



"Goo-ee!"

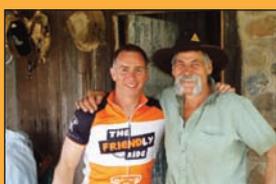
TRACKS

BNT



NEWSLETTER OF THE
Bicentennial
NATIONAL TRAIL

INSIDE:



The Friendly Ride



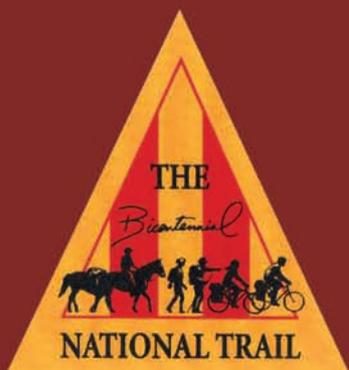
Return to Kunderang



The hut issue

BNT goes 5 star

Full story Page 9



March 2012

From the Chair

2012 has commenced on a positive note for the BNT. We have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the ACT Government.

This was achieved due to an outstanding effort by BNT member Beth Stone, BNT Board Secretary and ACT Coordinator Jenny Costin and the President of the ACT Equestrian Association's Christine Lawrence. This MOU guarantees the existence of the BNT in the ACT.

Continuing on from this good work the BNT has had productive discussions with both the Queensland and NSW government departments. These meetings are ongoing with positive results assured for the BNT.

I wish to congratulate our BNT Museum volunteers Sue Cummings, Marion Taylor, Margot Jones and Barry Nielson for organising a successful and enjoyable AGM.

The successful year achieved by the BNT Board was due to fine and dedicated teamwork of Abbie Grant-Taylor, Graeme Sleeman, Jenny Costin, Josephine Harding and Roger Fryer, who gave their time and effort unselfishly, supported by committee members Sue Cummings, Mal Keeley and Dave McLeod.

Thank you all, it is a great pleasure to work and associate with wonderful people such as yourselves.

Both Josephine Harding and Roger Fryer have stepped down from the Board but have continued in their respective positions of Office Manager, and Tracks Editor and website manager.

Their time and effort over the years and the years to come is to be com-



From left: Peter Cochran, Richard Smallwood and Nick Jacomas held fruitful talks with NSW Environment Minister Robyn Parker.

mended. Thank you both.

At the same time I welcome Andrew Graham onto the Board. Andrew's value to the Board has already been proven with his prior expertise in the outdoor recreation field.

Due to both financial and logistic reasons, it is with regret the 25th Anniversary Ride will not go ahead. Although, some regions have expressed interest with a local ride.

Finally I wish to extend to all in the BNT a year of fabulous and memorable trekking.

Nick Jacomas

Footnote, There is vacancy on the BNT Board. Any member interested in nominating, or wanting to assist in any manner please ring me on 02 4372 1520



Max on his way in Canberra.



Mal Keeley checks his coordinates on the GPS. See 'Gone to Buggery' on Page 14.

BNT TRACKS is the journal of the Bicentennial National Trail
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 ISSN 1836-7798

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Printed by APN Print Warwick
 50 Albion Street WARWICK QLD

Design by *Publish and be damned ...*



AGM Gatton from left: Abbie Grant-Taylor, Phillip Wilcocks, Jenny Costin, Lesley Oldfield, Graeme Sleeman, Marion Taylor and Josephne Harding. Inset: sound advice!



The old saying many hands make light work ensured the job was done in no time. It's very tempting to put the women's touch in the hut but alas we have to conform to the strict historical guide lines of National Park and Kosciuszko Huts Association so no lace curtains on the beautiful old window or comfy chairs inside. We had a great camp at the hut with some of our team riding in from their camp at Wares Yards.

A reminder to equestrians Riding Code states horses 50 metres from the huts and camping with horses, yards 50 metres from streams.

A new trail in Canberra

We have a new trail in Canberra South Tuggeranong, a short diversion next to the Murrumbidgee River from below the dam wall of Lake Tuggeranong to Pine Island. The archery range was getting a little dangerous since extending although I did notice the targets were always away from the trail! The club has Olympic standard archers.

Ranger Michael McConichie went to considerable effort after negotiating with me the last year where to put the trail and has completed the project. It's a very scenic trail with views of the river and well marked.

Jenny Costin Book 10 Coordinator

Latest from the ACT

CRAIG and Shirley, long-term trekkers, arrived in the ACT 28th November. I was very pleased they were able to negotiate the BNT through the sprawling suburbs of Gungahlin with the trail updates and detours with just a tad of help from yet another "Trail Angel."

They reckon there is quite a few they have encountered since starting their trip from Cooktown in their wagon four and a half years ago. Max, who usually walks with a donkey, flew into Canberra and joined them walking with a pack horse borrowed from a local riding school at Yarralumla.

After stocking up in Canberra headed off to Khancobhan for Christmas. A good idea as I have been told there is not a lot to choose from at Khancobhan general store. Coincidentally on the 10th January on his return trip walking from Khancobhan to Canberra, Max walked into our "Kids Camp" at Mt Clear BNT in Namadgi National Park.

Max, being very pleased to have our company and some fresh food after living on different flavours of rice for 5 days, particularly when the pineapple flummery appeared for dessert. Adele and myself both being adventurous grandmothers with 6 children from 12 to three with their horses, bikes and toys were pleased to have Max cook the barbeque that night and help us pack up for our return trip home.

We had the two youngest three and five convinced he was the bush policeman and they very respectfully stopped their naughty behaviors. Adele was able to truck Max and his horse Billy back to Canberra as a pressure sore on Billy's wither meant he would have had to stay for a while whilst it healed.

Above: Craig and Shirley. Below: Schofields Hut. Bottom: The Gypsies on their Canberra run.



Schofields Hut

The BNT passes many huts in Namadgi and Kosciuszko National Park and we are fortunate to have them as shelter in the changeable mountain climate. For many years our club has enjoyed riding to the huts when in Namadgi and Kosciuszko. We were approached by BNT member and Kosciuszko Huts Association member Clive Richardson a couple of years ago and encouraged to join KHA and have helped out at Townsend Hut on two occasions.

The Monaro Trekkers have many BNT members in the group and now proudly have been given Schofields Hut to care take. Our first working party in January was thoroughly enjoyed with much needed repainting of outside woodwork and a good general clean-up inside.



Next AGM at Ebor



PLANS are now well under way for the next Annual General Meeting to be held at Ebor, NSW at Yaraandoo Conference Centre for October 6 and 7. Upmarket accommodation will be available at a budget price, and there are cabins and camping.

Sunday there is planned a barbecue with NPWS on the Trail and local mountain bikers, walkers and riders will be encouraged to camp out at the BNT facilities near the Ebor recreation grounds. More on this next TRACKS issue. To book early contact Roger on 02 6654 9555.

Trekkers rego

Trekkers, please register with the BNT Office. Rego forms can be posted or emailed, or downloaded from the website: www.nationaltrail.com.au
PO Box 1196
NERANG QLD 4211
Phone: 1300 138 724
Email: info@nationaltrail.com.au

Munna Hall

MUNNA Hall is only a few hundred metres off the Trail in book 5 map 6. When you turn left out of Birts Rd keep hard left up to the Hall don't follow Blowers Rd down to Bauple Woolooga Rd.

This is a great spot for one-day trail rides, with heaps of space for car and float parking as well as a shelter, picnic table and water in a tank behind the Hall. It also makes an excellent overnight camp for through trekkers with acres of reasonable grassed area where pack and riding mounts can be confined within portable electric fencing.

Recently the Council reroofed the Hall and connected electricity again after many years and the Woolooga Trail Riders Club has recently used the grounds to park their floats and set up a ride to Miva and Dickabram Bridge along the BNT.



Letters to the Editor



Hi Roger, first of all I want to thank you for replying my mail. The text you put on the blog is really helpful.

