



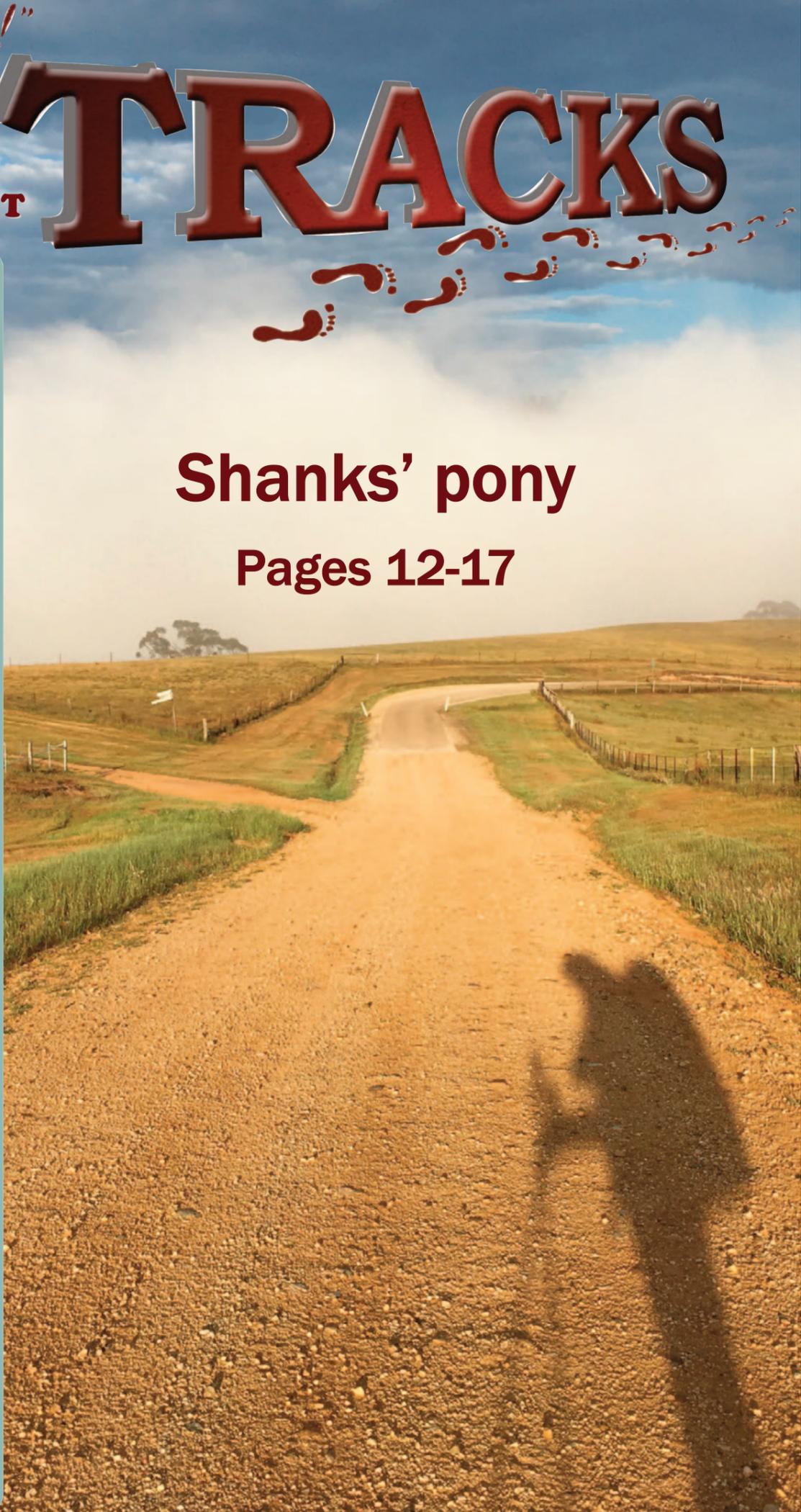
TRACKS

BNT



Shanks' pony

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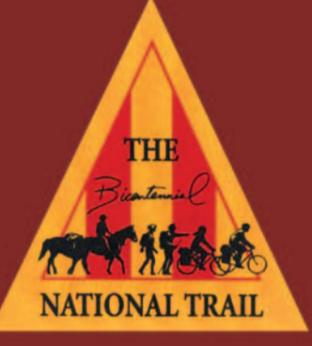
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Narbethong meeting P20



MARCH 2018

From the Chair

THE Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) that was held on Saturday, 17th February, has endorsed the changes to the BNT's Articles of Association.

The meeting was held at Equestrian Park, Curtin, ACT with many local BNT members present.

The amendments will enable the BNT to proceed with the application for the BNT to be endorsed as a registered charity, with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission.

The BNT is very grateful to BNT member Ross Macaw for his involvement in this process and also for his generous offer of funding the application.

It was Ross' initiative and foresight that has enabled the BNT to seek this application.

I also thank Christine Lawrence, President of the ACT Equestrian Association, for agreeing to be the independent Chair at the EGM.

Beth Stone, Secretary of the ACT Equestrian Association, with Christine has been very supportive of Jenny Costin, ACT Section Coordinator, with BNT issues in the ACT.

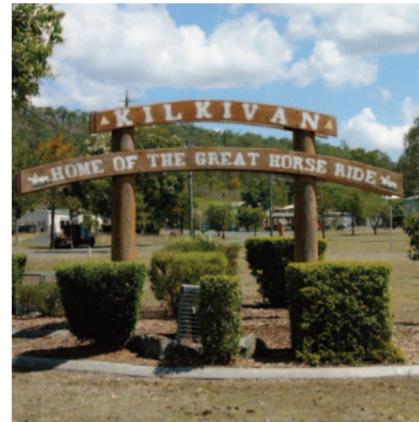
To the members who attended the EGM and the many members who sent in their proxies in approval of the motion, I am grateful for the support given to the BNT Board.



Christine Lawrence chairs the EGM in Canberra.

George Schneider has been appointed the NSW Fire Manager for the NSW Dept of Primary Industries and with much regret for the BNT, is no longer the NSW Trails Coordinator, a position that George performed most admirably and with much dedication. The BNT awaits the appointment of a new Trails Coordinator for NSW Dept of Primary Industries.

Finally, I would like to express the gratitude of the BNT Board to Chris Shrewsbury, one of the BNT's pro bono solicitors, who has had to step down. Not just to the BNT but also to the NSW Horse Consultive Committee, where Chris was a very productive and effective advocate in relation to recreational access to public lands. I, especially, will miss his counsel and services that Chris has contributed to the BNT as well. All the very best and thank you both George and Chris from the BNT.



FOOTNOTE: The 2018 AGM will be held in Kilkivan, Qld. The proposed dates are 29/30th October. More information in the next edition of *BNT Tracks*.

NICK JACOMAS

Donkey pack saddles for sale

I HAVE an order for one of our revised pattern packsaddles and I would like to gain a couple of additional orders to make the fabrication costs economical.

Cost \$Au855.00 fully rigged with breast collar, britching, and a single canvas "firehose" girth.

For those who wish to make up their own rigging, I can supply arches and backboards/ back bars for \$Au400.00 a pair plus freight/postage costs.



Tim Daniel, 0476 546 914
info@wildex.com.au
or tdwildwalk@gmail.com

News

Strategy planning workshop

AT THE BNT Annual General Meeting in Narbethong late last year, the BNT Board received many suggestions from attendees on everything from the broad topic of future sustainability of the Trail, to the potential of IT development and marketing.

Drawing on expertise from within members present, a Digital Strategy Working Group was immediately established, and the Board started working towards conducting in-depth strategy and marketing development sessions to deep-dive into the issues and potential of the BNT.

