



AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION OF LIVE STEAMERS

AALS Web Site
www.aals.asn.au

Limited
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Dear Secretary,

In this letter I am covering several topics which will be of interest to most of your members, probably the most pressing of which is a complete update on the char situation, as I know several clubs are running low on supplies.

AALS SECRETARY

After about a decade as AALS Secretary, Hugh Elsol has decided it is time to take a step back and let someone else have a go while he gets some well earned time in his workshop. The Board has reluctantly accepted his resignation, and I would like to place on record my thanks to Hugh for an outstanding job over such a long time, often in difficult circumstances. He really did us all proud.

Linda Hall, Secretary of the Gippsland club in Victoria, has agreed to take on the role of Secretary and the Board have appointed her to this position until the AGM at the Adelaide convention next Easter, whereupon her continued appointment will be subject to the normal voting procedures. Thank you, Linda. I believe Linda to be a very capable and efficient person and I have every confidence that she will do an outstanding job. Linda's contact details appear at the top of this letter.

CHAR

At the end of the Annual General Meeting at the Tullamarine convention I stated that I was in discussions with the various char suppliers and would advise everyone of the outcome. This has taken a little longer than originally envisaged because there were numerous products which had to be tested, a couple of which were unknown at that time. The information has now all been compiled and I can share the results with you.

Australian Char advised that they were ceasing char production totally about the middle of June and the plant has closed with no plans to re-open. They have confirmed this to me in writing. One product they have produced for many years is the Heat Beads brand of BBQ fuel and that is now their sole operation. We have extensively tested all the alternative offerings and I have to say at the outset that none of them are up to the same standard as the char we used to get from Australian Char.

Cooper Minerals in Melbourne are producing a char which seems to be generally finding favour with the clubs which have tried it. Theirs is known as the Bacchus Marsh char. The main drawback is that they do not produce larger sizes. Their 820 grade is a nominal 25mm size which is the only one

which would benefit us. Their other sizes are dust and under 5mm. They do not have a retort which would enable them to do larger sizes and the capital outlay necessary to build such a retort is out of their reach at this time, somewhere in the vicinity of \$40,000. They supply mainly in 800kg bulk bags which are \$480 plus GST and freight for 800kg. They can do smaller quantities, e.g. 15kg but it does work out more expensive and the price would have to be obtained at the time of placing the order. The procedure is you place the order, they will issue an invoice and dispatch once the invoice is paid. The man to contact is Brendon Cooper and his phone number is (03) 9867 8455 or fax (03) 9821 4452. I did not think to ask him if he has an email address.

Pacific Carbon in Newcastle are a major supplier of char to industry but feedback from clubs where it has been tried so far, indicates that it is not much good for our type of usage. The most common complaint is that you have to really work to keep a bright fire and if you let it die off even a little bit there is no recovering it. Samples tested have also had a very high shale content. They do however have a 25 x 55 mm size nut available in bulk bags only.

Sydney Coal & Coke are another supplier but are not over generous with details on where it is sourced. The char they supply is 5 - 15mm nominal size and it is from the Newcastle area, which more or less says it is from Pacific Carbon. They say that it is not and will not elaborate, but the product certainly seems to be exactly the same, though perhaps with an even higher shale content. The man to talk to is Todd Wildman and his number is a mobile 0418 201 931. His email address is todd.wildman@live.com.au He charges \$33 for a 20kg bag which he says is usually up to a kilo over in weight and he also does bulk bags of 1 cubic metre for \$725. Members from two Sydney clubs obtained samples for trialing. The comment from one was that it was no good for our locos and that he could buy shale for \$20 a tonne!

On the basis of all this it appears to me that the best option is the Bacchus Marsh char from Cooper Minerals. Unfortunately, most of the queries I have received over the last few months regarding char have come from owners of the larger locos because they can't get anything big enough. The bad news for them is that no one in Australia is now producing char any larger than 25mm in size, except Pacific Carbon, end of story. The only advice I could offer them is to brush up on their firing skills with coal and get to know their tube brushes more intimately.

NSW STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Many of you probably know by now, on August 6 we lost one of our better known and most respected members of the hobby, with the passing of Jeff Wakeham, the NSW State Rep. for the AALS. Jeff was also president of the Lake Macquarie club at Edgeworth for 16 years until the time of his death. Our condolences and best wishes go out to Jeff's son Tim and daughter Jayne and to the members of the Lake Macquarie club.

This does of course, mean that we now have a vacancy for the position of NSW State Representative. We are not going to rush into arm twisting or anything like that, but if you are interested, or know someone who might be, please do consider nominating when the correspondence for the next convention is mailed out in October.

I think that is about enough from me at this time, so until we talk again, I wish you happiness, enjoyment and contentment in your hobby.

Cheers

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sandra Proctor', written over a light blue background.

**President
Australian Association of Live Steamers**