



**BNT**

# TRACKS



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## The French connection

ALIENOR LE GOUVELLO came to Australia from Paris, France, 10 years ago on a three-week holiday and fell in love with the Australian Outback.

She lived and worked on remote Aboriginal communities in Central Australia and learnt to live and appreciate the remoteness and beauty of the Australian bush, becoming self-reliant and resourceful.

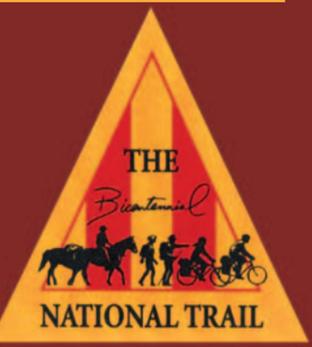
She planned and prepared her expedition on the Bicentennial National Trail for a year and a half, first contacting the Guy Fawkes Heritage Horse Association about her intention of using

Guy Fawkes brumbies. She then lived at the farm of two of The GFHHA members in Dorrigo, NSW, who mentored her in the breaking in of the horses.

She prepared and researched the logistics of the BNT and got her gear together to get ready to leave on the 17th of November last year from Healesville.

Her trip is mostly self-funded but she did win a couple of small grants, including one from the Australian Geographic Society and won the 2015 adventure fund of the *Sidetracked* magazine in the UK..

See story Page 12



**AUGUST 2016**

## Editorial

RECENTLY I met a man who told me his name was “Napoléon Bonaparte”. He’d spent the night in a toilet block on the beach at the seaside village where I was staying and was in a hurry to pack up and leave before he got into trouble.

Although he was missing a few teeth, showing a few ribs and hadn’t cut his hair in a long while, he was not “homeless”, at least not in the way we use the term to imply that we ourselves are the victims of the dispossessed.

He was pushing a stylish, strong and well-made three-wheel trolley – it even had an adjustable jockey wheel at the back to keep it level. There was quite a bit of gear in it – food, cooking and camping gear, clothes, a solar panel, batteries, lights and a radio.

He must have been very fit and strong because his vehicle was quite heavy. He told me where he had recently come from, but couldn’t say where he was going – it didn’t seem to matter.

I admired this man, and as I continued on my early morning beach walk my encounter with Napoleon caused me to reflect on the importance of the Bicentennial National Trail beyond providing bush holidays for those who can afford a team of horses and a year off work.

First and obviously, trekkers learn what it is to make do with very little, and how it

makes little difference to your feeling of wellbeing to do without. In a world where wealth is increasingly being concentrated in the hands of few, while the majority in poverty are denied basic rights, this is a revelation.

Secondly and most importantly, the BNT defends public access to common property. Eliza Allan’s article on page 16 about Travelling Stock Reserves shows how TSRs are a necessary and welcome facility in the rural landscape, and while grateful to the NSW Lands Department for its support, we have learned to our dismay that governments cannot be trusted to keep public assets in the public domain.

The English land tenure system, which began, like many other societies, with land seizure by force then used as currency, has been remarkably resilient, partly because the Manor provided a “common” for use by the peasants. Indeed some villages in Australia still have a common where residents can depasture say one horse, two cows or five sheep – perhaps even camping, which is something the BNT could look into.

Simple arithmetic will show that if all families on Earth owned a quarter acre

block, half of them would need to move to Mars – is that why we send rockets there?

It’s clear the current land tenure model is unsustainable in the long term and is already placing home ownership, and even rents, beyond the reach of young people. The BNT experience could help point the way.

Thirdly, the BNT community is a wonderful example of effective organisation at a grass roots level. Rather than relying on government control, with its erratic political pendulum and inefficient and bureaucratic public service management style, citizens themselves have created a web of communication to achieve a public good.

Social media works like this as well, and the BNT’s presence on Facebook has helped increase our membership and importantly brought many more young people into the fold. Many problems of society which have eluded governments over the years are now being tackled effectively by people joining together without whingeing and demanding change brought to them on a silver platter.

So I hope like me you wish Napoleon well on his journey into the unknown which does not matter.

ROGER FRYER



When the going gets tough ...

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## News

### Changes to BNT office and secretarial services

DUE to today’s technology and communication demands, and the constant changes to the different land tenures (both public and private lands), more demands are put on the voluntary BNT Board.

Looking towards the future of the BNT, the Board has opted for a contract for office and secretarial services as the best option.

A proposal put forward from Regional Development Australia Mid North Coast to have the BNT sales and membership office at Port Macquarie was accepted.

RDAMNC is a Federal Government-supported not-for-profit organisation with BNT members working at the office who understand the recreational and historical importance of the Trail. This will enable us to focus more on trail-related issues, future planning and updating guide books.

Many thanks to Lorraine Gordon, Section Coordinator from New England for suggesting and setting up the idea after responding to our call for help, and Jenny Kew for listening to us and understanding what is needed.

A meeting between BNT Board members Nick Jacomas, Jenny Costin and Sue Cumming was held at Port Macquarie RDAMNC’s William Street office to discuss the proposal and to meet the RDAMNC staff.

### Annual General Meeting

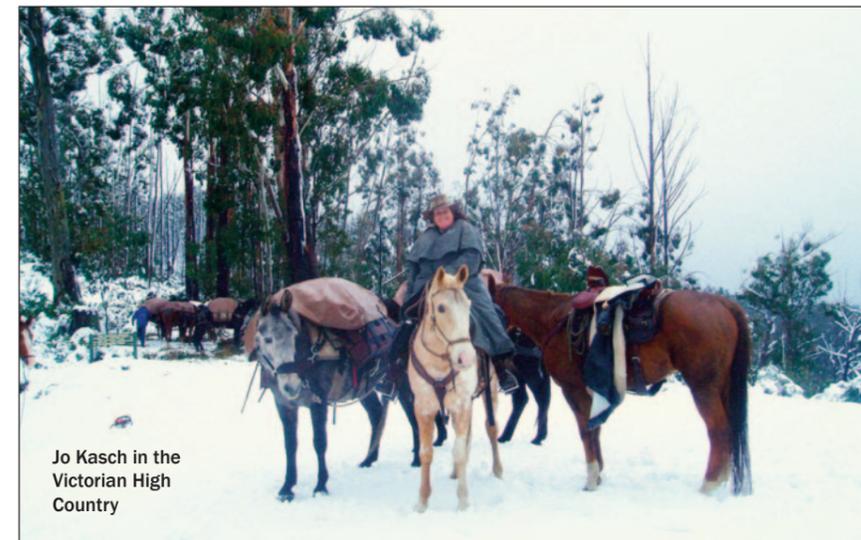
THE Annual General Meeting of the Bicentennial National Trail Inc. will be held at the UQ Campus, Warrego Highway, Gatton, QLD on Saturday, October 1, 2pm.

The meeting room is adjacent to the BNT resource centre/museum. The museum will be open on the day.

Sunday, October 2 will be dedicated to an information and technology conference on the future strategy for putting the guide books online to keep up with the younger generation of BNT members.

Anyone with IT ideas or skills will be most appreciated if they could attend. BNT needs the younger IT-savvy generation for trekkers’ input for the BNT’s future.

Motel style accommodation is available



Jo Kasch in the Victorian High Country

To start we have outsourced the memberships, accounting and guide book sales and other tasks as needed. To assist in the cost to the BNT for the office and secretarial services, the first increase in membership fees for 10 years of just \$5 individual or \$10 family/club memberships has had to be implemented.

So please keep supporting the BNT with your memberships.

Note the address for BNT is the same on the inside front page of Tracks and please use the RDAMNC phone 02 5525 1533 for all membership enquiries and

[order@nationaltrail.com.au](mailto:order@nationaltrail.com.au) for guide books orders. Mail orders and memberships and all correspondence to BNT/- RDAMNC PO Box 2537 Port Macquarie. NSW 2444.