Bringing their plans to fruition, the Board recently convened at Caloola Farm in the ACT, spending two days investigating, critiquing and brainstorming all topics related to the BNT.

Their volunteer facilitator for the Strategy session, trekker Chris Anthony, brought invaluable corporate experience to the table, but also first-hand trekking experience. (Chris is currently back on the BNT after this quick 'time out' with us!) This ensured the strategy process was tailored, insightful and incredibly productive. Donating his skills and energy, and sacrificing his trekking time for us, Chris' input was invaluable, and created a thorough analysis and way forward for the BNT Board.

Some of the areas investigated during the Strategy session included conducting market analysis, developing trekker profiles, assessing key issues and challenges, critiquing member value propositions, conducting a SWOT analysis, refining the BNT mission/vision, narrowing down to strategy priorities and creating an initial list of actions to complete.

Following the strategy session, the Board welcomed communications expert

You're our eyes and ears

HELP the BNT to gather statistics of use, something that is needed. Slip a line or two about your time on BNT to info@nationaltrail.com.au.

The BNT benefits from hearing of trekkers' outings. – Sue



BACK FROM LEFT: Nick Jacomas, Tracey Beikoff, Sue Cumming, Jane Fenton, Lesley Haine. FRONT: Jenny Costin, President of the ACT Equestrian Association Christine Lawrence, Chris Anthony.

and volunteer Jane Fenton to facilitate a marketing session. Jane is adept at cutting to the core of the message that needs to be conveyed, and having conducted prior research of the BNT, was able to bring a fresh and cutting edge perspective to analysing its potential.

The Board worked through stakeholder and partner analysis, prioritising a long list of stakeholders and conducting deeper analysis to reveal a key actions list.

With two incredible facilitators volunteering their time, leading to clear and precise steps forward, the BNT Board is looking to a productive and strategic period of progress.

Contributors

PLEASE send original photos and stories for the magazine, not ones already published on Facebook, etc.

Please put your name at the top of your story so we can see who wrote what. Please supply captions with your photos. The best way to do this is to make the file name the caption.

And please send high resolution photos. Set your camera or phone on the highest resolution, but reduce the photos to 5mg for easy emailing. Thank you.

The Board wish to acknowledge all contributors to the event, including Kathryn and Preston Stroud, who drove for hours to ensure Chris was able to attend, and who continue to contribute their own time and expertise.

To the wonderful staff at Caloola Farm, and of course our fearless leaders, Chris and Jane, we are extremely grateful, and excited about the future of the BNT!

And a sincere thank you to Section Coordinator Lynne Anderson for her supply of Seaton Fire Chocolate, which as always was enjoyed. Chris and the BNT Board will reconvene in February, to discuss initial actions and next steps. Watch this space for developments!



Dave McLeod on the right track.

Light my fire

ARE YOU annoyed with the deteriorating quality of Redheads safety matches which are now the only ones sold in supermarkets?

That leaves the ubiquitous BIC cigarette lighter which burns your fingers and leaves a dangerous piece of plastic rubbish when empty.

While expensive, you only need one of these matches below for a fire, they come in a handy container and will light your fire in the worst of conditions.



Elite Outdoor Gear

\$14.95

Jenny's tip: Blobs of vasoline in cotton wool balls, in a zip lock bag in first aid kit. Good for chafed skin, cracked lips. Use as a fire starter instead of smelly bought ones.

Woman's thumb severed in horse riding accident

SES volunteers scoured private bushland in search of a woman's thumb severed in a horse riding accident. The woman was thrown from the horse she was riding at a property in Huntly, near Bendigo, when a bird startled the horse.

Her thumb became tangled in the horse's reins and was torn off. While the woman was taken to hospital, SES volunteers searched the property for the digit. But fading light, long grass and leaf litter hampered the volunteers' hunt.

They called off the search when doctors told them the thumb could no longer be reattached.

Bendigo Advertiser

More online maps



JUST when you thought online maps couldn't get any better, the NSW government Land and Property Information department has come up with SIX maps.

SIX stands for Spatial Information Exchange and provides cadastral information overlaid on satellite imagery merging with topographic maps.

This gives private property boundaries, lot numbers and even survey marks and flood levels. It is a very useful aid for finding public rights of way, etc.

You can view and print topographic map segments at no cost, obtain GPS coordinates of locations and do many other things which will help you plan a great adventure.

maps.six.nsw.gov.au

QUEENSLAND Globe is an interactive online map site which has layers you can superimpose for interesting material such as biodiversity.

It appears to have been created with resource use in mind for it also can access information about mining and coal seam gas.

You can also access information on tourism, construction and agriculture.

There is more information available on the site than can be described here, so it is worth registering, although you can view without registration, and explore it.

You can save, print and share maps, show roads and rail lines and see topical information such as the controversial Carmichael coal mine

qldglobe.information.qld.gov.au

Missing hiker eaten by wolves

A MISSING British hiker whose dismembered, fleshless remains were found in the hills of Greece was probably attacked by wolves while walking alone on a remote path, then torn apart and devoured, a coroner said.

Both the woman's thigh bones had been cracked open by bites and large sections of her body were missing.

The remains mostly bare, gnawed bones were discovered near the village of Petrota in Thrace, 285 kilometres east of the northern city of Thessaloniki.

Near them, authorities found a passport for Celia Lois Hollingworth, 62, whom the British embassy in Athens reported missing in the area.



Wolves roam remote parts of Greece and have been reported in the Petrota area but attacks on humans are very rare and no fatal attacks have been reported in decades.

Remote charging your gadgets

WAYNE Monkhouse of Grafton City Batteries is a keen adventure cyclist and expert in remote electronic systems. We asked Wayne to build a system capable of charging the BNT TRACKS laptop so we could work while on the Trail.

There are so many variables in this subject it is easy to get lost in a sea of watts, volts and amps, and when you add in the myriad products advertised online and unknowables such as amount of sun, you can be left scratching your head.

Wayne's rule of thumb, he explained, is that "bigger is better". This leads to the first question: "How much weight are you prepared to carry?"

The basic system is:

- solar blanket
- regulator
- battery
- 12volt charger
- laptop.

Our laptop is a veteran of the last Olympics, a Sony Vaio S Series running Windows 10 with an i5 chip, drawing 7.4 amps. It's slow but not battery hungry and is not too heavy.

Wayne wanted to power this with a 40 watt solar blanket although he said 60 watt would be better. We found a 50 watt solar blanket outputting 7 amps at Super Cheap Auto with regulator for \$198 online.

Bushwalker has lucky escape on Bibbulmun Track

A BUSHWALKER trapped in the middle of the Mundaring fire on the Bibbulmun Track says he was rescued from certain death a mere five minutes before the hut he was sheltering in was overrun by the blaze.

A Department of Fire and Emergency Services helicopter spotted Everard Curchin just as 4 to 5 metre high flames were bearing down, and managed to pick him up.

Mr Curchin, 67, was on the second day of a four-day hike of the Bibbulmun Track when he woke up about 8:00am and noticed smoke coming from east of the hut.

He watched fire bombers tackling the bushfire but thought it was not too serious. But with a strong easterly wind pushing the



The crucial element, however, is the battery. Wayne likes a lithium "jump pack" designed for starting cars with a flat battery. "They are robust, won't blow up and come already set up ready to plug in."

The 50w/hr unit from Master Instruments weighs only 800 grams and wholesales for \$270. We rejected the 100w/hr unit which takes longer to charge, weighs 1240gm and costs \$550.

A 12 volt charger was sourced at Hardly Normal for \$89, and various sockets and leads can come out of pocket change.

