

BRUMBY RUNNING IN NAMADGI



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HIG

'Of the works of His hand, by sea or by land,
The horse may at least rank second.'
Adam Lindsay Gordon

'[Brumbies] have a fear of man which seems unreasonable:
or is it fear of losing their freedom?'
Eric Rolls

'Into 'em, boys!'
A Namadgi brumby runner

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PART 1

Introduction: why and how

In 1990 an ACT Government Heritage Grant enabled the Kosciusko Huts Association to carry out an oral history project relating to Namadgi National Park. I was contracted by KHA to carry out the project. One of the themes in the area's history to be uncovered by the project was brumby running in the Brindabella Range. After the project was completed, in November 1990 KHA members Graham Scully, David Cregan, Maurice Sexton and I did a walk in the Brindabellas to try to locate some of the various sites mentioned by interviewees. These included two brumby yards and we were delighted to find both on the day; they and other sites visited during that day subsequently became part of a heritage walk that we have since led during Heritage Week and on other occasions.

Given that brumby running had been carried on for a number of decades, it seemed certain that there should be more yard sites hidden in Namadgi's bushland. In November 1991 Reg Alder kindly advised me that he and a group of National Parks Association walkers had found what seemed to be another yard in the Jumbuck Flat area. This yard was visited immediately and in the course of endeavouring to find out some of the yard's history from people who had formerly worked in the area, information about more yards nearby came forth, and soon one of these was located by Maurice Sexton and myself in early January 1992.

Later that month I led a group of Australian Heritage Commission staff on a field trip to this latter site. During the trip one of the staff, Dr Sandy Blair, suggested that there could be scope for a full study of Namadgi's brumby yards which would record all the sites able to be identified. That suggestion, for which I was very grateful, led me to apply (with the sponsorship of the National Trust of Australia, ACT) for funding under the National Estate Grants Program. (Even while the application was being considered more discoveries were made during a day field trip in winter 1992 by Klaus Hueneke, Patricia Knight and myself!)

Getting support for the project was one thing; finding brumby yards in Namadgi's mountain bushland was of course a very different exercise. Brumby running - the chasing and catching of wild horses - is an area of historical enquiry that can be accessed by virtually no other means than oral history. A few general written references to brumby running in other regional areas do exist, but identifying where yards might be located in a particular area requires research amongst the people who participated in brumby running there, and also among people who for other reasons have a high level of familiarity with the area involved.

Former brumby runners, and other rural people with knowledge of the activity, who had been interviewed in 1990 were again turned to for more information about yards and about other people involved, and a new network of interviewees began to grow. Additionally, former and current Park staff were contacted to see whether they had seen yards during their work in Namadgi. Major bushwalking groups, such as the National Parks Association of the ACT and the Canberra Bushwalking Club, were similarly contacted through the placement of notices in their respective newsletters. The Orienteering Association of the ACT was another group contacted for information about sites. As it turned out, most of the information about yards that was gathered by the project came from former brumby runners and other associated rural people.

Another potential source was the aerial photo collections held by the National Library of Australia. Several relevant photo runs, taken in 1944 and 1952, are held by the Library and it was suggested that they be consulted. The photos however proved to be of no use as they were taken from too great a height to depict sites as small as yards (though they do yield other interesting historical information about the Brindabellas).

The interviews yielded a rich fund of material about the running of wild horses, and this is produced in part one of this report. (Not all 'interviews' were formal taped sessions; information was gathered through taped conversations, untaped meetings where notes were taken, correspondence, and telephone conversations.) Following the interviews, bushwalks were undertaken to find the trapyard sites mentioned. Like the proverbial 'needle in a haystack', brumby traps, built from bush timber and in many cases barely distinguishable from surrounding fallen timber, and as often as not in poor condition, can be very hard to locate in an environment as rugged as Namadgi's. Many times during the fieldwork for this project I was reminded of the British band XTC with its hit song whose refrain begins 'One, two, three, four, five Senses working overtime'. Virtually every site mentioned by oral sources was followed up in the field; the only yards not pursued were wire-snare type traps which, it was considered, did not warrant extensive searches given the extreme improbability of their survival and discovery.

Historical theme, cultural icon and commercial device

To understand why brumby running is a part of Australian history and why it has held a place in our folklore and popular culture it is important to understand the significance of the horse in the nation's past.

Today most horses in Australia are used for recreational purposes; the numbers still used for working purposes are only a fraction of those in the decades prior to the introduction of engine power. Before the development of steam engines in this country late last century and, much more significantly, before the era of diesel and petrol engines began earlier this century, horses were a key feature of Australian life, both urban and rural.

While only seven horses arrived with the First Fleet, pastoral expansion in NSW saw horse numbers rise to 10 000 by 1829 and then continue to grow to 251 000 by 1850, and by 1920 NSW horse numbers reached their peak at 661 800. Similarly in Victoria horse numbers reached their peak in 1913 with 562 000.

What were all these horses being used for? They provided transport, hauled loads and helped to drive myriad forms of machinery. In cities the great dependence on horses is reflected by the fact that even in 1931 there were still over 20 000 horses in the metropolitan area of Sydney and a similar number in Melbourne. Particularly in rural areas were horses a part of everyday life. The horse took you around your property, to your neighbour's or into town, pulled the plough, helped you muster your stock, helped you excavate dams, supplied the power for chaff-cutting machines, and was the power source for numerous other tasks. In gold-mining areas horses hauled wash-dirt carts, powered puddling machines and drove the whims which raised the pay dirt from shafts.

Horses were a major part of Australia's economy and infrastructure. They also played a formative role on society and culture, particularly in the bush. With such a dependence on horses, riding skills naturally assumed considerable importance within bush communities. A stockman able to ride swiftly through fallen timber and over rough ground during mustering was not only a valuable worker but someone to be admired. The skilled rider became a part of Australian folklore and popular culture.

Informal buckjump competitions, rodeos and gymkhanas offered opportunities for riders to test their skills against one another, as did pursuit of the growing mobs of wild horses that had escaped from properties. At the same time, horse-racing, ever since the first official meeting - as early as 1810 - attained an unfailing popularity in town and country alike.

That Australian colonists were developing riding prowess - and developing good breeds of horses - was recognised by observers last century. British military officer Colonel Godfrey Mundy wrote at mid-century that 'there are plenty of light, long-armed, bow-legged fellows, who have been on horseback since they were born, and know how to rough it in the bush. There are, moreover, plenty of active, wiry and hardy horses'.

Taking Mundy's last point first, a particularly good breed of horse had been developed in NSW. The so-called Waler (the name derived from *New South Wales*, although Walers were exported from other colonies too), a part-thoroughbred noted for its speed and endurance, was the major type of horse to figure in the horse export trade from the Australian colonies. Horse exports began in 1814 and by 1860 they had formed an established business. The trade reached its zenith in the decade 1901 -10 when 144 826 horses were sold. By the time the export trade began to decline in the 1930s over half a million horses, the bulk of them Walers, had been exported, the greater

proportion of them going to India and most of them being used as military remounts. In its time the trade was an important part of the Australian economy.

Mundy believed that colonials would be well suited to service in a mounted military force should the need arise. His words were indeed prophetic. On the South African veldt during 1899-1902 Australian mounted servicemen earned recognition for their ability. One-and-a-half decades later, in the deserts of Sinai and Palestine, the regiments of the Australian Light Horse achieved a place in the nation's military ethos. The famous charge at Beersheba in 1917 has traditionally been ranked in national memory alongside Anzac Cove and the major western front battles in France and Belgium. The horses on which the Australians rode into battle were Australian too - over 135 000 Walers were shipped to the war zone during 1914-18. At war's end almost all the surviving animals had to be left behind, shot or sold, because of Australian quarantine concerns (a memorial to the horses of the light horse was unveiled in Sydney in 1950).

One of the officers serving in the remount depot in Egypt during the war was an individual who had made one of the biggest contributions, to that time, to the popularisation and celebration of horsemanship in Australia. Lawyer, journalist and poet Andrew Paterson, better known as 'Banjo' Paterson, had joined the remount service in 1916 (and had also been a newspaper correspondent during the South African war). Australian bush balladry often focussed on horses and riding (as shown in the works of poets like A.L.Gordon), and in Paterson's *The Man From Snowy River* this branch of the genre reached its popular epitome.

Published originally in the Sydney *Bulletin* in April 1890, the verse was reproduced in 1895 as part of a larger collection of Paterson's work. These were nationalistic days; the volume sold more than 10 000 copies in its first year.

The poem of course revolves around a desperate chase after a mob of brumbies. Yet it is not the brumbies themselves that are sought, but rather a valuable station horse, 'the colt from old *Regret*' which is 'worth a thousand pound' and which has 'joined the wild bush horses'. This point is an important one for from an early time brumbies were often seen as more of a pest than a prize. Ever since (if the legend is correct) Private James Brumby's horses strayed in about 1804 there have been wild horses. By the 1830s fears about the impact of brumbies and straying horses interbreeding with local bloodstock led to a stringent new impounding law. During the 1860s-90s period wild horses were seen in some areas as a major nuisance (as competitors for feed) and were yarded and shot regularly, with their hides and hair being sold.

While a pest to some, brumbies were also seen as something of value to others. This is also implied in the first stanza of Paterson's poem, 'For the bushmen love hard riding where the wild bush horses are'. The running of brumbies - not just for culling but in order to catch and either use or sell them - became a part of bush life in many areas.

Today the biggest brumby populations are in central and northern Australia, yet it is in the high country of south-eastern Australia where the impact of brumby running on local culture and popular memory can be seen strongly. The place of this activity in the local way of life was recorded by Elyne Mitchell. Herself not only a resident of the region but the daughter of Lieut Gen Sir Harry Chauvel, commander of the Australian light horsemen during the Sinai-Palestine campaigns, Elyne has been one of the most prolific writers about the Snowy Mountains., and her *Silver Brumby* series of childrens books (soon to be released as a feature film) have undoubtedly added to the place of the brumby in popular perceptions of the high country.

While staying with local stockmen at Dead Horse Hut (which formerly stood near today's Thredbo) in about 1940, Elyne wrote in her *Australia's Alps* how the evening was spent. 'We ate tea as darkness fell. Some of the old, old talk was bandied round -

the talk of the mountains and directions, the heights and the slopes and what one could see, and the places where the wild horses run.' Later she went on to say how the stockmen could tell story after story 'without drawing breath' about brumby running. 'There are grand stories of wild galloping through the timber and scrub, whips cracking, the mob wheeling and charging off again. Tales of trying to run them into the trap-yards...'

Today around the Snowy Mountains, most of which is now within Kosciusko National Park, these sorts of stories can still be heard. At almost any gathering of former stockmen tales will be told about the old snow-lease days and the brumby-running. Earlier this year when the Bolton and other families gathered at Snowy Plain for the dedication of an interpretative sign mounted by Park staff at the site of the old Bolton home, the conversation among the men constantly revolved around horses. The horse was once central to these people's lives.

The place of horsemanship in the region is reinforced each year at Jindabyne with the annual Man From Snowy River Award, which is given to an individual who, as a former stockman and horseman, is considered to be a part of the mountains and part of the mountain culture. A 'stripling' award is reserved for juniors.

Paterson's poem has stayed with us. In some quarters arguments still rage over the real identity of the rider in the poem, eventhough Paterson may well not have based his work on any single individual anyway. In 1982 a film based largely on the ballad (complete with an American actor, Kirk Douglas, in leading roles), attracted big audiences and perhaps gave urban viewers a vicarious taste of what some of those former high country riders had, in less melodramatic form, once experienced for themselves.

Media images of the mountain rider in flying full-length oilskin are not uncommon. And there are many other examples of commercial usage of the 'Man from Snowy River theme'. There's the Man From Snowy River Hotel at Perisher Valley. Near Jindabyne is the Station Resort, which in addition to the name, has a logo with the 'S' of Station symbolizing a stockwhip. There is the Brumby Bar in Jindabyne, and out of town there is the Brumby's Hill Estate subdivision. Town planning too has helped to keep the theme alive, for in neighbouring Berridale there is a street which recalls the name of Elyne Mitchell's Silver Brumby - 'Thowra Close'. More prosaically perhaps, in Canberra Coggan's local bakery recently for a time printed stanzas from Paterson's poem on its breadbags. The title of a recent book on the mountains, *Banjo Paterson's High Country*, reflects the intimate link between the poet and the region that was forged a century ago by the poem and which is just as strong today.

Brumby running forms an important theme in the history of the Snowy Mountains. And it is a notable theme in other parts of the Australian high country, like the area now known as Namadgi National Park just to the north.

Brumby running in the Namadgi area: overview

The running of wild horses in Namadgi took place in three more or less distinct areas: the Brindabellas from Mt Franklin to Mt Bimberi, and some of the adjacent parts of the Cotter valley; the area from Mt Scabby to Rotten Swamp and Creamy Flat; and the areas of Kangaroo, Jumbuck and Emu flats; there was some activity at other places but it was not great. Running was going on at least as early as the turn of the century, but the most intense period was from the late 1920s to the late 1960s, although some attempts at catching horses apparently went on into the early 1980s.

Before looking further at brumby running in these areas, the question of *why* people chased wild horses in the first place should be answered.

The main reason why people ran brumbies was sport.; brumby running was an exciting , physical recreational activity. 'It was the most exhilarating sport that I had ever experienced', recalls Barbara Wentworth who in the 1930s participated in many runs in the Brindabellas. 'That most fascinating of all sports' clearly made an impact on Barbara for she says 'although I am now 86, I still have the most vivid memories of those wonderful days and camp fires in those fabulous mountains'. For others too the annual trips in the Brindabellas were big events. Lex Webb recalls of father Alec that 'My father used to make it his holidays...that was his big holiday'.

'It was good sport' recalls Vince Oldfield, while Lex Webb , then a youth, remembers how he looked forward to the trips, 'I think all young fellas looked forward to that'. Brumby running had particular appeal to rural people whose lives were close to horses. Max Oldfield, also a teenager at the time, remembers that he went because 'I loved the bush and I loved horses'. Charlie West talked of how the sport got in your blood from having heard stories about it from a young age, 'It was bred into you'.

The adrenalin of the chase was a big attraction, and something of an anaesthetic, for as Kevin Primmer recalls, 'You didn't care in those days if you took a fall, because it was all excitement'.

There were other reasons too for brumby running. One was economic. A brumby could be sold for cash. Vince Oldfield (born in 1914) says: 'You did it for a few bob - if you could break-in a horse and sell him then it was money in your pocket, and money was pretty scarce in them days'. Another horseman says that 'the idea of it was to make a bit of money out of it'.

Yet another reason was the protection of the Cotter Catchment, for wild horses were feral animals in the catchment and their numbers, as shall shortly be seen, had to be controlled.

People other than those who actually chased the wild horses were also attracted to the brumbies. The thrill created just by seeing brumbies was something enjoyed by urban persons. The Mt Franklin Chalet visitors' book contains a few entries capturing the appeal of wild horses for Canberrans, like on 24/1/1954 when the Waight family wrote 'saw 4 brumbies and broke thermos in excitement'; later, on 6/8/62 a group skied to Pryor's Hut and one of their number wrote that the 'girls were in love with the brumbies'.

Brumbies in the Namadgi region came originally from several sources. Those in the Brindabellas (which were the strongest and fastest of the different mobs in Namadgi) were descended from horses which had escaped from the Franklin family of Brindabella Homestead; the Franklins had leases on the Brindabella Range and used these for grazing horses. In the south, horses that had got away from Yaouk (due to a lack of fencing) had formed brumby mobs around Mt Scabby and adjoining areas. The

Oldfield family who had lived at Cotter Hut prior to the resumption of this area for the Cotter Catchment in 1913 had also lost horses which in turn went wild.

Information about Namadgi brumby running either last century or early in the present century is scanty, but the activity was going on. In the Brindabellas and the Cotter (as well as other areas nearby), Arthur Cochran (owner of Yaouk), Bevis West (who also shall be mentioned again), Jim and Charlie Sorell, Tom Pierce, Albert Lowther, Cyril Lynch, Herbert Oldfield and Ralph Lees were running wild horses in the early decades of this century. Around the turn of the century Herbert's brother Harry Oldfield (both brothers being members of that Cotter branch of the Oldfield family) built a set of trapyards near Mt Kelly; known as Harrys Yards, there were several different yards here and they utilized a natural wall of rocks for part of the enclosure. Another yard operating somewhere around the same time was the so-called Smoking Yards up near the head of the Bobeyan valley. This brumby trapyard was destroyed by fire after one of the brumby runners fell asleep by the yard while smoking a pipe; the grass caught alight and the yard was lost.