And now I know it is possible to walk the complete route. The more I read about the BNT, the more I realise it is going to be extremely difficult.

I like the challenge and I'm doing serious research to make this dream of my come true. I would love to tell my story for the article.

4

Some short information about me: I'm 21 years old. I live in Holland, study History at the university of Nijmegen and going to finish my 3th year.

After that I'm going to work full-time (one year to save money), do all the research that is necessary for the trip and train a lot for hiking.

I've done a lot of sports on a high training level (boxing, snowboarding and currently rockclimbing). I want to leave my hometown for a while because I know there is more in the world then only windmills. (The windmills are a joke.)

But I really want to explore and be on the road. This is a great opportunity and I'm going for it. I'm really excited to do this.

Is it possible to contact the person who walked the entire route? He would have all the information I need to make this goal a succes.

Kind regards,

Jens van Galen

Hi Roger, Therese Creed here, I am one of the Central Queensland BNT coordinators.

I have just had a call from a lady called Coralie who is travelling south on the BNT with two horses and will be heading into Central Queensland over the next few months.

She is looking for a travelling companion and planning to go as far south as Canberra.

The companion would need to have their own horses and gear except for electric fence and first aid which she is happy to share.

Was wondering if you could put a note in the next TRACKS?

Her number is 0414 830 383 and she is happy for her contact number to be printed. Thanks and regards,

Therese Creed

PS you are doing a fantastic job with the magazine.



Trail reflections

By Rob Sutton

WE are nearly at the end of our trek, camped at Blackbutt with only twelve days to go to reach Kilkivan and home.

Maybe we could prolong it a bit with a few more rest days along the way, I've actually been doing that since we came back out of the NSW high country and the risk of snow was over. I don't know how camels go in snow, maybe they would handle it like they do everything else thrown at them along the way:

Bernadette and I have trekked on the BNT a little different in that we started in the middle (or thereabouts) at Kilkivan near Gympie, our home. I won't even try to describe the scenery, the vastly different terrain or the great people we met along the way over the 25 months that we travelled on the trail, I think to do so would take a lot more paper than I have here but briefly I'll give a picture of the trip.

In January '07 we headed north with five camels, two mature bullocks that I've owned for ten years, Blackjack from the wild and Teewah who used to give rides up Noosa foreshore, two five-year-old bullocks Ringer and Dan both caught from the wild and to liven things up a bit, a young bull named Alby caught on the edge of the Simpson Desert, who I think was

mainly there to keep the rest of the crew and us entertained with his antics.

Setting off in the start of summer in our area to be in far north Queensland in winter to miss the wet season, Queensland was in severe drought at the time with very little surface water and most camps completely dry. Sometimes water was available at private windmills and after a cheery good day the second thing a grazier would say to us was where their mill was. Windmill mechanics are hard to get and nowadays most cockies have a Honda motor driving the pump, they fill with petrol, start it and drive to the next one. The tank that feeds the trough is always open with every bird from miles around having a party in the water, so unless the Honda was actually running and pumping we couldn't fill our jerry cans, we carried four of these on one camel enough water for us to drink and cook with for ten days, camels are finicky drinkers and even in the very dry go a week in between drinks.

We had not a drop of rain till the Kroombit Tops when a huge storm came over and it belted down, from here on things got better as we moved north with more water and good feed, up till then the camels had lived on she-oaks, cats claw (which cattle also eat in drought) and prickly pear.

At the Glenroy Crossing the Fitzroy was flooding about a metre over the cause-

way, we were going to sit it out but a local grain harvesting contractor said to get across today, as a big fresh was coming down and we would be stuck for two weeks. As he started through the murky water in his truck, he yelled out "By the way, crocs love camels!"

We came across two pubs with no beer, Ogmore Hotel and Little Bowen Hotel opening in a week. About this time we met Craig and Shirley (the Gypsies) coming south who later came back to our camp that night with some grog and some barley for the camels.

After a good run, disaster struck in the Mutchilba area after avoiding the heart leaf growing everywhere. In one afternoon, the young camels ate Cooktown Ironwood that I failed to identify. In the morning Dan and Ringer were too sick to move. I left Bern and walked to a station and phoned a vet. "Snake bite" he said. I told him two were crook. He said "Can't be that then, Ironwood. They will die. Had a racehorse last week ate some, worth a lot of money, did everything I could, but it died."

Within 24 hours Dan and Ringer were dead and Alby died the next day. Bernadette and I were distraught, camels that can eat almost anything but as we found out the hard way, not Ironwood. We walked Blackjack and Teewah to some yards and camped up for a week, hand

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Trail reflections

From Page 5

feeding them while we decided what to do. Gradually we came up with a plan to return with our two remaining camels, we went through the gear again and again, till we were down to the bare essentials and two saddles.

Most of the BNT is, with counting rest days, four weeks between small towns, with the biggest run between Mount Garnet and Mingela (bus into Townsville) which is about six weeks. A lot of food to carry however you do it and the last few weeks it's dried food only.

We had 12" of rain on the way back to Mingela – in the middle of winter? At Ravenswood we had a week off and were told the Burdekin Dam was flowing one metre over the wall, 8 weeks until it goes down.

The Gypsies caught up with us and got mustering work in the area but we decided to detour around by going to Charters Towers, Belyando Crossing and return to the trail at Nebo, here we found out that most of eastern Australia was in the grip of a horse flu and the huge job of trying to stop its spread – we wandered along through it all, lucky to be trekking with camels.

We arrived back home after travelling for 11 months and trekking 4,500km, Blackjack carried 200kg including Bern perched up on top and Teewah carrying 160kg.

We went back to work for 16 months and during that time I went and brought home two wild camels and trained them enough to continue south. It took a while but we set off from Kilkivan on the 20th

July '09 this time with four camels, Blackjack, Teewah, Dodge and Wolfe – both about four year old bullocks. Leaving in winter to be in summer in the Snowys, it was a completely different trip. There was always water, we hardly carried any water until Victoria. Everything went to plan and we kept moving covering 100km a week with two rest days.

Really nice country Killarney, over the border into NSW through the Guy Fawkes and up McDonalds spur in a dust storm to Ebor, Kunderang Brook, Hunter Valley with all its thoroughbred horses that just went crazy, couldn't seem to handle the sight of camels at all, the beautiful farming area of Crookwell, then Hall and right through the middle of Canberra. We had a nice rest week at Khancoban for Christmas.

But after crossing the Murray into Victoria things started getting hard, we had been following fire devastation since Canberra from all the different fires in recent years.

At Omeo the whole of Victoria was code red (catastrophic), total fire ban and we considered turning around, but a cool change came through so we went on and that was the last extreme weather we had unlike the year here before.

We haven't travelled the BNT from Mutchilba to Cooktown so I can't comment on that area, but as for the rest of the trail – none of it compares to Victorian Alps for plain hard going with little feed and water. You find yourself camped at a river at 200m in the morning and at 1600m at camp that night and down again the next day over extremely steep and rocky terrain. The camels ate blackberry in the rivers and snow grass on the high plains.

We arrived at Marysville and Nar-

bethong 12 months after the fires that devastated these areas and we were warmly welcomed by people who have been through a living hell and are only now starting to put their lives back together.

On the 15th of February, seven months after leaving Kilkivan we walked into Healesville fed and rested, four lean very fit camels, for 12 days before turning around and heading north not wanting to be caught out by early snow. People often say why return and not just put them on a truck to get home? But we enjoy the return trip knowing what to expect, where there is good feed and campsites (and good pubs!).

We passed through Killarney on exactly the same day one year later and a few days further on we walked up to the Rosevale Pub we could see heavy horses grazing nearby, the Gypsies had heard we were coming and camped up for a couple of days.

We hadn't seen Craig and Shirley since Mingela in July 2007 over three years ago. We had a good celebration while the big horses and camels grazed out the front and I think the bar takings would have been up that night!