The [info@nationaltrail.com.au](mailto:info@nationaltrail.com.au) and 1300 138 724 is for BNT trail issues, TSR and Trekker Registration and for Section Coordinators wishing to contact Chairman Nick. Members can contact the Section Coordinators for local trail knowledge where they wish to trek. Section Coordinators contact list is in TRACKS.

JENNY COSTIN Company Secretary



Alienor le Gouve at Glen Davis.

## Snaffle bits

### New Board members



CLANCY LEWIS operates a horse trail riding business at the southern end of the BNT called *Chum Creek Horse Rides and Huts*.

Clancy knows the country around Section 12 of the BNT better than the average bloke, having personally taken out around 6,000 customers on horse trail rides in the Australian bush. Additionally Clancy spent many fire seasons as a paid professional helicopter rappel crew leader and operations officer in the government forestry fire fighting crews right across very remote parts of the Victorian and NSW high country.

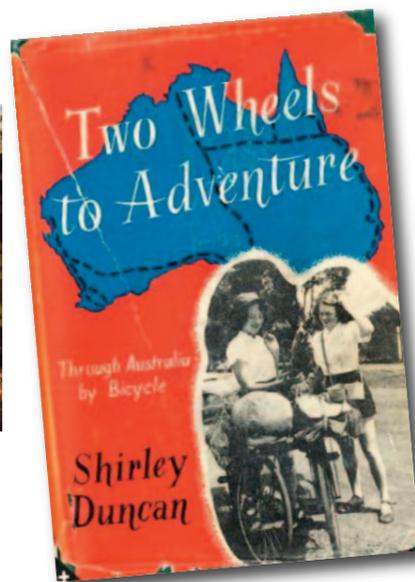
Clancy also offers commercial exhibitions along the BNT and accommodation.

Clancy is looking forward to complementing the existing presence and work done in the southern sections of the BNT and to promote the BNT as one of Australia's premier heritage and tourism treasures.



TRACEY BEIKOFF is founder of Shark Tank sensation Rescue Swag, and lives in Mareeba, Far North Queensland. Tracey is passionate about promoting the BNT for the serious trekker, but also for those wanting a great weekend mini-trek.

Being a keen horse rider, Tracey hopes to encourage more people in her region to get out, get active and enjoy everything the BNT has to offer.



### Book review

WENDY Law, 19, and Shirley Duncan, 21, were best of friends and shared a tale of adventure and made their dream a reality.

“We might have been in danger of starving to death on our budget of five shillings per day. People seldom allowed us to buy a meal. I cannot over-praise the generous, hospitable folk we met,” Shirley said.

They cycled through much isolation and there were numerous times when they ran out of food and water. The bikes that they used weighed more than 40kg with their packs, and had neither brakes nor gears. They laughed at how they would roll down a hill and then walk up another.

Shirley Duncan was sleeping in a Church Hall in Darwin when she was confronted by a man who grabbed her around the throat. Shirley screamed and he said, “Shut up or I’ll kill you!” Shirley’s screams and her dog’s barking woke the minister who came to her aid, saving her.

“The police recommended we carry a little revolver,” she said. “But we were more afraid of it than anyone else. We practised shooting gum trees.”

Wendy Law published *With Bags and Swags: Around Australia in the Forties* in 2008 and you can still order a copy of this book online.

See story back page.

**Two wheels to adventure:  
through Australia by bicycle.  
Shirley Duncan  
London: George G. Harrap, 1957**

### Bears bite back

A GRIZZLY bear has attacked and killed a cyclist just outside the Glacier National Park, police in the northern US state of Montana say.

The victim was killed about a mile from a West Glacier campground. The authorities said armed police officers were searching for the bear but gave no indication what they will do when they find it.

And, a hiker was bitten by a bear as he slept along the Appalachian Trail in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The 49-year-old hiker told authorities in Graham County, North Carolina, he was sleeping in a tent when the bear attacked, but the sleeping bag saved him.

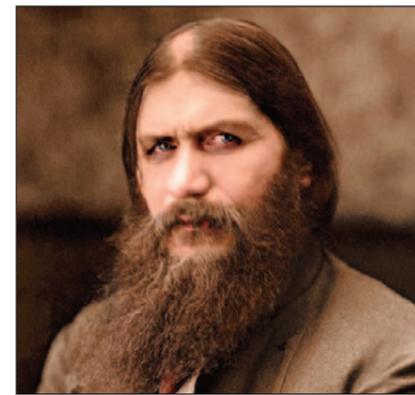


### South Pole cyclist



DANIEL Burton was the first person to complete an expedition from the coast of Antarctica to the South Pole by bicycle. He began his epic on December 2, 2013 at Hercules Inlet and arrived at the Pole on January 21, 2014.

Burton used a fatbike, intended for sand, ice and snow, but increasingly being used in the bush in Australia. The trip was 775 miles. He was a diabetic and used the trek to promote understanding of the disease.



### In good company

GRIGORI Rasputin was a religious mystic and wanderer, philanderer, legendary lover, and friend and counsel to Tsar Nicholas II and Alexandra of Russia – but he was also quite the walker. Today, we’d call it “trekking”.

Rasputin walked several times across Russia, from his Siberian hometown of Pokrovskoye to Kiev, during the 1890s – a more than 1,800-mile trip, or equivalent to the Appalachian Trail. In 1900, Rasputin made a religious pilgrimage on foot to Mount Athos in Greece, a journey of about 3,100 miles. His father didn’t exactly approve, saying Rasputin aimed to be “a pilgrim out of laziness”.

In 1914, Rasputin was stabbed in the abdomen by a former prostitute on the street in his hometown in Siberia. So many of his important organs were hanging out of his body that the woman ran away, screaming “I have killed the antichrist!” But he recovered.

On December 29, 1916, Prince Felix Yusupov gave poisoned tea cakes and wine to Rasputin ... but nothing happened. Then Yusupov got a revolver and shot Rasputin in the back. Rasputin slumped to the floor, presumably dead, but a few minutes later Rasputin suddenly opened his eyes, leapt up, and began to strangle Yusupov.

Friends then shot Rasputin three more times in the back. They bound his hands and feet and rolled him up in carpet and carried his body down to the partially-frozen Moika River where he wriggled out of his bindings. Though dead, Rasputin refused to give up. He was buried by the Tsarina, but revolutionaries dug him up and set his body on fire. As flames engulfed the corpse, the body sat upright, scaring the crap out of those present.

That’s trekking for you!

## New BNT office

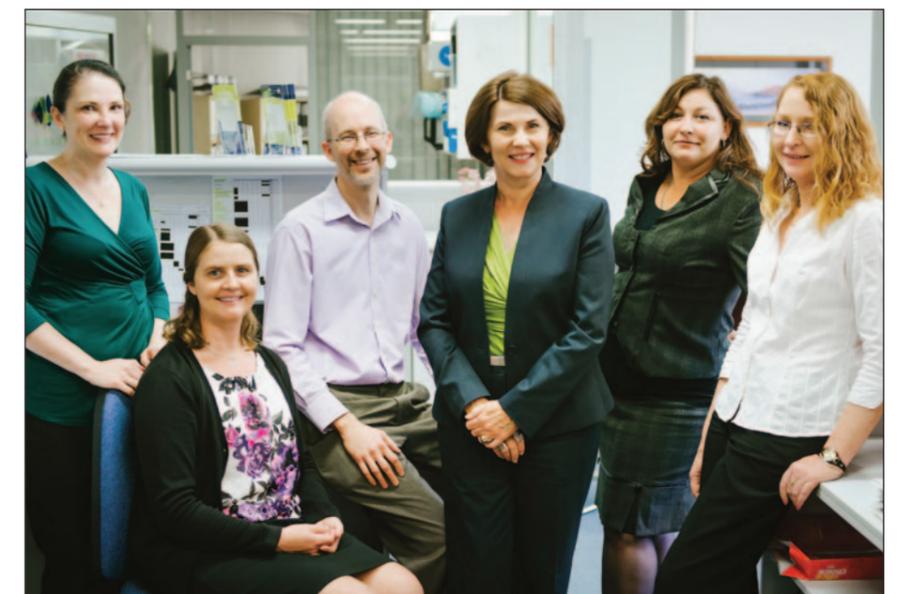
THE BNT Board has recently engaged Regional Development Australia – Mid North Coast (RDAMNC) to assist in part of the administration of the Bicentennial National Trail.

