



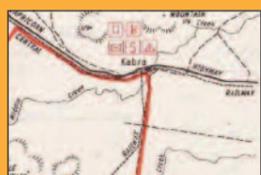
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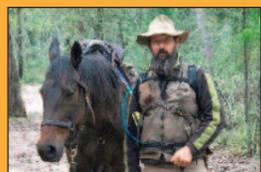


NEWSLETTER OF THE
Bicentennial
NATIONAL TRAIL

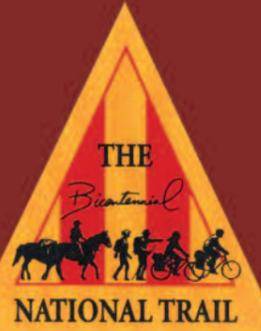
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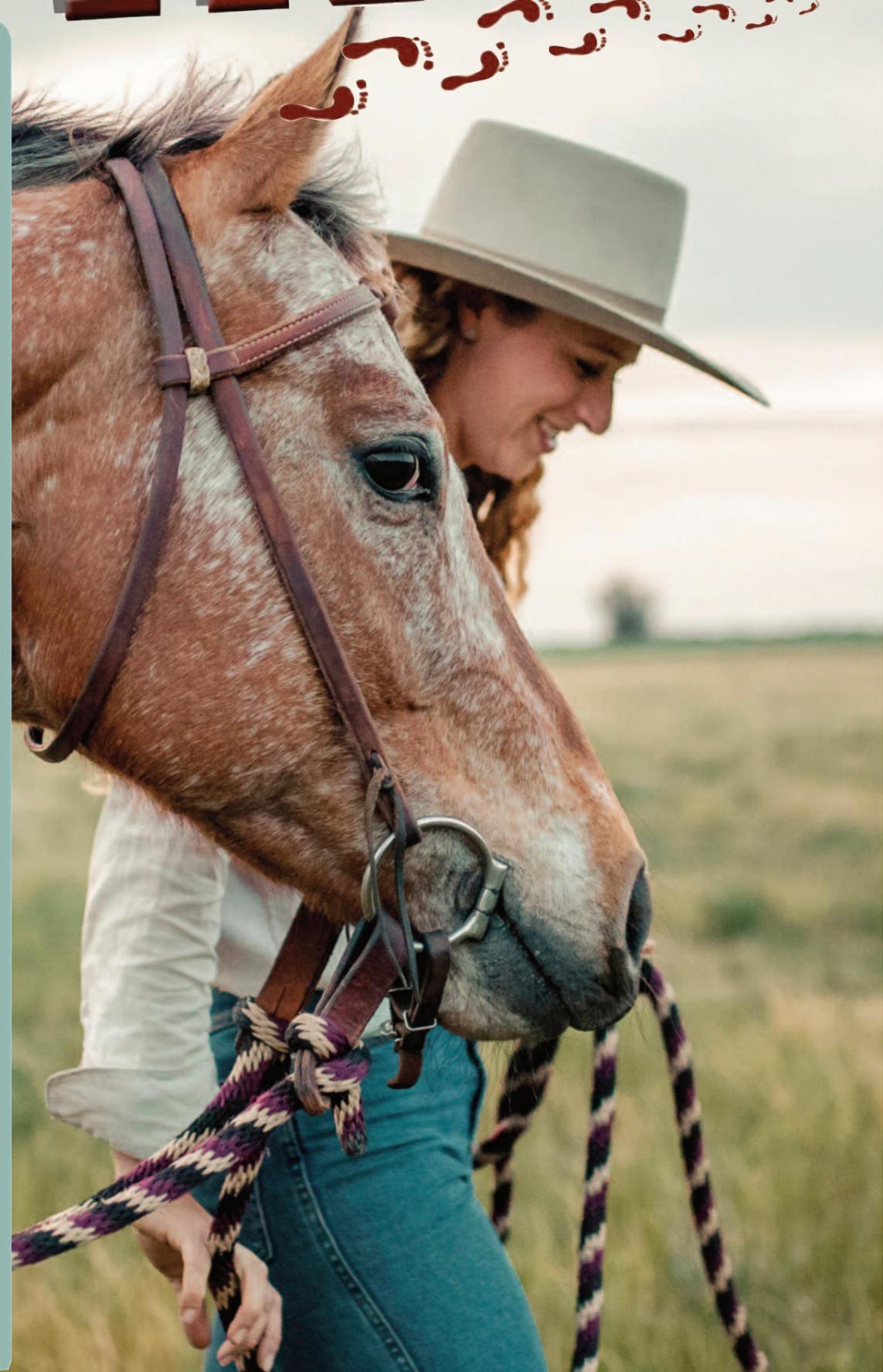
Mapping legends P10



Adversity to triumph P8



March 2019



From the Chair

It's good news week

THE good news is that the work on updating the BNT Guide Books for Qld, NSW and the ACT is progressing well and we hope to have some of the new editions finalised within the next few months.

