



**BlazeAid**  
 Helping Communities Rebuild  
 After Natural Disasters



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# The *BlazeAid* POST

A Quarterly Insight into the BlazeAid Organisation and its efforts to Rebuild Communities Affected by Natural Disasters

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## Volunteer in the Spotlight Bob Pride



### Meet Bob Pride: A Valuable Volunteer at BlazeAid.

BlazeAid is proud to introduce you to another one of our valuable volunteers, Bob Pride.

Bob has been a dedicated BlazeAider for over twelve years, volunteering his time and efforts at numerous camps and assisting in the construction of copious amounts of fencing!

Bob's originally hales from Croydon and Montrose in Victoria, where he spent his childhood. At age 19, he served in Vietnam before returning home to work as a mechanic for an earthmoving company in Dandenong. After the recession hit, Bob worked in quarries for CSR Ready Mix.

Now residing in Nambrok VIC and in the process of relocating to a RSL unit in Cheltenham VIC, Bob enjoys spending time with his two grandchildren. Though retired, he continues to lend a hand to BlazeAid. Although he is not currently at a camp, Bob and a few fellow BlazeAiders continue to assist locals near them who have been affected by the fires. Recently, Bob and a team from Heyfield helped a farmer rebuild his fences after flooding. Bob's first camp with BlazeAid was at Bridgewater. He quickly developed a passion for helping BlazeAid and became

a team leader. Bob's day at camp included an early start with breakfast, morning muster, a few laughs, and organisation of the day's tools, equipment, and food for lunch. Bob's role as a crew leader for BlazeAid required him to be responsible for his team, and as a result, earned a reputation as a strong leader. It quickly helped him learn the art of delegation! Bob also found that spending time with farmers during lunch breaks and on the fence line was a great way to learn new skills and stories, which he could then pass on to new volunteers. Bob cherishes the lifelong friendships he has made through BlazeAid and admires the dedication of his fellow volunteers. He says, "Sometimes, when you go to new camps, it feels like a reunion!" For Bob, the most satisfying aspect of volunteering for BlazeAid is seeing the smile on farmers' faces after completing their fences. In addition to helping BlazeAid with fencing across Australia, Bob also traveled to Cambodia with a small team of BlazeAiders in 2017/2018 to assist with "Cows for Cambodia". The team spent three weeks in Cambodia and then returned four months later to complete 20 kilometers of fencing.



Bob's contribution to BlazeAid has been invaluable, and he truly is an asset to the organisation!



# How Do you Spend Christmas?



**GABY'S FESTIVE SEASON** (volunteering @ Lismore Camp)

In Peru we spend Christmas and New Years with family. We have a turkey meal and fireworks for Christmas every year.

Our New Years tradition in Peru is to eat 13 grapes at midnight while making 12 wishes, one wish for each month to come and one extra to seal the deal. We also wear yellow clothes to attract luck and happiness for the coming year.

This year I will be spending the festive season in Australia with my sisters and brother-in-law having Christmas dinner and good times together.

**Gaby**



**KEN and JOYCE'S FESTIVE SEASON** (Volunteering @Forbes Camp)

Ken has been an active member of Blaizeaid for the past six years, starting with his volunteer work at the Dunedoo camp alongside his wife. With a shared passion for serving the community, they found a sense of purpose in their work with the organisation. Even after his wife's passing, Ken continued to honor her memory by volunteering with Blaizeaid, and now considers the group to be his extended family.

Through his involvement with Blaizeaid, Ken was fortunate enough to meet Joyce, his new partner. The couple is eagerly awaiting their move to a new house in Forbes, which they hope to do in the next few weeks. The anticipation of this new chapter in their lives is bringing them Christmas cheer, and they also plan to visit family and friends in Tumbi Umbi at Tuggerah Lakes.

**Joyce & Ken**



**LINDA'S FESTIVE SEASON** (Volunteering @ Lismore Camp)

I'm not a fan of the consumerism of the festive season or decorating an Aussie home with Northern Hemisphere decorations, so each year I try to make different festive trees in the traditional triangular shape. Some examples are polaroids hung on fairy lights around a frame, beach-combed items, and even toilet paper decorated with coloured textas.

For the last four years I've spent the festive season camping and walking on my own in the Kosciusko National Park. I visit my children and grandies before and after my chill in the hills. However, this year I won't be able to get there so will be having a quiet one at home on my own.