It’s an arrangement that will see RDRAMNC managing some of the back office services of the BNT, such as membership enquiries, trekkers’ registrations and financial services.

This partnership opportunity came about through Lorraine Gordon, then CEO of RDRAMNC and long-time supporter and member of the Bicentennial National Trail. Jack Gordon, Lorraine’s husband, is a BNT section coordinator. Lorraine is a graduate of the prestigious Australian Rural Leadership Program and was an award winner in the 2002 Telstra Business Women’s Award. She was also awarded the 1994 NSW ABC Rural Woman of the Year.

“The Bicentennial National Trail is a rite of passage,” Lorraine said. “There wouldn’t be another organisation like it that bridges so many different boundaries, organisations and people.”

Nick Jacomas from the BNT said: “We’re really excited about working with RDRAMNC as this professional administration will assist greatly to the future of the BNT. The workload that has evolved in recent years in the operation of the BNT has become a huge burden to the BNT volunteer staff.”



Lorraine Gordon and the office staff.

RDRAMNC is part of a national network of 55 RDA committees, nationwide, that work to support the development of regional Australia. Their office is located in the town of Port Macquarie (NSW) and services the Mid North Coast region.

The administration of the BNT is being managed by Jenni Kew, Operations Manager of RDRAMNC. Jenni brings with her extensive experience in finance, administration, governance and compliance, gained through employment with local and state government bodies and the private sector. Jenni administers the financial, administration, compliance, governance, human resources and regional migration requirements of RDRAMNC.

RDRAMNC are also working with the BNT Board to determine the best strategy to upgrade the current website and particularly, to automate the membership registration and ordering processes.

“We want to make this a simple and secure process for our members and to minimise the administration involved in doing these things,” Nick said.

“We appreciate the opportunity to work with an organisation like RDA. Myself and Lorraine Gordon will be meeting with Fiona Nash MP, Minister for Regional Communications, in the near future to try and secure some funding to support this website development.”

# Trekking with kids



## Wait for the right age

MAKE no mistakes about it, the BNT is a HUGE challenge, even for adults. The trail has been designed for self-sufficient travel and, as such, is not a carefully manicured, meticulously marked trail.

Many of the campsites are simply a paddock beside a river or dam. Huts or water tanks are the exception rather than the rule, and there are large stretches of the trail which cannot be accessed by vehicle. You also have the added complication of caring for and providing for your animals needs.

However, all of the above can provide a valuable learning / growth experience for children, provided that they are at an age where they have built up a degree of resilience and are able to rise to such a challenge, rather than be overwhelmed by it and simply stressed out.

Every child is different, but I would really encourage anyone considering a lengthy BNT trek to wait until their child is at least ten years old. My own daughter was ten when we started our trek, and I know there is no way she would have handled or enjoyed it, had she been any younger.

## Start small

GIVEN the above, I really believe the BNT is no place to try one's hand at trekking for the first time, especially with children. Even if your child will be riding an animal during his or her BNT journey, don't underestimate the value of going for lots and LOTS of long walks beforehand, without the animals. This will help your child to really become familiar with how those big distances feel (and a day on the trail IS a big distance for those unaccustomed to it). Sure, most children have a rough idea of how far 20km is, but have they ever travelled 20km, or even 10km, at a walking pace?

Distances like this can drag on for hours, and while we tend to get excited at the thought of all those breathtaking vistas we are bound to see on the way, it can also be monotonous, dull and physically exhausting, even if your child is not doing the walking. Doing a few practise hikes will help your child get familiar with long days in the elements, as well as helping them learn to pace themselves, giving them the confidence to know when they can indeed push on that bit further.

Keep in mind that your child should also be able to walk at least 15km in an emergency (ie an animal goes lame or goes missing). If not, you may have to carry the



child. Z usually walks a few kilometers every day, just to give her horse a little rest and to stretch her legs. However, when Fly injured his leg and we were in an awkward spot with no feed and therefore forced to move on, she had to walk 20km to the next camp, where Fly soon recovered. Luckily, she has only had to do this once (so far!)

We had also done a lot of multi-day hikes in New Zealand and on the Bibbulman Track in WA, and it was from these that Z became familiar with camping out in the dark, setting up tents, camp food, etc. But a few months before we set off for the BNT, I decided that we would walk the Camino de Santiago pilgrim trail in order to train for the BNT. A strange decision, some may say, but for me it was really about seeing whether we would both be able to cover the distance without the added complications of bush camping and looking after animals. We also got pretty fit for our forthcoming BNT trek! So all in all, I would definitely recommend hiking and camping in all sorts of places before the BNT. (Which, I might add, makes the Camino look like a Sunday afternoon stroll in the park in comparison.)

## Choose your animals wisely

ONCE you've established that your child is capable of embarking on a long distance trek and they have tested their mettle on a few challenging bushwalks, it is probably time to start thinking about animals. That is, unless your child has agreed to walk the BNT on foot, in which case I take my hat off to you! (I was unable to convince mine that it would be fun to walk)... So we looked at ponies, eventually settling on a little Welsh gelding- small and stocky, although a little green and flighty. After months of working with him, he was still quite anxious and

unpredictable in the bush. A few people said he would probably calm down once he got used to the routine of life on the trail, but in the end we decided it wasn't worth the risk of taking him. We needed a horse that was okay ALL the time, so Zaydee ended up switching to my 16hh thoroughbred. Yes, she is definitely overhyped, but I guess the moral of the story is that when trekking with children on the BNT, the temperament of your animals is more important than anything else.

I may be a little biased, but I would also encourage anyone who is considering trekking with children on the BNT to think about donkeys as opposed to horses. On the whole, they are much more predictable and steady than their equine cousins, and when frightened, will usually stop dead in their tracks, rather than suddenly take off, making them a safer alternative for younger or inexperienced riders. While their stoic nature has earned them a (well-deserved) reputation for stubbornness and they can be intensely frustrating to talk into something they don't want to do, it is probably a small price to pay for the sake of safety. Donkeys love children fawning all over them just as much, or perhaps more than horses and will provide many laughs and entertainment around camp in the afternoon.

On the BNT, your animals will have to deal with all sorts of crazy things- walking under wind turbines, crossing all manner of rivers and creeks, walking alongside busy highways, close encounters with mining machinery, forklifts, harvesters, groups of cyclists; the list goes on. Because your child's safety is literally in the hands of the animal he or she is riding, don't set off until you have one that you can trust 100%. You'll know in your heart when you have the right one.

## Trekking with kids



### Don't stress too much about schoolwork

UNLESS you are trekking a short section of the BNT over the school holidays, chances are you will have taken your child out of school and be committed to home-schooling for a year or so.

Home schooling conventionally on the trail can be difficult. Because you are limited by how much weight you and your animals can carry, this makes it impossible to carry a plethora of books or worksheets. It is also impossible to reply on the internet or electronic devices for educational resources, due to the challenge of minimal phone reception or power sources. In addition, trekking the BNT with animals doesn't leave a lot of spare time, and often once camp has been set up at the end of a long day, small ones do not have the energy for pages of maths sums! After experimenting with a few different resources and schooling routines, we now have only two school books- one for Maths and one for English. We work on a little of each every day, as well as a journal entry, usually illustrated with something we saw on the trail that day. Finally, we read a LOT on the Kindle, as we cannot afford the added weight of books.