This is not the end of the picture of course, and Wayne can build systems to include camp lights, torches, phones, etc, all neatly carried in a cloth bag with velcro straps so you can charge while on the move.

Phone Wayne on 02 66 427 314.

The bare bones

MANY trekkers these days are using their smart phones for nearly everything as well as communication, including photos and video, GPS and even writing, although this writer prefers a tablet.

Most smart phones charge at 5 volts, the standard for USB devices. An iPad charger is rated to handle 2.1 amps, while the iPhone charger is rated for 1 amp.

Goal Zero sell a range of plug and play products with integrated compatibility for powering all USB-style camping gadgets, including tablets and phones.

We like their Nomad 28 Plus folding solar panel which delivers 28 watts and retails online for \$399.99. They say it can be directly hooked up to your device but recommend using their Yeti or Sherpa power packs. Prices were not listed for the lithium Yeti but the Sherpa was \$349.99.

There are smaller panels, down to 7 watts for \$129.99 so it all depends on how much you want to carry and how long you are prepared to wait.



Lucky hiker Everard Curchin.

Photo Channel Ten

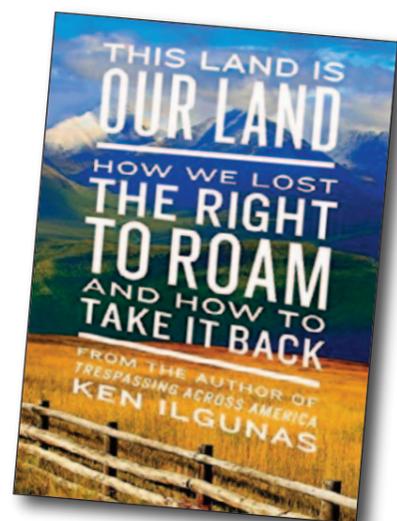
blaze towards him, he later realised how much trouble he was in.

He thought about escaping but realised he had been cut off and had made a mistake, as the fire started to surround him and come over the ridge.

He decided to shelter in the Helena hut, where he had slept, but then he spotted a helicopter passing low overhead and went outside.

Up in the chopper, DFES air attack specialist Rohan Aird and crew took advantage of a break in the aerial water bombing operations to have another look and spotted him.

Five minutes later and Mr Curchin would have been dead.



PRIVATE property is everywhere. Almost anywhere you walk in the United States, you will spot “No Trespassing” and “Private Property” signs on trees and fence posts. In America, there are more than a billion acres of grassland pasture, cropland, and forest, and miles and miles of coastlines that are mostly closed off to the public.

Meanwhile, America’s public lands are threatened by extremist groups and right-wing think tanks who call for public lands to be sold to the highest bidder and closed off to everyone else. If these groups get their way, public property may become private, precious green spaces may be developed, and the common good may be sacrificed for the benefit of the wealthy few.

Ken Ilgunas, lifelong traveler, hitchhiker, and roamer, takes readers back to the 19th Century, when Americans were allowed to journey undisturbed across the country. Today, though, America finds itself as an outlier in the Western world as a number of European countries have created sophisticated legal systems that protect landowners and give citizens generous roaming rights to their countries’ green spaces.

Inspired by the United States’ history of roaming, and taking guidance from present-day Europe, Ilgunas calls into question our entrenched understanding of private property and provocatively proposes something unheard of: opening up American private property for public recreation. He imagines a future in which folks everywhere will have the right to walk safely, explore freely, and roam boldly – from California to the New York island, from the Redwood Forest to the Gulf Stream waters.

AMAZON \$14.00

Adventures with Clyde and Benny

by TEENA SCHLOSS

In August 2017 we left our home in Gympie, Queensland to commence our adventure on the Bicentennial National Trail. It made sense to follow the BNT southwards to have the sun behind us and if we left at the end of winter, we would have cooler days to start and spring rains with spring grass to follow (or so we thought).

We had chosen to take two horses, limiting the demand of feed and water on us and the land we were to travel. Our two new geldings were Clyde, a Clydesdale cross stock-horse turning four unbroken and Benny, a pure stock-horse turning six with mustering experience. We had two canvas packs made as per Kevin’s design, which were able to fit three zipped supermarket bags on each side. We had the packs made to fit on to both our saddles, for dual purpose in case the trail proved to hard for our lightweight jig.

So there we were, camped out at the Bunya Hole (south of Kilkivan), with no reception, nobody around for miles, just the two of us and our two horses, Clyde and Benny. We weren’t in any hurry, we had no preconceived ideas, and we had no time frame. Lesson one for us was linger longer, take the time it takes and if you find a nice place stay awhile.

I can’t explain those first few days when we set off, it was both exhilarating and nerve racking. We didn’t know what was up ahead, but we were prepared to give it our best shot.

I don’t know how many times I turned to Clyde and said “good Clydey” and patted his neck. He just continued to impress me with his willingness and his trust to follow my directions. Each time he would stop on a small incline, I would pull out a piece of licorice and off he’d march, his eyes consumed with the tasty morsel, so much so, that he would forget about the hill he was climbing.

Up ahead Kevin strode out with Benny, who instead of having a rider, was carrying a light pack and was completely at ease walking beside his new found owner and friend.

As we walked beside each horse we found the bond between the four of us was growing. Even in the afternoons, we would set up the electric fence as close to our tent as possible. We soon became used to their sounds in the night, their eating, their lying down, their snorting and Clyde’s groaning, which amused us no end. We weren’t just walking together, we were living together. We were becoming our own little herd.

Clyde and Benny were depending on Kevin and I to provide for them, to take care of them and to treat them with kindness. As we showed ourselves faithful to looking after their needs, their trust in us grew. They began not only walking beside us confidently, but with purpose, almost as if it wasn’t a chore, but they were enjoying the chance of greener grass and to meet new friends (of the horsey kind), as if they too were actually enjoying the scenery, the challenge and the adventure

The first big change came when the rough four-wheel-drive roads proved too much for our jig’s mountain bike wheel. So plan B was put into action – Clyde would now have the pack put on his back. Each horse would carry 30 kilos maximum in their packs. Benny would carry all the people gear and Clyde all the horse gear. Clyde was amazing and took the pack on his saddle just as well as Benny. Lesson two for us was prepare for things to change, adapt your plans to suit.

It had not rained the whole time since leaving home. The grass was becoming very dry and we found permanent waterholes were not so permanent after all. In one instance, we walked 13 days in a row without a rest day, mainly due to shortage of grass in each campsite.

Yet Clyde and Benny maintained good condition the whole of the trail, with many people commenting. I believe this was due to the extra grain and stopping for five to 10 minutes to graze every hour or so when walking.



After having our horses sprayed for ticks (a must if travelling south to the NSW border), and delighting in wonderful views from the top of Main Range National Park, we were glad to reach the Condamine Gorge and an abundance of water.

Upon reaching the lovely town of Killarney, we settled down at the showgrounds with our horses in yards close by. Three days later a storm brought rain to Killarney, but other towns were not so lucky. This was the first rain we had seen on the trail since leaving home 42 days earlier.

We continued to prepare for northern NSW. We had our horses reshod and purchased the next three week’s food supplies. We were all set to go, when a total fire ban was put in place for northern NSW and southeast Qld. We agreed to stay put and just as well, as a large fire broke out in the location of our next campsite.

The following day, 24th September 2017, the BNT Facebook page read: “Due to severe dry conditions in Qld and NSW, water and feed is scarce. It is strongly advised for trekkers not to continue or commence their trek on the BNT.”

ABOVE: Oldfields Hut, Kosciuszko National Park.



RIGHT: Snow on the Main Range in the background.