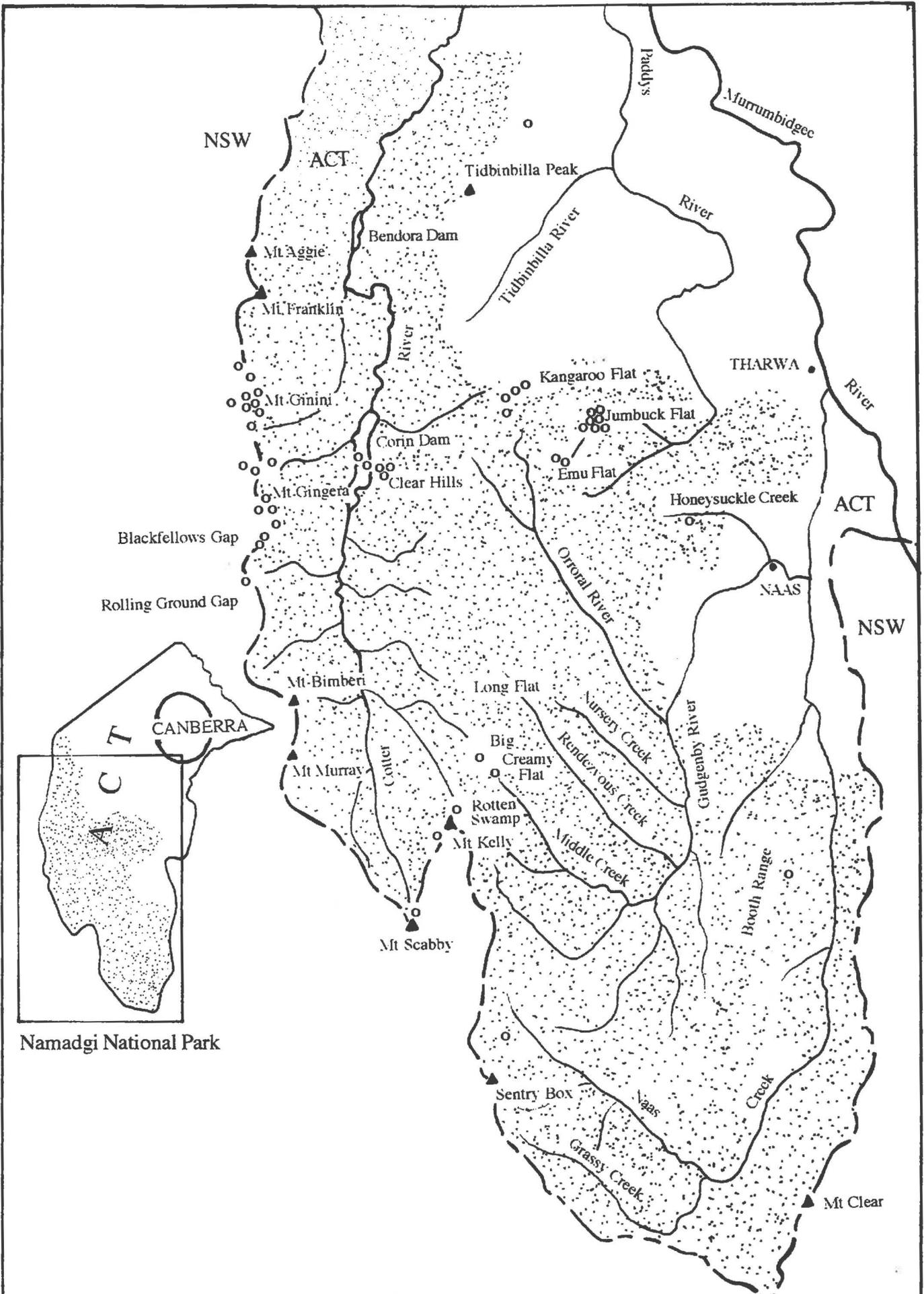
The Bobeyan area seems to have been a brumby running locality only during this early period for there was little or no activity there subsequently (although brumbies were seen there occasionally). A tantalising glimpse into early horse running in this area is provided by a fragment of a poem, a verse which was remembered by Ruby Gottaas (a member of the Bobeyan Brayshaw family) and which was partly written down by Ruby's sister. The piece sounds a little like it is referring to station horses which have been allowed to run out wild on the property, though it may be alluding to true brumbies afterall:

*The other day at Bobeyan, 'twas just before the snow
The Lutons & Tom Westerman to Crawford's place did go.
All seated round the bachelors fire Tom Westerman began
What say we get the horses in and sell them if we can?
Sell them who'd buy said George, we might sell eight or ten
But we would have a hundred head, who'd buy a mob like them?
Said Dan we'd quickly muster them and we would have some fun
For really there's too much stock out on the outside run.
To this all hands agreed.
Said George before we start we'd better have a feed,
Just then a knock came on the door.
They called out come in cold stranger there's room for you and more,
And Flanagan the horse buyer came shivering in the door.
All hands sat in silence they knew not what to say
Until at last said Westerman, what brings you this way?
I've come to buy some horses if they have glossy coats;
I'll buy the lot and pay for them with brand new ten pound notes.*

*Dan was on a fine big chestnut horse
He was the bravest rider and took the lead of course;
Dick was on a piebald and Flanagan on a brown...*

Unfortunately that is all that remains of the poem.

From the late 1920s onward a clearer picture emerges in the Namadgi area. It is from now on that the period of living memory becomes stronger. It was also at this time that Jack Maxwell was appointed the first ranger in the upper Cotter Catchment and for the next several decades brumby running in the Brindabellas revolved largely around him.



Map 1: Brumby trapyards known to have existed in the Namadgi area.

The Brindabellas

An idea of the number of brumbies in the Brindabellas at this time is given by Jack's son Lach. In 1929 at the age of 11 he, with his father and Dave Perrott, while riding across Snowy Flats and Mt Ginini, saw over 200 brumbies which were at that time so tame that they followed the packhorses. 'They hadn't been chased then', said Lach. Many of the brumbies here still had brands on them at this time. Some of the place names in the range derived from the presence of the brumbies; Brumby Flats is today an obvious one, another is Rolling Ground Flat (maps today show the Flat as a Gap) where the horses used to habitually roll on the ground.

As catchment ranger, Jack had to police the prohibition on grazing, and keeping the wild horse numbers down was another of his duties. Literally this meant culling, and Jack Maxwell shot numbers of horses in keeping with his official duty. But, as one brumby runner commented, to have shot them all would have been 'a big waste of good horseflesh'; Jack and his compatriots, being rural people with a long familiarity with horses, valued horses too highly to simply kill them. And so regular brumby running trips were mounted in the Brindabellas. (Jack generally shot only older stallions, and barren mares or mares which were considered too poor to last the next winter. So the shooting and catching of wild horses influenced the brumby breed in the area.)

The brumby running trips were like holidays which might last for ten days or a couple of weeks, and they were held in the summer, naturally, given the location on top of a major mountain range. A fraternity of other riders, numbering up to thirty at times, would join in: Jack's sons Lach and Doug (Doug was the first forestry ranger at nearby Bulls Head), Vince, Herbert and Max Oldfield, Arthur Cochran, Henry 'Bung' Harris and his brother Percy 'Pod' Harris (Pod spoke with a slight speech impediment caused when he once fell from a horse and bit off part of his tongue), Andy Cunningham, Tom Taylor (both well known figures in the region), Bert Reid of Tidbinbilla and his sons, Tom Chalker, Fred Tutty, Harry Cribb (who had a Winnecke saddle with a long spur scar on it - 'That's from where I once left in a hurry' said Harry; one of the best riders of the range he lost his life in the North African campaign during the second world war), several of the Cotters from Michelago, and Tumut stock and station agent Alec Webb and son Lex were some of the men who at various times ran brumbies with Jack Maxwell during the 1930s-early 1950s period. The names of some of the others are given at other points in this report.

While the Man From Snowy River legend is an all-male affair, the brumby runners in the Brindabellas also included a number of women. Jack Maxwell's wife Ivy (nee Franklin), Arthur Cochran's wife Eva and daughter Audrey (who subsequently married Lach Maxwell), Pat Pearce, Ruby and Tiny Bridle and Barbara Wentworth (Barbara Baird until 1935 when she married Bill Wentworth who, as a federal parliamentarian in 1968 became Australia's first Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) were some of the women involved. Ivy Maxwell was a cousin to author Miles Franklin and Miles (or Stella Miles as she was known by family and friends) also came on a number of trips. Vince Oldfield remembers Miles' presence with affection and recalls her sometimes riding side-saddle: 'My word, she'd gallop through the bush' She would also have a small notebook in which she would jot down notes during the trips; one can only guess now at what she may have had in mind for those notes.

Some of the women mentioned above were not only as good as the men in their riding ability, but were 'just as daring as far as bush riding was concerned'.

Just as the story of Namadgi brumby running helps to more finely focus the 'legend' in this manner, it does in other ways too. Take clothing for example. As mentioned above, modern media imagery pretends that brumby runners can be symbolised by the long oilskin and a wide-brimmed hat (often without any regard for the prevailing weather conditions). Yet it wasn't quite as simple as that. Photographs depict the



above A brumby-running party at Cotter Hut in 1931; Arthur Cochran is second from left. Note the fully laden packhorses. In the mid 1930s Cotter Hut was disassembled and moved to the western side of the Cotter River where it was rebuilt (Barbara Wentworth photo). *below* Riders in the Brindabellas, late 1930s; l-r: Doug Maxwell, Ivy Maxwell, Max Oldfield, May Maxwell, Ruby Bridle, Tiny Bridle, Harry Cribb (Colin Maxwell photo).



Brindabellas parties (and other groups of horseriders from the Namadgi area) as wearing a wide range of clothing; in fact Jack and Doug Maxwell would often wear a coat and tie on horseback in the bush, and at the yard sites themselves women are shown wearing ties. And this wasn't just 'Sunday best'. The photos accompanying this report make the point quite clearly.

As for locating the brumbies (usually in mobs of from 10 to 30), Jack generally knew where the horses were at any particular time and trapyards would then be built in appropriate locations. The brumbies generally fed on open flats and there was nearly always a relationship between these flats and the yards, eventhough the yards might be quite some distance from the flats. A small number of yards were built down in the Cotter Valley (now flooded by Corin Dam) and in the Clear Hills area, but the majority were constructed up on the Brindabellas, mainly in the vicinity of Mt Ginini and Mt Gingera. It should be noted that the riders themselves knew these peaks as Ginina (pronounced Ginninna) and Big Ginina (Big Ginninna) respectively, just as they called the Goodradigbee River the Curradigbee or Cooradigbee, a form of pronunciation which I understand to be closer to the Aboriginal. Owing to some extent to the catchment regulations, yards were often built just outside the catchment and on the beginning of the fall into the Goodradigbee.

Both running yards (where horses are chased into the yard) and salt yards (where the horses trap themselves) were used (both types of yard, together with other brumby running methods, will be dealt with in more detail in the next chapter). Of course it was the running yards which aroused the great excitement of the chase, and falls were a fact of life. Barbara Wentworth writes, 'I can't tell you all the times I fell off, jumping logs and creeks, or running up trees. In fact, I believe one creek was known as "Barbara's Wop Oh!" which my horse jumped and I didn't'. In view of the number of falls it is a wonder that no-one was seriously injured or killed during brumby trips. It is no doubt testament to the riders' high level of proficiency that such injuries or deaths didn't occur.

Runs could be succesful (as seen in later chapters) and they could be failures. Lach and Audrey Maxwell laughingly recall today that 'the yards were always in the wrong place'. The brumbies had gone a hundred yards the other side and it would be a case of 'we should have built it over there!'. Sometimes the yard was in the right place, but the horses got away. A story told by several riders concerns a yard on the side of Gingera; such a big mob of brumbies was run to the yard that as they piled into it they either broke the rails or tumbled over oneanother over the rails and went free.

There were also opportunities to run down horses in the open, without yards, and a few were also caught this way.

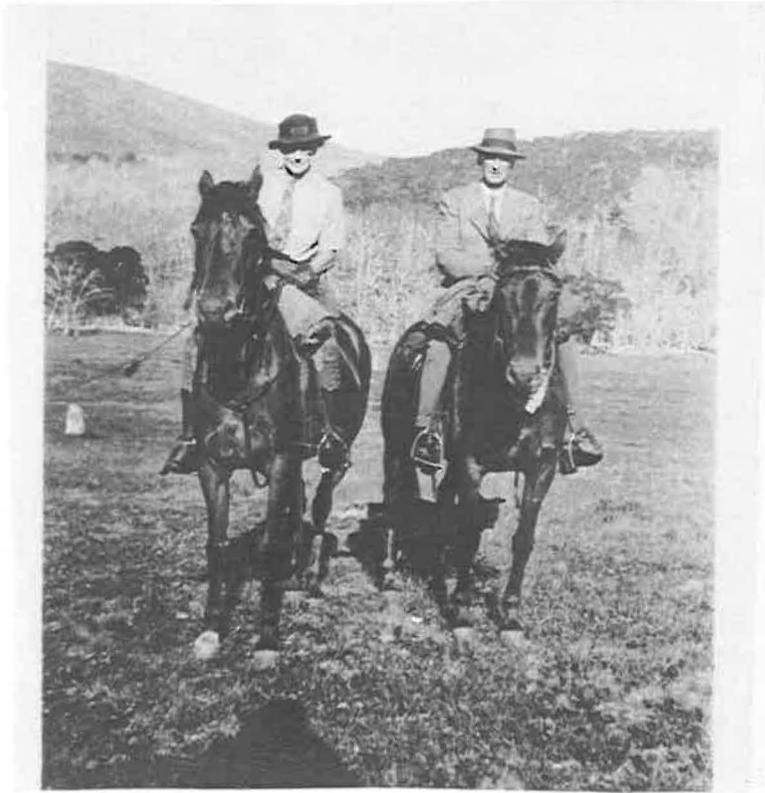
Jack Maxwell's abode was Cotter Hut, but during the brumby trips the parties would stay either below Ginini at the slab Stockyard Creek Hut (a forestry hut built by Jack Newlyn in the late 1930s) or they would camp out in tents at Snowy Flats below Gingera or at other flats nearer Ginini (the frames for the tents, simply saplings cut from the bush, would be left there from year to year). At night the time would be spent yarning (mostly about horses no doubt) and on a few occasions there might be some music; when Vince Oldfield was present he might play his mouth organ. On one occasion in camp when Miles Franklin was in the group she asked Gordon Dawes (who happened to be a Queanbeyan baker by trade) to bake a cake. So he did; the result was a sultana loaf cooked in the camp oven.

Jack Reid recalled that the parties slept about four to a tent. Jack Maxwell's sense of humour was one form of entertainment while in camp. One morning, he and Herbert Oldfield, having put their false teeth under their saddles on retiring the night before, attempted to put their teeth back in. 'Damned if I know, they won't fit', says Herbert.



above Building a running yard on 'Ginina' late in the 1930s (Audrey and Lach Maxwell photo, KHA Collection). *below* Frank Cleary, Norm McGuinness and Lach Maxwell at Stockyard Creek Hut in the mid 1950s during a brumby-running trip (Frank's son, Frank Cleary jnr, is today a prominent horse-racing figure in the Canberra area) (Audrey and Lach Maxwell/ Kevin Primmer photo, KHA Collection).



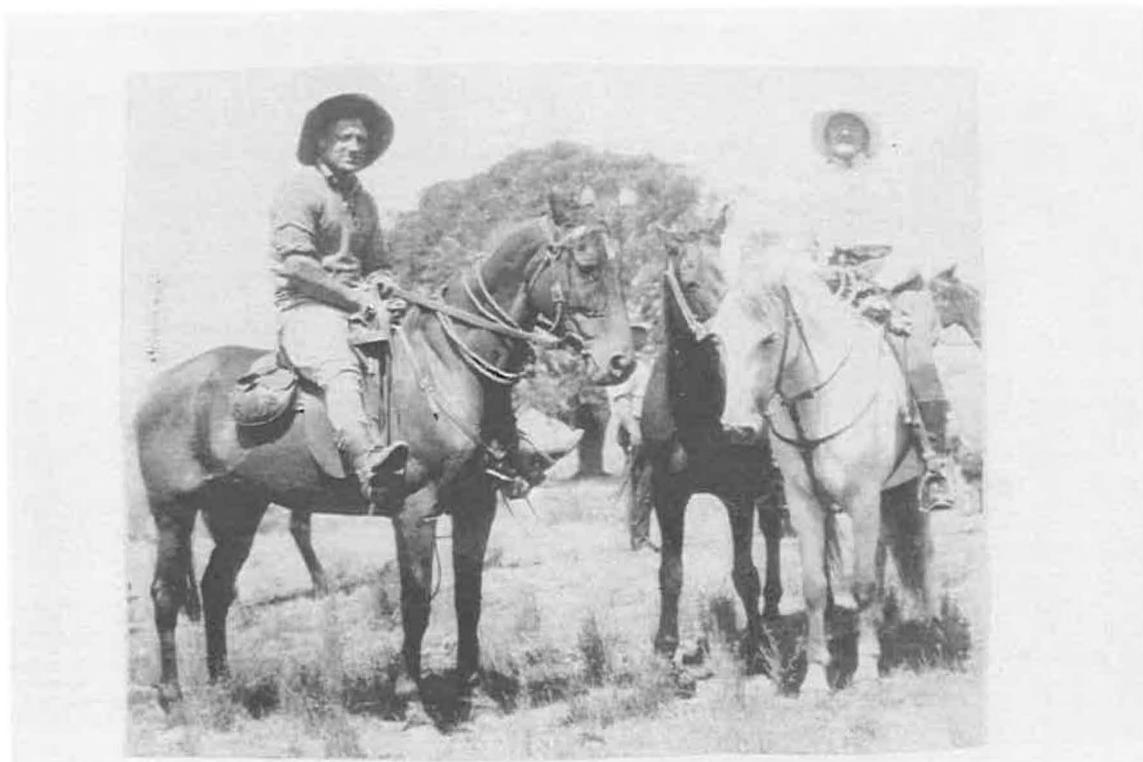


above Ivy and Jack Maxwell at Murray Creek (today known as Oldfield's Hut) in 1941 (Audrey and Lach Maxwell photo, KHA Collection). *below* Brumby runners in the Brindabellas (possibly at Snowy Flat) in 1932; the three people immediately to the left of the snowgum are Fred Tutty (1st left), Barbara Wentworth (2nd left), and Eva Cochran (3rd left) (Barbara Wentworth photo).





above Jack Maxwell (standing) and others at Cotter Hut in January 1937; by this time the hut had been re-located to the western bank of the Cotter River (Audrey and Lach Maxwell photo, KHA Collection). *below* Fred Tutty and Ivy Maxwell (Audrey and Lach Maxwell photo, KHA Collection)



So Jack Maxwell replies 'Try these, they won't fit me!'. Jack had mixed up the teeth deliberately.

Nights in the Brindabellas could be unpredictable, as Barbara Wentworth recalls:

one Christmas, we were expecting to camp fairly rough that night, so after a long run and an especially good camp fire, we turned in with saddles for our pillows, wearing the warmest clothes we could muster. When we woke up, everything, ourselves included, was covered in snow. The horses were hobbled, of course, but had cleverly managed to get miles away and the dogs had got into the tucker box; all that was left was dry bread and jam so we could not even make tea.

During Jack Maxwell's period as ranger no-one ran brumbies in his area independently of him or without his knowledge. If he heard that other horsemen were intent on catching some horses they might well be warned off. After Jack's retirement in the early 1950s, his successor Jack Silk did not get involved in the brumby running, although some of the people who had run horses in Jack Maxwell's time continued to do so (e.g. it was during this period that site 5 in the Yard Inventory was in use).

Jack Silk had the ranger position for only two or three years before Tom Gregory took over in 1956. So a new period of brumby-running began. Tom was joined by his friends in catching the wild horses, and included were people like Gordon O'Brien, Louis Margules, Bill and Wallace Bates, Jack Syphers, Johnny Tuson, Pat Ryan and others. They too would stay at Stockyard Creek Hut, often at Christmas time and at Easter and other longweekends. On one occasion Tom tied his horse, *California*, up to the back of the chimney at the hut and the horse pulled the chimney down! So the men had to set to and rebuild the chimney.