But in all honesty, the real learning Z has done on the trail has been via the people she has met or places we have been- experiences that cannot be planned, structured or measured. A trek on the BNT will without doubt help your child develop resilience, confidence, stamina, a deep respect and affinity for nature and the environment, a sense of responsibility and discipline that comes from caring for animals and setting up and breaking camp daily, among countless other skills and

qualities that will aid him/her down the track in later life.

### Assign individual responsibilities

LIFE on the trail and at camp will run more smoothly if everyone knows what they are responsible for and the expectations around each job. It may take a while to work at a system that runs smoothly for your family, but Z has certain jobs on the trail which are always hers- that way I don't have to explain a different task every day and she knows exactly what she needs to do before she can relax and have some free time.

I think having set responsibilities also helps children realise that they are an important part of the equation, and that their assistance is required for the whole outfit to run smoothly.

For example, in the morning, Z is responsible for getting the donkeys in and tied up, brushing donkeys, picking out the donkeys' feet. Personally I think it is important for an adult to saddle up or at least check saddling, as it is all too easy for animals to quickly acquire rubs or galls after long days on the trail.

The beginnings of these can often go unnoticed by a child's eye. In the afternoon, I take panniers off (they can be a little heavy for a child to manage), while Z takes off the pack saddles and prepares tethers/ hobbles etc. Then, while I sort out some food, Z sets up the tent and sleeping bags. It doesn't really matter who does what, as long as it works for you and the routine remains fairly consistent.

### Get off the trail now and again

LIFE on the BNT can be a bit gruelling for little ones, so when you have a chance to get away from it now and then, take the opportunity to do so. If this means a trip to a shopping centre for hot chips, or an extra rest day to swim in the pool, go for it. They have earned it after all! While we were in town in Glenn Innes, we got to watch the Jungle Book at the cinemas, which was pretty cool. When we get to Toowoomba, we may take a couple of days off to do a few touristy things for Z's birthday. You may find that a few town treats and surprises are necessary when spirits are beginning to wane.

### Prioritise nutrition

IT IS one thing to live off oatmeal for a fortnight on the trail, but when you have kids in tow, it is probably not the best idea. Firstly they seem to suffer from trail food fatigue much sooner than adults and hence are likely to just undereat, but also because you will likely be out on the BNT for quite a while. As youngsters, they have a lot of growing and development to do during that year, and hence really do need access to a wide range of foods, just like at home. Not really the best news when you need to be responsible for carrying food for up to two weeks at a time!

I recommend spending a lot of time preparing and dehydrating your own meals at home- when vacuum packaged, these can last months. Although there are a lot of freeze dried or dehydrated meals on the market, a lot of these are fairly pricey and contain strange ingredients and additives that you may want to avoid.

Another trick to try on the trail is sprouting. You may be unable to provide your child with as many fresh fruits and vegetables as you would normally do at home, but luckily you can make up for this to a degree by sprouting your own seeds and grains while on the trail. All you need is a stocking and once you get into the habit, it's pretty easy to do. Sprouts are nutritional powerhouses that contain large amounts of protein and vitamin C.

In addition to dehydrating our own fruits, vegetables and meals before leaving, as well as sprouting greens while on the trail, I also try to take about 5kg of fresh fruit and vegetables each time we leave a town to get

back on the trail. Just enough for Z to have a piece of fruit or two a day. I suppose it's a bit of trekkers 'no-no' as they are so weighty, but there is no real substitute for fresh fruit and veg! I would rather skimp on other gear like cameras to allow ourselves this small luxury.

Days on the trail can be long and tiring and young ones will start to flag before long. We usually carry a muesli bar, nuts and fruit leather to snack on while we get through our kilometres for the day.

### Put safety first

TREKKING the BNT with or without children is a calculated risk. There is a lot of potential for unexpected accidents or incidents to occur, especially when animals are involved. When travelling the BNT with kids, obviously you are responsible not only for the safety and wellbeing of yourself and your animals, but most importantly for your children. This is a heavy burden to bear, therefore it is worth taking a few safety precautions. These might include packing a comprehensive first aid kit, taking out premium ambulance cover, attending a first aid course with your child, discussing and roleplaying with your child what they should do in an emergency, instructing them on how to operate a spot device or satellite phone (or whichever emergency device you choose to use- and definitely bring one if you're travelling with kids), and making sure they have memorised important phone numbers and addresses.

Spend a lot of time before leaving drilling your child on behaving responsibly around the animals ie- no sudden movements, never wrapping the lead ropes around their hands, tying up safely ALL the time, how to gauge when to get out of the way etc. I would say that for a BNT trek, this groundwork stuff is even more important than your child's riding abilities.

Camp safety is also an important one and I believe it is important to have firm boundaries around things like not running around in the dark, wearing shoes in unfamiliar territory, and treating fire with respect.

And lastly, remember that you're not on the BNT to prove anything. You owe it to your child to always put their well-being first, and if that means skipping or detouring around a challenging part, then so be it. Putting safety first may take the form of having an extra rest day or two while waiting for bad weather to pass. Who cares



if you've only covered 30km this week? It's not meant to be a race. We detoured around the Guy Fawkes river section of the trail, choosing instead to travel on the ridge. I was worried about our safety going through the river crossings. Our detour added 25km to our journey and we missed out on seeing brumbies, but at the end of the day, you need to do what feels right and manageable for you and your child when out on the trail.

### Give it time

IF YOUR journey is anything like ours, it is going to take time to fall in love with the trail. To be perfectly honest, in the first few weeks, it feels like on big hard slog where everything is a challenge. Everyone's bodies will be sore and still adjusting to the new physical demands, and the routine of setting up and breaking camp will take a while to refine (In the meantime, be prepared for lots of packing, repacking, lost tent pegs, and frazzled tempers!).

The animals will also take a while to adjust, needing extra supervision and energy to keep them on task and 'in camp!' During this challenging readjustment period, Don's been surprised if the comforts of home start looking like a better alternative. More than once you will question yourself about what you were thinking! Even worse is that your child may just tell you they are hating it and

want to go home (just as mine did two weeks into our trip!) My advice would be to give it three weeks. If your family is still hankering for home, then perhaps reevaluate your plans. Incidentally, you may have the opposite problem. We have now been on the trail for five months and I don't think I could drag my daughter home if I tried now!

### Be realistic

I FEEL it is important that your child knows what he or she is in for before heading out on the BNT. It is easy for them to conjure up fantastic visions of blissfully riding ponies out in the sunshine all day, but of course, it's not always like this. Before you leave home, head out on a few trail rides or walks that really 'knock the wind out of you'. Maybe in the midday heat, perhaps in a downpour or up a rough gully, where your child may have to walk on slippery footing. During the experience, perhaps you can gently explain to your child that 'sometimes it will be like this when we go out on the trail'.

In conclusion, I hope all of this doesn't put anyone off. When tackled with the right amount of common sense and preparation, a trek on the BNT with kids can be the most amazing, life-changing experience. Happy trails!





## The naked cyclist

ROB GREENFIELD rode off the grid on his home-made bamboo mountain bike across America where he practiced sustainable living to the extreme.

In 4,700 miles of cycling he used just 160 gallons of water, burned less than one gallon of gas, never turned on a light switch and created only two pounds of trash.

That is 80 times less water, 200 times less trash, 600 times less fossil fuels, and 1,000 times less electricity than the average American.

Plus he ate nearly 300 pounds of food from grocery store dumpsters to prove just how much perfectly good food is being wasted in the USA.

His example may sound extreme, but many of his precepts apply anyway to trekkers on the Bicentennial National Trail – carrying less weight, using less resources, creating less rubbish, leaving behind no trace and experiencing harmonious relationships with those with whom we interact.

His advice appears on the right, but you will note, nakedness is not essential! Rather, it's a metaphor for opening oneself up bravely to the universe.

LIVE Happy. Live Healthy. Live Free. Live beyond yourself.