Kevin and Benny in Kosciuszko National Park.

To Page 18



Weekend in Paradise

By BRAD COOK

Back in August 2017 I convinced a group of fellow mountain bikers to allow me to lead them on the *Paradise Weekender* loop at Paradise Dam. With some decent climbs, fine views and a sense of history – it didn't take much convincing.

We met early morning at the dam kiosk and were greeted with a thick blanket of fog. We could still see our way, so unperturbed off we went.

The trail diverts off the bitumen and promptly straight into one of the first climbs of the day. We were following what was once the old coach road. I imagined the strain the bullock teams would have been under pulling their load up some of the steep grades. Usually, we would be treated with some fine views of the Burnett River from our high vantage point. But not today, the fog made sure of that.

To our relief, as the morning went on the fog lifted and we entered cleared grazing

country. The BNT marker on a fence post assured us we were on the right track.

Having some knowledge of the area, I opted to extend the loop to visit the historic Chowey Bridge. The detour also took us past the site of the Mt Shamrock Gold Mine township. Most maps will still show "Main Street" but these days the township is nothing more than a cleared paddock, but back in the late 1800s it would have been a busy place. We also spotted the site of the school marked with a concrete post just off the road reserve.

Chowey Bridge is a heritage listed structure over Deep Creek on the Mungar-Monto rail line. It was constructed in concrete using day labour and was completed in 1905. At the time it was noted as being "a concrete bridge of somewhat novel design".

After a quick rest and a snack, we retraced our steps (wheel tracks) back to Shamrock Road and headed in a northerly direction back to Paradise.

Brad is a keen photographer and prefers to shoot on black and white film. FROM TOP LEFT: Mountain bikers in the mist; We're on the right track; Chowey Bridge; My trusty steed.

A quick look to my left on a creek crossing revealed remnants on an old timber bridge. Of course I just had to stop and inspect.

The trend of testing climbs and fun descents continued as we traversed the undulating terrain back to Paradise. We stopped en-route to view a former lime kiln in adjacent private property. Even from a distance it looked like an impressive structure.

The kiosk was a welcome sight at the top of the last climb. We made our way down to the boat ramp to watch a speedboat roar up and down the water. But not before pausing on top of the hill at the site of the Paradise school with its remarkable view of the dam. I can't help but wonder what the view was like a hundred years ago.

The Paradise loop with an extension to Chowey Bridge was approximately 41km with 1000m of climbing. I'd recommend this loop be done in the cooler months of the year.

Why do we trek?



John Muir and Theodore Roosevelt at Yosemite, USA.

We enjoy it and we instinctively know it is good for us, so why discuss it? Simply: at various times we will need to prove its value to others.

Left field activities such as trekking are so far removed from the urban lifestyle that city people are often baffled why someone would want to walk, or ride a bike or a horse on the National Trail (or anywhere).

And we now live in a data driven world. Any dealings with government departments or any advocacy scenarios require concrete accurate information presented convincingly to back up our arguments.

Considerable research is proving substantial advantages of healthy outdoor activity in nature.

Emphasis in the medical profession is gradually shifting from treatment of disease to promoting wellness. This is applicable to all age groups and particularly relevant to an aging population who need to remain fit and healthy for as long as possible.

The World Health Organization defines health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity".

Firstly let us consider physical health. The British Journal of Sports Medicine recently carried an article *Physical inactivity: the biggest public health problem of the 21st Century*, raising grave concerns about lack of physical activity and all too often a failure to recognise the benefits of physical activity in preventative medicine.

One important aspect of physical health is cardio respiratory fitness: "the ability of the body's circulatory and respiratory systems to supply fuel and oxygen during sustained physical activity". I was surprised to read that "low cardiorespiratory fitness accounts for about 16% of all deaths in both women and men studied".

There is convincing evidence that a moderate or high level of cardio-respiratory fitness reduces the risk of all-cause and cardiovascular disease mortality in both men and women. The protective effect of CRF on mortality is independent of a range of adverse circumstances such as obesity, etc.

Physical activity of a vigorous and sustained nature is an important component in minimising the onset of type 2 diabetes which is becoming more and more prevalent and at a much younger age. It is also an important component in managing type 2 diabetes when it has been diagnosed.

Secondly a range of documented evidences also suggest that contact with nature has many positive physical as well as mental health outcomes including stress reduction.

Researchers have identified stress as one significant adverse element in a range of physical and mental health issues and those of us who enjoy regular outdoor physical activity are well aware of lowered stress levels and anxiety and a feeling of general well-being when active outdoors.

Lastly the social well-being benefits are

again well researched and also self-evident for those of us who enjoy the outdoors and love trekking.

In today's socially disconnected world we often need time away from our fast paced world including its technology to rediscover meaningful relationships in shared experiences trekking together, setting up camp and preparing meals together and sitting around a campfire yarning. Youth programmes such as Duke of Edinburgh Award can often introduce young people to this positive new world through the Adventurous Journey component of the Award.

If you are keen to learn more about the health benefits of outdoor experiences, and particularly if you are involved in Trail advocacy then Google for reputable research (not populist theories!) to discover interesting and surprising information.

Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy.

– John Muir 1901

John Muir (1838–1914) was an influential Scottish-American naturalist, author, environmental philosopher, glaciologist and early advocate for the preservation of wilderness.



Wildlife on the Trail

Striped Possum, Atherton Tableland.



A transect running the full length of the Great Divide through bushland, farmland, national parks and state forests!

What an opportunity for biologists to learn about the distribution and abundance of wildlife. This is one of the many important potentials of the Bicentennial National Trail.

BNT trekkers travel through a wide variety of habitats, from dense tropical rainforest and western downs to high alpine environments, which include many endangered species.

Trekkers are encouraged to learn about what interesting animals they may encounter and to keep an eye out for them.

In Victoria one could find Leadbeaters Possum, of which there may be only several hundred individuals remaining in the tall Mountain Ash forests.

In NSW the Trail runs through the best Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby colonies, in guidebooks 7 and 8, the Upper Macleay River and Guy Fawkes wilderness. These cute critters are endangered and declining everywhere else.

In North Queensland at night you may hear the reclusive Rufous Owl, or spot a Striped Possum, one of many interesting rainforest possums, in every respect like a skunk, including the odour!

The tough and aggressive Spotted-tail Quoll is often seen at Point Lookout in

New England National Park where it blends in with the lichen-spotted granite boulders of the Great Escarpment.

Eastern Quolls, while common in Tasmania, were brought to the brink of extinction on mainland Australia. Breeding colonies have been established using Tasmanian quolls with the aim of reintroducing them. However, there is a proved genuine sighting, including a carcass

which was later stuffed, in the mountains west of Coffs Harbour in 1989.

Equipment needed will include bird, reptile and mammal identification books, binoculars, spotlight and camera flash. A special notebook can be used to record your sightings.

These can then be uploaded to the online *Atlas of Living Australia*, run by CSIRO, so you will be a collaborator in this



Black and red forms of Eastern Quoll.

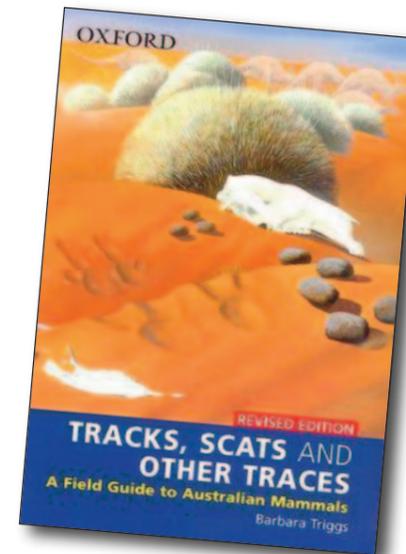
most important biological data-sharing project.

