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## The Cultural Significance of Bogong High Plains Wild Horses

*Heritage – irreplaceable - precious - to conserve for future generations*

### Terms used to describe Wild Horse heritage

The Oxford dictionary defines *Heritage* as embracing “a huge range of meaning and potential disagreement; it comprises the cultural expressions of humanity”. The term “heritage” is preferred because of its inherent sense of transmission, legacy, and inheritance”. “*Cultural heritage* is finite, non-renewable, vulnerable to damage or destruction, and frequently contested”. [Ref link below]

<http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195389661/obo-9780195389661-0119.xml>

Article 13 of the Burra Charter (ref-1), states that “*cultural values* refers to those beliefs which are important to a cultural group, including but not limited to political, religious, spiritual and moral beliefs and is broader than values associated with cultural significance”.

The Burra Charter states that “places of *cultural significance* enrich our lives and give a deep and inspirational connection to community and their landscape and to past & lived experiences”, and that “places of cultural significance reflect diversity of our communities, tell us who we are, the past that formed us, irreplaceable, precious and must be conserved for present and future generations in accordance with principle of intergenerational equity.

## Origins and cultural significance of Bogong High Plains Brumbies

### 1. Sourced from Steve Baird - Bogong Horsepack Adventures

<http://www.springspur.com.au/blog/blog/bha/history-of-the-bogong-brumbies-jun-2011/>

*The modern brumbies running on Young’s Tops and the Pretty Valley area are direct descendants of a commercial mob that was first established by Osborn Young in the 1880’s. From the mid-1840’s there had been increasing demand for the highly regarded “Waler” horses (horses exported from the New South Wales colony) for British Army remounts in India and later the Boer War and First World War.*



ref-5



*This trade would see well over half a million horses leaving this country as remounts for armies around the world. There was also constant demand for coach horses, funeral horses, post horses, carriage horses and hacks.*

*Osborn Young took out his first High Plains license, the Bundaramunjie run, in 1879. A horse breeder and cattleman who had settled in the Benambra district, Osborn built a horse breeding enterprise based on his numerous High Country grazing licences. Stewart Hollands of Benambra recalled in Tor Holth's book, Cattlemen of the High Country, that "Osborn had more horses than anyone ever had on the High Plains, estimated at 1900 head".*



ref2



ref-2

*Charlie McNamara recalled the Wodonga horse sales in Tor's book. "We'd start from Young's hut and get down to Paddy Duane's at Tawonga, then on to Kiewa where we camped at Billy Canoy's. Following morning it was on to the Blazing Stump Hotel at the Junction in Wodonga.*



Stockmen at a Snowy Mountains muster [ref-3]

*Young, along with the Tom and Mick McNamara, and others, built Young's hut around the 1880's, as well as yards, wing fences and horse traps. The McNamaras had horses on the High Plains from early days before Young, and took over the lease when Young retired.*

*As the horse trade faded with the advent of the motor car and the trade in war horses disappeared, the great mobs of Young's Tops and the nearby High Plains had also diminished, but many survived. The remaining horses went wild and became the brumbies of today, with a peppering of new bloodlines from time to time when domestic horses were turned loose with the "bucks".*



*Colleen Obrien took the two above photographs around 2013, and adds the following note that "Over 50 horses have been removed according to PV records since this was taken".*

*For a while in the 1990's we would run into old Ces camped at Charlie Mac's hut, but always had a few mares and foals around the place. Ces built sapling trap yards and used salt to lure the horses in.*

*Kirk's Bazaar, the grand horse market in Melbourne built in 1840, where the agents would source their army remounts, is today known as Hardware Lane, and few of the lunchtime coffee crowd would know of the link between the cobbled lane and the brumbies still running free on Young's Tops and Pretty Valley.*



*Bogong High Plains 2012/3 Colleen O'brien photo*

## **2. Modern day tourists valuing the chance to see Brumbies (Wild Horses)**

<https://www.thredbo.com.au/blog/festivals-events/special-visitors-brumbies-1km-from-kosciuszko-chairlift/> Linda Silmails writes of "Open spaces, brumbies, wildlife and fresh, fresh air".

Check out the 2 great shots below that walks Guru Dan took the other day when a group of brumbys visited Mt Kosi - just 1km from the kosi chair (below). I'm told there's something really special about being able to see brumbies in the wild. It's an absolute thrill.

Horses were essential for anyone living in the mountains, for both travel & moving stock. Brumbies are the descendants of escaped or lost horses, dating back in some cases to those belonging to the early European settlers, including the "Capers" from South Africa, Timor Ponies from Indonesia, British pony and draught horse breeds, and a significant number of Thoroughbreds and Arabians.



*Photos published in Linda Silmails article*

For me Brumbys are the wild horses whose freedom is symbolic of the Australian high country landscape. There is nothing better than feeling the freedom of hiking and exploring the beautiful Alpine Landscape. Sophie Mainprize is a blogger at Thredbo Resort.

### 3. 'Context' National Cultural Heritage Values Assessment (KNP) Dec 2015

- "The idea of mountain stockman and brumbies is evocative and powerful within the Australian imagination, created through literacy work and images, with Paterson's *The Man from Snowy River* and Mitchell's *Silver Brumby* series being significant influences. It is the part of continuing fascination with the distant "bush" and remoteness, and the vastly different lives and experiences of those who live elsewhere (pvi)", and
- "Given the need to manage Kosciuszko National Park (KNP), including the wild horse population, according to best practice, the NPWS seeks through this report to gain articulation of the cultural heritage values associated with the KNP wild horse population against established National Heritage List criteria, and to analyse these values within the context of other of other already identified natural and cultural heritage values, many of which are of State, National and International significance" (p1).