Beware! People will think you are awesome. You will be flooded with compliments, love, and appreciation. People will want to talk to you and be around you. Your life will have purpose and you will be passionate to be alive. You will be radiating smiles and health like never before. Please do not read on if that sounds like a bad idea to you.

1. Eat a whole-food, plant-based diet. Eat more veggies, fruits, grains, nuts, and less animal products.
2. Start riding a bike, walking, and using public transportation. Stop driving.
3. Go local. Eat local, shop local, play local.
4. Reduce-Reuse-Recycle – In that order. Recycling comes last! Trash sucks. Don't make it!
5. Share! Share your stuff and share others' stuff.
6. Buy less stuff and purchase used stuff when you can.

7. Conserve water and electricity. Just be conscious of your usage. There are 100s of ways to cut back. Look it up.

8. Don't use one-time-use anything (bags, take out containers, bottled water, straws, napkins etc.)

9. Positive consumerism. Buy from businesses that are using business as a medium for positive change.

10. Simplify. The less you need, the easier it is to be friendly to our earth.

11. Be conscious. When you make decisions take into account where things come from and how they were produced. If you don't know, then find out. Take action by putting the information you find to good use.

12. Live beyond yourself. How do your actions affect other humans, animals, and the earth? Make your decisions based on the well being of everyone and everything, not just you.

It's a process to transform a lifestyle, but there is no time to wait. Start today. Start now!



## Dukes bushwalking workshop

AUSTRALIA'S Bicentennial National Trail offers trekkers great opportunities ranging from easy to very tough and taxing across a range of terrain. Recently I was privileged to participate in a bushwalking workshop for Duke of Edinburgh Award Adventurous Leaders (AJS) to gain their Bushwalking Level 2 Controlled Environments qualification.

Education Queensland defines "controlled environment" as tracked, easy untracked areas...easily reached using basic navigation principles; on class three or four tracks, formed trails or areas that are: reliably marked on maps, are obvious on the ground, are regularly inspected, or are in areas where navigation is required along clearly defined/easily followed handrails or landscape features. Guidebook 5 behind Mt Perry from Boolbunda Tunnel to Swindon road fits this criteria very well.

Four of us met for dinner with our instructor from Maroon Outdoor Education Centre Friday night at the Grand Hotel Mt Perry which led on to a preparation session for the weekend. We studied topographic maps of the National Trail which had been prepared earlier from QTopo creating navigation data tables with compass bearings and distances for each marked waypoint with suitable escape routes.

We also discussed the weather forecast, our packing and equipment in general, safety and emergency response, minimal impact strategies, health issues particularly treating drinking water and a range of leadership issues from a Dukes perspective.

Planning of a bushwalk is particularly important. Realistic estimations of time

taken to reach destinations, escape routes and emergency plans for the "oh no" moments are needed, as is an adequate first aid kit. Weather forecasts need to be checked and adequate layered clothing selected which doesn't overload the pack. Boots need to support the feet comfortably and have been worn in first. Food needs to provide adequate energy without too much weight. Overall pack weight needs to be kept with manageable limits and a pack chosen which will bear the weight on the hips not on the shoulders.

Fortunately for us the weather was glorious with cold nights and we just managed to complete our hike before the next wet cold change passed through. This section of the National Trail is very pretty. This is easy walking with some moderate hilly sections and plenty of natural features for relating natural features such as hills, saddles and creeks against the map and vice versa for navigation. It is an ideal section of the BNT for beginning hikers with good road access for support if required and good camping on Sunday Creek. A BNT Weekender was written for this some years ago.

We started walking on Tunnel Road from Leathers Road just before Boolbunda Tunnel. As we reached the old school we turned right onto the former railway alignment heading for the Tunnel. This section is particularly historic with the old school, a massive fig tree which was possibly the railway station site once and then excellent interpretive signage near the tunnel relating much of the history.

Boolbunda Tunnel is 192m long and is the longest unsupported tunnel in the

Southern Hemisphere. The tunnel was originally built in 1883 for the railway line between Bundaberg and Mount Perry to service the copper mines. Now it is home to a colony of bent-winged bats and is an access road.

Once through the tunnel the BNT follows the tunnel tourist road for some distance before the tourist road forks to the right to rejoin the Mt Perry road. The BNT continues on following Sunday Creek Road which at this point whilst a surveyed road is only a set of tyre tracks through a paddock. At this point ground to map navigation became even more important as we related natural features against our maps for each marked point which was often a gate in a fence.

As the BNT passed over a saddle in Sunday Creek road the view broadened out and we hiked along a branch of Sunday Creek with various peaks and glimpses of Boolbunda Rock as a background. Finally after a set of cattle yards the vehicular track becomes a formed road with concrete creek crossings. The last crossing before the camp had been swept away in a flood so it was a wet walk.

Camp that night was a pleasant spot on Sunday Creek just across the creek. Mealtime was interesting as we discussed each others menus. Pre-cooked frozen meal reheated, freeze dried, pouches of fish and noodles.. there were some interesting possibilities. That night proved cold in Queensland terms with temperatures down to single digits but my overweight sleeping bag proved its worth.

# Wild at heart

By ALIENOR LE GOUVE

We left from Healesville last year on the 17th of November and have completed about 2800 kilometres of the Bicentennial National Trail so far.

We are currently in Kilkivan enjoying a rest day on someone's property. Having been on the road for over seven months

now and making it this far feels like a huge accomplishment, although we have a long way to go and more challenges ahead of ourselves yet.

Trekking the BNT is an extremely rewarding experience that pushes your limits and challenges you constantly but you do get better at dealing with hurdles and you learn very quickly to never expect

things to go easy or as planned!

I have traveled extensively throughout my life from horse treks in Mongolia and Brasil to motorbike expeditions from Siberia to Paris, and adventures in India and more, but I can safely say that I have never had the opportunity to see and explore such an amazing diversity of environment and

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Emervale Station hut.





## Wild at heart

From Page 13

flora and fauna as I have on the National Trail so far.

It's a unique thing to get to see so many different types of country in the one expedition. My favourite sections so far have been the high Victorian country, the Widden Valley, Glen Alice and Glen Davis and the Oxley wild river NP and Guy Fawkes River NP. Those sections where you are remote and isolated from the world and submerged in the beauty of nature just do something special to your soul.

The other wonderful thing about the trail is the amount of time you get to spend with your animals, learn all their different intricate behaviors and characters traits.

I have an amazing bond with my horses not only from training them from their wild untouched nature, but also from overcoming difficulties together and getting to understand each others' strengths and

weaknesses along this trek together.

They give me so much joy and do a fantastic job for me. I'm extremely proud of how well they have handled this trip so far, without an injury or major health dramas.

I aim to promote what wonderful creatures Brumbies are through my ride and I believe the way they have coped with the challenges of this expedition has proven how hardy, resilient and capable these horses are.

They are still currently in great condition from toes to tail — all of them. They might lose a bit of weight here and there through some of the tougher sections but the beauty of a Brumby is that when I pull up into a town and pour the feed into them they gain the weight straight back on.

Another beautiful experience is all the different amazing people I get to meet in rural outback Australia; families and individuals who have all been extremely

The rugged Glen Davis canyon behind.

helpful and generous to us. It's a fuzzy warm feeling to realise the beauty of humanity that there is out there!

We are yet to complete another 2500 kilometers to reach Cooktown and there are definitely days where I really wonder what I am doing out here!!

But overall the positives outweigh the challenges and as long as I can keep my horses in good condition we will keep on going and hopefully make it to the top!

Like us on Facebook on: "Wild at Heart Australia" and help share our cause for the Australian Brumbies. And get out there yourself and enjoy the amazing diverse environment we have in Australia! You can do many sections of the trail, one section of the trail, or even just a weekend!

You can also check out the Guy Fawkes heritage horses on Facebook on their page, the Guy Fawkes Heritage Horse Association.



