

The *BlazeAid* POST



IN THIS EDITION

Volunteer in the Spotlight: *Les Sloan*

Introducing another special volunteer to BlazeAid, Les Sloan. Les has been a BlazeAid volunteer for many years, helping in over 10 camps over this time. His first camp was at Tenterfield, QLD and his most recent camp was at Echuca, Vic.

Les was born in Brunswick Victoria and later moved to Greensborough Victoria. He has 2 boys. Les worked in the transport industry and also owned a few small farms of his own, St Andrews, Marraweeny and Terip Terip.



He heard about BlazeAid when they first set up camp in Longwood. Unable to assist at the time due to his commitments as a CFA member, he later joined the crew at Tenterfield. Les wanted to get in and help and be hands on with the farmers as he knew what they were going through.

"A day in camp would consist of morning muster, working with a good crew of people on the fence line, afternoon meal time and a catch up with your fellow camp volunteers. You would meet interesting volunteers and farmers and to help them get back to a starting point, provided a sense of satisfaction." Les recalls. What makes Les keep coming back to BlazeAid is his dedication to helping people, the experience you get volunteering and the people you meet. Les says, 'Working in a team every day, some days where good and some rough, but it was always a good crew that you worked with.'



Les Sloan (centre) with Charlie and Penny Bruce at a BlazeAid camp after the Keilira bushfire, which destroyed the Bruces' farm.

News From Around the Traps

Forbes Camp NSW

Our team out at Forbes have braved the freezing conditions from minus 4 to 4 degrees in the mornings. Surviving the winter solstice, they are looking forward to the fencing and cleaning of the fences as the days draw out and become longer. It has been a fabulous month in Forbes as we have had enthusiastic and friendly volunteers through the camp. It is refreshing to see new life coming into the area with many of the folks returning to their homes, gorgeous lambs frolicking in the paddocks and a sense of positive energy. Chris and John would like to thank every person that has volunteered, supported and donated their time to the farmers in the area.



Taralga Camp NSW

This camp opened up on the 24th May 2023 following the Upper Lachlan Fire. The camp is based at the showgrounds, which commenced with Mike Roberts as Co-Ordinator, now having handed the reins over to Brad Young. Taralga BlazeAiders are braving the cold temps, completing over 5.5km of fence and clearing over 4km of fence, with a variance of flat paddocks and some mountain goat country! With interest from backpackers on the rise chasing their 88 days, Taralga camp slowly growing in numbers and will venture out to assist property owners throughout the (suitable) winter weather. With 3 out of 9 properties finished, we are humming along just nicely. We are expecting more properties to register in the near future as farmers are ready.



Oxley Island Camp NSW

Oxley Island, one of our camps that has been open since 2022, is looking at completing work by the end of July 2023. Bob and Lisa are working very hard to complete the 8 jobs left to do in the area, before the winter chill really sets in! Our records show that this camp has helped over 51 property owners and has rebuilt fences of nearly 30km. A big thank you to all our Co-Ordinator's and Volunteers who have helped out with the camp.

Wickepin Camp WA

Our WA Camp reopened from the bushfires last year with Kevin and Rhonda as the Co-Ordinator's to set up the camp and assist those affected. At the end of May Kerrie took over as our Co-Ordinator for this camp and along with helping with the fence line we have been planting salt bush plants 9936 of them and 567 trees for the local area. With the volunteers that have been here helping we have been able to complete 16km fencing and clear 6km. Keep up the good work

Wauchope NSW

Wauchope Basecamp has been running since 2020. With over 870 volunteers, we have helped 449 property owners, cleared 148kms of fencing and rebuilt fencing of 313Kms. There are 15 jobs left to complete by the close of the camp in July, Bob and Lisa have had assistance from numerous back packers in the last few weeks to help with the last remaining properties. As part of our agreement to use the Wauchope Sale yards for our camp, our Co-ordinators, Bob and Lisa help out with the caretaking of the cattle on the grounds. Finally given birth to some very cute looking calves, we are happy to report all the cattle are in great health! It was nice to see our work pay off before leaving.