Tom, Gordon and some of their companions refurbished at least one of the yards from the Maxwell period. They also ran brumbies in the open. Following an accident a few years after taking on the ranger position Tom was unable to ride very much and was consequently dependent on his Land Rover. As a result he tended to use salt yards more than running yards. He and Gordon also started building a few yards which had a substantial proportion of wire (instead of timber) in their construction (i.e. wire was used for all the horizontal parts of the yards), and Gordon went on to build other similar yards with Cecil Leith. These yards, owing to what some riders saw as a potential for seriously injuring wild horses, were viewed poorly by some of the horsemen of the previous era, several of whom destroyed a wire yard on one occasion. By the early 1960s brumby-running in the Brindabellas was nearing an end.

Mt Scabby, and environs

Brumbies roamed around the Mt Scabby area, but they were considered inferior to horses elsewhere. Max Oldfield spoke for many when he remembered that the horses here 'were mostly buckjumpers. We never run them very much'. Few yards were built here, although Frank Oldfield and others did construct one near Scabby one year in the 1940s.

Despite these brumbies' poor reputation, there were some better horses among them. One mare proved to be of particularly good stock. Called *Bandy* and caught probably by Arthur Cochran, the horse was given to his daughter Audrey. *Bandy* had a foal to a sire named *Double Court*, and the foal was named *Topeka*. Audrey sold *Topeka* to Ruth Emery who started showing the horse. It wasn't long before *Topeka* snapped up a 2nd at the Royal Melbourne Show.

Brumbies were also run above Sams River at Rotten Swamp. Here too yards were very few and most of the running was done in the open. Wallace Bates and Percy Chalker were two men who were here in the 1940s and in the 1950s others here



above Rotten Swamp, one of a number of brumby-running locations in Namadgi (author photo, May 1993). *below* Remains of rails and posts at Jumbuck Flat: was this a wing of one of the 1930s yards here, or simply a log boundary fence? (author photo).



Y A O U K

BUSHMAN'S CARNIVAL

Presents by All of Aboriginal Public War Fund Committees

WEDNESDAY, 31st DECEMBER, 1941

TO BE HELD AT **YAOUK STATION** **£85** PRIZE MONEY COMMENCING at 9.30 A.M.

No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100

No. 9, 10
District
Backjumping Contest

£20

will be given to
Arthur Cochrane, Esq.
of Yaouk
as the Rider of
"SENTRY BOX"

The Master:
DRAMA ON "ROBIN"

No. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100

PLAIN & FANCY DRESS WOOLSHED DANCE

above Events like the Yaouk Bushman's Carnival gave local riders a chance to show their skills in a range of horse events. Quite a number of the people who went brumby running attended rodeos when the opportunity offered (Courtesy Audrey and Lach Maxwell, Rob Higgins photo). below *Topeka* performing at the Sydney Royal Easter Show in 1954 (Audrey and Lach Maxwell photo)



18

included Kevin Primmer (who also ran brumbies in the Brindabellas), Vin Cotter, Russell Cotter, Bill Brayshaw, Colin Curtis and Fred Blundell.

A little further north lay Creamy Flat (or more precisely the two flats, Little and Big Creamy). Horses had been run here in the 1930s by Jack Maxwell and companions; in fact the name of these flats was due to the colour of the early brumbies here. In 1958 Tom Gregory and Gordon O'Brien and a few mates built a timber running yard here a little below the upper flat; several horses were caught.

Jumbuck, Kangaroo, Smokers and Emu

How did brumbies come to be in this part of Namadgi? There are two explanations offered. About 1906 Herbert Oldfield ran some brumbies at Rock Flat near the head of Rendezvous Creek; the run was abandoned and the brumbies made their way to Smokers Flat. In 1934-35 a big run in the Creamy Flat-Long Flat area was organised by Jack Maxwell, Arthur Cochran and Fred Tutty; this chase resulted in a mob of about 30 brumbies getting away to the Smokers-Kangaroo-Jumbuck flats area. (Kangaroo Flat was always the name for the area now shown on maps as Smokers Gap.)

News of the appearance of the brumbies in this area in the 1930s caused quite some excitement, as Charlie West recalls:

It was a real hot summer's night at Tharwa, and we were all sitting outside the post office hoping for a thunderstorm. And Hughie Read came down through the hills. And he was that excited - he couldn't tell Dad quick enough that he'd seen these bloody brumbies. We were all very excited.

It wasn't long before attempts at catching the wild horses were being made. Eric Blewitt from Tidbinbilla, with assistance from Hughie Read, built a salt yard at Jumbuck Flats. (In 1949 Eric, who also had a salt yard at Tidbinbilla, was killed at his home Nildesperandum when *Bungool*, the horse he was trying to drench, struck him and fatally injured him.) Charlie West's father was Bevis West (winner of several Tharwa race cups, and as already mentioned, a brumby-running companion of Arthur Cochran) and in the mid-thirties Bevis was leading a gang building the dingo fence around Jumbuck Flats which at that time was part of Booroomba. Bevis ran a number of the brumbies at Jumbuck, and he was joined on at least one occasion by Jack Maxwell and Harry Cribb who had come across from the Cotter, and by Doug Maxwell who at the time was working on Booroomba.

Bevis's cousin Jim Sorrell (cook for the fencing gang and later cook at Booroomba) also caught horses here in a number of 'pretty rough' salt yards which he used through into the late 1940s. Jim, 'tough as nails', had broken a leg once while flag-racing at Michelago. As a result one leg was shorter than the other and he had to wear a built-up boot on the shorter leg; the leg would give a lot of pain but all Jim would say was 'By God, old leg gave me a bit of a doing today'.

Bevis, Jim and Doug were Booroomba employees, and the brumby running around Jumbuck both at this time and in later decades was often conducted by men off this major pastoral property.

At Emu Flat in the early 1940s Bevis and son Charlie built a running yard. On one occasion they had to muster some cattle and, it being late in the evening, the five bullocks were put in the yard overnight. Next day Bevis and Charlie found that several brumbies had started for the yard; the horses went straight to the yard but because the yard was shut they jumped over the wing of the yard and were gone. Bevis's eldest daughter Marie, and another son Leo also took part in brumby running in the Emu-Kangaroo area, and their brother Eric did a bit too.



above Gordon O'Brien on a brumby that he caught at Snowy Flat in 1954 (Gordon O'Brien photo). *below* Charlie West (right) with Clarrie Jeffery in Clarrie's store at Tharwa, 1947 (Ron Jeffery photo)



All the original brumbies in this part of Namadgi were eventually caught. But from the late 1940s-early 50s the sport entered a new phase. Merve Tong, who already had quite a lot of horses, acquired a large number from Booroomba Station. However he had nowhere to put them so he led them out to graze and breed in the Jumbuck-Kangaroo area. Some of his horses had been sired by *Bungool*, and many of Merve's mares were in foal to a Sydney registered thoroughbred, *Stanafar*. So the horses were of good breed. They were essentially station horses, but as time progressed they became wild ones. (Booroomba's own horses would sometimes be put out in this country; whether they ever joined the wild ones is not known.)

Merve from time to time ran some of his horses. Max Oldfield remembers how in the 1950s Merve and Doug Maxwell caught a number of them. Merve would put an old broken-in horse among them and leave it there for a couple of weeks. He and Doug would then return and the broken-in horse would start to follow them, bringing the bush horses with it. Once out of their territory the wild horses could be fairly easily driven and Doug and Merve, often with mobs of 30 horses, would bring them out to Orrol, on to Naas and then by truck to the Queanbeyan sales.

Other riders too ran the horses (which numbered over 200 perhaps) in this area during the 1950s-60s. Charlie West, then working at Tidbinbilla, ran a number of brumbies in the open at Kangaroo Flat and elsewhere nearby. Other riders here at various times included Louis Margules, Wallace Bates, Gordon O'Brien and Bennie Ferguson. Yards (both running and salt traps) were constructed at Kangaroo, as they were at Emu, and at Jumbuck where the brumby runners included Booroomba employees like Ernie Mitchell and, later, Glen Ryan, as well as others.

Yards from other periods on some of the other flats in this part of Namadgi included a salt yard seen by Arthur Woods just off Smokers Flat, and a salt yard near the Honeysuckle Creek swamp built by Dan McMahon in the 1930s and used by him to catch either his own horses which had run a bit wild, or brumbies.

Running in the Kangaroo-Jumbuck etc area came largely to a close at the end of the 1960s, though there is evidence (as seen in site 12 of the Yard Inventory) to suggest that some brumby running was still being attempted in the early 1980s. By this time the breed of the brumbies here had deteriorated.

Running methods

This chapter looks at the various methods used to catch brumbies, surveying in turn running yards, salt yards, snares, and open running. As the term 'brumby running' implies, the activity is generally one of action, and in the case of running yards and particularly open running this was the case. Use of salt yards and snares was a more static activity.

Running yards

Running yards, as can be guessed from their name, were built where it was desired to chase the horses to a yard where they could then be caught. They were built with rails which were timber cut from the bush, and uprights which could be either posts cut from the bush or standing trees. In the earlier period (say up into the 1940s) these yards were built without any wire to affix the rails to the uprights; the rails were chocked together either between a pair of posts or between a post and a tree trunk. These yards required real skill with bush timber. There was some pride in not using wire, for as one former rider commented, 'wire was a dirty four-letter word to us'. The labour required was substantial for holes had to be dug for each post. The timber for the yard was either carried by the riders from suitable nearby trees, or hauled by one of the men's horses which had been designated as snigging horse. If a yard could be built in a stand of Alpine ash then it was all the better for ash timber is always straight; but often other factors dictated that the site be in the more twisted snowgum or other timber.

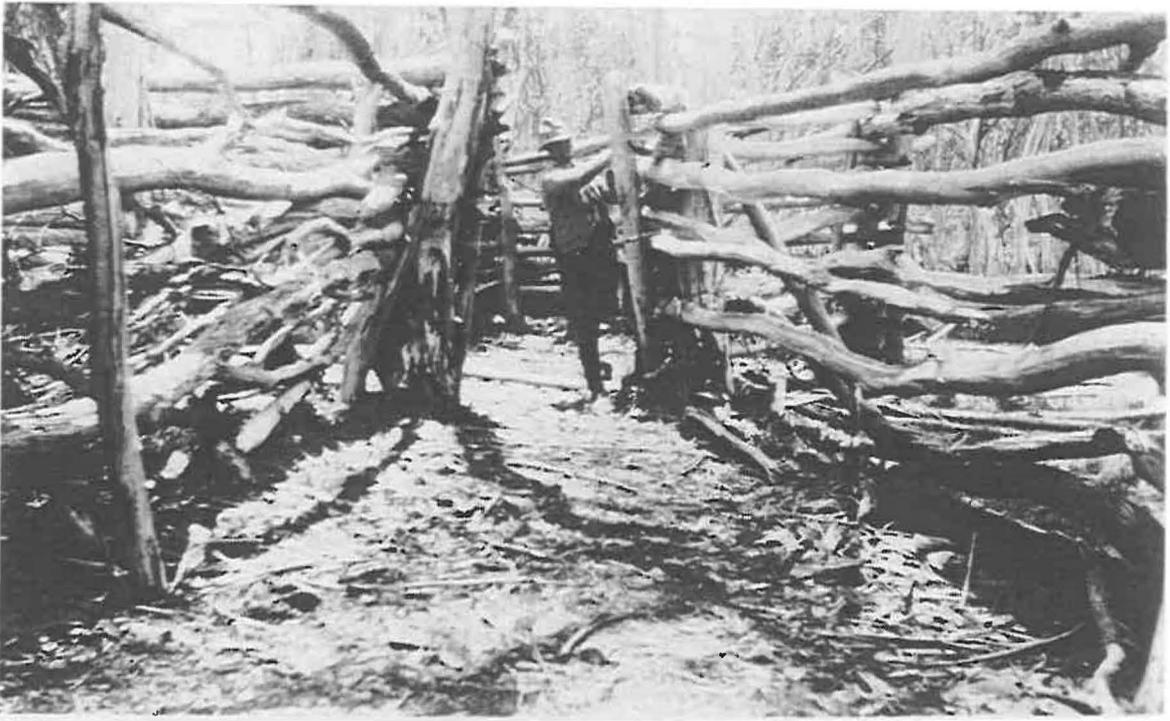
Subsequent yards (beginning probably in the 1940s) incorporated wire to fix the rails to the uprights, and wire was used to refurbish some of the older yards. Obviously a yard built in this fashion would have been quicker and easier to build; most of the yard sites located under this study are of this type. As has been mentioned, by the late 1950s and early 1960s there were some yards (both salt and running) where all the horizontal structure was wire.

The shape of the yard varied. Many brumby runners preferred a round yard which provided the least potential for obstructing (and injuring) the horses caught within; some however say that a round yard was not the best as the horses could circle as soon as they entered and come back out again before the yard had been closed. Often the shape was determined by the trees on the site. Generally the yards were not very big as a large yard would make it more difficult to control the brumbies caught within; the entrance was just wide enough for a horse to enter.

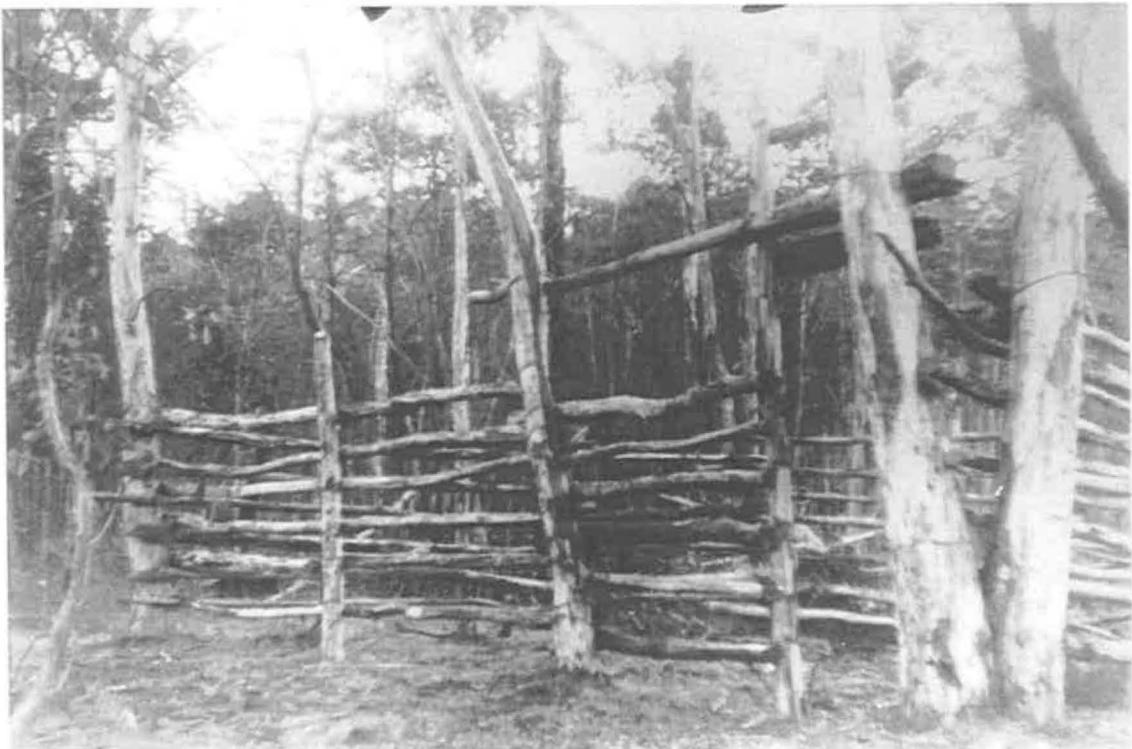
The prime distinguishing feature of a running yard is the wings which extend out from the entrance. The purpose of these was to funnel the chased horses into the yard, and they could be very long, up to a couple of hundred metres. The first few panels of wing would be of similar construction to the yard itself, but from here the wing would simply be saplings and bushes thrown up together; in some brumby running areas the wings could be just rope with pieces of rag attached, though these do not seem to have been used much in Namadgi. Some yards (called double running yards) had two entrances, each with wings, so that brumbies could be run to them from either direction. And some sites consisted of several yards linked together.

Finally a piece of hessian, usually a split bag, or sometimes a blanket, would be furled up over the entrance and tied with string. A rope attached to the string ran away from the yard and was held by one of the party positioned nearby.

The building of a yard was a major event and required a lot of work. As Audrey Maxwell recalled, 'A main part of the trips was building the yards - and talking about it afterwards!'



above An excellent view of a running yard on 'Ginina' in 1931-32. The photo looks down the wings into the yard; there is no wire evident (Barbara Wentworth photo).
below A good shot of a salt yard at Kangaroo Flat, about 1953. The remains of this yard still exist; see site 8 in the Yard Inventory (Keith Green photo).



Yards were sited on the tracks used by the brumbies themselves; generally it was the idea to have one of the wings placed across the path. And it was best to have the yard in such a place that the brumbies were galloping *downhill* to it, for when going downhill they have less chance of breaking away in a different direction.

Once the yard was ready, several riders were given the task of finding the brumbies and driving them toward the yard, while others had the job of waiting near the ends of the wings to appear at the appointed moment and drive the brumbies into the yard. Each task demanded skill. 'Great store was set by who would start the brumbies off, and who'd stand at the wings...God help the blokes at the wings if they weren't ready!'

The brumbies were located (often on an open flat where they fed) and would be started for the yard. Sometimes the pace was gentle as the riders endeavoured to avoid scaring the wild horses away from their path altogether, while at other times the riding would be fast as the riders put on the pace to keep control of the mob. Dogs were used occasionally by some parties to assist with the run.

As the brumbies reached the wings the riders there (who had been waiting for several hours; Lex Webb says 'it certainly was a bit of a kick, hearing the brumbies coming') suddenly appeared shouting, waving their hats and cracking stockwhips. If this had the desired affect the brumbies galloped down the wings into the yard, whereupon the man with the rope gave it a quick jerk, dropping the bag over the entrance. And, as the maddened and frightened horses jostled and reared in the yard with eyes wide and ears flattened, other riders then properly blocked the entranceway.

Of course things didn't always go to plan. The brumbies might break away before reaching the wings, the wing riders might fail, the brumbies might 'come bolting back at you', or crash through the wing or escape from the yard.

But if you had succeeded, then one of the riders, remaining mounted in the yard, started putting halters on the brumbies in preparation for the trip out. What happened after that will be told in the next chapter.