The work on the new editions is only happening though dedicated people who have been responsible for either mapping and/or co-ordinating their sections.

My thanks go to those who have been driving the process: Nicole Austin, Andrew Graham, Jenny Costin, Mal Keeley, Dave McLeod, John Dwyer, Sue Cumming and Lesley Haine deserve particular mention and not forgetting assistance from the IT Project Manager, Vincent Brouillet and Web Manager, Lance Williamson.

I am very grateful to all the BNT Section Coordinators who have assisted in the process, along with support and information provided by some of our BNT trekkers and members.

In the past, governments and their departments provided much of the mapping and assisted in managing the BNT. Unfortunately support from Federal and State Governments is somewhat lacking, however, now our own volunteers are doing this work with support from individuals in various government departments.



BNT Chair Nick Jacomas and Board Director Lesley Haine at the Killivan Annual General Meeting. COVER PHOTO: Jodie Morton shares her life lessons learnt on the BNT, Page 16.

There have been some outstanding contributions from individuals from within government departments that the BNT and I especially are forever grateful. Their support has been crucial to the operation and management of the BNT and I am also very grateful for the friendships that have arisen.

The management challenge that is always before the BNT is constant and our thanks are due to the outstanding volunteers who support our work. This is a debt that can never be repaid.

Thank you to all of you.

NICK JACOMAS

Letter to the Editor

HI ROGER,

At the start of this month I have joined/renewed my BNT membership.

While browsing through some members' blogs I came across a BNT map which also displays a simple, but effective, graphic map of the entire trail.

I am interested in using that image as well, it is for my own personal use. If that image had been created by the BNT graphics person could I ask permission to copy it?

I have noticed the publication of that type of graphic maps for sections of the BNT as well, like NSW and Queensland, used by general BNT travelers.

There are a number of different maps of the BNT available on Google.

Are those maps copyrighted or are they

free to be copied? In case of the latter I'd like to ask the respective BNT contact for permission of the usage of one or the other image. Thank you and kind regards,

GITTA STEFFES

HI GITTA,

A very nice wall map depicting the entire trail is available for purchase from the website for \$10 in the Guidebooks section.

The BNT maps used in our guidebooks are indeed copyrighted. The graphic images I think you are referring to would be also. Without knowing what your intended use is we could not give blanket permission.

Google and Hema both are breaching our copyright and do not take account of recent updates.

EDITOR

News



UNPRECEDENTED extreme weather on the Trail over summer has raised the level of concern and scrutiny trekkers should observe in forward planning.

Heatwaves, bushfires, drought and floods all prevented trekkers from continuing their journeys through December, January and on into February.

Guidebook 12 Victorian section coordinator John Stubbs said the Timbara fire was still burning on January 26, changing direction due to wind change, and no-one should attempt the Trail section Omeo/Bindi to Limestone Creek. Glen Joiner reported multiple lightning strikes through the Wonnangatta area on top of drought conditions which "saw the bush suffering".

Dave Wallace, section coordinator Guidebook 1, reported 12 metres of water

over the Daintree River crossing before losing internet contact in December. In February, Tim Daniels reported the Burdekin Dam was overflowing, making the Trail, which crosses the river below the spillway, impassable.

A blocking high had concentrated a tropical low pressure system off the northern Queensland coast causing record flooding and a "dome of heat" to build up over Central Australia lasting nearly two months without moving, bringing record high temperatures west of the Great Divide and in Victoria, and exacerbating drought conditions already experienced.

It is apparent now that trekkers must factor climate change into their forward planning. This means keeping in close contact with section coordinators, making arrangements for accommodation and agistment, etc, if a trek has to be suspended and keeping an eye on weather predictions with internet apps and Facebook pages like *North Coast Storm Chasers* who provide real time local updates and easy-to-understand technical explanations.

While it is not logical to "close" the BNT, there were a number of warnings on the Facebook page for trekkers to stop because of lack of feed and water, etc.

Annual general meeting

The BNT Annual General Meeting is tentatively booked for Saturday, October 12 at Yaraandoo, Point Lookout Road near Ebor. NSW.