### 4. Visit Victoria - <http://www.visitvictoria.com/Regions/High-Country/Things-to-do/History-and-heritage/Cattlemen-history>

The districts surrounding High Country were home to the legendary cattlemen, immortalised by poet AB 'Banjo' Paterson in *The Man from Snowy River*. You'll still find their historic huts on the Bogong High Plains and Mount Buller. The rustic huts were built by the cattlemen to use as shelter when driving their cattle up to the plains in summer.

- **Wallaces Hut** - Wallaces Hut is situated near Falls Creek, with the walking track commencing 7.7 kilometres along the Bogong High Plains Road from the Rock Valley Dam Wall. Built in 1889 from snow gum slabs and woollybutt shingles, this timeworn cattlemen's hut is thought to be the oldest in the high plains.
- **Cope Hut** - Cope Hut can be found a further 2 kilometres along the Bogong High Plains Road, a 500 metre walk from the road. Built by the Ski Club of Victoria in 1929, Cope Hut was coined 'The Menzies of the high plains' by early visitors due to its size and comfort.
- **Fry's Hut** - Fry's Hut was built by Fred Fry in the late 1930s and is located in the Howqua Hills Historic Area approximately 34 kilometres from Mansfield.
- **Craig's Hut** - Craig's Hut, a replica cattlemen's hut, is situated on Mt Stirling, approximately 51 kilometres from Mansfield. Originally constructed for *The Man from Snowy River* film in 1981–82, Craig's Hut was burnt down by bushfires in 2006. It was completely rebuilt, reopening January 2008.

### 5. Historic huts in horse country - <http://www.visitvictoria.com/Regions/High-Country/Things-to-do/Outdoor-activities/Horse-riding>

Whether you're a novice or experienced rider, there's a trail for you in the heart of Australia's biggest recreational horse riding area. Visit the historic cattlemen's huts built to shelter riders on the Bogong High Plains in the nineteenth century. Take a scenic ride over Mt Stirling, through stands of Alpine ash and snow gums, to Craig's Hut, the place where *The Man from Snowy River* was filmed. Hear tall tales of life on horseback in the High Country as you take in soaring alpine vistas with legendary mountain horsemen.

### 6. Horseback touring - <http://www.visitvictoria.com/Regions/High-Country/Things-to-do/Outdoor-activities/Horse-riding>

Choose from a range of guided tours, from short rides along quiet bushland trails to multi-day packhorse tours of eventful days and relaxing evenings spent around the campfire.

Tour operators provide horses, equipment and basic tuition suited to your experience and abilities. All operators are licensed and committed to maintaining high safety standards, and experienced and fully trained staff lead and supervise all trail rides.

## 7. Visit Mount Beauty - <http://www.visitmountbeauty.com.au/explore/history-heritage>

The first known European visitors to the Kiewa Valley were explorers Hume and Hovell in November 1824. Following the drought of 1838-44, pastoralists sought out the rich pastures in the fertile Kiewa Valley. For the remainder of the 19th century the major industries of the Valley were cattle grazing, dairying, tobacco growing, timber harvesting and milling.

The Bogong High Plains became a popular summer grazing destination for many local cattlemen and women. Cows would be taken up to the high plains for the summer and then mustered together at the end of summer to come back down to the valley. Many of these farming families still farm in the Kiewa Valley today, however the cattle do not graze in the high plains now. Families such as the Edmondson's, Maddison's, Roper's and Ryder's would stay in their huts during the "muster." Huts that bear their family names are still evident today. Tawonga Huts and Wallace's Huts are two of the oldest and most well known huts. Wallace's Hut is the oldest surviving hut now classified by the National Trust. It was built by the Wallace brothers with Jack Platt, Kyrum Maurum, and Andy Damn.

## References

Ref-1 - Burra Charter [p2, s1.1] explains:- *Place*; means a "geographically defined area"; "may include elements, objects, spaces & views"; & have tangible & intangible dimensions".

Ref-2 - <https://www.google.com.au/search?q=young+hut+brumby+archives+photos&client=firefox-b&biw=1366&bih=634&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj0n7OupofSAhVCvbwKHwDpBKIQ7AkIMw#imgsrc=1y4UQvHgmGCr7M>: Photo source

Ref-3 - <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/the-snowy-mountains-have-a-rich-history-and-attract-millions-of-people-to-their-slopes-every-year/news-story/88e864f86cbb8695fb8d629996eab16f>

Ref-4 - <http://www.gettyimages.com.au/detail/photo/youngs-hut-on-the-bogong-high-plains-high-res-stock-photography/183469149>

Ref-5 - <https://www.google.com.au/search?q=waler+army+war&client=firefox-b&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi9uP6wylfSAhUEjpQKHxtMBWwMQ7AkINA&biw=1366&bih=634#imgsrc=wy6l-MdL2Bx4gM>:

Information compiled for the Parks Victoria Alpine-Bogong Wild Horse management Round table meeting 15-February-2017 by

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