Salt Yards

Salt yards are of similar construction to running yards except there are no wings. In a salt yard a bait is placed in the yard to attract the brumbies. This bait is usually salt (wild horses, like stock generally, crave salt) although molasses was sometimes used, and in some instances another horse might be placed in the yard to attract the brumbies. The entrance consisted of a rolled-up wire-netting and hessian door to which was tied a trip rope fastened to the ground by a peg. When the wild horses entered the yard and started milling around the bait the peg was invariably kicked and the weighted door fell shut.

Salt yards therefore did not require riders to be present. But they did need to be checked regularly for horses trapped in these small yards could soon die through lack of feed or water especially. One disadvantage with salt yards is that they also attracted stock; in the 1930s Bevis West found a cow in his salt yard somewhere near Snake Flat in the Jumbuck area, and as he released it it went for him!

Snares

Undoubtedly the worst type of trap, as far as injury to animals is concerned, was the snare. This was simply a loop or double loop made from wire (usually No.8 fencing wire) which was placed so as to snare around the neck a passing brumby. There was an art to using them so as not to choke the horse, but the risk of the brumby thrashing around in a snare and dying must have been high. Snares were set on brumby paths where they passed between two rocks or crossed a creek through ti-tree. They are

known to have been used in the Booth Range, in the Clear Hills area and between Smokers Flat and Emu Flat.

Running in the open

Chasing and catching brumbies in the open, without the use of yards, was at once exhilarating, demanding and risky. If it was just after winter and the brumbies were in poor condition then your chances were higher, but if it was summer and they were well fed then the advantage definitely was with the brumbies.

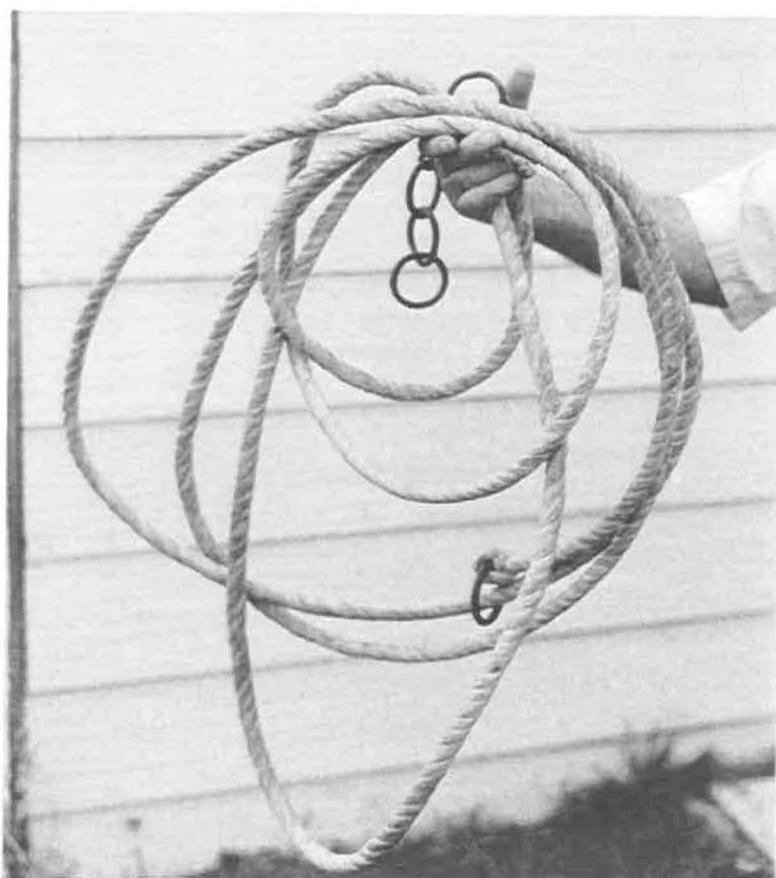
The main thing was to get as close as possible to the horses before they sensed you. Then, as Charlie West says, 'it was straight into them, you cooed and panicked them and they'd take off'. You had to get onto them quickly. 'Once they get their second wind they're gone', recalled Louis Margules. 'You either get them quick or they're gone.' The technique was either to grab their tale and hang on, tiring the brumby until you could put a halter on it (or put a strap around its neck to impede its breathing and then put on a halter), or else you twisted the brumby's tail and pulled the horse over, and then put a halter on. This was not easy at a fast ride. Barbara Wentworth when chasing brumbies near the Tin Mines south of Kosciusko wrote how 'I had watched the men twist [the brumbies'] tails and throw them, so I tried this, but it did not work and I came off over my horse's head'.

As was the case with some of the parties using running yards, dogs were also sometimes used when running brumbies in the open. At Rotten Swamp below Mt Kelly Kevin Primmer used his sheep dogs. You'd hear the dogs chasing the horses and could tell where they were going, then you'd get into position to run the brumbies.

There was always a risk, both to rider and rider's horse. A common expression was 'why kill or injure a good horse to maybe catch a bad one'. Max Oldfield tells of when in the 1940s he and Herbert Oldfield had ridden from Murray Creek Hut up into the Laura Gap area. Ted Tong had specifically told young Max not to risk chasing any brumbies. But when his and Herbert's horses and dogs picked up the brumbies' scent or sound, there was no turning back. Herbert missed his stallion, but Max caught a yearling. As the yearling brumby pulled Max's horse around however, Max's horse stood on a stake and went lame. Max let the brumby go so as not to get into trouble with Ted, but Ted found out anyway and still gave Max a talking to. And Max, with his horse lame, had to walk all the way back to Murray Creek.



A handmade greenhide halter (above) and rope (below) used in brumby running.
(Courtesy Kevin Primmer, author photos)



And after the run

What use was made of the brumbies caught in Namadgi? Before looking at the fate of the horses after their capture it is worthwhile discussing how they were brought out of the mountains.

Younger brumbies (which were generally desired most) could usually be handled fairly easily and led on a halter. Older horses (both stallions and mares) put up more of a fight and it was common to blindfold them in order to lead them out of their own territory, after which the blindfold (usually just a bag tied around the head) could be removed. A common practice also was to tie a brumby, by the leg, to a log for a couple of days to help quieten it. At Cotter Hut there was a paddock down below the hut where brumbies were held before being taken out of the mountains. As for who got what, this was decided among the riders fairly easily. Barbara Wentworth recalls of her first run in the early 30s that 'some quite good horses were yarded on this run. The helpers could have their choice, and I remember, I think it was Fred Tutty getting a beautiful bay stallion'.

Whereas for much of the period that brumby-running took place the horses were led out by riders on horseback, by the early 1960s vehicles were starting to be used; in the Brindabellas Gordon O'Brien took out some horses in his float, while at Kangaroo Flat the construction of the Corin Dam Road made the area here accessible to trucks.

Once out of the bush, the wild horses were broken in or alternatively they might be sold unbroken. At Yaouk Bung Harris broke in quite a number of brumbies. On the other hand, Jack Reid recalls Jack Maxwell, Bung and Fred Tutty bringing brumbies out of the mountains to Tidbinbilla and leaving them there for a couple of months before the horses were sold, unbroken, for 10 and 12 pounds each in Queanbeyan.

Many brumbies were sold as saddlehorses and could fetch from 5 pounds up to 20 and 25 pounds. Perhaps surprisingly, many made good children's ponies and numbers were sold to riding schools. While working at Bulls Head Vince Oldfield broke in eight brumbies and sold them to Bill Kinnane who owned a riding school at Ainslie. Louis Margules sold David's Riding School its first horse, a broken-in brumby from Sams River. Many horses were also used by the children of the brumby runners themselves, or were sold to friends for their children.

Max Oldfield sold his first brumby (an eighteen-month old black mare) to Colonel Jones of Duntroon who wanted a horse for his daughter. When the Colonel inquired about the pedigree of the horse, Max was stopped for an answer. Jack Maxwell told him to say that the horse was out of *The Hills* by *Hard Riding*. 'I didn't wake up', says Max, who conveyed the information to Colonel Jones. This remained a joke amongst the men for years.

Quite a number of brumbies were used by the brumby runners themselves as saddle horses. And, more often than not, these horses proved to be sure-footed animals in the mountains. Many more brumbies were caught from these former brumby mounts, as is mentioned in the next chapter.

Some brumbies ended up hauling loads. Queanbeyan milkman Bill Beatty used a former brumby to tow his milk-cart. One day something frightened the horse and it took off. 'There were milk bottles all over Queanbeyan, and the cart was just about destroyed!', the story says. Bill sold the horse.

Older stallions could be very wild. Charlie West tells a tale about an 8 or 10 year old chestnut which was part of a mob which he was breaking in at the Cotter for Jack Maxwell in the late 1940s or early '50s. The chestnut was a real bad horse ('they were



above 'End of a run', about 1938, probably with Mt Gingera in the background (Colin Maxwell photo). *below* Members of Cla Allen's early Canberra bushwalking group at Cotter Hut on 5 June 1932. On the slab wall of the hut are hanging the tails of several shot brumbies (Rose Allen/Tom Gregory photo, KHA Collection).





above A brumby mare and foal in a running yard on the western side of Ginini, mid 1950s. *below* Here the mare has been blindfolded and Frank Cleary has a halter on the foal. (Both photos Kevin Primmer)



all pretty bad', says Charlie) and Charlie sold him to Buddy Williams' rodeo show which was then camped at Queanbeyan where the swimming pool is today. On the first night the horse threw its rider and then struck, bit and savaged him; the rider went to hospital with broken ribs. The show moved to Cooma the next night and here the horse broke a man's arm. At Tumut the following weekend, on the first night the stallion threw his rider and on the second put the same man in hospital. Finally, at Wagga, this wild horse of the hills killed someone, and had to be shot.

Vince Oldfield tells of one experience breaking in a savage brumby stallion. He had led the horse (which was about 8 years old) down from around Ginini where he had caught it to Pierces Creek where he was working by this time. It had already bitten Vince on the leg and 'I had the biggest blood blister I've ever had in me life'. At Pierces Creek Harold Tuson asked Vince how he was going to catch the horse now that it was loose in a yard.

"I'm gonna lasso him", I said. I got him going around the yard and I threw the lasso, and he kicked. And the bloomin' lasso fell down alongside him and around his front leg. How it happened I don't know. And I sat back on the lasso and I threw him. While he was down I roped him. Harold said, "I've never seen that done before". I nearly said, "And neither have I", but I said, "Yeah, that's the way you do it". (laughs)

It might also be mentioned here in this chapter, that in various regions it was not uncommon for brumbies to be shot and used as dingo baits, their carcasses laced with strychnine. It is known that this occurred in the Brindabellas and adjacent mountains early this century.

Horse sense

There were a number of fascinating aspects to the behaviour and character of the brumbies themselves.

Brumbies were known for their cunning, clever nature, especially as far as yards were concerned. If a brumby mob knew that you were building a yard then there was virtually no point in trying to run the horses to the yard, because they wouldn't come anywhere near it. Brumby runners either built the yard and used it immediately, or they built it and then deliberately left it for a good while in order to let the brumbies get used to this new element in their environment. It was not uncommon for yards to at first be left open at both ends to allow the brumbies to freely pass through and lose their suspicion of the yard, and with a salt yard salt might at first be placed outside the yard to entice the horses to the site, before the bait was put inside the enclosure. Only once the horses had become familiar with and less fearful of the yard would one end then be closed in readiness for catching some horses.

Some brumbies were particularly clever. Kevin Primmer and Lach Maxwell tell how the stallion that led the mob of horses on the top of Gingera, who was called by the riders *The Rat*, could hear and recognise the sound of timber being chopped during the construction of a yard. Then at night he would come down and go over the site, as was evidenced by his droppings all round the yard next morning. And once *The Rat* had smelled a rat, there would be no catching him.

Other stallions too were so distinctive that they were given names. *Spook*, for example, headed a mob near Ginini Flats. Down on the western side of Ginini in the ash forests there, it was The Black Horse Country. Some horses assumed almost mythic dimensions. Louis Margules and others in the Jumbuck area were always looking for the 'huge chestnut stallion' which, apparently, was never caught.

Brumby stallions were also known for the way in which they would try to steal domesticated mares in order to have them as part of their mob. Max Oldfield told how when, in the 1940s as the Franklin Road was being extended from Ginini on to Snowy Flats, one member of the road crew would have to stay at the camp at weekends in order to mind the crew's draught horses and stop the brumbies making off with them. Charlie West had a sleepless night once when he and his wife Joan were taking sheep into Sams River. A brumby stallion tried all night to take their mares (one of which was the packhorse), and Charlie was constantly cooeing and putting his dogs onto the wild horse to keep him away.

An insight into the character of older stallions was given in the last chapter. Some could be very aggressive. Doug Maxwell in the 1930s led a big bay stallion out of Jumbuck and to Booroomba where the horse was put in the cattle yards. Arthur Rowe came to the yards and said the horse was only timid and held out his hat at the brumby. With that the stallion 'took his hat out of his hand and struck it and kicked it to pieces in the yard. That stallion was a terrible old bloody horse'. Older mares too could also be hard to deal with, for as one rider stated 'some of those old mares would fight like a bloody old stallion'.

Yet younger brumbies were quite different. John Dowling, when talking of experiences at running yards in the Brindabellas in the early '40s, told how when you were in the yard putting halters on the caught horses they would pack in around your own horse out of fear. Similar behaviour was seen when running horses in the open. If it was possible in that first quick dash into the mob to quickly separate a mare from its foal, the foal might well come up to your own horse for security. Vince Oldfield said of younger brumbies that they were 'a very placid type of horse, there's not much vice in them'.



Bung Harris and Barbara Wentworth at Yaouk in 1931, mounted on two horses broken in by Bung with some assistance from Barbara. (Barbara Wentworth photo)

View from Mt Scabby down into the upper Cotter River valley: another former brumby haunt.



Some of the horses ridden by brumby runners were former brumbies themselves, and they could be very dependable horses. Charlie West ran many of his brumbies off a chestnut mare which he'd caught down Kangaroo Creek. She must have been a patient horse. Once at Emu Flat Charlie caught two brumbies; he tied one to his horse's tail and the other was led with a halter tied to his horse's neck. The brumbies played up and the one on the tail started throwing itself down on the ground. The mare simply kept walking, dragging the brumby until it got up again. 'She was the best brumby-running mare you ever saw in your life.'

One of *The Rat's* fillies was caught by Garry and Jack Cotter in the 1940s. They named her *The Fox* and they had her from a foal until she died aged in the 30s. Garry used to ride her everywhere when mustering and she was very sure footed, she 'never stumbled, never fell', according to one horseman.

The excitement of the chase felt by the riders was shared by their horses. It was often the horses that first sensed the brumbies. The horse would start sniffing the air and before long it might be prancing on the spot. Its heart would be pounding, only serving to heighten the excitement already being experienced by the rider - 'the tenseness that you'd build up would be unbelievable', said one brumby runner.

Finally, some thought might also be given to the impact of the mountain environment in which the brumbies lived in Namadgi. Summer months were good ones for feed, but winter was a harsh time as it is for all life in the mountains. Brumbies try to get to lower elevations in winter in order to obtain better feed and a local climate that is at least a little more comfortable.

But they were not always able to get down out of the snow. There are several stories of brumby runners in springtime finding the bodies of brumbies which had been caught in the snow. The wild horses form a ring to try to survive. They eat all the grass and then with no more food they commence to eat oneanother's manes and tails. One group of dead horses so found consisted of only the skeletons and, where the stomachs had been, there was just tail hair.

End of brumby running, and end of the brumbies

Brumby running in the Brindabellas came to an end in the early 1960s. The last brumbies were not caught but died during the big snowfalls of the 1964 winter.

Brumbies continued to live elsewhere in the Namadgi area. As has been mentioned above, brumby running in these other areas petered out following the end of the 1960s. In 1979 the Gudgenby Nature Reserve was declared and five years later the upper Cotter catchment area was added to it to form Namadgi National Park. Brumbies were still in this region and the last population was in the Kangaroo-Smokers flats area (and a little beyond).

These horses stayed here until shot during a culling program by Park staff in 1987. Control of feral animals forms a part of Namadgi's plan of management and the Park's management was especially concerned about the horses' impact on native flora (particularly plants such as *Austral pilwort*), and also their impact on sub-alpine flats and watercourses generally. The shooting (carried out from a helicopter) eradicated wild horses from the Park and at the same time attracted considerable media attention; sections of the community were angered by the Park's action. Shooting of brumbies was, as has been shown, nothing new. But the 1987 culling created ill feeling because of the *total* nature of the cull, and because of fears that the horses may have suffered unnecessarily.

This project has revealed the strength of that ill feeling among numbers of people who were formerly associated with brumbies in the Namadgi area, for although it is now six years since the horses were shot there is still felt, by some, a very real bitterness against the Park for its action. And there was also disagreement with the Park's policy expressed by some members of the bushwalking fraternity, a group which in other respects, as a whole, is a keen supporter of the national park ethic (though undoubtedly there are many bushwalkers who agreed with the cull policy too).

Perhaps what can be learned from all of this is the special nature of the relationship between humans and horses and the way that this comes to bear when the issue of horses (as opposed to other introduced animals) in national parks is raised; the feeling that wild horses have a historical right to be in the bush is a potent one. There are brumby populations in both Kosciusko and Alpine national parks. As the managers of these parks come to deal with the question of how best to manage the brumbies, they would be well advised to be mindful of the Namadgi experience and the way that Park policy was received by the community.