Look up www.ala.org.au so that you can organise your notebook and check out what other people have seen in the regions through which you will be travelling and observing.

Spotlighting at night is a great camp activity. There may be something interesting right there, but a walk at the dark end of twilight will find nocturnal animals leaving their hidey-holes and travelling to feeding trees and grounds.

Some species such as the Greater Glider are fascinated with the light and have a really bright eye reflection which makes them easier to find. But spotlighting only works the first couple of nights, after that the animals wise up and they don't really like it. A softer red light seems more tolerable.

Don't forget to turn off the spotlight and just listen. Sugar Gliders make a soft yipping bark which is often warning about your presence. You may be familiar with the sound but never knew what it was.



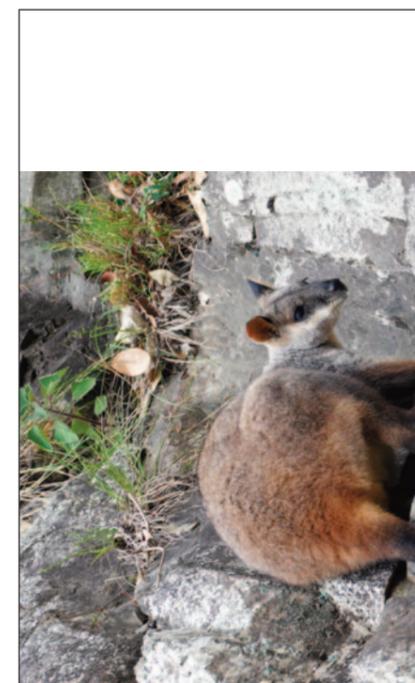
The above book by Barbara Triggs is a classic and incredibly useful for mammal identification. It is available from Booktopia for \$38. Other guidebooks can be found in most bookshops or online. Get the pocket field guides to save space.

David Stewart of Nature Sound (www.naturesound.com.au) sells a great variety of recorded wildlife sounds you can use to identify frogs and other wildlife species, and even attract them to your camp by playing the calls. Of particular interest are nocturnal calls which include owls and gliders.

Photos by ROGER FRYER



Rufous Owl, Atherton Tableland.



Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby at Dalmorton Bluff.



Leadbeaters Possum, Healesville.

Getting on track ... again

By **CHRIS ANTHONY**

I originally started on the BNT from Cooktown 20th May 2017, aiming to walk all the way home in Healesville. Unfortunately, I only made it as far as the Valley of Lagoons, a little way into the second guidebook, before an injury stopped me in my tracks.

As disappointing as it was to have fallen so short of my goal, I wasn't done. I chalked it off as a good practice run. I was keen to return to the trail as soon as possible however, the time I needed to recover ruled out me picking up where I

left off. I recut my plans to start from Healesville on the 20th October and head north. This gave me a more favourable alignment of the seasons for an end-to-end hike, and certainly preferable to waiting nearly a year to have another go at a north-to-south run.

With the date and orientation set, I got on with business of preparing for another crack at the BNT.

My "practice" run gave me the opportunity to benefit from hindsight. One of the first bits of gear I changed out was my bivouac bag (bivvy). Whilst it was very light at 600 grams, I found it quite

restrictive and, at times, depressing. At the end of a long and tiring day's hiking, it was usually a race to get water, set up camp, dinner, and be in the bag before mozzie hour.

Being trussed up like a pork sausage, the favourite food for crocs apparently, is not a lot of fun. For my second time around, I went with an ultralight, 1-person tent; it only weighs a kilo, and I was able to more than offset that by going with a lighter sleeping mat.

I have been so much more relaxed since setting off from the southern end. Ultimately, I think that is because of

several factors: my new sleeping arrangement; knowing what to expect on the trail because of a good "practice run"; no crocodiles for a while; the fact I've been away from the rat race now for more than six months; and – perhaps – the fact people have been plying me with beer everywhere I go. Ahhhh, trail life ... it's so blissful!

By the time this goes to print, I think I will have completed five BNT guidebooks; one at the northern end, and four at the southern. I won't inflame North/South relations by passing judgment on which end has been better. As amusing as that would be, truth be told, both ends have been amazing. I have loved every minute of Victoria, even those bastard mountains, but am loving every minute as I'm heading further north.

I'm still just taking each day as it comes, but if I'm lucky enough to get as far as where I stepped off injured, I still don't know whether I'll hang up my hiking boots there (claiming BNT end-to-end victory) or continue on and repeat guidebook one. I'll make that call later, but the way things are going at the moment, I'm inclined to think I'll be like a kid on an awesome ride saying "again, again, AGAIN!"

Speaking of awesome, I've crapped on about the amazing time I'm having on the Trail, but have been holding out on you and not sharing. Ok, let me share a few of the highlights, there have been so many!

Flying into Cooktown was brilliant. I'm so glad I planned to "acclimatise" first, and spent a day checking the place out!

Arriving to my first camp at the Lions Den in Helensvale felt great, despite it being a big day and suffering achy legs.

I loved the CREB Track, steep slippery hills and all. Hiking through the Daintree rainforest was magical; crossing the crocodile infested Daintree River not so, but something I'll certainly remember for ever.

There were so many special moments up north that I could write a book about it and still not do it justice. One of the most memorable experiences though was the injury, and the way complete strangers came together to help out. For a hiker, legs are kind of important and not being able to walk without excruciating pain, was quite the problem.

To Page 14

Sheltering from torrential rains in Davies Plain Hut.
FRONT PAGE: Fog clearing leaving Omeo.



Getting on track

A town at last, oh and celebrating completing Guidebook 12.

From Page 13

I hadn't seen a soul for days, it was hot and dry, but I was lucky to get a ride to a cattle station about 40 minutes away. There I was put up for the night, fed, enjoyed great company, and saw the bush telegraph swing into action, where a ride into Townsville, a few hundred kilometres away, was arranged.

I was warned the Victorian section was the toughest, with very steep rugged terrain, and very remote. Accordingly, in addition to strengthening workouts during my recovery, I re-cut plans that had me hiking one day, resting the next through Victoria. This worked very well for me, not only did it give me extra recovery time from some of those gruelling hills, it enabled me to really enjoy the gorgeous Victorian Highlands.

My BNT Take 2 adventure kicked off on the 20th October 2017, with my wife, Beth, dropping me off at Donnelly's Weir in Healesville bright and early. So early in fact, the automatic gates to the Yarra Ranges National Park were not open yet, so my first day's hike was about 500 metres longer.

It was great meeting past, present and future BNT trekkers, section coordinators, the BNT Board and loyal BNT members and supporters at the BNT Annual General Meeting in Narbethong, on day two of my hike. I couldn't help myself though: not only did I add my two cents worth in during this meeting, I think I must have tossed in fifty bucks worth of opinions.

Some of them must have resonated

though, as I was asked to facilitate a planning and strategy day for the board. This was scheduled for early January with arrangements made for me to be picked up from the Trail. So much for leaving my corporate life behind ... Oh well, the truth is, I was incredibly honoured to be asked.

For a solo, unsupported hiker walking through one of the remotest sections of the trail, I was far from lonely. In fact, it was incredibly social. Hiking up Mt Terrible, terribly steep, cold and wet Mt Terrible, I first met a couple of lovely gents out for a drive to check the hut out. They shared a beer with me and then got busy with their chainsaw, chopping up a bit of firewood.

I enjoyed a lovely fire in the pot belly stove that night whilst it snowed outside. The next morning, I met Shane and Sally, newlyweds honeymooning their way through the Victorian Highland.

