

Box Hill - Nelson Bush Fire Brigade

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Following the fire of Saturday 10th December 1938 which burnt from "The Big Sandy", a waterhole in Cattai Creek, crossed Blind Road and on to Annangrove Road, Annangrove before being halted, and then only five weeks later on Saturday 14th January 1939, (Black Saturday) the fire that burnt from the Jack and Jill picnic grounds at Vinyard through to Castle Hill being the worst fire in the district's history, with the loss of two lives on Box Hill and served homes in the area, the residents of Rouse Hill, Box Hill and Nelson felt that action should be taken to form a Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade.

A Public Meeting was called for the 17th January 1940 in the Rouse Hill Church Hall, twelve people attended, the Chairman was Mr J.A. Peterson with Mr L.W. Holme acting as Secretary in the unavoidable absence of Mrs H.A. Cox. This number of people being considered as not representative of the district, it was resolved to hold a further meeting on Saturday, 27th January 1940. Thirty six people attended this meeting with Messrs. Fisher, Spice and Tuck, visitors from Riverstone also attending. A motion was moved and seconded that a Brigade be formed and on being put to the meeting was carried unanimously.

Officers elected were:- President, Mr L.W. Holme; Vice President, Mr R. Munro; Treasurer, Mr Pearce; Secretary, Mrs H.A. Cox; Captain, Mr Ken Brocklebank, Vice Captain, Mr Hubert Mason. Lieutenants:- Messrs W. Cooper, Lelant, J.A. Peterson, C.D. Rasmussen, H. Cox and T. Lackey. It was also resolved to divide the area into two zones with Annangrove Road being the division. Membership was one shilling (ten cents) per family.

Original members included Messrs Cooper, Lelant, Pearce, Pie, J.A. Peterson, T.A. Peterson and C.D. Rasmussen from Rouse Hill. H. Cox, L.W. Holme, L.R. Holme, T. Lackey, R. Munro, G. Ritchie, A. Thorpe and Mr Shaler of Box Hill, with K. Brocklebank, R. Harris, F. Hession, L. Hession, M. Hession, T. Hession, V. Hession, R. Keen, H. Mason and J. Mason from Nelson.

During the late 1940s. the amalgamation of the original two zones drifted apart, resulting in Box Hill-Nelson Brigade looking after their area west of Nelson Road with Rouse Hill Brigade taking care of their area on the eastern side of Nelson Road. Today, the boundary of the Box Hill and Nelson Brigade commencing at the junction of Windsor Road and Nelson Road, follows Nelson Road, Edwards Road, left into Annangrove Road to Cattai Creek, thence northwards following Cattai Creek to Pitt Town Road, Maraylya following Pin Town Road to Boundary Road, turning left out to Windsor Road, then left again down Windsor Road to Nelson Road.

During the early years of the Brigade, equipment included chipping hoes, mattocks, long handle shovels, rakes, axes, brush hooks, leather beaters, watering cans and metal knapsack sprays, a far cry from the modern four wheel drive tankers and all the equipment that goes with them today. The first water tanker this Brigade owned had been a meat delivery van for the Riverstone Meat Works, a Morris Commercial and after being dismantled and rebuilt as a fire fighting vehicle, it went into service in October 1958. All the work on this vehicle was done voluntarily by the members with the motorised pump, reels and hoses supplied through Baulkham Hills Shire Council.

The tanker was garaged in an old hay shed on Miss Clare Hessian's property in Nelson Road until Council built the Brigade's first Fire Station in 1965 on land donated by Mr & Mrs J.C. Thomas in Nelson Road. On 1st May 1970, the Brigade took delivery of a replacement tanker, a 1969 Austin, fully equipped with two-way radio. On 21st December 1981, a Toyota Landcruiser was delivered to the brigade. Fitted with a ninety gallon tank and one hose reel, it was a very handy quick response vehicle for small fires and mopping up. This gave the brigade two vehicles for the first time.

A new two-bay fire station was officially opened on 21st September 1985, situated in Old Pitt Town Road, Box Hill. The brigade now had two stations.

The year 1986 saw the brigade involved in the production of an episode for the television serial "Country Practice". Together with Kenthurst Brigade, a full day was spent filming at Killarney House, Pitt Town and at Kenthurst.

Late 1986, the brigade took delivery of a new, four wheel drive, double cab, Isuzu tanker, with a carrying capacity of 3,500 litres, this vehicle replacing the Austin. On the 8th January 1990, a new, four wheel drive Mazda fully equipped with a carrying capacity of 1,400 litres was handed over to the brigade, this unit replaced the Toyota Landcruiser.

In 1993 the brigade took delivery of a Toyota Landcruiser as a personnel carrier and on the 8th January 1996, the 1986 Isuzu was replaced with another new, four wheel drive, double cab, Isuzu tanker.

Initially formed to help the district in times of bush fire, today brigades are on call 24 hours a day to assist in any emergency, be it fire, flood, road accidents or clearing the havoc wrought by storm.