PART 2

Yard Inventory

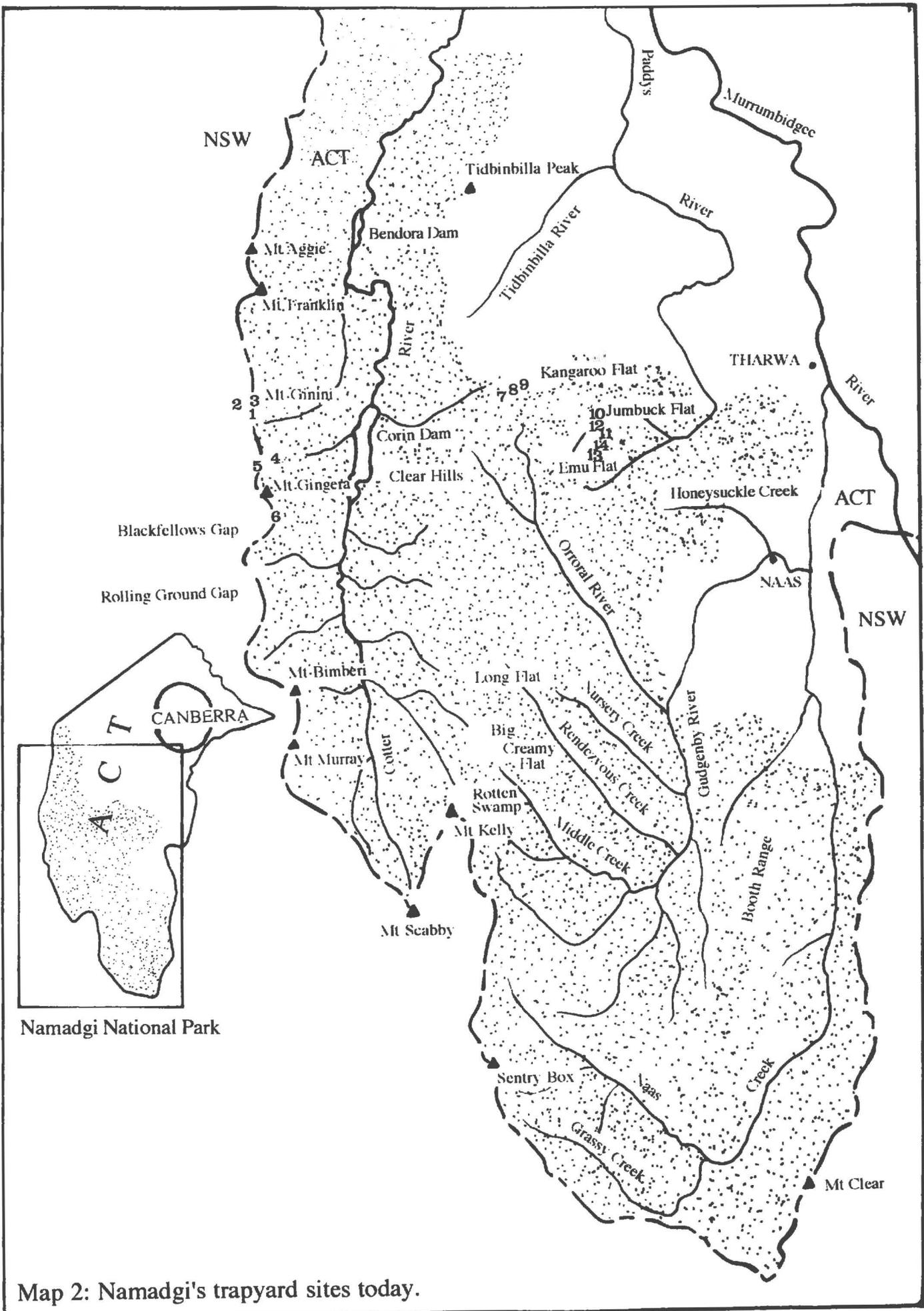
Fourteen yard sites were located during this project and they are all within the area covered by the CMA Corin Dam 1:25 000 map. Eleven of the sites are definitely known to have been brumby trapyards, the remaining three are possible brumby yards. The yard inventory provides details on each site through three means.

Firstly there is a yard record sheet which lists grid reference and general location, yard type, physical description, historical details, and condition (the yard's condition is usually also mentioned in the description or the history entries).

Then there is a site sketch plan, the intention of which is to show, in a simple scale drawing, the basic shape of the yard and its dimensions (both of which cannot be conveyed via photographs), and any particularly significant features. (Note that where rails and uprights are still fixed then these are shown with solid lines; where rails or uprights have fallen to the ground then they are shown by broken lines, rails or uprights that have disappeared are also shown by broken lines where it is possible to know their original location.)

Finally there are photographs of each site and these are keyed to the sketch plan.

The question of the cultural significance of the yards is dealt with in a separate section which follows the inventory. As the yards have a collective significance as well as individual significance, it was considered best to deal with this aspect in the manner chosen, rather than having separate statements in each of the yard record sheets.



Map 2: Namadgi's trapyard sites today.

Site 1

Grid reference and location: 603648, on the southern slope of Mt Ginini a few hundred metres north of Stockyard Gap, very close to the ACT/NSW border.

Type: Running yard.

Description: The site consists of two linked yards (and is the only such site found). The downhill yard is vestigial, remains consisting of a few fallen rails and posts and some wire, including a piece of wire very deeply embedded in a tree. The uphill yard is more intact, with the walls being about half their original height (at one point there is still a rail fixed at about its full height). Rails are fixed to uprights with wire, and the uprights are trees. Extending uphill from the entrance are the remains of the wings which have collapsed but can still be easily distinguished along the ground. (Several hundred metres north of the yard are lengths of wire in trees which might have been part of the early catchment fence along the range, though this is only surmise at this point; they could be part of the yard's wings, although they seem too far away.)

History: The yards originally built here were constructed by Jack Maxwell, Fred Tutty and others in the 1930s or 1940s; three linked running yards were built. In the 1950s the uphill yard was refurbished with wire and a few new rails by Tom Gregory, Gordon O'Brien and Jack Fisher.

Condition: Fair to poor, as per description.

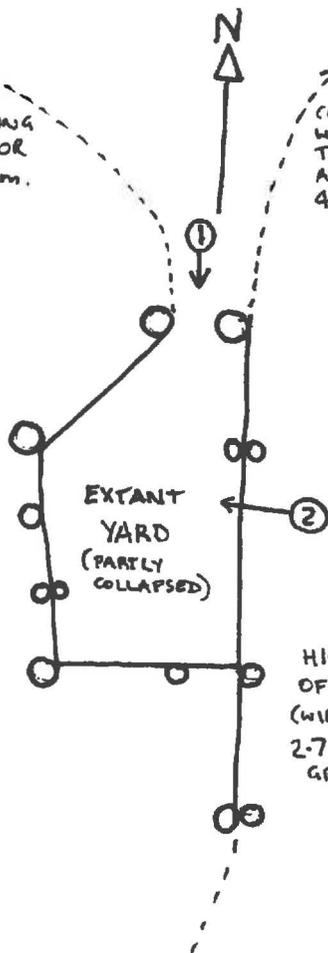
SITE 1



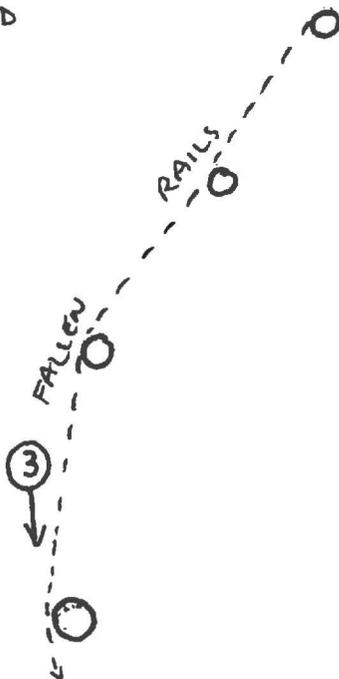
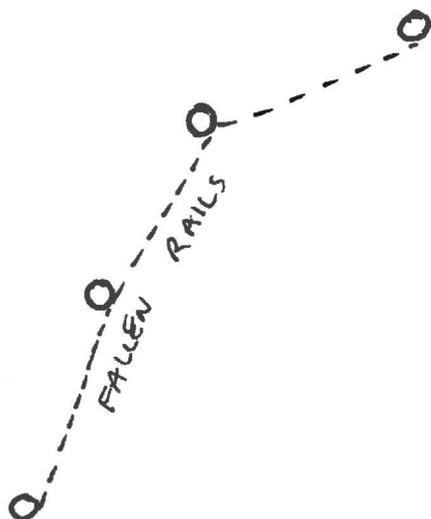
① → PHOTO NO. AND DIRECTION

COLLAPSED WING CONTINUES FOR AT LEAST 80m.

COLLAPSED WING CONTINUES FOR AT LEAST 40m.



VESTIGIAL YARD



NUMEROUS STUMPS INDICATING WHERE RAILS WERE CUT.



Photo 1, taken from just above the entrance of the existing yard; the collapsed wings are visible in the foreground.

Photo 2, showing some of the remaining rails of the yard.





Photo 3, showing fallen rails of the lower yard; a length of wire is deeply embedded in the centre of the tree trunk (arrowed).

Site 2

Grid reference and location: 591657, located in a stand of Alpine ash on Harrys Spur, about 30 metres south of the fire trail down the spur.

Type: Running Yard.

Description: The yard is constructed from Alpine ash rails which were wired to standing ash trees and posts. At the entrance to the yard an additional post was wired to the tree at this point to hold the rails slid across the entrance once the brumbies had entered the yard. There is some evidence of the wings. The yard has now collapsed and two fallen trees are laying across the site.

History: The yard was built in 1943 by Jack Maxwell, Ivy Maxwell, Doug Maxwell, Herbert Oldfield, Max Oldfield and Vince Oldfield. On the first run, the brumbies were driven to the yard from Ginini Flats by Jack and Doug. This took several hours and Max Oldfield, who was stationed on one of the wings on a spot known as a brumby 'stamping ground', fell asleep (Jack had warned him against this which suggests that wingmen often dozed off during long waits).

As the brumbies approached, Frank Cleary, also in the run, whistled at Max to try to wake him up, but couldn't. Max eventually woke up to the sound of brumbies snorting at him just 8 or 9 metres away. 'All these brumbies standing looking at me. I jumped up and thought "Gawd, what have I done". I got on my horse and only half got on him - didn't get a proper hold of the reins and was only half on for about 50 yards before I could get right on my horse.' (His horse was named Wewak, a reflection of the New Guinea campaign then being fought against the Japanese, a campaign in which Lach Maxwell was involved.)

As it turned out the run was a success (three of the four runs that Max was in here resulted in brumbies being caught). Of the horses caught, a stallion was shot by Jack Maxwell and the others were to be led out. There was one too many brumbies for the number of riders but Herbert Oldfield said he'd lead two and the two horses were tied together, despite Jack's warnings that if they got out of hand and went either side of a tree they might break their necks. Herbert led the two horses out of the yard and before he'd gone fifty metres the brumbies had started to get away, gone either side of a tree, and one's neck was broken.

Condition: Poor.

≡SITE 2≡

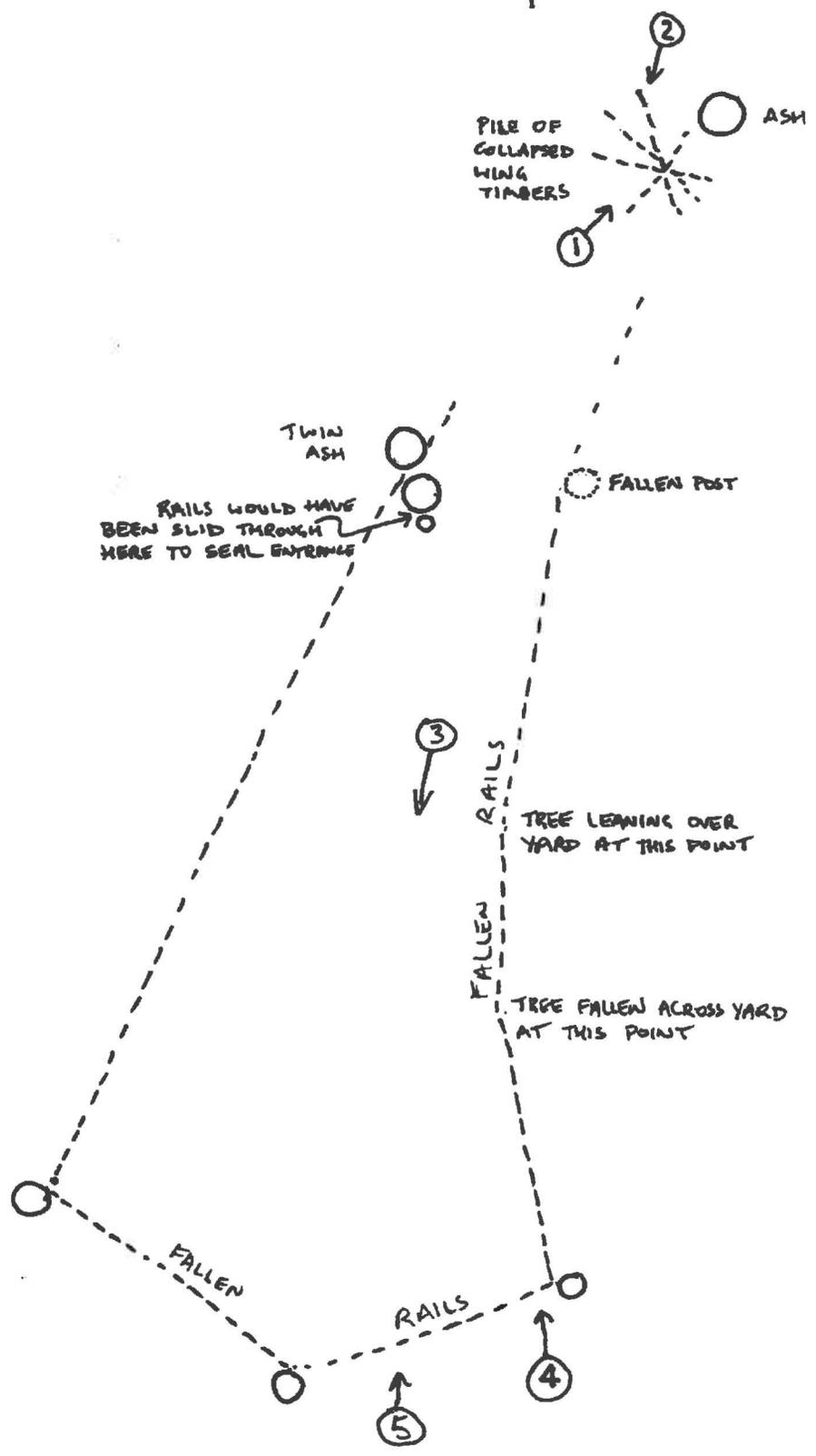




Photo 1, collapsed wing timbers.

Photo 2, looking toward the entrance of the yard; wire is seen on the ash tree just right of centre (arrowed).





Photo 3, showing collapsed rails of the yard and the trees that are leaning and fallen across the yard.

Photo 4, rails at the bottom end of the yard.





Photo 5, On a very wet day in May 1993 Max Oldfield (left) with Laurie Tong revisits the yard that he helped build 50 years earlier.

Site 3

Gridreference and location: 605660, south of Mt Ginini's summit, near the top of Harrys Spur.

Type: Salt yard.

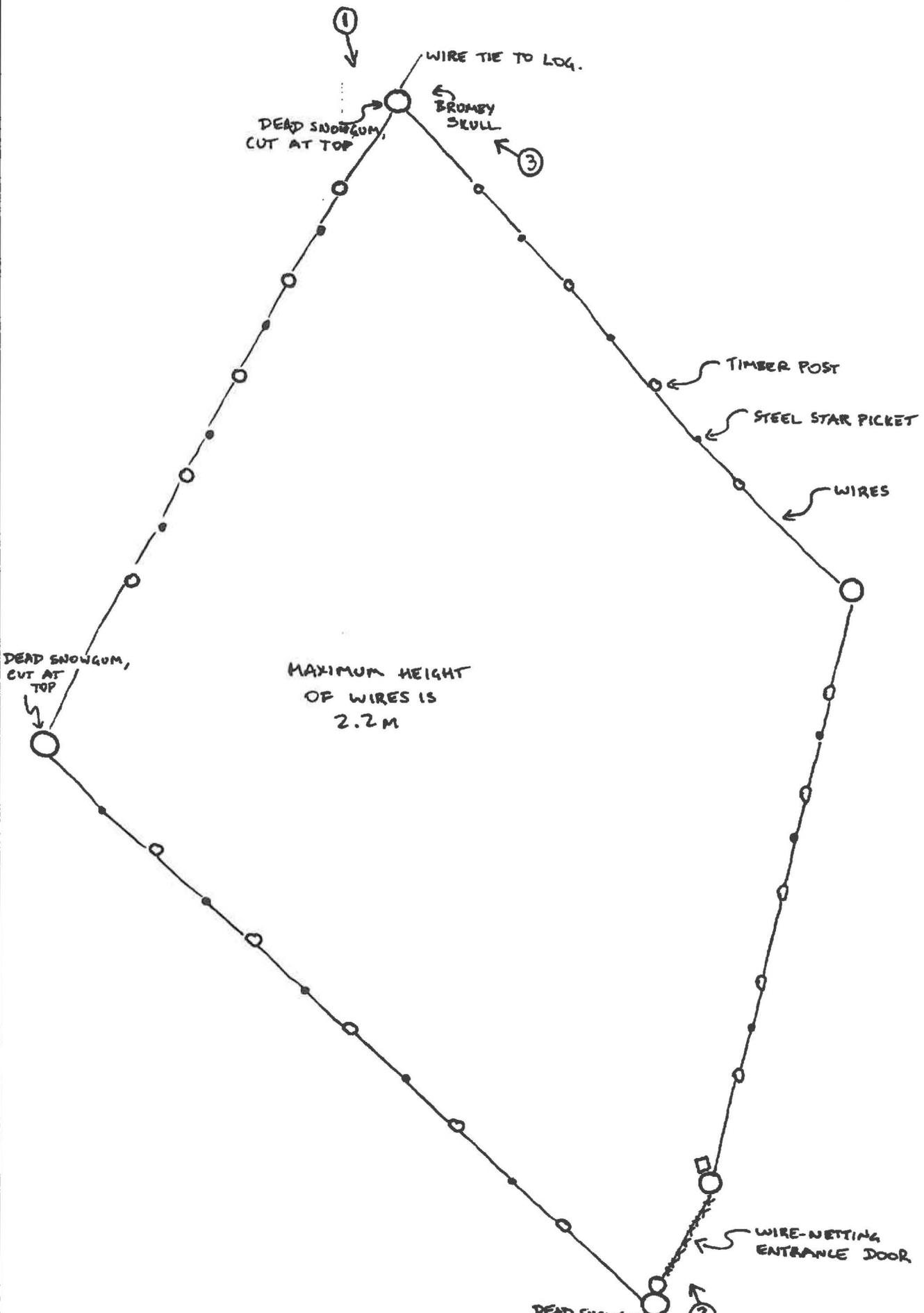
Description: This is a salt yard of the later type, much of its construction being heavy gauge wire. The four corner uprights are trees (most of them dead, in fact one is wired to a log on the ground for extra strength) and in between these are uprights of alternating timber posts and star pickets. All the horizontal parts of the yard are double lengths of wire which have been twisted together for extra strength (some of the sticks used for the twisting are still present). The wire-netting entrance door is weighted with light railway iron and timber; some of the string used to tie-up the door is still present. A brumby skull is near one corner of the yard.