To add a little festive cheer to the camp I am currently working on a few foraged item decorations for around the camp, using things like rubbish fencing wire, vines, seed pods, and a woven obelisk for a tree.

**Linda**



**Mandy and Peter** (Volunteering at Willawarrin Camp: We will be spending Christmas Day in Marrickville with our children and their families. Our eldest son is hosting the family this year, so its a stressless Christmas for us. We most look forward to our grand children and the joy they bring is infectious. Lots of noise and chaos with doting grandparents, parents and friends.

Food is a big part of Christmas day and everyone contributes. This year we are having a more traditional fare - baked ham, chicken and roast pork, and a variety of salads. Mandy is making the pudding. There will be plenty of bubbles and wine and a spicy pineapple cocktail for the adults.

Our family is keen on cards and board games. The latest craze is bananagrams. I expect after lunch and the kids have settled down we'll all play games together.

**Mandy and Peter**





# Dedication

## Vale Randall McCarthy

Recently, we lost a wonderful volunteer and Blazeaid friend, Randall McCarthy. Randall and Gayle played an instrumental role in the establishment of the first BlazeAid camp in Kilmore East. They arrived in April 2009, where they assisted Rhonda and Kevin in managing the base camp for nine months.

Gayle, who is extremely practical and highly organised, took charge of the kitchen and social events in camp, providing meals for the thousands of volunteers, while Randall, equally as diligent and passionate, handled maintenance, infrastructure and tools.

With their infectious personalities, Gayle and Randall were incredibly popular and so loved among the volunteers, filling the camp with much laughter and entertainment, which played a crucial role in people wanting to volunteer for longer periods of time.

Randall was a hardworking and industrious character, always willing to go above and beyond to help others. He was known for his quirkiness and his unpredictability which in turn made him a fascinating individual and an absolute joy to be around.

During the initial BlazeAid camp, the set up was very basic and simple. Randall was hailed a king for gifting our humble camp with an instant gas hot water system, which was a game-changer for the volunteers.

Gayle and Randall were Kevin and Rhonda's rocks and their contributions to BlazeAid have been invaluable. The loss of our dear friend, Randall is immeasurable and he will always be remembered with great fondness and love. We extend our heartfelt condolences to Gayle and their children and their families during this challenging time. You will be truly missed, Randall.







# Around the Grounds



## Lismore Camp NSW

It was Monday morning, and the dreaded phone call came.

“Gary can you please write up something about BlazeAid Lismore camp for the next Newsletter?”

“Sure!”, I replied.

“Oh, and by the way, can I have it by the end of the week please?”, came the next part of the request.

A less enthusiastic “Sure!” emanated from my lips while my brain sent out the question, “Okay, so now you have committed yourself, what words of profound wisdom and insight are you going to pen?”

The brain, being the wonderful part of our anatomy that it is, immediately sent me its first snippet of wisdom.

Please do not comatose the readers with boring statistics like you have been operating since 20 September, you have 95 farms registered, or that the camp has done in excess of 600 Volunteer days and has been blessed with 41 fantastic Volunteers. And please do not mention you have completed 15 km of fencing and 8km of clearing.”

“Okay brain, I am listening.”

“Good! You could tell them about the excellent hardworking backpackers, their enthusiasm, and the differing culture and conversations they bring to the camp as they strive to complete their working holiday visa 88 days for a 12-month extension on their visas.”

“And while you are it, you should probably mention the camp fun times such as the Melbourne Cup afternoon, celebrated with appropriate attire, festivities and the obligatory Cup Sweeps. Perhaps here, you could also add that the coordinator, by sheer chance, picked the winning horse.”

“Hey brain, that’s enough! This two-finger typing with constant deleting, backspacing, misleading predictive text and auto-correction is wearing me out; and besides, I need to go and join my fellow volunteers for our regular afternoon happy hour, doing the social thing and listening to the tales about the day’s events on the fencelines.”

“Ok, but as one last thought before you go. I reckon you should mention the volunteer who mistook the hoist handle for the handbrake in the farmer’s tip truck as he moved it along the fenceline and proceeded to empty all of the recently loaded fencing scrap in a wandering trail across the paddock.”



*Merry Christmas to all!*

BlazeAid HQ and the BlazeAid Board extend a very merry Christmas to our fantastic volunteers, supporters, and communities! Here's to a glittering 2024 filled with happiness, health, and a whole lot of love!

Thanks for everything you do to keep our mission burning bright!