As I said we are now only days from home camped up at the Blackbutt show-ground. Bernadette will be 50 in two days' time having had four birthdays on the trail. We are not spring chickens. Have a grandson that we haven't met yet. Dodge and Wolfe have walked 5,800km, Blackjack and Teewah have walked over 10,000km. Bernadette has ridden most of that and I have worn out five sets of boots. We don't carry a mobile phone or GPS. Just a compass and an EPIRB.

The trail is open.

If we can do it, so can anyone.

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ATHRA camp



IT WAS as though somebody had lit the signal fires guiding ATHRA Qld members to the gates of iconic Eskdale Station nestled on the BNT in the Brisbane Valley, for our annual September Camp.

The week prior to the camp saw bush-fire season start early, and the local Rural Fire Brigades were kept busy averting disaster. Spirals of smoke could be seen for miles during the day, and of a night time the glow on the hillsides kept us all watching and alert to any wind changes. Most property owners in the area had prepared themselves for a severe fire season and had conducted controlled burnoffs around buildings and yards in the month or so prior. Through much of these ashes you could now see short green pick emerging. This planning would not only guard property assets but would provide good feed for the stock which would be brought in from burnt-out paddocks.

For many years ATHRA Qld's moving September Camps followed closely along sections of the National Trail, in areas stretching from Blackbutt to Rathdowney and also on the Brisbane Loop. Eskdale Station has been visited on six previous occasions during these treks; however this was the first time we were given the opportunity to camp here on this lovely property and explore its rolling hills, steep mountain staircase climbs and pretty creeks. The driveway into the property,

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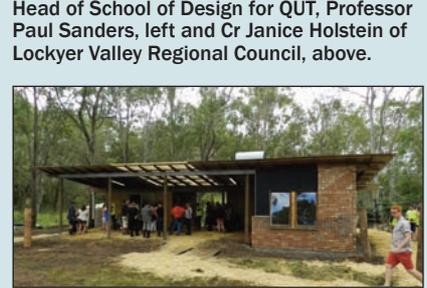


Top: Roy and Kay Wilson from the Logan Club.



Above: Morning muster at Eskdale on the BNT.

Left: Shane Nash leads the way along ashen tracks.



Head of School of Design for QUT, Professor Paul Sanders, left and Cr Janice Holstein of Lockyer Valley Regional Council, above.

ATHRA camp

From Page 7

past the stockyards where we were camping, and veering off to the left past the homestead is the National Trail. The BNT dissects Eskdale Station entering from Nukininda Station in the north, and heading southwards out through the front gate, crossing over the cattle grid and into Eskdale South Station.

It seems appropriate to visit this area and use the local sections of the Trail, as not far from here in the township of Gatton, ATHRA was formed. Arising from this event and the fact that ATHRA was looking at a means to keep stock routes open for use by riders, RM Williams (who was a founding member), commissioned Dan Seymour to find and mark the Trail running from Cooktown to Melbourne. This historical event begins a journey for many of us, as we retrace sections of the BNT on our annual escapes from reality.

Eskdale Station's property manager Mark Gelhaar and station hand Vicky often see travellers on the BNT coming down through the property. In the week prior to our camp, a traveller with 3 donkeys passed through and also a caravan with camels. The camels were scheduled to make a return during our stay, but let's just say that in some ways we were glad they didn't as there would have been many a startled horse standing snorting with googly eyes at these dromedaries as they plodded along the dusty track.

In all 72 ATHRA members were camped here and each day saw an average of 63 riders mounted to head out. The

local Brisbane Valley Trail Riders Club had spent countless hours in the saddle sourcing and mapping exciting rides for all. Each day's ride at some stage travelled along section of the BNT. Local identities and property owners joined us each night for dinner, and gave a brief outline of the areas which we would ride the next day. This verbal account of the history of the scenery unfolding before our eyes, and short tales of some of the characters who lived and worked in these areas, brought life to the tracks we would be following.

Mid-week as per usual sees the changing of the guard – while there are many who can enjoy one of these camps for the entire session, others sadly have to return to homes and jobs. As a welcome to our new riders and to demonstrate support for the local families and their communities which gave so much towards making this week a success, a charity auction had been organised. It was an evening of much fun, with many of us returning late in the evening to our camps clutching sides still aching from laughter. The previous day had seen these volunteer guys and girls coordinating the water bombing and back burning up in the hills to the north-east of the property.

One of their main concerns during this day was that of the safety of horse riders who were travelling along an already charcoaled section of the BNT. Although our track was located a safe distance from the fire front the Rural Fire Brigade didn't want our mounts to be startled by the beat of the spinning rotors and the crash of water hitting nearby bushland as it dampened the path of the fire. We often saw these charcoaled faces of the fireys as they

passed through our camp, occasionally calling in for a quick bite and cool drink as they also followed the track of the BNT, to then take a side road as they headed off to intersect the fire front. Therefore it was appropriate that we had chosen this group as our beneficiaries from the auction when the decision to hold one was made a couple of months prior.

The remainder of the week still saw an eager group mount up each day. On the Thursday, an excited group readied the pack horses and saddles looking to head out for what would be a traditional day's ride and overnight camp for travellers of the BNT. Half of us had earlier chosen to return to the comforts of our swags back at the main camp, and we waved good bye to the Packers at lunchtime. Sitting around that evening's campfire thoughts of our mates camping in differing sections of the valley crossed the void. Next afternoon saw a few of us saddle up and follow the BNT in search of our mates, as it brought the returning packers back to our folds.

As with all memorable times, they end too soon, and Saturday saw us celebrating a week spent on the BNT, and the reunion and formation of lasting friendships which are a symbol of the times spent around campfires. ATHRA Qld thanks the property owners of Eskdale, Eskdale South and West, Glenmaurie and Avonvale for supporting our adventures. Also to the local Brisbane Valley Club for their attention to detail and long hours marking our individual trails.

Janice Turner



Owner of the property where the new hut is sited, book 6 section coordinator Lynne Anderson, requests trekkers call before arrival to schedule their stay.

Rebuilding after the floods

QUEENSLAND University of Technology students have been volunteering their time to rebuild a historic campsite at Murphys Creek, an area devastated by last year's floods.

The shed, designed and constructed by QUT architecture, interior design, industrial design and construction management students, will provide bushwalkers and horses on the Bicentennial National Trail Campsite at Murphys Creek with shelter.

It replaces a previous campsite on the property of chilli chocolatier Lynne Seaton Anderson, which was destroyed during last January's floods.

QUT Real Studio project coordinator Alison McDonald said the region's building industry had rallied behind the project, providing materials and expertise to rebuild the shed at the popular stopover.

"The Murphys Creek campsite is a halfway point on one of Australia's most important historic trails. It has been a huge amount of work for students but they have learnt so much," she said. "Many of them gave up their time during the university break to work on this project."

The new campsite, which includes an agricultural shed for horses and campsite

facilities for visitors, will be officially opened at a ceremony on January 17.

Final year architecture student Joel Alcorn, 26, was among more than 80 students who took part in the Real Studio project.

The Banora Point resident said the project was a good chance to get practical experience while rebuilding a regional area.

"I thought it would be a good opportunity to do something that was going to be a real project and also to help the community," Joel said.

Joel, who designed the winning concept for the shed, was on site from November to January for the project, working with builders, engineers and other students.

"It's very important as architecture students for us to be onsite working with builders and other consultants," he said.

"You learn so much you can't learn in the classroom. It will make us better architects."

Ms McDonald, who lectures in the School of Design at QUT, which is now part of the Creative Industries Faculty, said the Real Studio project would give students a career edge.

"It was run like a real architecture project. Students designed the whole project and worked closely with the client," she said. "It's a valuable learning experience."

The building is also a rural agricultural shed, which in addition to housing farm equipment for Seatonfire Chilli Farm, can accommodate BNT trekkers. The shed's facilities include holding yard, hitching rail, shower room, feed room, workshop, store/tack room and first aid room.