Coordinators of the Quarter!

Stan and Lyn Rasmussen Echuca Camp

Husband and wife for 50 years this August and living in Kangaroo Flat, near Bendigo, Stan and Lyn have been running a satellite camp for BlazeAid from our Echuca camp. Lyn was born in Bendigo and Stan was born in Elmore, the couple have 3 children. They lived for a time in Rochester, where Stan spent time working in the bridge gang.

In Bendigo, this salt of the earth team ran their own Fencing and maintenance works business for 25 years.

BlazeAid: How did you first find out about BlazeAid?

Lyn & Stan: We first heard about BlazeAid when we were helping out Bridgewater in 2011 after the fires. We notice caravans at the Rec Reserve and went to say hello, wondering why everyone was congregating there!

BlazeAid: Was this your first camp?

Lyn & Stan: No, our first camp that we helped out in was Corryong. This was run by Bill & Wendy Gerritsen in 2020. A time when BlazeAid saw really big numbers for volunteers - having 100 people each day wasn't uncommon!

BlazeAid: What made you want to Coordinate/Volunteer for BlazeAid?

Lyn & Stan: We wanted to be able to help people worse off than us, be hands on and not shy of experiencing different work and challenges. There is a wonderful sense of satisfaction when you are able to help the farmers out with some direction, and see the turn around on their properties.

BlazeAid: What does a typical day look like?

Lyn & Stan: Each morning on the job, we do our safety talks with the volunteers which can be anywhere from 2 to 6 people. We liaise with the farmers, working on what needs to be completed, provide lunches for the team, meals and do the admin requirements also.

BlazeAid: What do you like most about volunteering for BA?

Lyn and Stan: We like helping people and being hands on. You meet a lot of people with BlazeAid, it's nice to talk with the farmers and volunteers and listen to their stories.

We have great friends back home and when we catch up with them we do like to share our tales from the fence line.



Mary Howarth, The Co-Ordinator that keeps giving



Fondly nicknamed "Media Mary" by Kevin and Rhonda Butler for her sharp wit and remarkable ability to tell a great story, this issue, we honour all that Mary has given to BlazeAid. Recently, Mary has been unwell, but we are so delighted to report that she is on the mend and recovering strongly - and we would expect nothing else from our amazing Media Mary!

Mary Howarth, was widowed by the age of 40 years old, having to bring up four children on her own.

Mary has done around 18 or 19 camps for BlazeAid, her first camp was Mafra Victoria in 2011. This is where Mary helped in the office at the camp and Angus was the Co-Ordinator running the camp at the time. She soon then became a Co ordinator and liked the days of doing 2 or 3 camps a year. One memorable year was 2016 running the Hamley Bridge camp after the Pinery Fires for over 4 months, then after closing that camp, she travelled to Muttaborra, central QLD to run a drought relief camp, then over to Tasmania to run the Ulverstone camp after being affected by devastating floods.

Mary also worked on 3 cyclone areas in QLD, she worked in

the paddock after cyclone Yasi and Co-Ordinated camps after cyclone Marcia in the Yeppoon/Byfield area and cyclone Debbie hit Clarke Creek.

"I could go and stay at some lakeside park or go down to the beach, but you can only do that for a certain amount of time – you've got to have a purpose in life." Mary has been heard to say.

Mary has enjoyed all her years with BlazeAid, the experience gained and the people she has met. Having parents who had a sheep and cattle property near Gundagai NSW, the country life is in her blood and she really feels for the farmers and their struggles on the land. "A lot of people are very proud; I know my Dad was and he wouldn't have asked for help but by God it makes it easier," she said.



"What I love about a lot of the farmers is they're more worried about their friends or neighbours and wanting to help them. But everybody needs help. It doesn't matter how big or small they are in what they've got land-wise." "It's the satisfaction when you do finish and wind up a camp, that you've left a mark there that has helped so many people. Some people think you have to have qualifications or some kind of skills in fencing – you don't. If you're an able person and want to get out there and make a bit of a difference, please, by all means, come along."