Visiting a thoroughbred stud in the Hunter Valley.



Trail sign before Aberdeen.



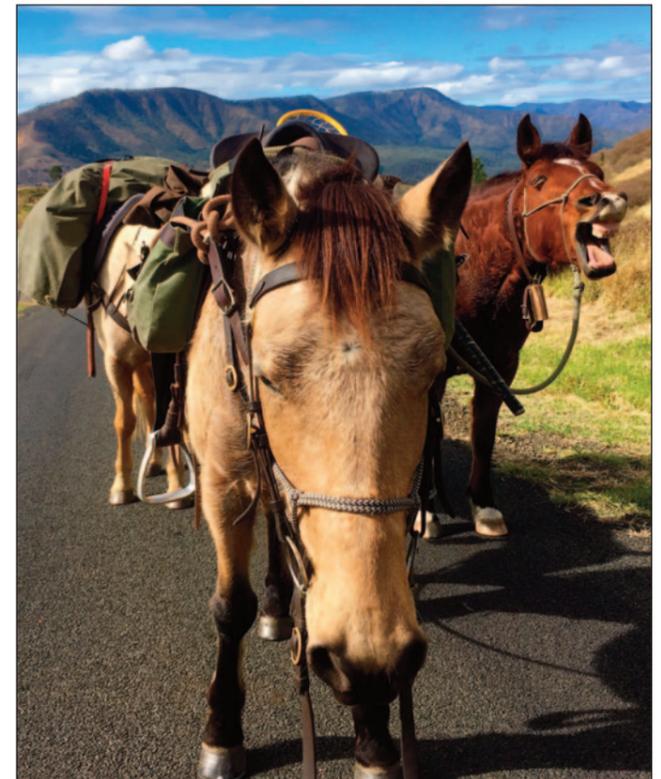
The amazing Glen Davies canyon.



River crossing in Oxley Wild Rivers National Park



Cooper being a sook, leaving the lovely Murphy's Creek retreat.



Tired ponies after a steep climb back on top of the range, Mt Sylvia, QLD.



## Travelling Stock Reserves

By ELIZA ALLAN

'TSR' is a term that gets thrown around a lot when it comes to talking about the National Trail. It stands for Travelling Stock Reserve, which is, quite literally, a parcel of Crown Land reserved for 'Travelling Stock.' These were established along routes for the droving of sheep and cattle during the early days of European colonisation and are often collectively referred to as 'the long paddock'.

The incredible thing is that there are around 6500 TSRs in New South Wales alone, and free to use if you have genuine travelling stock- ie those travelling the Bicentennial National Trail. Coming from the nanny state of WA, which lacks NSW's long history of droving and often tends to view free camping as unhygienic, UnAustralian and unforgivable, the idea of the TSR was incredibly exciting to me. Theoretically, thanks to TSRs, one could acquire a few steeds, perhaps a little wagon, and take to the roads for, well, forever!

It is thought that many of these stock routes and reserves were derived from traditional indigenous travel lines, as naturally they make use of waterways and prime camping locations. Scarred trees,

middens and artifacts have been reportedly been found in several TSRs. In fact, when we were camped in one by the Goulburn River, Z found a carved piece of rock, thumb hole and all, that we thought may have been used as some kind of grinding stone or axe head (We'll get it checked out).

However, with the convenience of highways, feedlots and cattle trucks, the days of the long paddock are fast disappearing. Nowadays, TSRs see few genuine travelling stock, and so I got to wondering how it could possibly be economically feasible for the state governments to retain them. With all those acres of prime real estate locked up in TSRs, what a wonderful thing that they hadn't been sold off years ago! Alas, I was soon to find out that the humble TSR has caused no shortage of debate and controversy over the last few decades. Indeed, managing these huge tracts of land is largely unprofitable and provides few financial returns for the local Land Boards, so often these underutilized TSRs are leased to neighbouring farmers.

Now traditionally, the pattern of short, intense grazing followed by long periods of rest kept TSRs in optimum health, and the

fact that they are often not as heavily cleared as neighbouring farmland helped foster plant and fauna diversity. They were also seen as common land for emergency use during times of drought, fire or flood. But now, those holding a lease on a TSR will often see it as simply an additional paddock for their stock, and the resultant continuous grazing has led to reduced flowering and seeding and an increase in weeds, not to mention hungry bellies for trekkers' animals! While I am hugely grateful to have access to the TSR network, it is nonetheless disappointing to find it chock-a-block with cattle, grass nibbled down to bowling-green length.

Overgrazing is not the only modern-day threat to TSRs- there has been no shortage of pressure on the government to just sell them off and be done with it. According to the National Parks Association of New South Wales, construction of pipelines for coal seam gas along Travelling Stock Routes, as well as construction of other infrastructure, has been proposed and even encouraged by the NSW government. This poses a major threat to TSRs, because it requires significant clearing of vegetation along the routes. In the case of some narrow routes,



clearing would result in the removal of almost all vegetation.

Fortunately, an alliance of drovers, graziers, and conservation groups have banded together to champion the long-term protection of TSRs. Organiser Robert Groth states, "It doesn't matter whether you're trying to save stock in a drought, if you're an apiarist, or Mum and Dad and the kids wanting to fly a kite on the river, if they get to the point where they close the routes, what will be left for the future?"

I can't help but agree. It true that we can't live in the past- while we might dream of it or even dabble in it, the days of the quintessential drover are long gone, for better or worse. But as country singer and TSR campaigner John Williamson states, the TSR allows all Australians a chance to boil a billy in the bush. It is a part of our unique cultural heritage. But it is also more than that. In our over-regulated society, the TSR is like a last taste of the freedom to wander across the land at one's will.

In some Scandinavian countries, the 'Freedom to Roam' law gives individuals the right to access private or public land for recreation. As long as you aren't running about in someone's backyard or disturbing stock, you can camp, pick berries, and do what you will, anywhere. Many Australians would regard this as a bit extreme. But ironically enough, we are the only species born onto this planet that cannot live on it freely. Just food for thought ...

\* The BNT has a long and proud association with TSR management in NSW. Originally administered by the Rural Lands Board the TSR are now managed by the recently restructured Local Land Services (LLS).

The BNT has signed a Memorandum Of Understanding with the LLS NSW. The MOU allows registered members of the BNT access without any financial fee. BNT members must first fill out a TSR application form which the BNT forwards onto the Admin section of the LLS.

The BNT Board is grateful to the LLS NSW for their continued support towards BNT trekkers. — Ed

## Who's on the trail



Rob Sutton shepherding the camels.

SIMON Dunfort and Susanne McIntosh from Watson, ACT cycling started March from Mulligans Flat ACT north for six months.

ALIENOR le Gouvello originally from France with horses started November Healesville to Cooktown now in Queensland.

KIMBERLEY Delavere from Kiama, NSW with horses restarted back on the trail taking a winter break at Crookwell, NSW.

ELIZA Allan from Denmark WA with horses sStarted January from Healesville north for six months

BRIDGET, Jessica and Dustin Hone from Uralla, NSW with horses five days in Guide Book 8 Georges Creek to McCleay River

JULIE O'Connor from Highland Valley, SA walking with Wendy the mule started Healesville still going north.

LIZ and Alisa Irvin from Fitzroy VIC hiking four days last November

Healesville to Marysville.

LYNNE Blythe from Kuranda, QLD with horses started February.

MARK Anderson from Curl Curl, NSW cycling during April Central Tablelands and SE NSW.

NORMAN Carter from Belgrave South, VIC with horses started March from ACT south to Khancohan.