The building has been constructed reusing materials from the previous shed which had to be demolished as a result of the 2011 flash flood; materials such as metal sheeting, gates, steel mesh.

The building also uses local materials salvaged from the site, in particular rocks and sand; donated recycled materials, such as windows, doors, posts, steel beams, formwork, acrylic sheeting, slate, metal mesh, seconds bricks and various timber; and this is supplemented with plywood and additional timber and metal sheeting.

Water is harvested on-site and stored in a tank. Timber post and rail yards were made by the client and a neighbour. There's an inside toilet, with a new advanced Enviro-septic and solar hot water.

Big October ride



Dayboro Trailriders Club

2011's Big October Ride was a huge success with the largest number of participants ever. We totalled 230 horse and riders!

The ride is run annually and attracts people from Queensland and New South Wales, from Hervey Bay in the north; Crows Nest in the west; Redlands Bay in the east and Murwillumbah in the south.

Our Friday night meal was very successful with more than sixty meals served, some people missed out on dessert as they were too busy catching up with friends.

We enjoyed the company of a couple of well-known horsemen. The first of whom was retired jockey Mick Pelling who assisted with the running of the bar on Friday night plus a few other odd jobs and Peter Gould who was horse trainer on the movie 'Australia' starring Nicole Kidman.

The quality of horses and riders was of a higher level than in previous years and as a result only two riders didn't complete the ride. After mustering up the ride departed the showgrounds on time (8:30am), escorted through town by Dayboro Police with assistance from the Rural Fire Brigade, with the local Apex club on 'poo patrol', picking up the manure in the main street.

This year the long and short ride travelled together to the smoko stop, trekking through a large park (which was about 5 metres under water earlier this year); across the North Pine River and then across three rural properties, stopping at a set of cattle yards for morning tea.

The ride then split. The short (3hr) ride heading towards Woodward Road where a koala was on the ground until he saw all of us coming. He quickly climbed a tree up out of harm's way.

While some riders were checking out the koala a wallaby charged through the horses, which caused no end of excitement. From here more rural properties were crossed; back on to Glover Road; back across the Pine River into Juff's and back to the showgrounds for lunch just as the rain began to fall.

The long ride (7 hours) continued on past the dip yard, criss-crossed Lacey's Creek and up to the top of a hill with a fantastic scenic view. Through Gary's place, over Lacey's Creek Road, into Wirth Road and Kevin's for a BBQ lunch.

Once lunch was over the ride headed back into Gary's and then took a different trail back to the smoko stop cattle yards; Rowe Road; Doyle's; across the North Pine River; on to Mt Pleasant Road; Sellin Road; Stewart's and back to the showgrounds. Unfortunately we did get a bit wet.

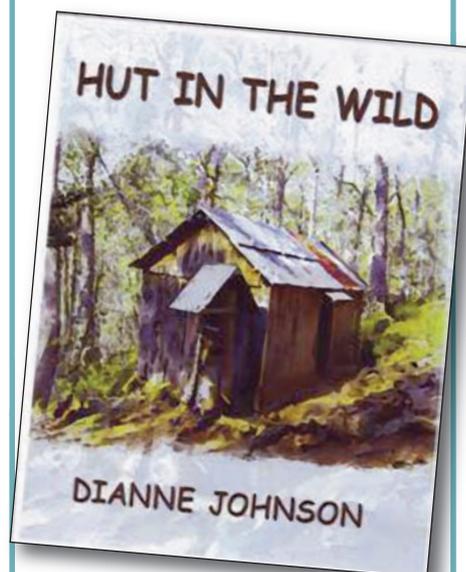
Everyone who was staying for the Saturday night showered, washed and fed their horses. Entertainer Cousin Jack had everybody singing and dancing and there were a number of giveaway prizes.

We hope that everyone who joined us had a great time. We enjoyed being your hosts and hope to see you again next year with some friends in tow.

Happy trails,

Bob Ebert

Book review



HAVING nurtured a passion for huts over the past 30 years, Dianne Johnson has explored their variations and ideals by visiting and creating many over that time.

In *Hut in the Wild*, through a series of essays, she discusses the hut in its many guises – as inscape, as metaphor, as escape, as tent, as caravan, as ripple iron and as cubby.

The essays range from the philosophical to the whimsical, from architecture to archetype.

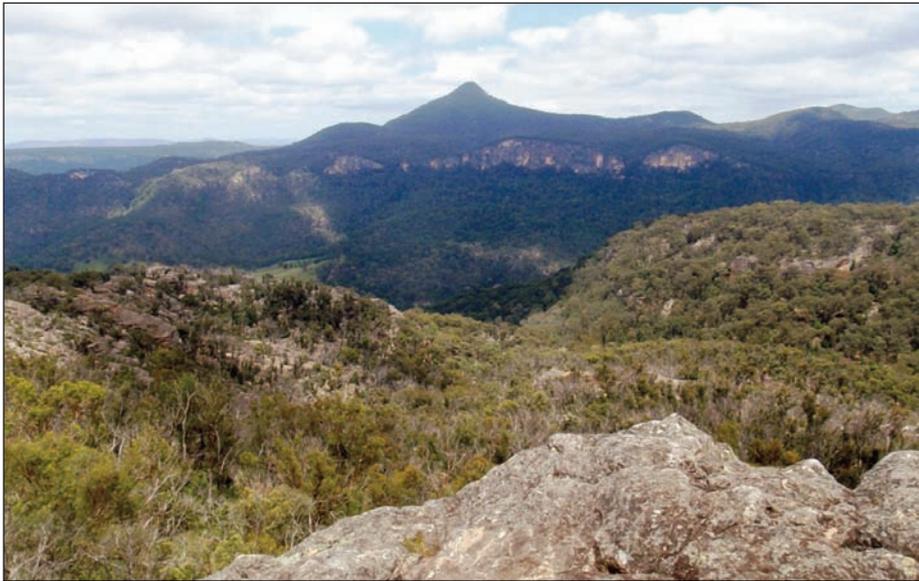
The huts featured are from many parts of the world but the photographs (also mainly taken by the author) are concerned with the Australian landscape.

Hut in the Wild is about space. Essentially a cabin of the imagination, the hut is redolent of paradise regained. It haunts our dream-sleep.

Hut in the Wild is available from Blue Mountains bookstores including Megalong Books (Leura), Gleebooks (Blackheath), Turning Page (Springwood) and the NPWS Heritage Centre (Blackheath) or from:

**PO Box 7207
Leura NSW 2780
(\$23 inc P&P).**

Phoenix rises on Grassy Mountain



HERE at Grassy Mountain our Phoenix is the BNT shelter that was built in its modern form in February 2007 and which was then wiped out by a Blue Mountains wildfire in November 2009 less than three years after it was built.

After building materials were collected and the date set for rebuilding, Mal and Denise had to apply for permits for passage through Wollemi State Forest.

There is no direct road access to Grassy Mountain which is located in mountain tops on the northern side of the Capertee Valley about 100 km from Lithgow towards Mudgee. On the Trail it is in book 9 map 7 near the Glen Alice school – one of a few schools that are built directly on the National Trail. The hut itself is built on private land with very steep approaches.

On an interesting side note, the Capertee Valley is the largest canyon in the world being longer and wider than the Grand Canyon but not deeper.

Grassy Mountain gained its name because of the excellent cover of grass which grows there all year round on the basalt cap lying over deeper sandstone deposits. Whilst the exact history is uncertain it is believed the first hut here was built for shelter by farmers who often grazed their stock up there in summer. The firestorm which burnt the second hut was so fierce the iron was carried 30 metres away on the updraught and the original tank was just a molten blob.

