

UNPUBLISHED REPORT 1967/02

Bush fires in the South Pieman River area (February 1967)

by E. Williams and A. B. Gulline

This report was primarily requested by the Department of Mines due to inconveniences and lost time caused by scrub fires in the area during January and February.

The Duck Creek camp (north of Granville Harbour) was vacated on Wednesday February 8 on learning of the fires in Hobart. A small fire was burning in scrub at the south end of 'Four Mile Beach' at the time. Only one vehicle other than ours was seen in the vicinity and that was a Land Rover (registration number recorded).

Before returning to Duck Creek camp on Monday 20 February a chartered flight was made over the area at the instigation of the Mines Department Chief Geologist for the specific purpose of determining whether the camp had been burned or not and to spot fires close by. No fires were noted in the immediate vicinity. To the north it appeared that some land clearing was in progress, and piles of logs and scrub were burning.

On returning to our camp (February 20) we noticed marks of a tracked vehicle leading to it. A one gallon kerosene tin, which was left 150 yards along the track, was now a few yards from the tents. An area of ferns had been burned near the tents and a terylene tent had about six holes burned in it. The fire had crossed the creek upstream from the camp and had burned a small area of scrub and dead trees. An aluminium billy was missing from the camp. A tractor (McCormick International) was parked on the track about 200 yards south of Duck Creek.

On Tuesday (21 February) we returned from work at mid-day to find a fire had sprung up again from the other side of the creek, and was burning up and down the valley from the camp. We extinguished the visible fire which threatened our camp. The tractor was inspected but no means of starting it was visible so it was left and one tyre burned.

The fire was last seen moving southwards through scrub fanned by a 20–30 MPH north to north-west wind. A much larger fire was noted to the north but our activities were restricted to protecting our own camp from sparks and back burning down the valley of Duck Creek.

It must also be brought to notice that small fires were burning near the camp and along the Zeehan–Granville Harbour road in the interval December to February 20.

[24 February 1967]