It was a cold and misty morning, and I was treated to a lovely piping hot coffee, and Shane got busy with his chainsaw topping up the firewood supply ensuring a lovely warm rest day for me in the Mt Terrible hut.

By the time I got to Knockwood I was a bit whiffy. Once camp was set up, I stripped off for a wash, and was all soaped up when the rumble of a 4WD announced the arrival of more visitors.

I quickly grabbed my pack cover to protect my modesty as I smiled and waved. My guests turned around and gunned it out of there without stopping to say hello. I

guess what has been seen can't be unseen! I'm going to do Victoria a major disservice and wrap up my remaining BNT experience of it in a paragraph, and hope a handful of photos suffice. The Victorian hills were certainly very tough, but I quickly learned that the hard work was usually rewarded with gorgeous views and phone reception.

I continued to meet incredibly generous people, out and about exploring in their 4WDs, or at various camping spots along the way, cooking me breakfast, shouting me beer or coffee and, most importantly, being great company. Even when I was swearing and carrying on with exhaustion at the numerous false peaks or after a slip or tumble on a steep descent, I loved Victoria.

Crossing into NSW was very exciting and also a great relief. Exciting in that I'd walked a long way and it felt like a big milestone; a relief, because I'd survived a flooded creek crossing and reached the border and shelter looking like a drowned rat.

After drying out, I set out on another side adventure: the summit of Mt Kosciuszko – this was a major bucket list moment for me. In all reality, it was a gentle 14 kilometres from where I got off the chairlift to the summit and back again, but it still felt like I'd achieved a major milestone having stood at the highest point in Australia. Staying at the Thredbo Alpine Hotel after 40 days in the bush was pretty good too.

Aside from it being a bucket list item, a major driver in wanting to stand on the summit of Kosciuszko, was that the BNT passed through the Kosciuszko National Park, but missed the summit – I had to "correct" this.

Looking back, the Kosciuszko National Park stretches from the Vic/NSW border all the way to Canberra. It's huge and was breathtakingly spectacular all the way through. I'm glad I took the time to stand on the top of Kosciuszko, but it turns out the "correction" wasn't necessary; it's not the main show.

Aside from the views, there were so many other memorable experiences, most notably was the distinct change in the company I was keeping. 4WDers and campers made way for trekkers – so much so that I coined the phrase "Trekker Mecca" to describe this section. I particularly enjoyed travelling for a while with fellow BNT trekkers, Zoran and Rhonda.

I take my hat off to them, I imagine



BNT meets AAWT at the Trekker Mecca aka Oldfields Hut.

trekking with seven horses is quite challenging. I offered to take one off their hands to make things easier for them. The fact that I had fallen in love with Amber had nothing to do with it all. I was just trying to be helpful ... honest!

For those that are curious, human vs horse, who wins? I kept pace for the first six kilometres and it nearly killed me. Flat ground I kept pace no problems, downhill I was bit quicker, but up the hills they ate me! To protect my ego after discovering this, I decided that I could pack up and be ready to go a lot quicker so I set off earlier ensuring I had a relaxing hike, with Zoran and Rhonda only catching up to me at the end of the day. We finally parted company in Canberra, as I'd decided to have a few days off there over Christmas. I also took a couple of days off in Gundaroo to celebrate New Year's Eve properly.

From the summit of Kosciuszko to Gundaroo it was an absolute joy meeting a whole manner of adventure junkies including BNT horseback trekkers, Australian Alpine Walking Trail hikers, weekend bushwalkers, cross country skiers, rock climbers and endurance riders. I've learnt that a wonderful camaraderie exists amongst this fraternity, and it feels so great being part of it.

After leaving Gundaroo I quickly settled back into trail life, albeit a little more solitary but with a few exceptions. I had the



Gazing at World's End from atop Mt Black Jack.

little excursion back to Caloola Farm, south of Canberra, to facilitate the BNT Board Planning and Strategy day. I must say I was a little nervous in the lead up to this, worrying that I'd let them down, and the day would be a flop. I reckon a 40-kilometre hike would have been less gruelling than the agenda we got through. Congrats to the BNT Board for their energy and making this a successful day – I had a great time.

I'm now in Hampton, and loving the Blue Mountains National Park World Heritage area. The Jenolan Caves were truly amazing and I'm looking forward to what

lies ahead. A wise woman told me that despite copious amounts of preparation, planning and hard work, to successfully complete the BNT requires a lot of good luck. Having had a decent "practice run" with my north-to-south attempt, I'm being a little more circumspect this time around.

Luck seems to be on my side so far – touch wood! You can cheer me on via my Facebook page: www.facebook.com/gettingontrack2 or directly from my blog site: www.gettingontrack.net.



Camping at Kosciuszko National Park, NSW.

The walkabout

By FREDERIK VAN DER ELST

I was standing at windswept Cape Reinga, the northernmost point of New Zealand, on Sunday morning, the 13th of November 2016.

I closed my eyes, excited as I was, ready to hit the Te Araroa Trail. Suddenly I saw another person with a pack. “Hi, I am Fred, from Belgium.”

“I am Alex, from New Zealand. What are you up to?”

“I am walking to Bluff, to the bottom of New Zealand.”

“That’s exactly what I am up to as well!”

More than 14 months later, Alex and I hugged at South Point (Wilson’s Promontory National Park, Victoria), the southernmost point of mainland Australia. The wind was blowing and the waves were rolling in as the sun was setting. We had walked 9000km together, New Zealand and Australia from top to bottom. We had become brothers and this adventure had changed our lives.

The Long Pathway took us from Cape Reinga to Bluff across both New Zealand’s North Island and South Island. Deserted

beaches, muddy forests, hilly farmland, quiet backcountry roads, wild river valleys, spectacular volcanoes, rugged mountain ranges, turquoise lakes, tiny villages, big cities, friendly Kiwis, the Maori culture ... It was all part of our 3000km journey which we finished on the 1st of March 2017.

During our New Zealand walk I told Alex about my plan to walk from Cape York to the bottom of Tasmania upon finishing the Te Araroa Trail. Most of this journey would be along the Bicentennial National Trail. One day I was very excited to hear that Alex had decided to join me for the Australian adventure. We estimated that our ‘big walk’ would be between 6000 and 6500km.

On the 28th of May 2017, a couple of days after Alex and I had reunited in Cairns, we flew to Horn Island in the Torres Strait. From Horn Island we ferried down to Seisia. Those last moments before embarking on our epic journey were intense.

We felt in our hearts that the trip was going to be a rough one, a different one, a rewarding one. Excited as we were we had faith. After all those months of planning we were ready.

The rainy season was over and we planned to walk Queensland in winter.

We left the Tip of Cape York on the 1st of June. It took us 24 days to cover the 832km to Cooktown. Cape York Peninsula turned out to be one of the hardest parts of the walk. Limited food and water, long dusty stretches of road walking and a lot of four-wheel-drive traffic made up for a rough start.

We were delighted to arrive in stunning Cooktown and to hit the varied Bicentennial National Trail. It felt so good to be on the road. A sense of peaceful freedom and connection with this vast land and its unique fauna and flora never left us. We felt fascinated by both the Aboriginal and European history and culture. We found people were very interested and helpful, especially when you’re ‘having a go’.

Walking through the Wet Tropics with some of the world’s oldest rainforests was quite a different experience from the fertile tablelands and the timeless spirit of the Outback. The wildlife was amazing and the views extensive. Flat to undulating terrain sometimes changed into steep and rough conditions, depending on our location in relation to the Great Dividing Range.



The days went on and the sun was always shining in the Sunshine State. Enormous cattle stations, dams, historic towns, characterful pubs, state forests and national parks and so on were all part of the National Trail. We mostly walked on quiet backcountry roads and stock routes. It took us 100 days to walk the 3600km from the Tip of Cape York to the NSW border.