Grassy Mountain is a crucial hut nearly in the middle of a 35km day with no other

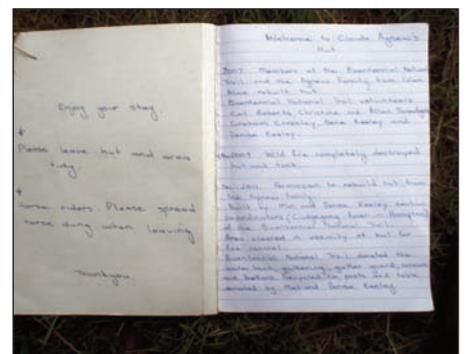
water for all trekkers. The Trail climbs from 200 to 1100 metres to get from the valley floor to the top of the range. This hut is needed to break a big long day with a campsite and water.

The hut was rebuilt in the same design as the 2007 hut with a skillion roof, two walls, tank, a table and a barbecue. The original hitching rail was singed but not burnt so it was retained. The hut location was shifted closer to the hitching rail so it is now in a slightly safer position in regards to future fires.

Day 1, Mal and Denise drove up to Grassy Mountain in two vehicles, removed a couple of burnt trees which were unsafe and Denise mowed the grass. By day's end the poles were concreted in, the frame was built and the roofing iron was screwed on. Day 2, the walls were screwed in place and Day 3, the tank, table and barbecue were fitted along with other finishing touches.

A logbook has again been set up there in a waterproof plastic container. Mal and Denise had camped in the previous hut shortly before the fire and Mal had photographed the original logbook so the BNT still has a record of all trekkers that have passed through the original BNT hut.

Next trip the hut will be painted environmental green and the job will be finished. Many thanks to the BNT Board for allocating funds for some of the materials and to Section Coordinators Mal and Denise for donating the iron, posts, wall frame and barbecue as well as a good job well done. They also enjoyed three nights camping at such a wonderful location.



From top: View from Grassy Mt; remains of the old hut; new hut halfway up; finished hut; trail sign; new logbook.

Return to East

EAST Kunderang is an iconic historic cattle station on the Macleay River and a recommended campsite of the Bicentennial National Trail.

Now national park, the homestead can be rented for a brilliant wilderness/farmstay experience by booking with Armidale NPWS.

The property was owned and managed by the Fitzgerald family who recently had a reunion in

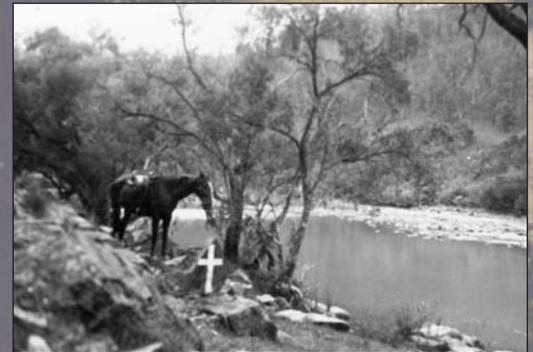
From the collection of



Five of the six Kunderang sons about 1900. Joe, 19, the eldest, Edward, 14, who drowned that year in the river after coming off his horse, Des, 16, Jim, 9 and Jack, 18, shooting at East Kunderang.



The Fitzgerald clan at East Kunderang for a recent reunion.



This is the spot where Joe Fitzgerald came off his horse by the river in 1927. The horse stumbled and Joe came off and hit his head on that rock by the river where the cross is painted. Apparently he got back on and went home and died that night in bed due to his head injury.



Eileen, 20, and Flora Fitzgerald at 16 years cleaning and dressing chickens about 1913.



The Kunderang girls Mary, 26, Eileen, 22, Addie, 20 and Flora, 17 about 1915 at Middle Yards Hut.



BNT section coordinators Paul and Cherrie Jones at Middle Yards

East Kunderang

More to farewell one of the brothers who owned the station.

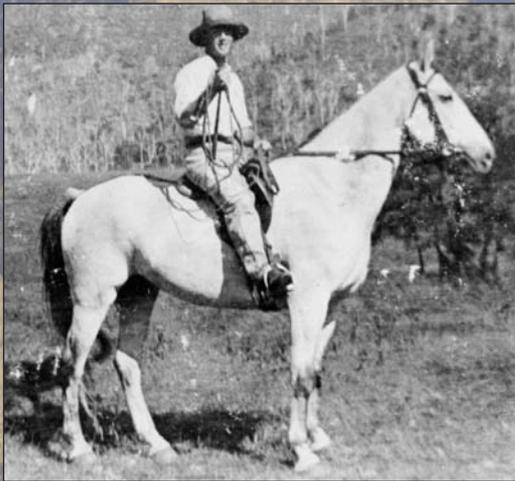
The wilderness location gives East Kunderang a unique ambience and is one of the most valued experiences on the National Trail.

BNT TRACKS has been given access to a wonderful collection of old photographs which provide a valuable insight into life in the wilderness during pioneer times.

Life of Annie Fitzgerald



East Kunderang as it is today. Made from pit-sawn cedar.



Jim Fitzgerald (b. 1891) on Romeo 1912 or 13. Romeo was bred as a race horse from another race horse called Herbalist. Jim was a great rider and won many local area competitions on Romeo such as best exhibition of bareback campdrafting, open cattle draft, best cavalry horse and the maiden hunt. He went on to become an Augustinian monk in Brisbane. He was also an excellent wood carver and a collection of his work was recently exhibited at Moree Art Gallery. He died in Brisbane in 1976.



Page from album featuring Kathleen, a visiting cousin from Cundle on the Manning where the Fitzgerald family lived and farmed before they went to Kunderang. It was the oldest son, Joseph, who was born in Dungog in 1846 who went to farm at Kunderang, leaving his brothers and sisters in the Dungog/Cundle area. He married first and moved to Kunderang with six of his 10 children. The last four were born at Kunderang.



the Yards Hut recently.



Bryan, 8, Adrian, 4 and Ronnie Fitzgerald, 6, with a fine catch of bass caught in the Macleay.



Joseph (Joe) Fitzgerald with his favourite and very best horse Kahtan about 1911.

Gone to Buggery

THIS stretch of the Trail has been notorious for getting trekkers lost for a long, long time so a detailed audit was long overdue.

The property owner kindly loaned us a suitable bush-basher while he went ahead on a bike. Mushgang capably drove while Mal wrote up the notes and consulted his GPS.

Been some incredible flood stories emerge on this trip. Back of Gatton one valley we visited is so narrow the road and creek bed fight each other for space in the valley floor. They had at least 10 inches of rain in a couple of hours and the road was shredded. Families couldn't get out for weeks.

When a road of sorts was finally sorted out it went bush through paddocks all over the place – almost undrivable but better than nothing. Council guys were still busy pouring concrete replacing a dozen or so floodways and associated works when we drove through.

This valley we were in here we noticed builders hard at work on a low-set, very old farmhouse. We called in – wonderful old couple who are great supporters of the Trail.

Their flood story made my hair curl. They were worried sick about getting the grandkids out – someone else told us how one stage they nearly had a chopper lined up but then it had to go elsewhere.

The family had a ladder in place ready to head for the roof if the house started to break up but about then the water started to drop again. Kind of story that has been repeated over and over in SEQ. Not all families were that fortunate.

When the insurance claim was being lodged they submitted many of the grandkids' pics – one she showed us finally clinched their claim – six months later. The kids' pic of the water coming down the hillside over the contour proved the biggest problem was the storm run-off as opposed to riverine flooding. At least these guys were luckier than many in that they were able to keep the water out so there was minimal damage inside.

As happened so many places elsewhere much of the insurance claim was tied up in machinery and the like in the farm sheds.



On the goat track high on the ridge just above Emu Creek Gorge I spotted this property sign. After Mal downloaded the pic he spotted something else we hadn't seen in our hurry – what a coincidence. Look under the sign. Before long we were at Blackbutt – well just north at Nukku – where the BNT leaves the BVRT and heads south for the country we had just visited. Significant really – we should have taken a pic but by this time we were racing to get back to Nanango RSL by 6pm for dinner with BNT mate Jim who happened to be visiting that weekend. Grand trip – we had achieved a lot and as always it had been a ton of fun going bush with Mal.