History: This yard was built by Tom Gregory and Gordon O'Brien in 1960-61. Horses were often seen here so Tom and Gordon placed salt here to see whether the brumbies could be attracted to the bait. The salt was soon gone so they decided to build the yard. Quite a bit of effort was involved. Once the yard was finished, half a 4 gallon bucket filled with salt and molasses was placed inside, and a peg and trip-rope were attached to the rolled-up door. At the first attempt the peg was only lightly set in the ground and the brumbies tripped it before many of them had entered the yard. Next time Gordon and Tom set the peg more firmly, with the result that they caught more horses.

After Tom's accident, Gordon for a time used the yard on his own. They used the yard for several years. On one occasion they caught 3 mares and a foal. These horses' stallion, left on the outside of the yard, 'went mad and belted other stallions and took their mares'; Tom and Gordon shot the stallion just down from the yard (is it this horse's skull that is at the yard today?). By about 1964 there were only 9 horses left around here and it was these that died in the big snowfalls of that year.

Condition: Good.

≡SITE 3≡



①
WIRE TIE TO LOG.
BROMBY SKULL ③
DEAD SNOWGUM, CUT AT TOP

TIMBER POST
STEEL STAR PICKET
WIRES

DEAD SNOWGUM, CUT AT TOP

MAXIMUM HEIGHT OF WIRES IS 2.2 M

WIRE-NETTING ENTRANCE DOOR

DEAD SNOWGUM ②



Photo 1.

Photo 2, showing the entrance.





Photo 3, showing corner tree tied to log, and brumby skull in foreground.

Site 4

Gridreference and location: 621641, on the upper part of Stockyard Spur, adjacent to the fire trail along the spur.

Type: Salt yard.

Description: Another salt yard of the later type, bearing similarities with site 3. The four corner uprights are trees; the walls of the yard are supported by timber posts but there are no star pickets in this case; all the horizontal parts of the yard are wire and there are 10-12 wires on each wall.

History: Built by Gordon O'Brien and Cecil Leith in 1958, the yard was never quite finished and was not used.

Condition: Good; the entrance is unstable.

≡SITE 4≡

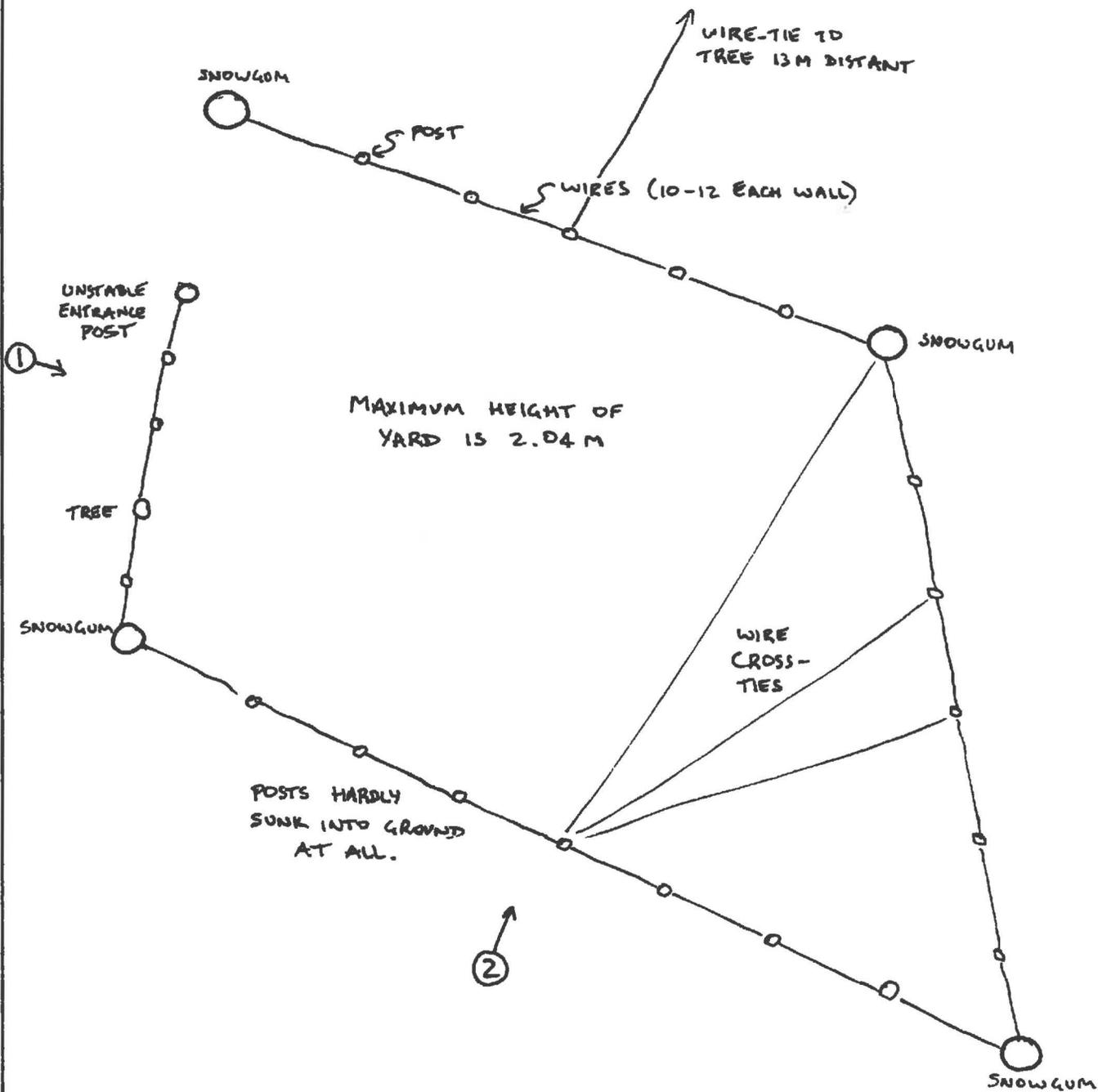




Photo 1.

Photo 2.



Site 5

Grid reference and location: 610629, located a few hundred metres behind Pryor's Hut, near the corner of the arboretum fence.

Type: Running yard.

Description: This yard was built of light timber, with timber rails wired to uprights which included trees; the materials are on the ground now and the site is largely overgrown. There is vestigial evidence of at least one wing.

History: The yard was built by Kevin Primmer, Frank Cleary, Lach Maxwell, Norm McGuinness and Norm Sutor in the mid-1950s. On its one and only run, Lach and Norm Sutor ran the brumbies down from Brumby Flats behind Mt Gingera; as they approached the yard, Norm McGuinness (who was on one of the wings) rode up too soon and the brumbies, seeing his grey horse, smashed through one of the wings and escaped. The yard was cut down not long after by one of its builders and Jack Silk in order to stop other brumby runners from using it.

Condition: Very poor.

==SITE 5==

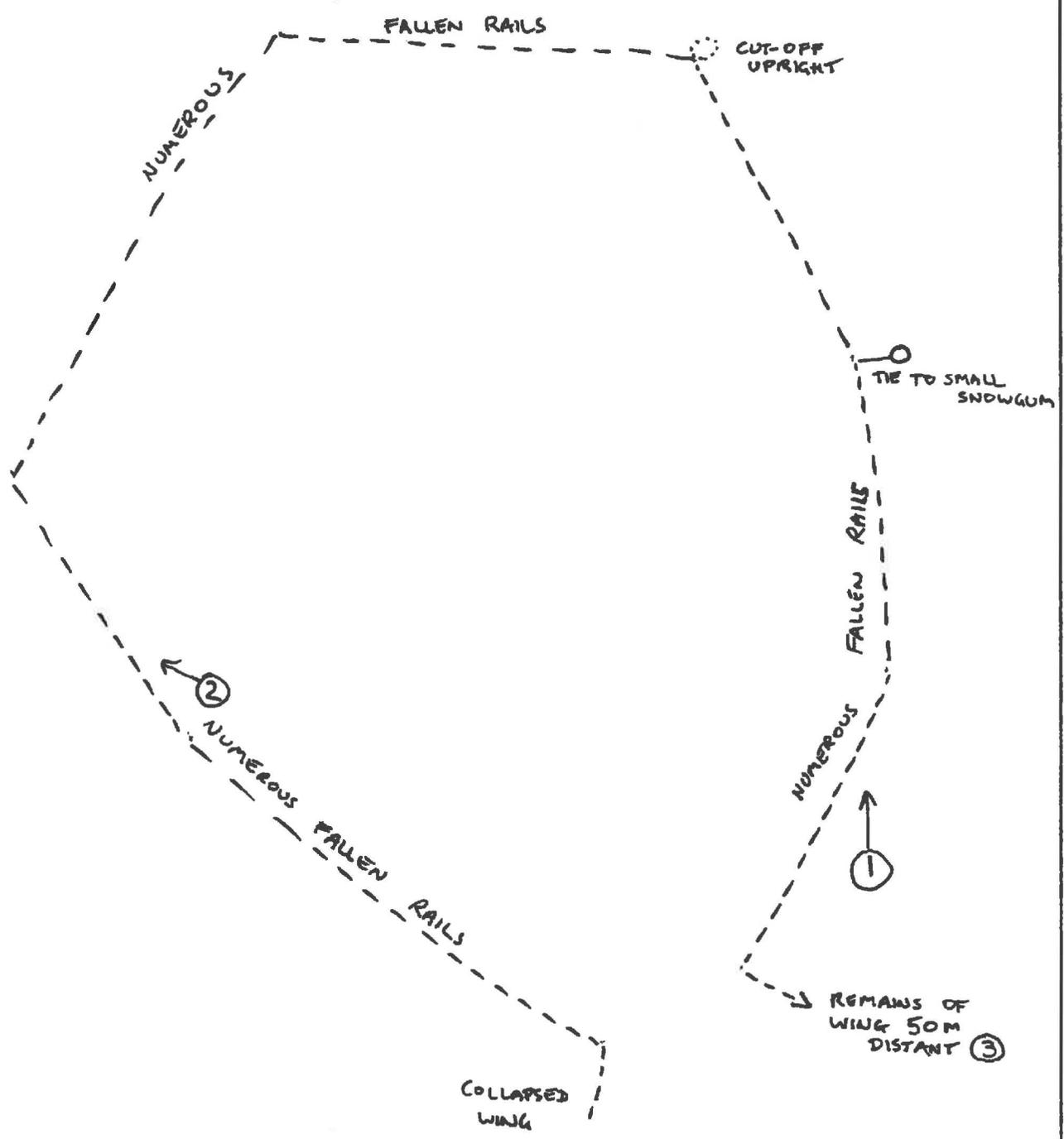


Photo 1, Kevin Primmer stands beyond the yard's fallen rails.



Photo 2, fallen rails (arrowed) partly hidden by vegetation.



Photo 3, arrows point to remains of one of the wings.

Site 6

Grid reference and location: 618603, located on the southern slopes of Mt Gingera, just west of the ACT/NSW border.

Type: Running yard.

Description: A running yard with timber rails attached to uprights which included at least one snowgum, the site is now extremely vestigial with only a few rail/post timbers remaining on the ground (they are distinguishable from natural fallen timber by their axe-cut ends, a key identification feature of many yard sites). There is no wire evident at this site. Of the few remaining pieces of timber at the site some are from one of the wings (which are known to have been quite short at this yard). (Just above the yard is the location of the former bridle track which ran along the range here and there are lengths of wire at one point nearby which are possibly from the early catchment boundary fence.)

History: Jack and Doug Maxwell, Max Oldfield and Frank Cleary built this yard in about 1944. Max took part in only one run here which took place the day after the yard was built; it was unsuccessful. The yard may well have been used on other occasions. Construction of the yard took one day.

Condition: Very poor.

≡SITE 6≡

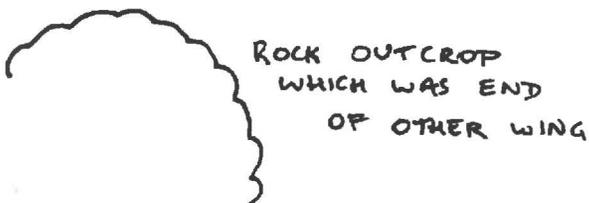
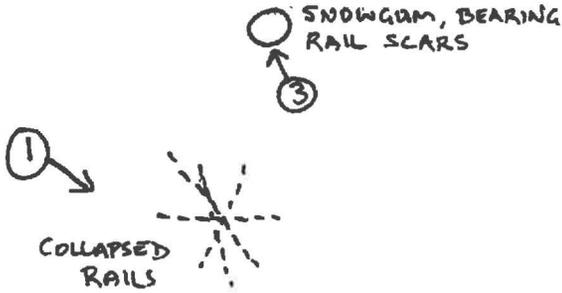




Photo 1, the pile of collapsed rails.

Photo 2, the remains of one of the wings; Max Oldfield standing behind.





Photo 3, the snowgum showing scars where rails were attached.

Site 7

Grid reference and location: 729675, located near the western end of Kangaroo Flat (now known as Smoker's Gap) and just within the timber across the flat from the Corin Dam Road and the Smokers Gap Carpark.

Type: Running yard.

Description: This yard was built with rails wired to posts and trees; the rails have largely fallen to ground level or disappeared and only in one section are there rails above ground level. There is no evidence remaining of wings but the yard is about 20 metres from the boundary fence which separated Booroomba's land from the eastern side of the Cotter Catchment, and it is understood that this fence may have been used as a wing, the fence being draped in hessian or bushes for the purpose.

History: Kevin Primmer first saw the yard in about 1945-46 and it may have been built a couple of years before that. Who built it is not known, nor are there any details about its period of use.

Condition: Poor.

≡SITE 7≡

5 METRES

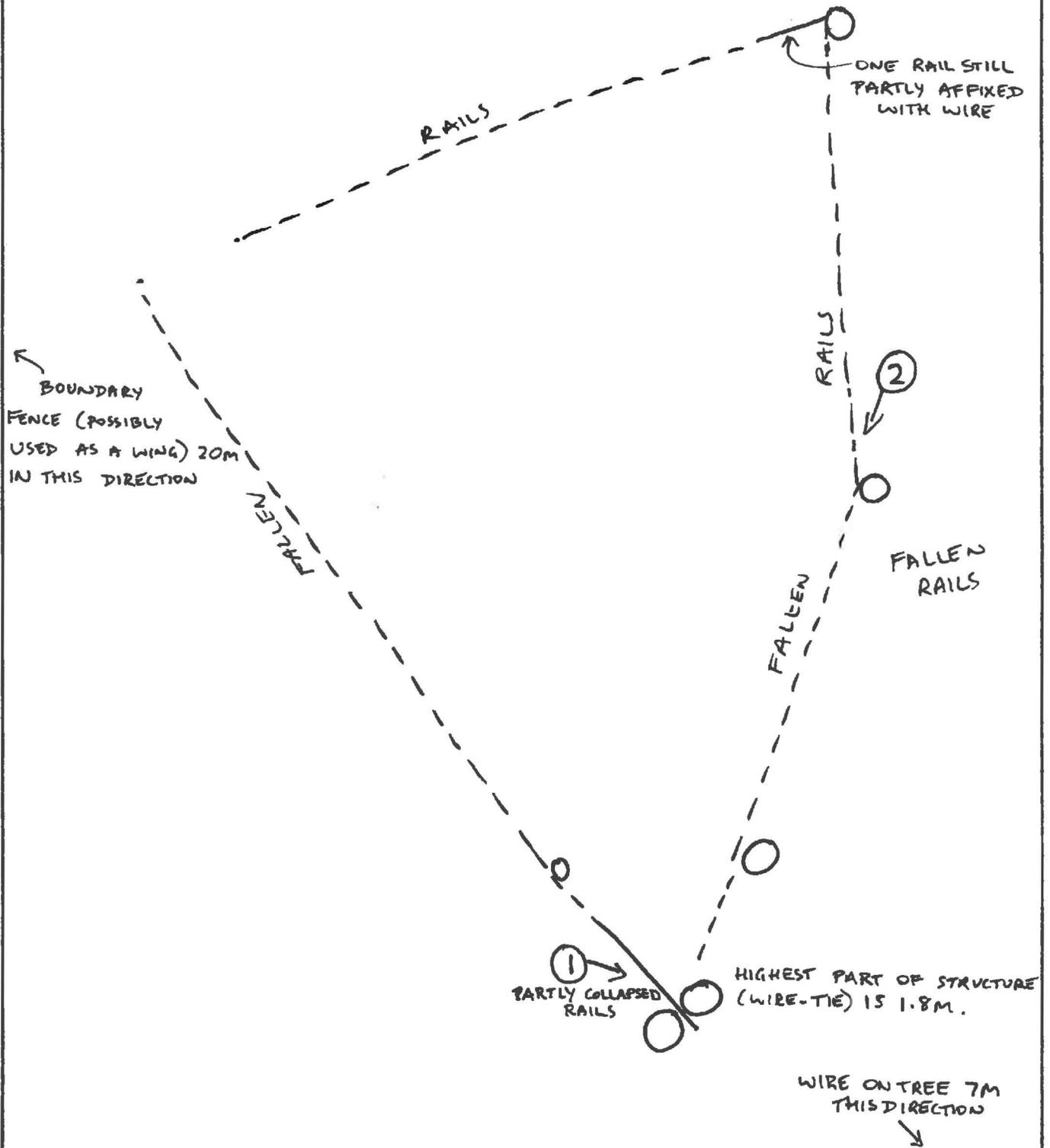


Photo 1



Photo 2



Site 8

Grid reference and location: 730675, located on Kangaroo Flat (now Smoker's Gap) within the timber across the flat from the Corin Dam Road and the Smokers Gap Carpark.

Type: Salt yard.

Description: A yard built with rails wired to uprights consisting of both posts and trees, this site was destroyed when the rails and many of the uprights were sawn down. The yard now consists of the unstable entrance framework, the ends of some cut rails still wired to the trees, and sawn rails and uprights laying on the ground. Numerous stumps (from where the rails were cut during construction of the yard) are found nearby.

History: There is some contradictory evidence concerning the history of this site. Gordon O'Brien maintains that he and others built this yard early in the 1960s after the Corin Dam Road was put through. The group found that the brumbies wouldn't touch the salt and so bread and even lucerne were used as bait in the yard but without success. Alternatively, the yard was photographed by Keith Green in about 1953 (the photo is found earlier in this report) well before the road was built. Keith understood that the yard may possibly have been built by Merve Tong, but is not certain.

