popular 'Duck Race'. This year's winner was Catherine Cavanough. Thanks to Chris and her helpers for a great job of getting everything organised.

It was requested by a number of people that we go back to the old way of on the Friday, "...while the shoot is on the rest of us get together preparing the fish and salads over a few drinks in the shed". Something worth considering for next year.

Thanks to the Toopuntul Family for all your help in making Easter 2018 another successful occasion to remember!







THE ROYAL JOURNAL

SUMMER AT TOOPUNTUL (PART ONE)

By Robert Sturzaker



23rd December 2000 (RS, Kate and Biggles in charge)

River low but over the sand bank opposite. Weather fine 27deg by RS thermometer. By the way those who doubt the accuracy of RS thermometer can effing well bring their own in future. Thermometer memory says the highest temp has been 53 deg and the lowest 8.1 since last trip.

Water not working and RS stung by a wasp putting the electricity on but very peaceful nevertheless. Later will put in yabby nets if I can kill some bait then off to the rice.

Quite a few ducks on the rice at the house end in the bays with open water. Gave Jock's trombone a workout but only got 4: 2 woodies, a teal and a hardhead. Biggles (the 1st) was the star - he chased the teal in the dark and found it for me. The dumb bastard then assumed ducks were some sort of fish and stalked up and down the paddy waiting for them to appear!

I caught 3 carp: 2 small and 1 about 8lbs. Although, if my scales are as good as my thermometer, it could have weighed anything.

Four goats wandered into camp this arvo and Biggles tracked them down as they had a drink in the river about 30metres away. Biggles followed their trail for 100 metres or so then shit himself when he looked over the bank. Very amusing!

24th December 2000 (Sunday)

Slept thru alarm but out at first light anyway. Saw 2 good sized pigs and 3 smaller on left of road near cattle yards, one black and white, 2 good sized on levee bank river side of old rice - one shot - heard strike, no corpse! Saw 4 small ones in the open between levee and old rice - got the black and white one. Shooting high. Saw 6 on river side of lignum - too far no shot. Got 1/2 bucket good sized yabbies. Now 9.30am cooking yabbies and charging car batteries. Ducks everywhere - old rice, new rice, channel, river.

Heaven help me, but as I peel these yabbies I notice the temp outside 37deg, inside 28deg. I check the car 28deg. Oh bugger me! The thermometer must be picking up heat from the wall of the Royal. I liberate the sensor from the wall - now reads 33deg and dropping! Ha ha ha - my mistake! Water now on. Mark says we need a new pump.

11.30pm What a day. Where the wasp got me my finger is swollen and dark purple. I may have to amputate. One more carp (8lbs), another bucket of yabbies - I am going fishing tomorrow. (cont.)

On the rice I got 12 - 15 ducks, 1 hare, 1 fox, and peppered 5 pigs with no5s. They did not drop, but a couple were not well - Merry Xmas! The ducks were on the old rice, the rice closest to the river (sown last week) in their 100s!!! They did not come in till 9.10pm. Almost too dark. Need a dozen shooters to do it right. The ducks came into the bays closest to the river. When I drove up there was 100 or so on the water. The slide trombone ran hot but is now retired. I kept leaving the safety on, forgetting to reload, and it jammed once. The Beretta will be out tomorrow. The pigs were seen on the way back on the edge of the new rice. I drove up next to them and nearly did not see them. I jumped out and let fly with the trombone. I have started a new trophy - pigs ears on a coat hanger in the small gum tree outside.



25th December 2000 (Monday)

31deg/river lower - sand bank showing.

Up at 5am saw 6 pigs, 2 shots - no pigs. Walked from the rice to the river and along the river and back thru the lignum to the car. Could not hit my foot if I shot at it - better stick to camels and other large game.

First pig - black and white just where you hit the road after going to the tip. Went fishing and put in trotline with yabbies and worms. Found 2 of Wayne's lines - 1 to go. Glued Toopuntul Journal back together. Finger (wasp bite) now dark purple in between 1st and 2nd knuckle and hand swelling up (What does this mean Tonto....?)

6.00pm Biggles has finally lost it. He did a little dance in the camp fire ashes and laid down to sleep. I have photos to prove it! Dogs having hare for tea (crunch crunch!) and me - bacon and eggs.

