

# Dear diary, wrote letters, report, and fought fire

By Mike Lyons

THE normally peaceful surroundings of the Woodvale Wildlife Research Centre were transformed recently when fire swept through the reserve and threatened the buildings.

The fire originated on the western side of Mitchell Freeway in the Water Authority reserve.

Woodvale staff members Tony Start, Mike Churches and Brent Johnson were monitoring events when spotting across the Mitchell Freeway soon spread to the verge adjacent to the south-western edge of the Woodvale Reserve.

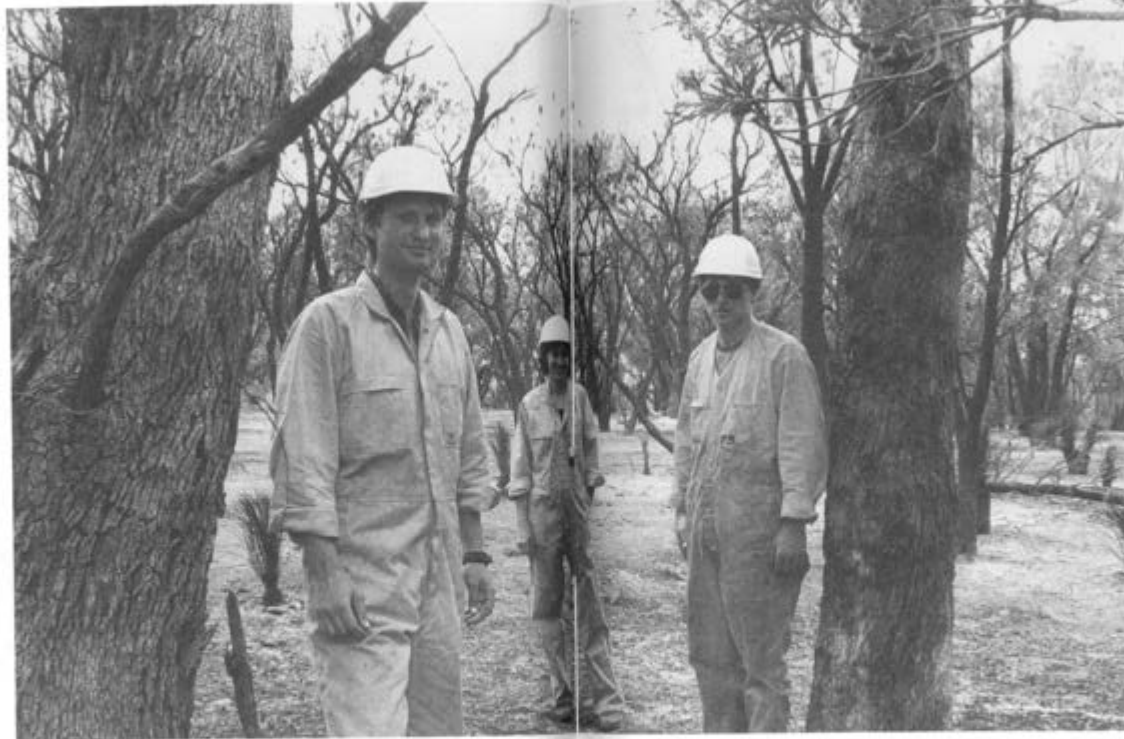
By this stage two light fire units from the centre had arrived and, with the WAFB, attempted to restrict the fire to the verge.

The alarm had been raised at the research centre and the buildings, roof and barrier sprinklers were activated.

Front office staff Raelene Hick, Lois Cade and Kylie Dyson provided base communications.

Aided by a south-westerly breeze, the fire jumped the boundary and spread towards the vehicle compound.

By this time, John McKenzie from Perth District had arrived, assessed the situation and withdrew Perth and Dwellingup crews from the Avon



CALM technical officers Peter Orell, Natasha Baczocha and Mike Lyons in burnt-out bushland only 30 metres from CALM's Wildlife Research Centre at Woodvale. The previous day, they were battling six-metre high flames at this site. Photo by Carolyn Thomson

Valley fire to help.

With extensive spotting, the fire could not be contained to the south-western part of the reserve, and spread north along the western side of the reserve towards the ranger's residence and the research centre.

At the centre, fire warden Keith Morris organised staff to secure the buildings and additional personnel donned overalls and helmets to staff fire hydrants around the buildings.

WAFB ordered evacuation of the remaining centre staff, with

Bill Muir ensuring staff left quickly and calmly.

As the fire approached the centre, staff using hydrants and CALM crews with heavy duty tankers defended the perimeter.

The fire front continued around the buildings to the north

where low fuel areas, hydrants and the barrier sprinklers provided protection.

Hydrants were under the control of Norm McKenzie, Alan Clarke, Keith Morris and Gordon Friend.

Once the threat to the build-

ings had passed, attention moved to the eastern boundary where the reserve adjoins residential areas.

At this stage a City of Wanneroo light unit and a rubber-tyred loader provided help to secure remaining unburned bushland and prevent the fire spreading outside the reserve.

CALM crews remained to mop up until 8 pm, followed by overnight patrols drawn from research centre staff.

Thanks are due to many people, in particular, John McKenzie, Greg Napier and crews from Perth and Dwellingup Districts.

These crews were extremely professional and highly effective in the manner in which they contained the fire and saved the buildings.

The WAFB and Wanneroo City Council also provided good support.

Finally, the Woodvale staff in addition to those already mentioned who performed well in difficult circumstances included Jim Rolfe, Natasha Baczocha, Peter Orell, Mike Onus, Phil Fuller, Paul De Tores, and Greg Keighery.

The training of Woodvale staff by Bill Muir during the year certainly paid off.

While there were a few tense moments only minor property damage occurred and everybody was unharmed.



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