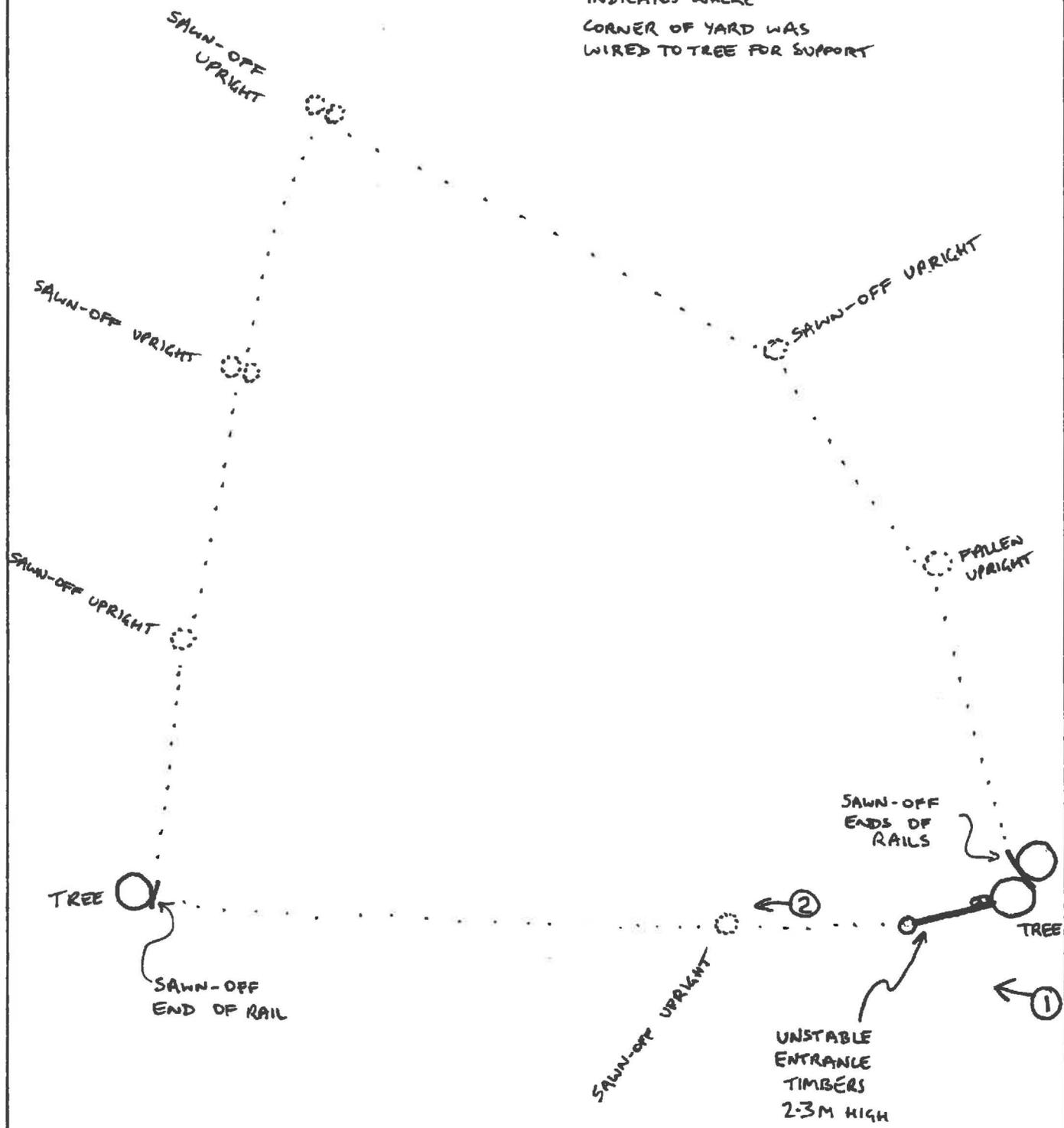
The yard was sawn down in about the 1970s to prevent its future use; the demolition was possibly carried out by government employees.

Condition: Poor.

≡SITE 8≡



TREE
WIRE-TIE
INDICATES WHERE
CORNER OF YARD WAS
WIRED TO TREE FOR SUPPORT



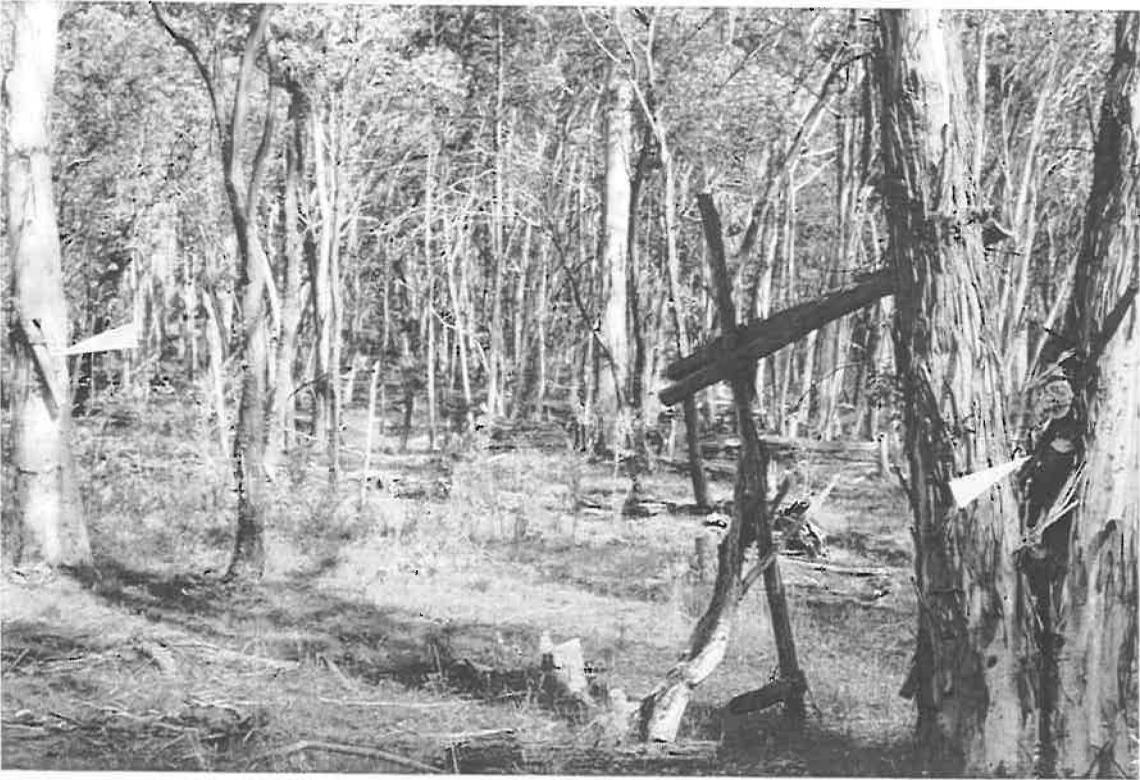


Photo 1, the remains of the yard's entrance; arrows show ends of rails still affixed to trees.

Photo 2, sawn-off upright.



Site 9

Grid reference and location: 731675, located on Kangaroo Flat (now Smoker's Gap) within the timber across the flat from the Corin Dam Road and the Smokers Gap Carpark.

Type: Running yard.

Description: A yard consisting of timber rails wired to uprights (trees), the site is similar to site 8 in that the yard was sawn down and most rails are now on the ground. The ends of a number of the rails are still wired to the uprights. The remains of one of the yard's wings are still visible.

History: Built by Tom Gregory, Bennie Ferguson, Warren Hoffman and Gordon O'Brien in the 1960s. The yard was not finished and brumbies were not caught in it. It was cut down in about the 1970s similarly to site 8.

Condition: Poor.

≡SITE 9≡

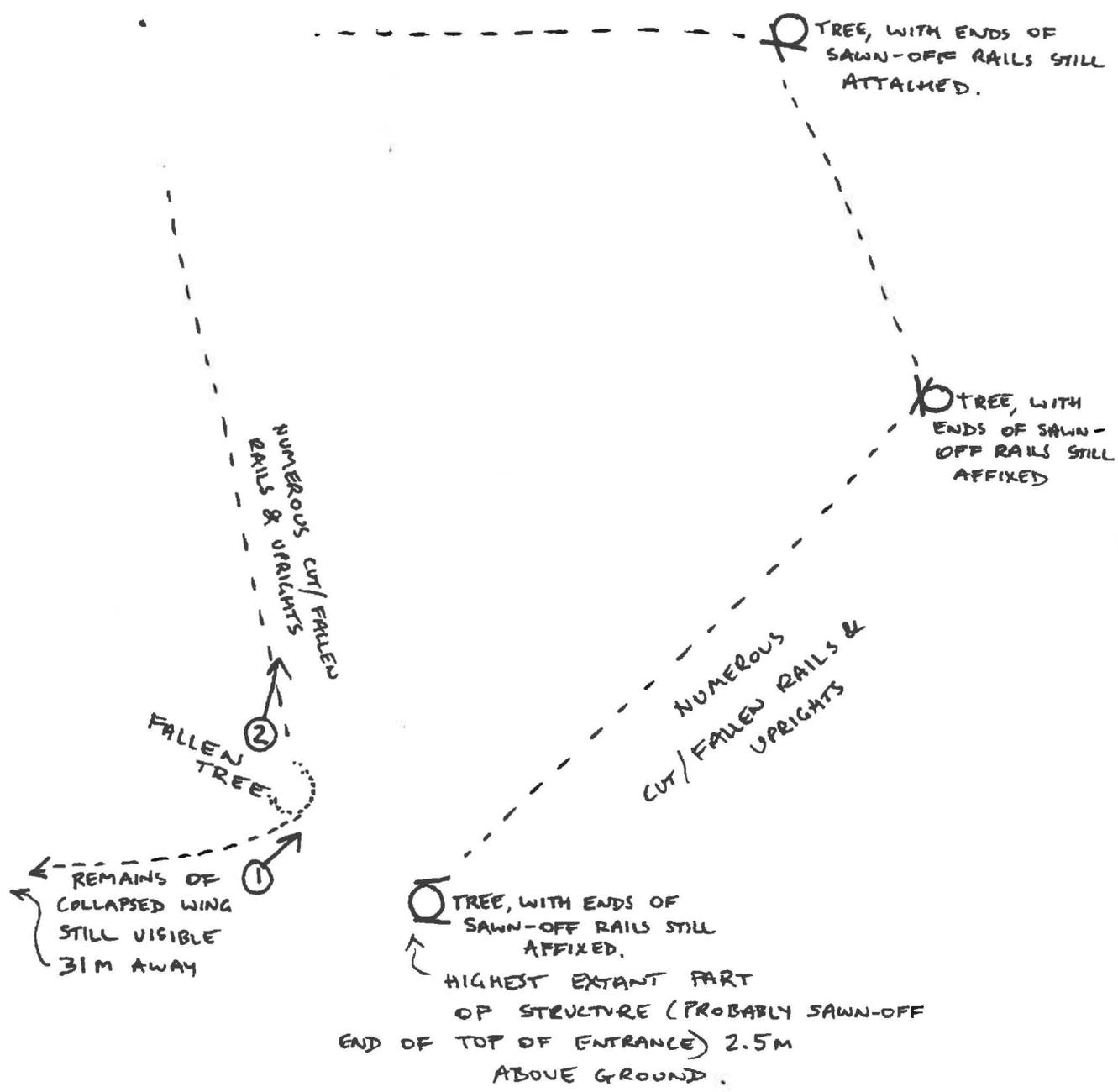




Photo 1, showing sawn-off rail-ends still affixed to trees.

Photo 2, rails and uprights on the ground.



Site 10

Grid reference and location: 762665, within the Jumbuck Flat dingo fence and a short distance from a small flat on an upper tributary of Blue Gum Creek.

Type: Salt yard.

Description: This is the biggest of the yards located under the study. It consists of timber rails wired to uprights (mainly Mountain gum trees). There are two entrances (the timber framework at one end has collapsed; there is still some remnant hessian attached at this entrance) and so the yard could have been used to operate in either direction. Within the yard is a smaller yard which may have been used for one of two purposes. It may have been where the brumbies were taken so that a halter could be put on (owing to the large size of the main yard this would have been a difficult task there). Or it may have been where a domesticated horse was left as a 'bait' to attract the brumbies (as an alternative to salt); it is known that one of the brumby runners off Booroomba used this technique and it may have been here that he did it. A tree within the yard has some wire attached and this is probably part of the trip wire that would have dropped the door at the southern entrance. A horse leg bone is at the yard; there was also a skull at the time I first saw the yard in November 1991 and it was still here in April 1992, yet it had disappeared by March 1993. A faint path is discernable running up to the yard and it may be the old brumby track.

History: No precise details are known concerning the history of this yard. However the yard was probably built in the 1960s; Booroomba employee Tony Brady, who worked on the property and was familiar with this area, said there was no yard here in his time. He left Booroomba in 1957-58.

Condition: Good; some rails have collapsed.

≡SITE 10≡



COLLAPSED ENTRANCE
TIMBERS (WITH
REMNANT HESSIAN
ATTACHED)

UPRIGHTS
MAINLY LIVE
MTN GUM

HIGHEST RAILS
ARE 2.4M
ABOVE GROUND

WIRE ATTACHED HERE TO
TREE; PROBABLY TRIP-WIRE
FOR SOUTHERN
ENTRANCE

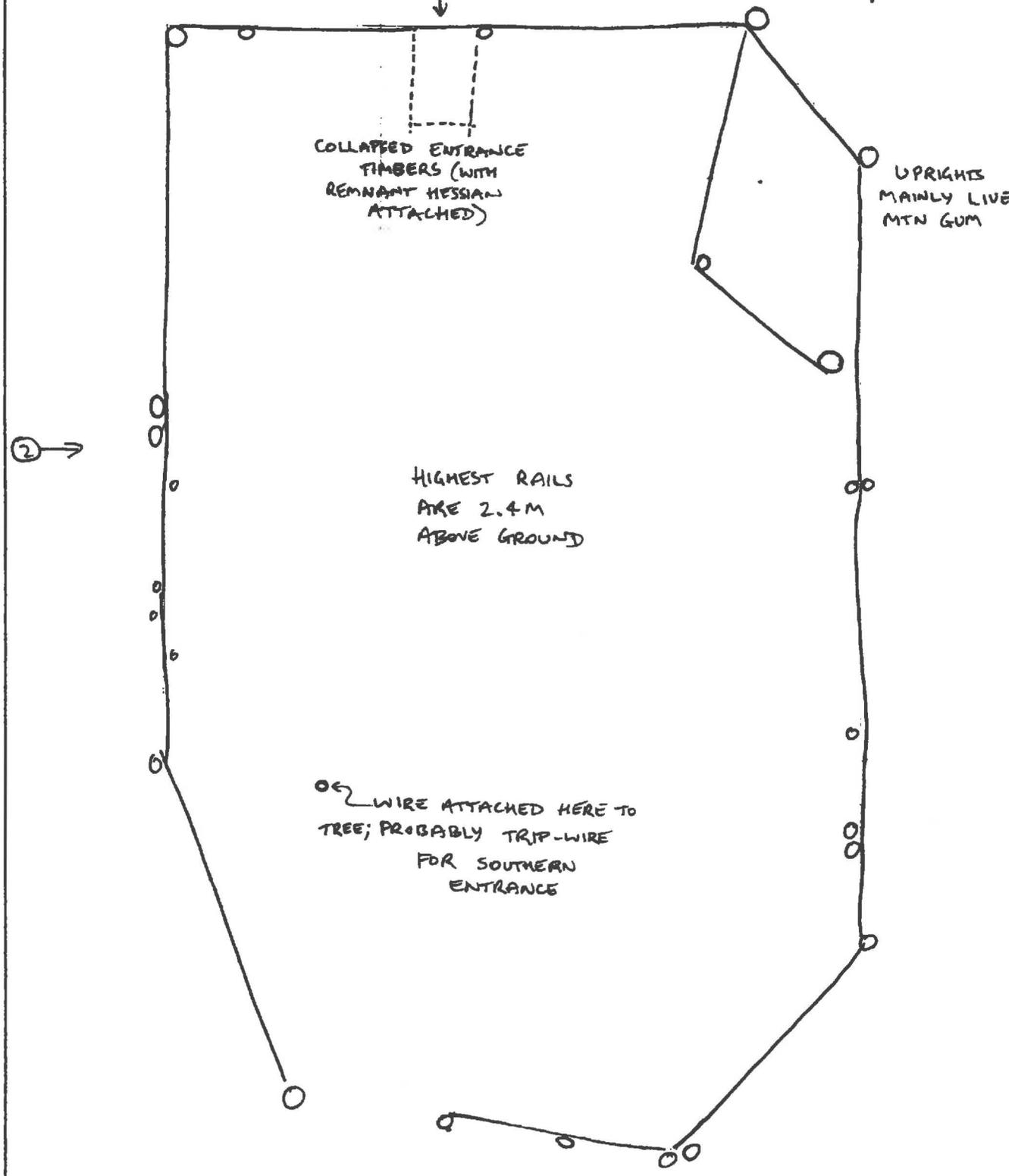




Photo 1.

Photo 2.





Photo 3, the collapsed northern entrance timbers; arrow points to remnant hessian.

Site 11

Grid reference and location: 756645, located in a stand of Alpine ash near the southern end of the Jumbuck dingo fence, at the top of a gully running into an upper tributary of Blue Gum Creek.

Type: Running yard.

Description: This yard has ash rails wired to uprights which are a combination of ash and Mountain gum. The wings are still standing for about 15 metres (making it the only Namadgi running yard with wings that have a high level of intactness), and can be traced for much further. The yard however was not well designed as the horses would have to have been run *uphill* to the site. A track, quite probably the old brumby track, runs to the yard.

History: Tony Brady knew of this yard and felt that it was 'old' even in his time. Consequently the yard dates from at least the 1950s and could conceivably have been built in the 1940s although this is uncertain. One of the Booroomba employees who used the yard was Ernie Mitchell; the yard was being used annually in the 1950s at least.

Condition: Good; one upright (a small tree which has died) has fallen across the yard,



Photo 1, the yard is in the centre and the wings lead off to the right.

Photo 2, looking up the wings to the yard's entrance.



Site 12 (possible):

Grid reference and location: 757659, located within the Jumbuck dingo fence near a partly open flat at the head of an upper tributary of Blue gum Creek.

Type: Salt yard, presumably.

Description: The yard had rails wired to trees; it has since been dismantled. Rails lie on the ground at the site and also are found up to 15 metres away. A small amount of wire is present on the ground, but not in the trees.