11.00pm shot 20-30 ducks in 10 minutes! Dog did not know which way to look. Saw 8 pigs in 3 groups on way back - got two with SG's. It is a bit hard by yourself! Pinky will clean up. 100s and 100s of birds came in between 9.10 - 9.20. Then I could not see. Teal, blackies, hardhead and woodies. There were two mobs of 50 - 60 birds on the water just sitting. Not a bird in the air till 9.10 when all hell broke loose. With the trustee Beretta in hand Sturzy is back in town! Another bucket of yabbies the biggest 10 3/4 inches. Great night!



(cont.)

26th December 2000 (Tuesday – RS)

11.30pm Up at 5.00am to check the longline. 3 carp and one very large tortoise. Rebaited and checked the springer at my favourite spot - yabby gone. Shower and change and off to Denni. Saw 2 pigs medium on the old rice and gave chase in \$60K Pig mobile. Fired one shot - no pig!

Met Wayne (who has caught a 45lb cod) and gave him his springers. Shot with WC, Wayne, Rod Evans and Stuart Nisbett (a local who shot his first 25 with us). Doug Osborne won with 92/100. In our squad, SN 80, RE 81, WC 73, WB 62, RS 78. Great shoot and WC gave me the remaining 11 stubbies he owed me.

Back to the rice. Ducks late tonite - 9.12pm. Shot 15 or so and then went arse over in the thick mud, gun (Beretta Pinky, don't worry), clothes and RS all covered in mud. Checked yabby nets in jocks.

Yabby in red Thai curry for tea with Orlando Trilogy Semillon Sauvignon Blanc Muscadelle. Not bad. Water supply off again! Absolutely stuffed, going to do dishes now and sleep in tomorrow - lay day to wash clothes!

Happy to report swelling in left hand receding, I do not think I will have to amputate!

To be cont'd

POWER TO THE PEOPLE

The crews descended late last year to connect power to the shareholders on the eastern side of the ablution block and with power outages in 38deg, it was a good time not to be camping!