Ma Ma Creek: the Trail has gone forever – it is being relocated. Where there were gentle creek banks once now it has been stripped to bedrock and there are cliffs metres high (didn't visit it – someone else is looking after that).

Emu Creek you could hardly see the creek for masses of “creek bottlebrushes” – now it is stripped across the entire width of the gorge and wide open – you can see where boulders the size of cars have been rolled downstream.

Dave McLeod



DIGGER DOG CANVAS GEAR started life as a horse rug repair business, but an inability to find suitable Pack Saddle Bags and functional packing equipment led us to design and fabricate the range of products we make today. These products have been tried and proven on

numerous packing and camping trips on Australia's Bicentennial National Trail and Victoria's High Country. Quality is the most important characteristic of a Digger Dog Canvas Gear product. We use only the best materials available to ensure you have a hassle-free and

pleasurable experience on the trail.

See the full range of products on our website: www.diggerdog.com.au or phone Ruth Manning on 03 5967 3026 or ripstop@bigpond.com



Heading north 2012

LOTS of university students dream of getting out in the real world and spending a year travelling. Not so many plan to take a year off from their studies to camp rough with three horses as their sole companions while they attempt to travel the length of the BNT.

Sam Alexander is not your average 23 year old medical student. Born and raised in Gippsland, Victoria, he's only been riding for five years and two of his horses are still pretty green, but on February 20 he plans on heading out from Healesville with the goal of reaching Cooktown, Queensland in 12 months.

Along the way he will raise awareness of rural health issues and much needed

funds for the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

As a not-for-profit organisation, the RFDS relies on fundraising to continue to provide vital emergency and essential health services for those living in rural and remote communities. ‘

“As a medical student I think the RFDS are an amazing service – 270,000 patient contacts per year, that’s one every two minutes,” said Sam. “This adventure is going to give me a much greater appreciation of the work they and rural doctors do in the areas in which they operate.”

Battery packs and regular recharges allowing, Sam plans to post video and status updates on Facebook to keep followers in-

formed of his progress. Another goal is to speak at schools and raise funds during the regular breaks required for the horses. At the end of the adventure the two geldings and gear will be auctioned off in a final fundraiser for the RFDS, while Marda the mare, his first horse, will return home for a well-earned rest.

“I know this ride will involve many challenges and shall test me in ways I didn’t even imagine were possible. But ... I can’t wait to get started!”

So if you see a young guy with three horses and a massive medical textbook as his pillow, that’ll be Sam and he’d love to have you join him on the trail or catch up with him during one of his rest stops.

For more information join him on Facebook at Heading North 2012 or visit www.headingnorth2012.com or www.flyingdoctor.org.au.



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Jeff Maudsley (07) 4163 0305

Trail Distance:

- Moore to Blackbutt (Nukku Road): 33.5km
- Moore to Linville Station: 7 km
- Linville Station to Benarkin: 18 km
- Benarkin to Blackbutt: 4.6 km
- Blackbutt to Nukku Overhead Bridge: 3.9 km

Moore to Blackbutt Rail Trail



LAST July I spent three weeks in Montana, one with the Swan Mountain Outfitters. Their ranch and corral are at Swan Lake in northern Montana, not very far from the West Glacier National Park which borders Canada and on the Continental Divide.

I caught the Amtrak Cascades train down to Portland and then an overnight sleeper into West Glacier on the Amtrak Empire Builder which followed the Columbia River for much of the way through Oregon into Montana's mountain area arriving at West Glacier. There I had my first bear encounter walking up the track to an isolated log house. Luckily it was more interested in the huckleberrys. It was really unexpected and scary.

One of six guests we had a 12 mile ride up to the top camp through raging snow melt creeks, deep dark forest with enormous tall trees and very rocky, narrow, one-way track with only one passing area.

The quarter horses with pinto and paint marking were called the Elite Mountain Team. Their surefootedness and great temperament was a credit to Swan Mountain Outfitters. The mule team was just as amazing carrying all the gear, food and horses' hay and oats to the top camp tied together with a breakable piece of light rope, did not have one slip of a pack. The lead guide calling "come on kids" they followed. Due to heavy snow falls the camp was dug out two weeks prior to our trip.

Riding up to Lions Head pass we had to dismount because of the snow and leave the horses tied up and walk up to a most beautiful lake in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area.

The top camp being in a National Forest is completely dismantled after the season and reassembled with the mules carrying everything up. The tents were warmed with a drum fire every night and every effort was made to keep us six guests comfortable. The food was kept in the river in waterproof boxes. Our guides, all professionally trained, were excellent and kept us protected on the constant lookout for mountain lions and bears with guns in holsters and the dog certainly warned us of any danger nearby.

It's quite amazing to see a bear climb straight up a vertical tall tree. A tip I bought back from the guides: place petroleum jelly a small dab inside cotton wool balls, keep inside a small plastic sandwich bag, makes a great fire lighter when pulled apart.



Top: preparing to leave for Top Camp.

Above: guide Taylor collecting wood on pack mules.

Below: that's where we were going to ride.

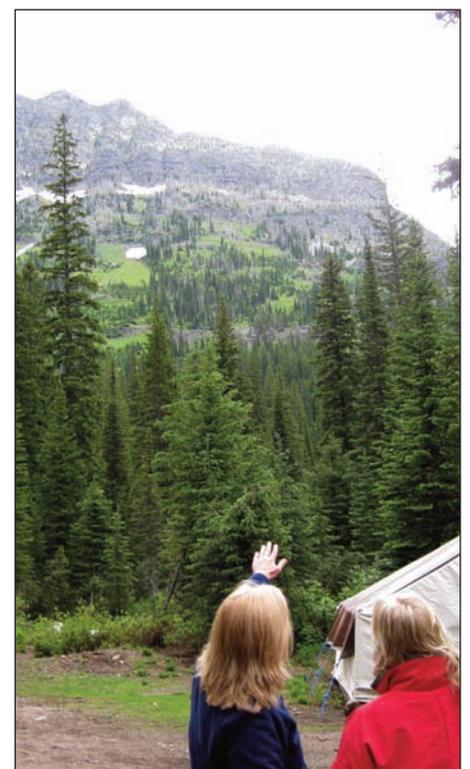
I stayed on at the ranch for three days which is Jo and Pat Tabor's home and had a lovely hospitable time with them and their two dogs. Pat is a hunter and Swan takes out hunting trips as well as fishing. The trophy heads of bears moose, elk, deer, mountain lion, etc being all over the ranch walls including a complete wolverine.

There were many 'bear jams' along the road – every time a bear is spotted eating the berries, then soon after the rangers arrive to move the cars along. There were also bear attacks during my visit, usually hikers either alone or coming across a mother and cubs unexpectedly. All the children had bear bells attached to their walking sticks or packs.

The old lodges in West and East Glacier National Park are huge, all built out of timber and huge trees to support them again decorated with trophy heads.

I tried coffee, huckleberry pie and all those other meals which are much bigger than ours. In fact everything is big. F250 with huge slide on campers are very commonplace,

Big sky, big mountains, trains, lakes, absolutely a great place to visit and the people so friendly.