Some places we won’t forget: Daintree, Innot Hot Springs, Ravenswood, Strathbowen, Nebo, Kabra, Kroombit Tops NP, Mungungo, Kilkivan, Blackbutt, Withcott, Killarney ...

Upon completing the Queensland stretch of our walk we left the trail for a couple of weeks from mid-September. Alex’s parents came over from NZ and my partner from Belgium. We enjoyed the coast around Noosa, on Fraser Island and on Great Keppel Island.

The terrain was changing faster when we were back on track through New South Wales. We really enjoyed the wild Guy Fawkes River (Ebor) and Oxley Wild Rivers NP. The unique rock formations and gorges of the Wollemi and Blue Mountains NP made for a stunning walking experience. By this stage, at the end of November, Alex had

developed a painful foot injury. He had decided not to walk across Tasmania and to finish at the southernmost point of mainland Australia. While he was giving his foot a couple of weeks of rest in order to finish, I went down to cross Tasmania from north to south. Having walked 568km across Tassie, it’s especially the Overland Track and the southwest corner of the island that made a deep impression.

Alex and I reunited in Goulburn, where we had stopped walking a couple of weeks before.

His plantar fasciitis injury turned out not to be over. Alex did an amazing job by covering an extra 1000km to the end in severe pain. Once we neared the ACT, we walked a combination of the BNT, the Australian Alps Walking Track and some road walking towards Wilsons Promontory NP. Mt Kosciuszko summit, Omeo, the South Gippsland region and the southern circuit at Wilsons Promontory NP were some of the highlights.

Finishing on the 17th of January 2018 at South Point was a strong, emotional moment. We had walked 160 days (only walking days) and about 5700km from Cape York to Wilsons Promontory. We

FROM TOP LEFT: Tip of Cape York; Extensive views around Calliope, Qld; South Point, Wilsons Promontory, Vic; Summit of Mt Kosciuszko.

managed to average 35km per day. A heavy pack, hunger and thirst, hot and cold conditions, flies, mosquitoes, ants, long monotonous stretches, etc. tested us mentally and physically on a daily basis. We had seen amazing things, had met amazing people. In walking we experienced the essence of true happiness. Being out of your comfort zone is not always easy but the experiences and rewards that come with it are vital.

Walking the BNT we were grateful to experience a kind of guidance. The Trail is always there and soon it became our companion in our mission to walk across the country. It is truly wonderful to keep such a long trail alive, especially in such a vast and harsh country. Contacts with the BNT organisation, landowners, section coordinators and other supportive people were beautiful opportunities to meet both interesting and passionate people.

We would like to thank everybody who helped and supported us on our journey, you kept us going.

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
250 Somersby Falls Road
SOMERSBY NSW 2250

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

Bendigo Bank
BSB: 633 000
Account: 1502 6245 9
Account name: Bicentennial National Trail
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 (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

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

Clyde and Benny



Main Range National Park Queensland.

From Page 6

At this time, going home was not an option for us, but safety was and so we stayed, safe and sound in Killarney. The next few days were spent researching central to southern NSW and the ACT. We phoned BNT coordinators to check on current conditions. Canberra it seemed was perfect, "green grass and plenty of water".

We had our horses collected by a reputable horse transport company, picked up our car from Brisbane and set forth on wheels for the ACT. It was a long two-day trip for all of us, but once our horses arrived safely and we saw the campsite and the green grass by the flowing river, we knew we had made the right decision. Lesson three for us was safety first, check out all the options.

Once again Clyde and Benny amazed us with how settled they were. They were in a completely different location, miles from home, different sounds, different sights, different temperatures and yet this was just another normal day on the BNT. Change had become the normal, but the constant in all of this was the four of us.

Leaving the campsite, the boys again were set and ready to go. Then with Benny's lead in Kevin's hand and Clyde's lead in mine, we would hold each other's hand and pray for safety and direction for the day. Then just like old times, we were off walking again. The countryside was beautiful, with green grass all around and every creek running. Wildflowers were coming out, old huts were appearing and trout could be seen.

As we walked to the familiar beat of our horses' shoes, the hills in beautiful Namadgi National Park led to the mountains in iconic Kosciuszko National Park. As the gradient became steeper, we put our heads down and just kept walking, stopping occasionally to rest and look back on how far we had come. Lesson four, just keep walking, behind every mountain is another mountain.

The familiar BNT markers and guidebooks didn't change from state to state and neither did the helpfulness, generosity and kindness of BNT coordinators, hosts and locals.

This is not the end, but to be continued, and that's a whole other story.

Who's on the Trail

PLEASE take time to fill out a trail registration form.

We need numbers to prove the Trail's activity and worth in lobbying local and state governments. The questions of "well how many people use this trail?" "what it is worth to tourism and input into local economy?" is often asked at meetings when lobbying for government help and trail continuity.

Registration is proof of use. Please send in a registration form. Download from www.nationaltrail.com.au, or email info@nationaltrail.com.au and tell us what you did.

Registrations received

FRED VAN DER ELST and ALEX JOHNSON started Cooktown June 2017 walking. Last heard of walking into Namadgi National Park Visitors Centre in December, thoroughly impressing the staff with their trek.

DANE ROBERTS started in Aberdeen December 2017 cycling to Canberra for four weeks.

TEENA and KEVIN SCHLOSS walking with two pack horses. Started at Kilkivan and replanned their trip after 600km of Queensland drought conditions and concern for their horses' welfare. Sought advice from section coordinators and trucked their horses and restarted in October south from the ACT and trekked to Geehi near Tom Groggin on the Victorian border.

TAMI MILLS started at Murphy's Creek November 2017, planning to ride south to Healesville.

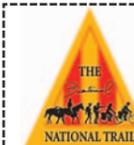
RHONDA CHARLES and ZORAN BOZIC started Healesville October 2017 riding with seven horses to Cooktown. Trip diaries on BNT Facebook page.

CHRIS ANTHONY started last May at Collinsville, walked south for some distance. Replanned trip and restarted at Healesville last October heading north. Trip diaries on BNT Facebook page.

TEGAN STRETTER and TOM RICHARDS started March 2017, cycled from Healesville and completed their trip to Cooktown end of 2017.

YANNICK JOKMIN, overseas visitor from Germany, arrived in Sydney November 2017, caught the train to Katoomba and joined the Trail at Jenolan Caves, hiked to Taralga. Prior to trip Yannick had contacted info@nationaltrail.com.au and section coordinators and sought advice which enabled him to prepare for his successful trip.

KEVIN BRISTOW started from Glen Davis to Denman return, cycling for four days.



Bicentennial National Trail Ltd
ABN 83010860143

Trekker registration

Send completed form to:
Bicentennial National Trail Ltd
250 Somersby Falls Road
SOMERSBY NSW 2250
or email:
info@nationaltrail.com.au
Phone 1300 138 724
(within Australia)

Name(s):

Phone: Email: Membership no:

Proposed start date:

Proposed starting point:

Direction of travel:

Intended destination:

Number of days/weeks on the Trail:

Mode of trekking: on foot bicycle riding

pack animals how many: other

Will you be taking a group? How many?

Age of trekkers:

Have you obtained guidebooks?

Are you carrying a personal locator beacon?

Contact number/email on the Trail:

Emergency contact details: Name:

Relationship:..... Phone: Email:

Address:.....

Trekker registration is for statistical purposes only



BNT Board: Clancy Lewis, Lesley Haine, Sue Cumming, Tracey Beikoff, Nick Jacomas, Jenny Costin. At the end-of-trail marker, Donnelly's Weir, Healesville.