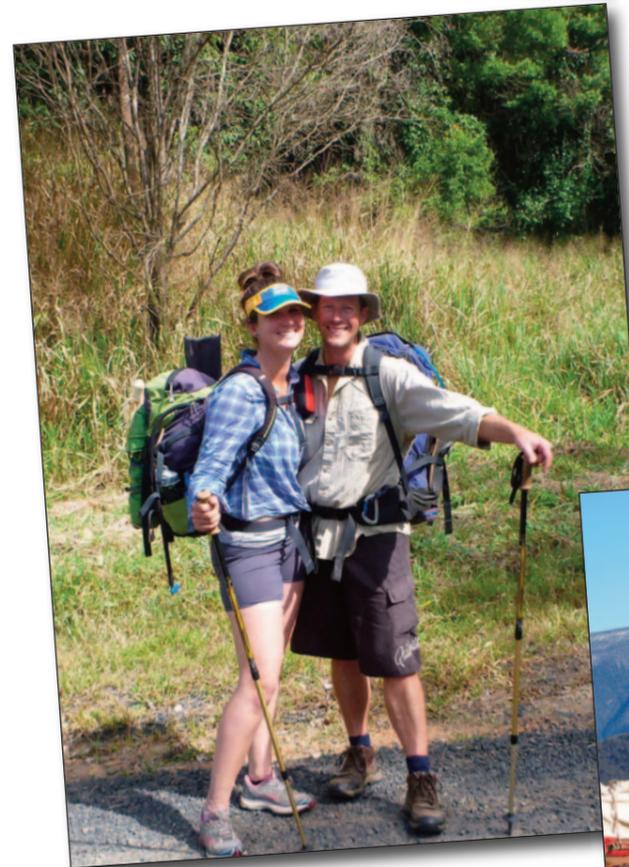
ROSS Macaw from Melbourne with horse riding McAlister River to Omeo for 13 days.

GLEN Smart from Darwin walking started June Cooktown to Healesville.

STEPHEN Signor from Maine, USA walking started November Healesville to Cooktown.

REINTS Lottsma and Donna Case from Samford, QLD cycling during March Witcott QLD loop to Mt Sylvia.

# Picture gallery



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AT BNT MUSEUM  
UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND GATTON CAMPUS  
GATTON SATURDAY 1ST OCTOBER 2PM 2016

Nominations for the Board of Directors  
Bicentennial National Trail Ltd

Nominations for the Board of Directors must be submitted on this form, and received by the Office Secretary by Friday 16th September 2016.

Post to: Returning Officer  
Bicentennial National Trail  
c/- RDAMNC  
PO Box 2537  
Port Macquarie  
NSW 2444.

Or scan and email to: [order@nationaltrail.com.au](mailto:order@nationaltrail.com.au)

Please provide a brief profile of the nominee.

We/I (Nominator) .....  
and (Secunder) .....  
being a current financial member/s of the  
Bicentennial National Trail Ltd hereby nominate:

For the position of: .....  
on the Board of Directors of Bicentennial National Trail Ltd.

Nominator's signature: .....

Date: .....

Secunder's signature: .....

Date: .....

Nominee name in full: .....

I accept this nomination

Nominee's signature: .....

Date: .....

Proxy Form, to be submitted on this form and received by Friday 16th September 2016. Post or email as above

I: .....  
of: .....  
being a member of the above named company hereby appoint: .....  
of: .....

or failing him/her the Chairperson as my proxy to vote for me on my behalf at the Annual General Meeting of the company to be held on Saturday 1st October 2016 at Gatton and at any adjournment thereof.

SIGNED this ..... day of: ..... 2016

\* Strike out whichever is not desired. Note: In the event of the member desiring to vote for or against any resolution, they shall instruct their proxy accordingly. Unless otherwise instructed, the proxy may vote as he thinks fit.

Clubs have two delegates, therefore entitled to two votes.

## BNT Membership Application

Membership period July 1-June 30  
Complete the form below and post or email with your payment to:

The Bicentennial National Trail Ltd  
PO Box 2537  
PORT MACQUARIE NSW 2444

Email: [order@nationaltrail.com.au](mailto:order@nationaltrail.com.au)  
Website: [www.nationaltrail.com.au](http://www.nationaltrail.com.au)  
ABN 83 010 860 143  
Phone 1300 138 724 (within Australia)

Name: .....

Postal address: .....

Postcode: .....

Phone: (business): .....

(home): .....

(mobile): .....

Email address: .....

### MEMBERSHIP FEE

\$40 individuals:  \$65 family or club:  3 years \$100 and  \$180  
Family membership includes one person, their partner and any children under 13. Only one vote allowed and nominated person to be advised. Please include details of each family member.  
If club membership then two votes allowed and nominated persons to be advised.

### DONATION

\$10  \$20  \$50  \$100  \$500  Other .....

### PAYMENT BY EFT (preferred)

Bendigo Bank  
BSB: 633 000  
Account: 1502 6245 9  
Account name: Bicentennial National Trail  
Reference: Your name, new member, renewal or donation  
Please email to: [order@nationaltrail.com.au](mailto:order@nationaltrail.com.au) with receipt details to confirm payment and indicate whether new membership or renewal.

### PAYMENT BY CREDIT CARD (add 5% surcharge)

Please charge \$ to my  Mastercard  Visa

Cardholder Name: .....

Expiry date (day/month/year): ...../...../.....

My card number is:

Cardholder's Signature: .....

### PAYMENT BY CHEQUE OR MONEY ORDER:

Cheque  Money order   
Please make payable to Bicentennial National Trail Ltd

Do you wish to receive a copy of the Annual Financial Statement prior to the AGM? Yes  No

I am primarily a  walker  horserider  cyclist  donkey packer  
other: .....

How did you find out about the BNT?

website  word of mouth  magazine or newspaper article

other: .....

All annual membership renewals are due June 30.  
Membership paid between April 1st and June 30th provide continuous membership until June following year

## Two wheels to adventure

From Page 24

Wendy and Shirley were best of friends and shared a tale of adventure and made their dream a reality. "Whenever we disagreed about anything – which was seldom, as our tastes were astonishingly similar – we settled it by tossing a coin, which Wendy always seemed to win."

Their journey was an experience which took them to some truly remarkable places, and they met some wonderful people along the way. "We might have been in danger of starving to death on our budget of five shillings per day. People seldom allowed us to buy a meal. I cannot over-praise the generous hospitable folk we met on our tour."

"Peter thoroughly enjoyed this new experience, bounding far ahead of the bicycles, then looking back to make sure we were following. We hated to see Peter grow up. He was the cutest puppy in the world and we wanted him to never change. Each day was a new adventure, and whenever we loaded up our bicycles, he jumped joyfully around us."

We can look back in hindsight, and marvel at what Wendy and Shirley achieved under extraordinary circumstances. They cycled through much isolation and there were numerous times when they ran out of food and water. The bikes that they used weighed in excess of 30-40kg with their packs, and had neither brakes nor gears. They laughed at how they would roll down a hill and then walk up another.

Their ride was a success, despite the fact that they encountered a number of potentially dangerous circumstances. On a ride in the forests towards Hobart for instance they found themselves riding straight into a bushfire. "On either side of the road trees blazed, shooting out sparks. Darkness turned the bushfire into a spectacular fireworks display." It was common for the girls to laugh off any danger.

Sadly their trip was also marred by two attacks. The first attack took place near Mount Kosciuszko and thankfully neither were injured.

In the second attack Shirley Duncan was sleeping in a Church Hall in Darwin. She was woken in the middle of the night. She recalled: "Peter our dog was barking like mad" and she was confronted by a man who grabbed her around the throat. Shirley screamed and he said, "Shut up or I'll kill you!"



Shirley Duncan and Wendy Law at the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

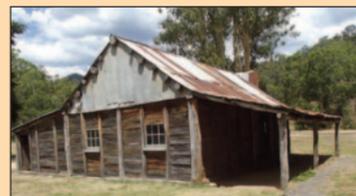
Shirley's screams and her dog's barking woke the minister who came to her aid, saving her.

"The police recommended we bought a little revolver," Shirley said. "But we were more afraid of it than anyone else. We practised shooting gum trees."