New members

Brett Butler	Queanbeyan NSW
Heather Stackman	Nowendoc NSW
Travis Lye	Murwillumbah NSW
John Rae	Greenwich NSW
Charlton J Yeatman Mount	Ousley NSW
Kosciuszko brumby & Horse Camp Conservationists	Yass NSW
Karen Carter	Yass NSW
Justin Grant Creagan	Albion Park NSW
Benjamin Lucas	Kellyville Ridge NSW
Mark William Anderson	Leichhardt NSW
Shane Donnelly	Garingbah NSW
Peter Gargano	Aranda ACT
Lisa Poulsen	Jamison ACT
Andrew Friend & Kerri Rawling & Family	Griffith ACT
Richard Bowles	Alphington Victoria
Catherine Clancy	Balnarring Victoria
Robert John Melham	Ballarat Victoria
Peter Robert Foster	Healesville Victoria
Craig Wright	Willagee Western Australia
Brooke Sutton & Adam Johansen	Gympie Qld
Bouldercombe Trail Riders Club	Bouldercombe QLD
Fraser Coast Regional Council	Hervey Bay QLD
Euan D McLean	Toowoomba QLD
Bruce & Beril Murray	Taromeo QLD
Robert Nieuwenhoven	Nambour QLD
David Alan Walton	Warwick QLD
Sanna Langeveld	The Netherlands
Sharyn Bacon	Scott Creek SA
Nicholas James Wareham	Leanyer Northern Territory

Caption competition

“Don't you know you are supposed to take the saddle off first, you greenhorn.”



Susan Walsh,
Secretary Caboolture
Trail Horse Club

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
PO Box 1196 NERANG QLD 4211
Email: order@nationaltrail.com.au
Website: 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

\$35 individuals: \$55 family or club: 3 years \$90 and \$150
If family membership then only one vote allowed and nominated person to be advised.
If club membership then two votes allowed and nominated persons to be advised.

DONATION

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

PAYMENT BY EFT

Bank of QLD BSB: **124 001** Account No: **10 285 229** Reference: your name.
Please email to: order@nationaltrail.com.au with receipt details to confirm payment and indicate whether new membership or renewal.

PAYMENT BY CREDIT CARD

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

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

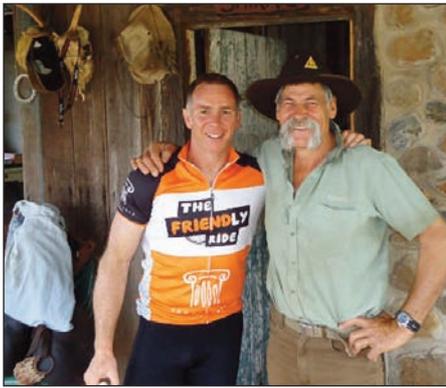
I am primarily a walker horserider cyclist donkey packer
other:

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.
New memberships paid between January and June provide continuous membership until June of the following year.

The Rabbit's Hut, Snowy Plains, between Lake Eucumbene and Mt Jagungal, Snowy Mountains, NSW. Order poster from: rog.fryer@bigpond.com





Day 56, with Mushgang.



Day 67, Kez and Andy at Guy Fawkes NP.



Day 75, at the dingo gate.

What was I thinking?

What was I thinking when I agreed to do this ride,
It wasn't about me legs and it wasn't about me hide.
It was more about this blue eyed girl, the one I call me
bride,
Or Curl, Kez, The Back up Queen, who's always by my
side.

Over a years gone now since that awful day when she
gave us such a fright,
I'll never forget the helplessness I felt there on that
night.
Kez had fallen off her Mountain bike and landed on her
head,
If it wasn't for her fighting spirit I reckon she'd be dead.

But Kez pulled thru as we prayed she would, with a few
scars left to bare,
Countless hours of sleeping, and eyes that had lost
their flare,
Her balance, confidence & mental strength – she
seemed to lose all control
"Two years" they said "to unscramble that brain", now
there's a special goal.

Things slowly improved but the signs were still there,
then I lost my job and had more time to spare,
So with Kerri's full recovery, acting as our guide, we
came up with the concept we called "The Friendly
Ride".

What was I thinking as I jumped upon the bike,
In Cooktown, Far North Queensland, and got ready for
the hike.
I WAS thinking about the miles ahead and the track, the
BNT,

And those bloody Mountain Ranges – what about ma
knee!

Through the Daintree, cross the Tablelands into coun-
try rugged raw,
Where Pioneers before us had searched for Iron Ore,
Where Mining towns and Cattle Stations now occupy
the land,
And track will turn from gravel, into bulldust then to
sand.
Where water is your best of friend, it's a crime to run it
dry,
Just be careful in the water holes with Crocs in big sup-
ply,
As we headed south, the country changed, and more
water seemed to flow,
The grass got greener, valleys deeper and the hills they
seemed to grow.

And the kind and gentle country folk we met along the way,
With offerings of food and drink and beds for us to stay
There was nothing that they wouldn't give, they'd offer
up their home,
Cause giving's better than taking in the world these
people own.

With the places we saw and the people we met, we
never lost sight of the prize,
To bring confidence, life and colour, back into those
beautiful eyes.
Did Kez do it tough? You bet ya she did, with countless
hours of tears,
And moments of real uncertainty as she tried to con-
quer her fears.

But inch by inch and step by step she slowly found her
way,
With more belief and more assertiveness in the things
she'd do and say,
And as the miles ticked by and the days rolled on her
perseverance set the tone,

So me, I just kept pedalling, pointing the bike for home.
Through the Mountains and the valleys, down the
tracks of the BNT,
After 94 days and nearly 5,000k's, we rolled into ACT.

So what am I thinking as I stand up here today,
And I think about life challenges that will surely come
your way.
You can treat 'em as hurdles, look for blame and
things to say,
Or you can grab 'em by the horns, and search to find a
way.

That's what we've thought, that's what we've done,
that's what we've always been,
And the proof is in the pudding when you see the Back
up Queen,
She's back is Kez, in her brand new way, her eyes have
found their flare,
She still sleeps a bit and forgets a few things but she
ain't Robinson Crusoe there.

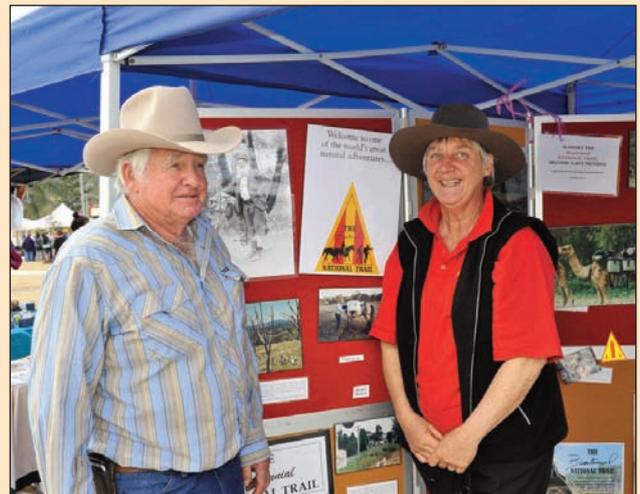
And we're hoping that our journey may act to shine a
light,
For those who search for guidance as they try to fight
life's fight,
Believe in what it is you do, and do it with you soul,
And don't be afraid of sweat and tears, they'll help you
find your goal.

Two years they said to unscramble that brain, well I
reckon we've got it beat,
So please raise your glass as I propose a toast to hav-
ing Kez back on her feet.

Andy Friend



John Dwyer and Mal Keeley at RM Williams Reserve in the escarpment
area of Lockyer Valley.



A glorious day at Esk Multicultural Festival mid-2011 for the BNT
display stall and volunteers Jimmy King and Sue Cumming.

The Friendly Ride

OVER the 30-odd years the National Trail has been in existence the trekking fraternity has always been inspired by the handful of trekkers who have successfully completed the Trail end to end. Wherever BNT'ers gather together sooner or later the conversation will turn to this elite body of trekkers. Another name may soon join those respected names – Andy Friend, rugby coach and athlete who has already cycled Cooktown to Canberra in very good time.

Last issue of Tracks we read of Andy's plans to cycle Cooktown to Canberra after his partner Kerri received serious head injuries in a mountain bike accident.

Andy planned the trip to assist Kerri to recover from Acquired Brain Injury. That dream was realised on December 3, 2011 when he rode triumphantly into Canberra surrounded by family friends and well-wishers.