Mary, we salute you and all you do for BlazeAid and wish you the speediest of recoveries! Thank you!

Bitten by the BlazeAid Love-Bug!

Ross aged 74, a retired Jeweller and watch maker, and Marg aged 76, a retired Disability and Aged-care worker, have been volunteers with Blazeaid for many years now. Ross has volunteered at 4 camps and Marg at 5 camps, and this is where their love story begins.

It wasn't until they were both volunteers at our Braidwood camp in 2019/2020 (Dennis and Carol McGrath were the Co-ordinators at the time) that sparks started to fly!

It was one day on the fence line when Ross noticed a fine looking lady on another team that sparked his interest. He needed to find out more about this beautiful woman - "who was she, and why are we not on the same fencing team?" After a discussion with Carol, Ross was told her name - Marg - and she volunteered regularly for BlazeAid. Unfortunately, Ross thought his luck had run out, after seeing the lovely Marg leaving camp after his exploratory chat with Carol.

Ross was very pleased to hear that Marg would be returning after a short break, so after Marg's return to Braidwood camp, Ross had organised with the co-ordinators that they would be rostered on the same team. After winning Marg over with his charm, the rest is history and the couple are both still happily together in

each others company.

Marg lives in Yass and Ross lives in Gerringong, where they travel between both places. Marg's home is over 130 year old and the happy couple have both been working together on restoring it back to its original condition.

Both Ross and Marg have enjoyed volunteering for BlazeAid over the years.

"Being able to do something for people in need has been a sense of value to both of us. The people have been warm and friendly and are very appreciative of the help they receive. Meeting people who have lost everything has been a real experience to both of us."

Volunteering at their next camp has unfortunately been put on hold due to van repairs, but will be up and running soon. We look forward to welcoming this dynamic duo back to camp when the time is right!



Gripple's Guide

By Peter 'Rossy' Ross

Hello sports fans and fellow BlazeAiders, Rossy here. Just a quick note to let you know about a common rookie mistake I have seen when using "gripples." I was lucky enough to be told about it before I did it, and I have seen it done before. Now I'm sure most of you have used or at least seen a gripple on a fence line, either an "olive" gripple or the T gripple, an invaluable asset when tying off a bottom wire while on your knees in the dirt. Now, you know how you need a "tail" so you can get your gripple "grippa" (my name for my tool) to work, and depending on who has shown you how to use them will result in how you tie the ends off. The main thing is to leave enough tail so you can re-tension in the future if required. Now the rookie mistake is to trim the ends (tails) making it impossible to put more tension on the fence if needed later, simple mistake. So, if you have a rookie with you, ask them if they have seen or used one before? Take the time to explain/demonstrate it (as with any other process), as it will repay you later, either by not having to fix a mistake or having someone who can get the job done because you trained them so well, what an asset! Ok, I'll get outa' ya way....



Above: Tail wire trimmed too short



Above: This tail is far too short



Left: Gripple with Tool

Quiz Time

		1	9			3	
3		9	7		4	6	
		5	6			2	
	1	6			5	8	
9		2			7	6	
	2			1	9		
		4	3		2	9	7
1				7	5		

the objective is to fill a 9 × 9 grid with digits so that each column, each row, and each of the nine 3 × 3 boxes contain all of the digits from 1 to 9.

4			6		8	9	5	
			9					
	8			3	1			
2	6					7	9	
		1	7		6	3		
9		7					1	5
			1	8			6	
					7			
	7	8	2		9		3	

Did You Know?



During the 2019/20 mega fires, BlazeAid set up 45 camps around the country to help rebuild. In many areas, the fires were so intense that they scorched the ground so significantly that native grasses and perennials were unable to grow. BlazeAid successfully trialled a project as part of the rebuild called the Grass-seeds Re-establishment After Fires Funding Initiative (GRAFFI), teaching and supplying farmers with native trees and grasses to regenerate their lands and assist in the future prevention of erosion. This project is now embedded within the BlazeAid structure of disaster response.

Joke of The Day

As a farmer, I hear lots of jokes about sheep. I'd tell them to my dog but he'd herd them all