Meeting at Narbethong

THE Annual General meeting of the Bicentennial National Trail was held on 21-22 October 2017 at the property of Joanne and John Kasch.

People from interstate and all over Victoria began to arrive on Friday night, joining the Kasch family at the Black Spur Hotel for dinner and a yarn, before Jo headed back home to put the finishing touches to the dining area and many other jobs on her list.

The following morning as we shared a cuppa around a blazing fire, the Far North Queensland members returned from a tour of the trail with John through Anderson's Mill and Marysville. They were impressed with the extent and quality of the amenities offered to trekkers, in particular the yards, built by volunteers (i.e. John and friends) with the cooperation of shire and government departments.

By lunchtime, a large crowd of about 40 lined up for a sausage sizzle, before settling down to the business of the AGM.

With re-election of current Board members dealt with, Christine Johnson was invited to speak of the enormous contribution Mark Doonar made to the organisation, spending seven years from 1995 to 2002 as Chair and a total of 12 years on the Board, Chris closed by noting that the BNT owes its life to Mark Doonar. A unanimous approval of the motion to confer Life Membership to Mark followed.

Tracey Beikoff, Board member from Mareeba in Far North Queensland, was accompanied by two members of the working group that she has instigated to support and further the development of the BNT in her area. Both are employees of the Mareeba Shire and keen horsewomen. This evolving relationship with the local shire is an inspiring model which we hope to

duplicate along the Trail as it attracts both financial and in-kind opportunities.

Lesley Haine, Victorian Board member, then presented an update on the completion of a new Guidebook 12 for Victoria, from Healesville to Tom Groggin on the NSW border.

Roger Fryer was complimented on his contribution as editor of the BNT Tracks magazine. The meeting was then opened to general discussion.

The exciting outcome of this meeting was that eight participants committed to forming a subcommittee to be called the IT Digital Strategic Working Group. The conveners of this group are BNT trekkers Vincent Brouillet and Preston Stroud. The skillbase which is represented by this group is impressive and will ensure that many of the issues identified during the discussion will be addressed.

A major challenge identified by membership and acknowledged by the Board was the issue of succession. As with all volunteer organisations, the BNT relies upon the goodwill and best intentions of people who are already busy and who, after many years' service, would like to pass on the responsibility to others.

The Board has committed to seeking professional advice with a day of facilitated workshoping. The goal is to create a vision of future directions, roles and responsibilities that does not rely upon the individual, but involves sub-committees of people outside of the Board, with skills and interests which match the changing requirements along different sections of the BNT.

Scones and cream were the next item on the agenda! The fantastic setup, music and friendly atmosphere were conducive to much sharing and exchange of ideas as we awaited dinner.

The beautifully presented tables, with napkins, donated bottles of wine littering the tables and aromas arising from the camp ovens ensured that everyone arrived in plenty of time.

Having eaten our fill, we settled down to enjoy presentations from previous trekkers. Ross McCaw entertained us with his promotion of the Icelandic ponies which accompanied him as he trekked north through Victoria with a small group of friends and back-up vehicle.

Then Chris Anthony, breaking his trek north to be at the AGM, told us of his adventures in Book 1 of the trail, before injury forced him home to recuperate. Finally, Vincent Brouillet recounted his cycling adventure along the BNT from the south, the pros and cons of cycling the Trail and the challenges of travelling alone.

The following morning the newly formed IT Digital Strategic Working Group met to form a plan of action. This included fortnightly Skype meetings for a couple of months until action plans can be formulated.

The Board then met to confirm positions and plan for the upcoming workshop in January. Chris, Preston and Kathryn, representing the Digital Strategic Working Group, were present to report on their meeting.

As farewells were made and members headed home, a renewed sense of shared mateship, enthusiasm and appreciation for the Bicentennial National Trail was kindled in the breasts of many.



Our hosts Jo and John Kasch catered for a great night.



Jo Kasch with her grandchild.



Vincent Brouillet.



Mike and Dean have just completed trekking the Victorian section of the BNT.



Lenore Wyatt from Mareeba, North Queensland, feeling the cold.

Section coordinators

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Christopher Hodgson
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Aboriginal star names gain recognition

FOUR stars in the night sky have been formally recognised by their Australian Aboriginal names.

The names include three from the Wardaman people of the Northern Territory and one from the Boorong people of western Victoria. The Wardaman star names are Larawag, Wurren and Ginan in the Western constellations Scorpius, Phoenix and Crux (the Southern Cross). The Boorong star name is Unurgunit in Canis Majoris (the Great Dog).

These names represent a step forward by the International Astronomical Union (IAU) – the global network of the world's roughly 12,000 professional astronomers – in recognising the importance of traditional language and Indigenous starlore.

Aboriginal Australian cultures stretch back at least 65,000 years, representing the most ancient star names on the list.

The Working Group on Star Names is looking to identify even more star names from Australia and other Indigenous cultures around the world. As Indigenous cultures have a rich collection of names for even the faintest stars, many new star names could gain IAU recognition.

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.

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.

Deadline for next issue August 30. The magazine is direct mailed to 1000 subscribers.

tracks@nationaltrail.com.au



Last one to leave ...

People beset with wordly troubles should sit on a mountaintop on a clear night as far from civilisation as they can, look at the sky and consider what is really going on.

We hear of atoms, electrons and protons; little balls spinning around each other, bound by invisible forces. We believe, but we don't really understand because we can't see them.

Yet here we are, sitting on a beautiful, colourful, perfect sphere, suspended in inky dark space of unimaginable proportions, and slowly revolving around a brilliant orange ball of burning gases which emits heat and light so reliably that it sustains this miracle called life, but so hot and bright it can burn or blind us.

All around are other planets and stars; constellations and galaxies of spectacular design, but so far away they are merely winking specks.

The revelations this vision inspires begat the disciplines of astronomy and navigation separately in every known civilisation early in their evolution, which in turn spawned mathematics then science.

Discovering fire gave us a mini-sun to cook our food, warm us on cold nights, control our environment and light up the night.

Fast forward: the Islamic city of Cordoba in Spain in the 11th Century AD had two miles of street lighting, allowing convenience and safety at night.

Now, with advances in technology and cheap energy, we splash artificial light around with such abandon in our communities we can no longer see those stars.

Enter the International Dark Sky Association, a group consisting of astronomers, airline pilots, wildlife biologists, insomniacs and other "crackpots" who lobby for a minimisation of this profligacy when it interferes with their business or daily lives.

Too-bright artificial light at night obscures the stars, confuses aircraft, disrupts the navigation of migrating birds and sea turtle breeding, prevents night-time plant pollination, interferes with the body's circadian rhythms and keeps people awake.

The IDSA advocates turning on the lights only when necessary and directing them only where needed. Modern technology and design

can achieve this without inconvenience if only local government would take up the cause.

When you are on the Bicentennial National Trail and turn off your torches, headlamps and lanterns, and allow the fire to die down, you will notice in the visual darkness that your other senses sprout wings: you can hear, smell, feel and sense a bigger world that is familiar but different. Wildlife surveyors use this technique to locate animals which are hiding and say they can even hear the blood coursing through their own ears.

On full moon nights the old man with his Mona Lisa smile floats so near we can make out his mountains and deserts. His power is so strong he can pull the tides, so why not our feelings too? And the eerie light he casts is bright enough that we can see our way.

When printing was invented, along with Bibles, almanacs were the most popular publications, providing information like astrological and tide charts and phases of the moon so farmers knew when to plant and people could plan night-time activities. Even Ned Kelly consulted the almanac to execute his robberies.

... don't forget to turn off the lights.