## Ashford Camp NSW

Since November, Ashford Camp has been up and running following the devastating fires that hit the area on Friday October 13th, 2023. While volunteer numbers have been low, a group of students from Macintyre High School Inverell joined the Ashford team and worked tirelessly to get fences cleared and rebuilt. Their efforts brought smiles to everyone's faces and we're truly grateful for their help. With seven properties suffering significant damage, we still have a lot of work to do, but we're committed to making progress to give these appreciative property owners a hand.



## Stanthorpe Camp QLD

### Stanthorpe Camp Update: First Week Progress and Future Plans

On November 27th, we opened our Stanthorpe Camp, and by November 28th, the first teams had already begun their work. With ten hardworking volunteers, we were able to clear and fence 1km on very rocky terrain, so living up to the area's name, "The Granite Belt." As we move into the Christmas and New Year season, we will be taking a break, but plan to reopen in January 2024. We are grateful for the Southern Downs Council's enthusiastic support, and we look forward to working with Tenterfield, who have also shown us great support. We would like to extend our sincerest thanks to all of our volunteers and wish everyone a happy holiday season.

## Forbes Camp NSW

Forbes Camp has been struggling to acquire volunteers, particularly those with fencing experience. This has significantly slowed our assistance progress. Of our 90 registered properties, so far 47 are completed, 23 have been commenced, 5 not yet commenced and 15 we have attempted to reach to confirm their current status.

Of late we have had a few new volunteers start with us and whilst this has been wonderful, they have not had fencing experience, though are willing to learn. With an experienced team leader, we now have a team to go out fencing again and numerous properties have been teed up to have their fencing done. We also have some experienced volunteers arriving next week, which will be a huge asset towards helping us meet our goals.

It was very satisfying when speaking with the farmers who had been recently contacted regarding their fencing statuses, how very much they have appreciated all the assistance Blaizeaid has provided. Many would not have been able to repair their fences without our assistance due to various personal circumstances.



## Miriam Vale QLD

Our camp in Miriam Vale, led by coordinators Bill and Bev, was established in November after the fires had passed. Although it has been a small camp, we have accomplished a lot. A total of 17 properties registered for assistance, and we have completed 11 of them. While the blaze covered a lot of ground, there were a lot of smaller block where owners have been able to repair fences on their own. Now, we are facing the challenge of properties being too wet to work on. Initially, we had only a few volunteers due to the heat, but our crew has gradually grown to 13. With the holiday season approaching, we will have eight volunteers at the camp to continue assisting with the remaining properties.

Bill and Bev would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone at BlazeAid and our amazing volunteers a Merry Christmas and a Safe and Happy New Year.



## Willawarrin NSW

After the devastating bushfires that affected the area in October, the Willawarrin camp opened in November. The camp, located at the Willawarrin Showgrounds, is run by Bob and Lisa.

As we support farmers and property owners in BlazeAid with fencing, we would like to make a special mention to all the volunteers and the community who have come around to show their support by helping the 'Mainey Family'. It has been a difficult time as the fires claimed the life of their son, brother and father Richard Mainey who was protecting their property. With continuous support we have had 6-7 volunteers a day to help with fencing on their property which approximately needs 6kms of fencing. John and Phillip Mainey have been working side by side with the BlazeAid team to rebuild, and even through such a difficult time, Jennifer Mainey (the mother of the 3 boys) has found the strength to volunteer during the week to sweep and mop the floors at the BlazeAid camp.

Our heart felt sympathy goes out to the Mainey family and thank you for supporting others.





# Welcome to our new Board Members

How did you become involved with BlazeAid?

I first became involved with BlazeAid, as a Volunteer, in early 2022 at BlazeAid Biggenden. Luckily, for my first camp, I encountered two great Coordinators, Bill and Bev Holzberger. That was such a rewarding experience I realised I had found my new 'passion'.

I first encountered BlazeAid while I was still working in my profession in road design and construction. BlazeAid was assisting farmers in the Lockyer Valley Qld in the aftermath of series of annual devastating weather events from 2011 to 2013. I was the project manager for reconstruction of flood-damaged roads in the area where BlazeAid had their basecamp.

Retirement provided me with the opportunity to 'give it a go', and so here I am following my passion.

Why do you volunteer with BlazeAid?

I love the interactions with other volunteers and the local communities. I value the opportunity to use my professional skills and background to assist those negatively affected by natural disasters.

Top of the list I reckon, is knowing I have helped some farmers find the light at the end of the tunnel and start to move forward again from a state of disaster induced despair.