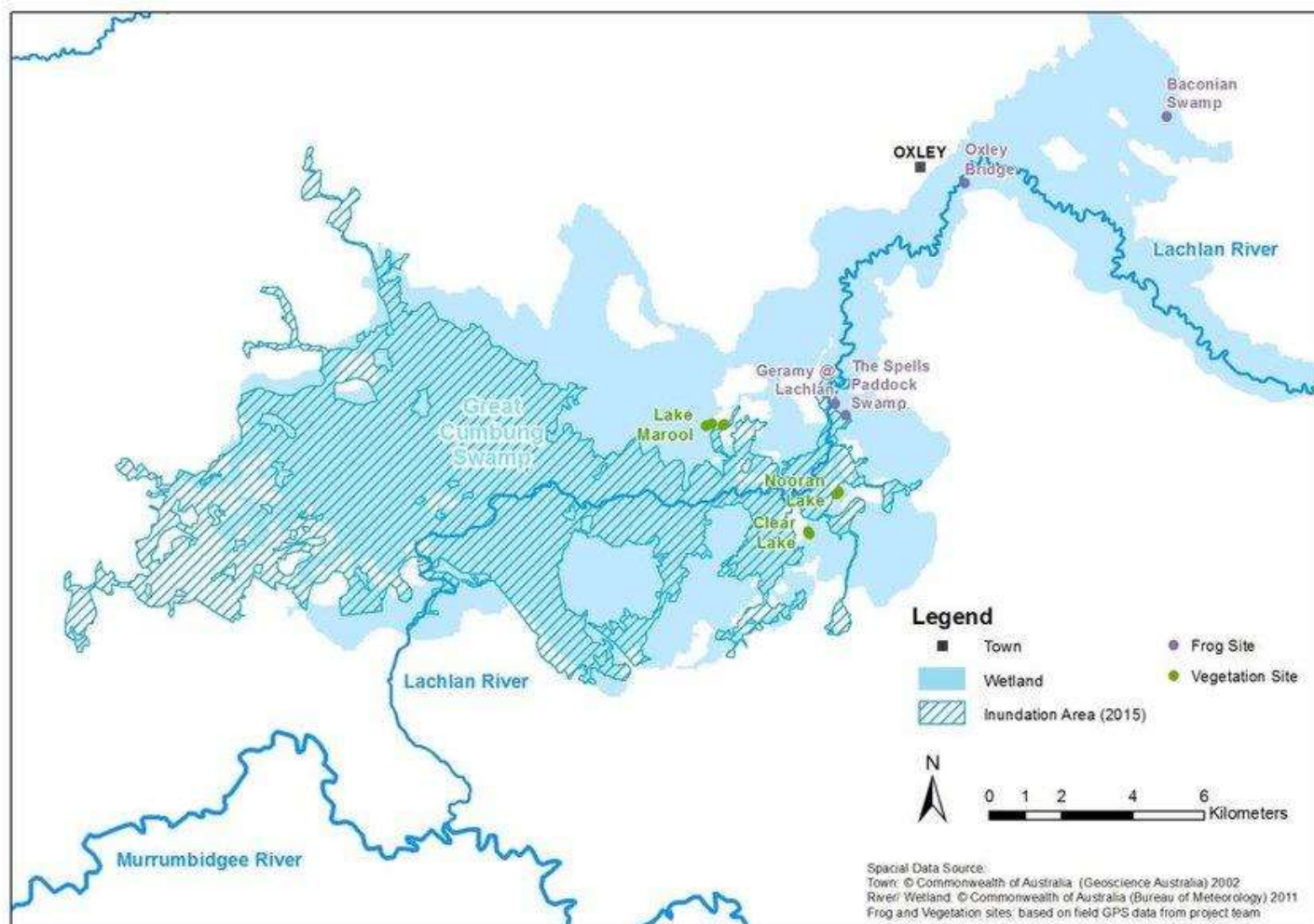


TOOPUNTUL HISTORY PART 1: INTRODUCTION

ROD JOUNING

Toopuntul Station is a place steeped with history. Its very location at the junction of the Murrumbidgee and Lachlan Rivers has long attracted people, with our indigenous people going back 40,000 years or longer and more recently, European settlers. As with any inland area, water is the life blood of survival and so it's easy to see why the attraction was there.

Imagine what Toopuntul would have been like prior to European development in Australia with free flowing rivers. The Murrumbidgee River, 1,600 kilometres long with many tributary rivers. Now regulated south of Burrinjuk Dam with weirs right along its course. The Lachlan River, 1,400 kilometres long with a catchment of 90,00 square kilometres. Now 1,300 kilometres of it regulated with huge holdings such as the Wyangala Dam, Lake Cargelligo, Lake Brewster, Carcoar Dam as well as many smaller storages. Well over 90% of the water used for irrigation, town supplies and industry. What would the Great Cumbung Swamp have looked like then? See below.....



(cont.)

Along with human occupation come the stories and artefacts of the individuals and their efforts.

Many years ago, the Toopuntul Board recognised the importance of identifying, recording and preserving this heritage and so set up the Historical Committee. With competing demands the work of this group has been slow but some progress has been made, as evidenced by the preservation of sites such as the Blaze Tree, Fanny Kerrish' grave and more recently (thanks to



a small band of hard workers) the construction of the new community shed using material from the old wool shed and housing some of its restored items.

In coming issues of the 'Bidgee Bulldust, we hope to bring you a series of articles to share some of this history. The history we know of that is. There are still many gaps in our knowledge but with the help of

people like John and Judy Tolley, the pieces are slowly coming together.

If you have something that may assist in this process, please let us know via Jouning56@optusnet.com.au

TOOPUNTULS' LATEST ARRIVAL

CLINT COMELLI (CHAIRMAN)

Toopuntul now has a brand new Victory 280e Wheel Loader. This loading machine has been primarily purchased to assist in the clean up of the box thorns in Nooran. This noxious weed, not only covers hundreds of hectares in Nooran, it is also very hard to get rid of as it grows back unless it is dug out of the ground and burned, then poisoned.

Peter has a big job ahead over the next 12-18 months getting rid of this weed for us, which will not only clear up Nooran Paddock, but also create more feed for our agistment cattle.

The loader will also be used for farm jobs that have been too big for the old green John Deer tractor. Peter has already used it to clear fences, scrape dams out, repair bridges, move large logs and trees from the river, move soil and clean up the campground.



Image from suppliers

Here are some specs about the machine (for all you rev heads!):

- 2800 kg capacity (6500kg operating weight)
- 125hp turbo diesel Weichai (Deutz) engine
- Powershift transmission Generous ROPS (certified)
- Air conditioned and heated cabin
- Hydraulic quick hitch Reverse camera
- 4in1 front bucket / Pallet Fork set / Spare Wheel
- Ripper set for rear for ground ripping and pulling out tree roots
- Size (L x W x H) 6240 x 2200 x 2920
- Wheelbase 2060 mm
- Min turning circle 4600 mm
- Max gradeability 30 deg
- Min ground clearance 390 mm
- Lift height to base of bucket 3900 mm
- Tyre size 16/90-24
- Max travel speed 25 km/h

So welcome the new yellow machine when you see her working on the property!