Much to Ms Duncan's disgust, the man was fined £10 for unlawful entry but only £5 for molesting her.

Wendy and Shirley's tale of adventure is a tale which should inspire all of us to get out on our bikes and to live the dream.

## Home, sweet home



Fry's Hut, Howqua River, VIC.

**BNT member seeks accommodation.** Bushland location, but privacy, access to shops and internet if possible.

Long term if suitable.

Contact editorial office on 0427 559 575 or email [tracks@nationaltrail.com.au](mailto:tracks@nationaltrail.com.au)

## Bushwalking workshop



From Page 11

Training continued after dinner with radio communication exercises and safety discussions. In this digital era communications have improved enormously but no one means is totally reliable. Satellite phones are probably the most reliable but they also fail when out of sight of satellites. UHF CB may prove a possibility if there is no mobile reception if someone within range is monitoring. SPOT Trackers are probably the best single safety option.

Pack weight and packing lists was a constant source of discussion all weekend. I worked out later my pack with water weighed over 17 kgs which for a simple walk like that was much too heavy. A lightweight tent and sleeping bag and dried not fresh food is a must.

Drinking water quality is an important issue in our developed world. With so many gut parasites and diseases present in our modern environment good water sterilisation is critical. Whilst we had to demonstrate we knew how to treat water our leader had dropped off a drum of potable water at the camp before we started because of the high numbers of cattle in the watershed of Sunday Creek.

A really useful text is The Outdoor Leader Online developed by the Bushwalking and Mountaineering Training Advisory Board (BMTAB) in Victoria in 2000 and updated after the Black Saturday bushfires in 2009. <http://outdoorleaderonline.org/content/ol/pagerend.php>

Although this was a training exercise where we learnt much I have very fond memories too. The views over creeks and waterholes to the backdrop hills, a leisurely lunch sprawled in the grass by the creek while curious cattle watched on from a rise nearby and the general camaraderie of instructor and instructed learning and laughing together all made for a great weekend.

Photos by Tridstan Hill

DAVE MCLEOD



Track Packs Panniers are lightweight industrial powder coated aluminium with 45 degree edges and corners. They are lockable and animal proof, water and dust resistant. Quick and easy to connect and disconnect and are available in 2 sizes. Track Packs Tree is made from a lightweight aluminium and stainless steel construction with fully adjustable swivel knuckles which are guaranteed not to bind. It has adjustable pannier mounts to allow for various shapes and sizes in horses with memory foam pads for the perfect fit and comfort. Track Packs come with removable, washable quality lamb wool covers eliminating the need for saddle blankets, providing substantial airflow while being very strong and easy to maintain. There are also many extras available including a Solar and Battery Pack, Storage tube (to hold maps, first aid), etc. Track Packs have been designed with the safety and comfort of the horse in mind.



**1800 399 827**  
[www.trackpacks.com.au](http://www.trackpacks.com.au)

**The Australian Trail Horse Riders Association**  
Proudly presents for members and guests a  
**Pack Saddling Workshop**

Our experienced presenters John and Jo Kasch will once again be joining us from Victoria to share their knowledge and experiences about pack saddling in remote areas.

**19 – 20 November 2016**  
**Marburg Showgrounds**

**Save the date**  
more details to come in August

**General topics to be covered but not limited to are:**

- Gear and Equipment
- Horse and Human Dietary Requirements
- Cooking and Camping Suggestions
- Load, balance and style
- EPERB & GPS Options
- Tracks and Trails
- Horse Feeds available for packing
- Night lines, Electric Yards, hobbles
- Veterinary equine first aid
- Hoof care, shoeing and rugs
- Hands on packing gear, harnessing, loading
- Plus.... lots more



**Details to be finalised shortly – for any immediate queries contact Claire Bourke on via email on [clairebourke1@bigpond.com](mailto:clairebourke1@bigpond.com)**

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We are looking for photos, news items, snippets, poems, stories and particularly treks and other activities carried out on the Trail.

Photos should be emailed as JPGs, stories in MS Word if possible, but any format would do.

Contributions are cursorily edited but largely style and correct English is the responsibility of the writer – thus retaining the original flavour of the text as the author intends.

Phone 0427 559 575 for advertising rates.

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# Two wheels to adventure

In 1946 two Melbourne girls made the journey of a lifetime and touched the heart and souls of Australia in a time when it needed it the most. It was post World War II and Australia was suffering from depression and desperately needed a hero to give them hope. Australia found not one but two in Wendy Law, 19, and Shirley Duncan, 21.

These young women planned on spending six months touring around Australia, but underestimated how much fun they would have. Their adventure kept on rolling for four years until they rolled back into Melbourne in April 1949. Before their epic adventure began, Wendy and Shirley were already experienced cyclists. The girls had travelled extensively around Victoria to Adelaide and also toured Tasmania in order to prepare themselves for the journey to come. Peter's Ice-cream offered them a unique sponsorship of unlimited ice-cream for the duration of their trip. Peter's gave them a letter which they could take to any distributor entitling the distributor to bill Peter's directly for any ice-cream the girls would eat. You can pretty much guess what their staple diet for the journey was.

Malvern Star also sponsored the journey providing their bikes and servicing along the way. The girls had nothing in the way of money and to help fund the trip so they took on a job selling magazine subscriptions. They also took on odd jobs throughout the trip with each becoming an adventure in itself.

The girls' Aussie adventure became legend and Wendy and Shirley became mini-celebrities with their trip receiving much publicity. They would be interviewed by local newspapers, do radio interviews, and talks for schools, churches and community organisations. Their journey was put in the national spotlight when their trip was featured on the Movietone News, which was played all around the country at the movie theatres.

Their success helped them along the way as they used their fame to help meet many lifetime friends. Ordinary Aussies welcomed the girls into their hearts and their homes. The girls did not need to buy a meal for the first two and a half years. Now that's a testimony to the great Aussie spirit!

Touring on two wheels gave the girls a first-hand view of what the country had to offer. Wendy and Shirley went rock climbing, shooting, caving, skiing, and were even taught how to fly a plane at one stage. They were in no hurry to end their adventure, so it took them a year to make it up to Brisbane where both of the girls fell in love. Not with a smelly, hairy swagman, but with a six month old cattle dog, who they found at the "Happy Dog", and they named Peter, in honour of their sponsorship with the ice-cream company. Peter was to remain with the girls for the remainder of their journey and travelled with the girls in a cardboard box, flimsily tied to the front of one of their bikes.



The girls continued on their way and spent some time in Darwin before heading south to Adelaide where they caught up with family. They spent a fair bit of time there before setting off for arguably the hardest part of their journey. They were determined to be the first female cyclists to ride across the Nullarbor. They worked hard to save up £15 passage across to Perth where the plan was to cycle back to Melbourne.

## The Nullarbor

"BETWEEN us and Perth lay a five-hundred mile desert known as the Nullarbor Plain. Flat, empty and treeless. With a fairly good road we knew that we could ride it," Shirley said.

Back in the late '40s the road across the Nullarbor was little more than a goat track, and a challenge to drive a motor vehicle across. It was definitely not a road designed with cyclists in mind.

"The road ran straight ahead in an unwavering line, growing thinner and thinner. Although it looked flat, we seemed to be pushing a continual incline, to the horizon."

All great journeys must come to an end, and when the dynamic duo reached home they received a mighty reception in Melbourne. A huge crowd gathered in front of the Melbourne Post Office to welcome them home. Wendy and Shirley rode into a sea of family and friends and well-wishers. The media was on hand with cameras flashing and newspaper men on hand to interview the returning heroes. The radio was also on hand and 3AW broadcasted the event.

"As we stand here beneath the big clock in the heart of Melbourne it gives me a great thrill to welcome back these two adventurous young ladies after the bicycle trip of-how far was it, girls? Eleven thousand miles." - 3AW