A close second is working within an organization that is so passionately focused on why it exists. There are no egos; the end game is clear; have fun, help people and do it safely.



Gary Lawrence  
Lismore Coordinator



Colleen Condliffe  
BlazeAid Board Member

Colleen Condliffe is a farmer from Sailsbury West, Victoria. Colleen was a regional winner of the ABC Rural Woman of the Year award in 1997, an OAM, and in 2009 she was honoured with inclusion on the Victorian honour roll for women as a nod to her continued involvement with women's health and networks. She was the first woman elected to Loddon Shire Council, where she held her position for 16 years. and has been a steadfast supporter of BlazeAid since 2011, and has remained actively involved since.

Currently sitting on several boards, including previously serving director of the Bendigo Bank Community Board in Inglewood, Colleen's experience with board structures and her exceptional empathy for rural communities and property owners alike, makes her an invaluable addition to the BlazeAid team. We are incredibly grateful to have Colleen on our BlazeAid Board.

I live at Woodend, Vic and I'm married to Carolyn with 3 children and a couple of grandchildren. My interests outside BlazeAid are caravanning, 4 wheel driving and looking after my 4 acre block. Carolyn and I will be celebrating our 50 years of marriage in a few months time and I appreciate the support that Carolyn has given me in volunteering. I joined Blaze Aid in 2019 at the Bunyip camp, and have coordinated a number of camps since that time. The most memorable being Buchan camp in 2020, Carolyn and I did 8 months of volunteering which was a life experience for the both of us. It showed us the benefits of BlazeAid to the farmers, volunteers and ourselves. I accepted the nomination to the board to enable me to stay connected to BlazeAid when I'm not volunteering at the camps,

I have a particular interest in tool management - combat trailers that are fully stocked with fencing tools are critical to the success of BlazeAid and it is imperative that we minimize the loss of tools. My working life has been in civil engineering project management. I hope my participation in the board and my background, can assist in meeting those objectives.



Graeme Allen



# New BlazeAid Merchandise

Psst! Listen up! We've got some wicked BlazeAid gear up for grabs! Think cozy hoodies, sleek travel mugs, and sporty bottles! To score yourself some of this epic loot, just shoot head office an email with all your details, and we'll handle the rest: payment, shipping, and all that jazz!



Insulated  
reusable  
coffee (or  
tea)  
mugs!

\$25 each



High-Quality Hoodie with  
Front Pouch \$50 each

These water  
bottles are  
triple insulated  
and keep drinks  
*cool* or *hot* for  
up to 8 hours!  
\$30 each





# White Christmas Recipe

## Ingredients

- 250g cophia
- 3cups rice bubbles
- 1 cup desiccated coconut
- 3/4 cup icing sugar, sifted
- 1 cup powdered milk
- 1cup dried mixed fruit
- Glace cherries for topping

## Method

1. Combine dry ingredients in a mixing bowl
2. Melt Cophia slowly over a low heat. Cool slightly, pour onto dry ingredients. Mix Well
3. Working quickly, spoon into a lamington tin and press around for the same thickness.
4. Freeze until set ( approx 15 mins) then store in fridge.
5. Cut into fingers, top with glace cherries and serve.

Cook Time 30 Mins



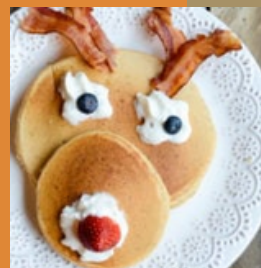
# Reindeer Pancakes

## Method

1. Mix dry ingredients together in a large bowl.
2. In a separate bowl mix together wet ingredients
3. Add the wet ingredients into the dry dry ingredients and stir until combined.
4. Heat fry pan and add a bit of cooking spray to the pan so the pancakes don't stick. Cook equal amounts of large round pancakes and small round pancakes.

## Assemble reindeer

Place 1 large pancake on the plate, and then place 1 of the small pancakes on top, On the large pancake add dollops of whipped cream for eyes and the nose, then put the blueberries for eyes and a strawberry half for a nose. Break the bacon into pieces and use 2 for each antler and arrange outwards.



## Ingredients

2 cups of Plain Flour  
3/4 tsp salt  
1 1/2 tsp baking soda  
2 Cups of milk  
2 eggs beaten  
2 Tblsp melted butter

## Decorating

strawberries cut in halves  
blueberries  
streaky bacon cooked  
whipped cream