Andy and Kerri raised \$165,000 for Brain Injury Australia and The Outward Bound Foundation to run outdoor programs for participants with an Acquired Brain Injury. Andy and Kerri then decided to continue the Trail to Healesville to complete their BNT trek.

"I have met many people in my seventeen years of professional coaching but what really stood out as I cycled the Trail was how so often the people who had the least gave the most and without hesitation," Andy said.

Cycling the BNT through the Lockyer Valley near Brisbane (scene of the January 2011 floods) was a particularly poignant experience. Andy and Kerri felt a particular affinity with those folks as they still faced so much uncertainty but moved on with life without complaining and with determination.

Andy and Kerri enjoyed Queensland which didn't have the challenging mountains of NSW but noted the remoteness of the Queensland portion of the Trail in places and felt that in the dry it could be tough going with water points spaced well apart. (Better spacing of campsites and water points has been a goal of the Queensland book team for some time so this situation is steadily improving.)

Distance climbed is of particular interest to cyclists because the uphill stretches use the most energy. A day spent climbing almost non-stop in mountains can be exhausting. Andy told me that across the entire length of the Trail a cyclist will climb ten and a half Everests with 57,800 metres of climbing between Cooktown and Canberra alone.

It wasn't always plain sailing, er cycling. At Ma Ma Creek just after Toowoomba Andy missed reading in the notes pointing out that the original Trail had been wiped out in the floods of January 2011. He launched into the original Ma Ma Creek route finding the going rapidly getting tougher and tougher.

After carrying the bike on his shoulders wading in waist-deep water for some

distance he bailed out and found a farmhouse.

The lady of the house was surprised to see him, telling him he was the first one through there since the floods and kindly gave Andy and Kerri a bed for the night.

Down around Muswellbrook solid rain set in for several days making conditions not only miserable but almost impossible. It isn't much fun camping in a leaking tent and staggering out in the rain in the middle of the night. Fortunately Andy was several days ahead of schedule so he and Kerri took advantage of better accommodation until the rain passed.

On December 3, 2011 the first part of the Friendly Ride concluded as Andy cycled around Lake Burley Griffin to Parliament House with both their boys and 300 supporters and Kerri in tow flanked by crowds of well-wishers lining the route. That night there was a dinner with 250 guests at the National Press Club which finished at 2:30am the next morning.

It would be great if you could support Andy and Kerri. Go to their website at www.andyfriend.com.au/ or contact Brain Injury Australia on 1800 BRAIN1 (1800 272 461) or Outward Bound Australia – FRIENDLY Ride to Support Australians Living with Brain Injury on 02 6235 5716.

Andy wrote the poem opposite after the Cooktown to Canberra portion of the trek which describes the ride far better than I ever could.

Section coordinators

QUEENSLAND

Guidebook 1

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jennylott@skymesh.com.au

Steve Grainger
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Kingsbrough to Walsh River
Ph: 07 4099 6171 Mob: 0459 996 171
tontosjg@yahoo.com.au

Tim Daniel Wilderness Expeditions
Edition 2 Guidebook 1, Maps 15-20
Walsh River to Gunnawarra (Rudd Creek) Ph: 07 4096 2266 Mob: 0447 401 090
info@wildex.com.au
or tdwildwalk@gmail.com

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Therese & Cedric Creed
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Guidebook 4

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Graham Knight
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Bruce & Beril Murray Edition 2
Guidebook 5 Map 12-16 R125 Brisbane River to Blackbutt Ph: 0438 017 903 or 0408 874 634
brucemurray@gmail.com or berilmurray@hotmail.com

Guidebook 6

Bruce & Beril Murray
Edition 2 Guidebook 6 Map 1
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Contributions

BNT TRACKS welcomes contributions. Photos need to be 300 pixels per inch at size of publication, meaning the file size needs to be at least 500kb.

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. Please don't embed photos in the

Word document, send them separately.

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 02 6654 9555 for advertising rates. Deadline for next issue July 30. The magazine is direct mailed to 1000 subscribers.

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Dukes inspired



TEN St Marys College trekkers from Maryborough who featured in the last *BNT TRACKS* have been so inspired by their experiences on the National Trail earning their Silver Duke of Edinburgh award last year they have gone on to start their Gold Award.

They recently undertook their Practice Journey canoeing the Mary River near the section of the BNT which is featured in the Weekender, Rambling Round the Mary.

St Marys have around 14 Bronze Award students who will be trekking for their Silver Award on the BNT again this year on the section between Biggenden and Glenbar Rd – approximately four days cycling. At Glenbar Road they will turn east off the Trail to complete their trek in Tiaro.

Maryborough Special School are also planning Duke of Edinburgh Award treks on the National Trail east of Biggenden this year.

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A slightly true story

Chapter 3

by Harold Gardner

WE hired a dozer to clear the wattle regrowth which was choking the high flats and put in a couple of dams, walking behind the D7 to scatter rye grass and clover seed in the tracks it left behind. Wild pigs attracted by the commotion rooted it all up overnight and the next morning the main paddock was a moonscape. Aghast at the damage we declared war on the pigs despite national parks saying we should not disperse them. Pigs are generally too smart for traps so we advertised in the local paper for hunters with dogs and shot, bayoneted and captured more than 50 over the next three months until the herd gave in – they have stayed away for six years now.

I hated the pigs and took part in the bloodshed – they're the only animal in the Australian bush I fear and lethal to horses, charging their skinny shanks to break their legs. Horses know this and are always wary around pigs, snorting and stamping whenever they catch their smell.

You wouldn't think bow-legged old Quinn had the speed, but with some deft footwork the old boy caught some piglets by running them down while I had the sow backed into a wombat burrow, wounded by my feeble pump action 22. I went down on hands and knees with my pocket knife between my teeth like we were taught in basic training. The little Browning was handy but even with a long rifle shell wouldn't penetrate through her blubber so my plan was to get four or five rounds in her eye from about 20 feet before she charged. As it turned out I didn't need the knife.

Quinn raised those piglets to a timely end but in the meantime they had sport rolling the little border collie "slut" he called Flo down the hill in a cage made from a milk crate he put her in when she came on heat. Quinn liked to think he was a dog breeder. Flo was one of his enterprises, but he needed to stop his other two dogs – Ginger, three-legged barb and top dog, and Boofhead, red heeler-bull terrier cross and kicking dog – from getting in first before she could be bred with a "Blue Merle" belonging to an old acquaintance in Boorowa or somewhere over the range who owed him a favour. Merles have odd-colored eyes which give them a slightly demented look but they are highly regarded by sheep men for their ability to stare. The cock-eyed dog – one blue, one brown – arrived one day tied up in the back of the mail driver's van and the old man made tea in a thermos to sip while we cheered them on in the unused front bedroom of the old house which forever after became known as the "honeymoon suite".

The weather is clearing rapidly and the river dropping in turn. It's Boofhead Charlie and I notice first, streaking across the flats to hide behind my shack – Boofhead hiding out from a kicking – that tells us the old man as usual has tackled the river with the deadly 60 horsepower Fergie and there he is, stuck, the giant back wheels churning up the shifting silt as they sink lower and lower, his brow set in an uncompromising glower.



This could be fun, but behind him, striding against the pulling current, is Frank Billion, bugger it. With nautical tattoos across his hairy chest and shoulders, he looks like a giant huntsman spider, the reach of those long arms dragging in the water one of the main reasons he is top pub brawler in town – the knuckles of one hand roughly tattooed with the letters L O V E and the other with H A T E an indication of jail time. I was scared of Frank and he knew it. He liked it that way and always let me know whenever we met with the agro tone in his voice.

It's Christmas Day, don't forget, and we are in for one of those hot, steamy summer days when the drone of the cicadas in the river oaks along the lower banks pulsates and almost hurts your ears. There will be four of us for Christmas dinner: a man without a chin, a man without a left forearm, a man without a past, and now, by the looks of it, a man without a wife. And we all know what we have to do.