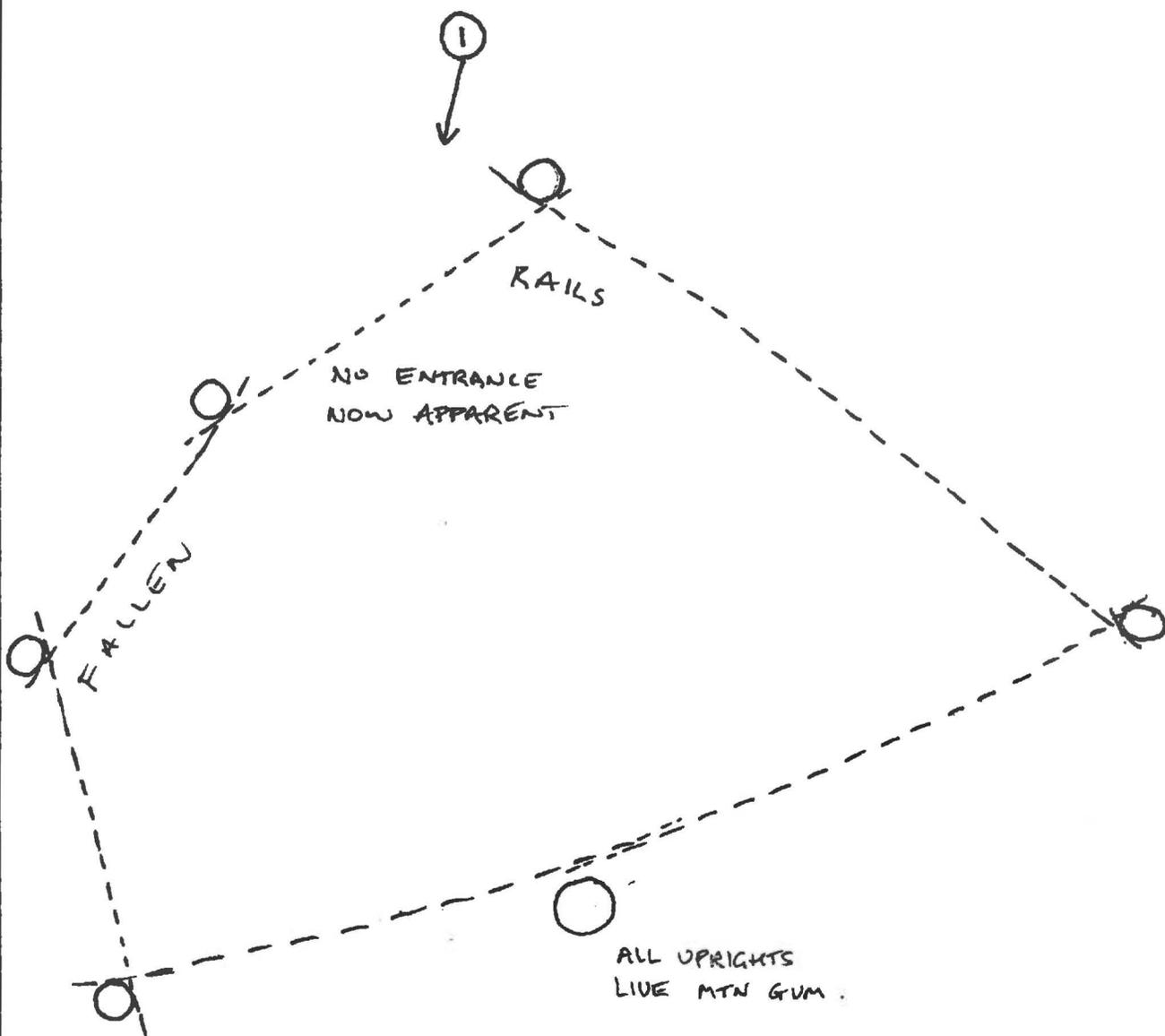
History: Bushwalker Lyle Mark found the yard in the early 1980s; it was then under construction and looked 'rather amateurish'. It was seen first in 1981 and again two years later. An abandoned tent in bad repair was now at the site and it was decided to report the site to rangers. In addition to the tent a salt lick was also apparently later discovered. It was then considered that the site was related to brumby running; the site was subsequently dismantled.

Condition: Poor, the yard has been dismantled.



Photo 1.

≡SITE 12≡



MORE FALLEN (DISMANTLED) →
RAILS ↓

Site 13 (possible)

Grid reference and location: 752643, located about 20 metres outside the south-west corner of the Jumbuck dingo fence.

Type: Salt yard, presumably.

Description: The site has been subjected to fire and very little remains. The main features are a fallen tree with concave recesses indicating that timber rails have at some time been affixed; these 'rail scars' are burnt, showing that the rails have burnt away against the tree. The fallen tree is 1.4 metres from another tree which has wire well embedded in it; this other tree was possibly the other side of the yard's entrance. At some time the function of the yard has changed from brumby running to stock use for strands of wire were added to the now-fallen tree to replace the lost rails and these extend up the tree for only a short distance, thus the later wire enclosure could not have been very high. N.B. as there is so little material remaining at the site, no site plan has been compiled.

History: One of Jim Sorrell's salt yards was known to have stood almost exactly on this spot. It is for this reason that the site is considered to have possibly been a brumby yard.

Condition: Very poor, burnt and collapsed.

Photo 1, showing the fallen tree, with arrows pointing to the burnt rail scars; the standing tree assumed to be the other side of the entrance is in the background.



Site 14 (possible)

Grid reference and location: 754653, located on the southern portion of the Jumbuck dingo fence.

Type: Running or salt yard.

Description: This possible yard has one wall of rails wired to trees while the other wall is the dingo fence itself. It is not possible to tell whether the horses were run downhill into the yard or whether they were attracted to it with salt.

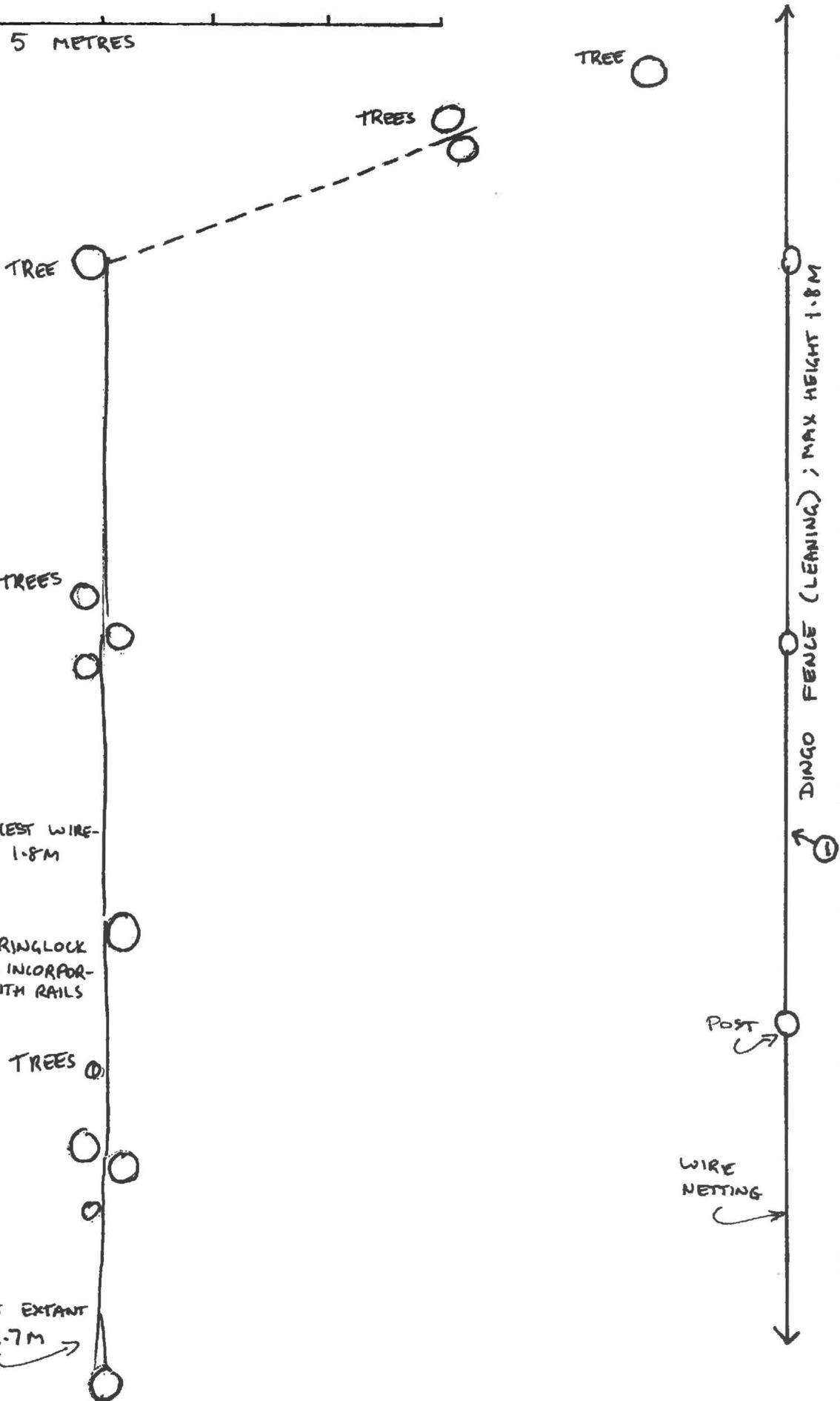
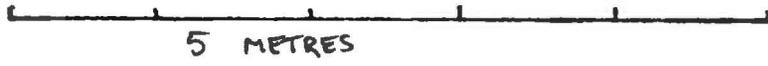
History: No historical details are known.

Condition: Fair, the lower wall and some other rails are missing.



Photo 1.

≡SITE 14≡



Significance

In determining the cultural significance of Namadgi's brumby trapyards, the term 'cultural significance' is defined as aesthetic, historic, scientific or social value for past, present or future generations, which is the definition given in the *Burra Charter*. Assessment of cultural significance was carried out through analysis of the oral and physical evidence relating to the yards, together with the values tables as used by the Australian Heritage Commission, and the criteria for the assessment of the heritage significance of places as listed in the *ACT Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991*. These criteria (i.e. those relating to cultural heritage places) are as follows:

- (1) a place which demonstrates a high degree of technical and/or creative achievement, by showing qualities of innovation or departure or representing a new achievement of its time;
- (2) a place which exhibits outstanding design or aesthetic qualities valued by the community or a cultural group;
- (3) a place which demonstrates a distinctive way of life, taste, tradition, religion, land use, custom, process, design or function which is no longer practised, is in danger of being lost, or is of exceptional interest;
- (4) a place which is highly valued by the community or a cultural group for reasons of strong or special religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations;
- (5) a place which is the only known or comparatively intact example of its type;
- (6) a place which is a notable example of a class of natural or cultural places or landscapes and which demonstrates the principal characteristics of that class;
- (7) a place which has strong or special associations with a person, group, event, development or cultural phase which played a significant part in local or national history;
- (8) a place which demonstrates a likelihood of providing information which will contribute significantly to a wider understanding of natural or cultural history, by virtue of its use as a research site, teaching site, type locality or benchmark site.

Taking the trapyards collectively, they relate to a number of the above criteria, particularly criteria 3, 5, 6 and 7:

- The yards are a manifestation of a particularly distinctive activity which is now far less common in the high country and extinct in the ACT mountains. Brumby running is a part of Australian folklore and bush culture and the yards represent a tangible link with this important historical and cultural theme.
- The yards also have considerable rarity value. Comparison of maps 1 and 2 reveals the tremendous loss rate (through bushfire, natural decay, and deliberate destruction) among the yards. The remaining yards thus have heightened significance as the few survivors in the ACT's mountain hinterland.
- The yards contain examples of both running and salt yards and so the two major types of yards are represented in Namadgi (though Namadgi doesn't possess as fine examples as are found in Kosciusko National Park, e.g. the running yard at Teddy's Hut).
- Finally, a number of local families and individuals significant in the history of the area now known as Namadgi (which after all is half the area of the ACT) took part in the chasing of wild horses and the use and building of the yards.

A number of the yard sites have individual significance as well. No firm assessment of significance can be made for sites 12-14 because their background is still not certain. Sites 2 and 6 have high historical significance, though their fabric is of a very vestigial nature. Similarly sites 5, 7, 8, and 9 have significance but it is lowered by the sites'

poor condition. The remaining five sites are the intact or largely intact yards of Namadgi:

- Site 1 is highly significant on account of its association with two of the main periods of brumby running in the Brindabellas (the Jack Maxwell period particularly, and the later Tom Gregory period), its being the only example of a linked yard, and its being an example of a running yard. Despite the partial collapse of this yard its purpose and function is still able to be recognised and this yard is probably the most significant in the Park.
- Site 11 is significant as an example of a running yard; its wings are more intact than those at site 1 and it is able to convey the function of a running yard very well, though it is not as good an example as site 1 owing to the way the yard is sited and its partly very light construction. The yard also is important as evidence of running in this part of Namadgi during several decades.
- Sites 3, 4 and 10 all have significance for their association with their respective historical periods and as examples of salt yards. Sites 3 and 4 show a major departure from traditional yards through their wire construction and this can be noted. Site 10 is more traditional in materials and is of further interest for its size and distinctive inner yard.

Some comments on the future conservation of the yard sites should be made. In the best of all worlds it would be preferable for all 14 sites to be conserved for their cultural significance; however this is not possible given the limited human and financial resources available and it probably has to be accepted that not much can be done for the vestigial and 'possible' sites. As for the five main sites, the main threats to their survival are fire, natural decay (including decay of timbers, rusting of wires, impact of snow weight, bursting of wires through tree growth, falling trees, etc) and deliberate or accidental damage. In order to help conserve the yards the following brief points are made:

- Namadgi staff should be mindful of the sites' locations so that in the event of bushfire in the yards' vicinity some attempt can be made to save the sites. It is recognised that several of the sites are on or just outside the Namadgi boundary, thus management of these sites will need to be a co-operative effort with the authorities responsible for the relevant neighbouring area e.g. NPWS for Bimberi Nature Reserve.
- Natural decay of timber work could be averted or retarded by the application of clear wood-preserving fluids, if the resources are available.
- Education of Park users and staff about the sites would help to avoid damage to the sites; this could be done through staff being briefed on the sites and through reference to the presence of the sites being included in Park literature (eg walks pamphlets, inclusion in displays at the Visitor Centre etc). Whether on-site interpretation can be achieved without intrusive side effects is a matter for discussion.
- Where minor structural collapse at these five sites has already occurred, this could be rectified by the re-erection of the fallen structures. For example at sites 10 and 4 the fallen or loose entrance timbers could be re-erected and stabilised, and the fallen upright at site 11 can be made secure. Broken wires can be re-tied to hold rails or other fallen timbers. New materials should *not* be introduced unless absolutely necessary. In the case of the many rails which have gone from site 1, and the decayed wings, there seems little point in trying to *reconstruct* the yard, or the wings, to their original state; rather concentration should be on preventing further deterioration of the site.

- Ongoing conservation of the sites in the future could be guided by the above point where it has become evident that further deterioration of a site has occurred.

Finally, bushwalkers and other users of Namadgi are encouraged to report further finds to Park staff and to staff of the ACT Heritage Unit. Every effort was made to locate all existing brumby yards during the course of the project, and it is to be hoped that this aim was achieved. But there could still be more yards out there, waiting...

Appendix: some of the brumby runners

This is a list of those people known to the author to have run brumbies in the Namadgi area. It does not pretend to be a complete list, but it is at least a start.

Bill Bates, Wallace Bates, Eric Blewitt, Fred Blundell, John Boyd, Bill Brayshaw, Leslie (Tiny) Bridle, Ruby Bridle, Tom Chalker, Percy Chalker, Frank Cleary, Bill Cotter, Garry Cotter, Jack Cotter, Russell Cotter, Vin Cotter, Arthur Cochran, Eva Cochran (nee Lowther), Harry Cribb, Andy Cunningham, Colin Curtis, John Dowling, Bennie Ferguson, Bill Fisher, Jack Fisher, George Franklin, Stella Miles Franklin, Tom Gregory, Henry (Bung) Harris, Percy (Pod) Harris, Warren Hoffman, Ralph Lees, Bill Lindley, Albert Lowther, Cyril Lynch, Charlie Margules, Louis Margules, Jack Maxwell, Ivy Maxwell (nee Franklin), Lach Maxwell, Audrey Maxwell (nee Cochran), Doug Maxwell, Norm McGuinness, Lem McKeahnie, Dan McMahon, Ted McMahon, Ernie Mitchell, Gordon O'Brien, Frank Oldfield, Harry Oldfield, Herbert Oldfield, Max Oldfield, Vince Oldfield, Pat Pearce, Tom Pierce, Len Pockley, Kevin Primmer, Lindsay Pryor, Hugh Read, Bert Reid, Alan Reid, Neville Reid, Jack Reid, Marie Reid (nee West), Pat Ryan, Glen Ryan, Charlie Sorell, Jim Sorell, Sam Sorell, Stan Southwell, Norm Sutor, Jack Syphers, Tom Taylor, Merve Tong, Ted Tong, Johnny Tuson, Fred Tutty, Alec Webb, Lex Webb, Barbara Wentworth (nee Baird), Bevis West, Charlie West, Eric West, Leo West, Miss - Whitehead, Doug Young.

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Oral (this list includes all people contacted for information during the project and during the period 1990-92)

Reg Alder, Eric Andrews, Odile Arman, Alan Bagnall, Phil Boreham, Tony Brady, Granville Crawford, Stan Cregan, Colin Curtis, John Dowling, Peter Filmer, Monica and Bill Flint, Lindsay Franklin, Keith Green, Tom Gregory, Peter Hann, Carole Helman, David Hogg, John Hyles, Frank Ingwerson, David Kerr, Fay and Noel Luton, Louis Margules, Lyle Mark, Audrey and Lach Maxwell, Donald Maxwell, Colin Maxwell, Gordon O'Brien, Max Oldfield, Vince Oldfield, Peter Ormay, Will Osborne, Kevin Primmer, Lindsay Pryor, Hugh Read, Jack Reid, Marie Reid, Brian Terrill, Laurie Tong, Jules de Smet, Sybil and Robert Story, Rob Watchorn, Jim Webb, Lex Webb, Barbara Wentworth, Charlie West.

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