Memberships migrate to the web

MEMBERSHIP forms and trekker registration will no longer be published in *BNT TRACKS* magazine.

To save administration costs, memberships and registration will be automatically processed on the BNT website: www.nationaltrail.com.au.

New or renew a BNT membership in just a few steps. Choose your membership type: Individual \$40/yr; Family \$65; Club Members \$65. Family memberships include a person, their partner and any children under 18 (please list them on the membership application).

Memberships are for 1 year, starting from the date you register.

Memberships are auto-renewed unless you select to opt out. Contact the BNT if you want to cancel an auto-renewal. Otherwise it's considered you agree for the membership to be automatically renewed.

Note: Membership and purchases are subject to the BNT's Terms and Conditions. TRF & TSR forms are on the web site under "Trek Planning." And TRF and TSR Forms are to be submitted between four weeks and one week of commencing your trek.

New BNT Board members



MARIANNE KRANENBURG: "My husband Fraser Creese and I are avid cyclists and have experienced some sections of the BNT and are keen to try the full length.

"Our attendance at the AGM inspired us to volunteer for the BNT as we would like to see this iconic trail actively used, supported and promoted and we feel that we could contribute."



SIMON TELLMAN: "I have completed the Coast to Coast walk in England, the Overland track in Tasmania and the 6ft Track in NSW.

"I completed the Australian Institute of Company Directors Course and when I saw the opening to combine my interests by becoming a Board Member (and Board Secretary), I jumped at the opportunity."



SECOND stint on the Board for *BNT TRACKS* editor Rog Fryer, an environment journalist who bushwalks, cycle tours and has done a number of packhorse trips.

"Politics and meetings remind me of towing a packhorse – one of the best ways to dislocate your shoulder – but it's handy to find out what's going on behind the scenes for my role as editor."

Snaffle bits



Portable wood stove

THIS easy-to-set-up, lightweight stove helps you cook a meal outside using wood, twigs or dried leaves. Titanium construction, extreme durability, lightweight, wide-opening design enables higher combustion efficiency.

\$39.99 Outdoor Wood Stove on Facebook



Permanent match

STAINLESS steel and tough metal body; waterproof; works equally well when wet or cold. Good for at least 15,000+ strikes; premium quality magnesium core striker. Great tool for camping, survival and emergency preparedness.

\$19.95 <https://emperodium.com/>

Packsaddle for sale

Leather bags, all in good order, ready for use. Two sets of breastplates and new breech strap to fit galloway or standard-bred horse. New PVC pack straps and yellow car webbing strap that goes over the top load. Asking \$700. Also, a good wool saddle blanket and extra straps for \$50. Contact Wendy Ingle on 0447 588 718 – extra photos available.



Snake bite wisdom

DO NOT try to catch, kill or identify the snake! In hospital we no longer need to know the type of snake; our new antivenom neutralises the venoms of all the five listed snake genus'.

3000 bites are reported annually, 300-500 hospitalisations and two-three deaths annually. Average time to death is 12 hours. There are five genus' of snakes that will harm us seriously: browns, blacks, death adders, tigers and taipans. On the North Coast of NSW the rough-scaled snake is also considered dangerous.

When bitten, a snake injects some venom into the meat of your limb, not into your blood. This venom can not be absorbed into the blood stream from the bite site. It travels in the lymphatic system.

Lymph fluid moves around with physical muscle movement like bending your arm, bending knees, wriggling fingers and toes, walking, exercise, etc.

Stay still!

In the 1980s a technique called *pressure immobilisation* bandaging was developed to further retard venom movement. It completely stops venom /lymph transport toward the blood stream. A firm roll bandage is applied directly over the bite site (don't wash the area).

Step 1

APPLY a bandage over the bite site, to an area about 10cm above and below the bite.

Step 2

THEN using another elastic roller bandage, apply a firm wrap from fingers/toes all the way to the armpit/groin. The bandage needs to be firm, but not so tight that it causes fingers or toes to turn purple or white. About the tension of a sprain bandage.

Step 3

SPLINT the limb so the patient can't walk or bend the limb.

Do not cut, incise or suck the venom.

Do not EVER use a tourniquet

Don't remove the shirt or pants – just bandage over the top of clothing.

Australian snakes tend to have three main effects in differing degrees. Bleeding –



Whopper 2 metre brown snake.

Rog Fryer

internally and bruising; muscles paralysed causing difficulty talking, moving and breathing; pain.

In some snakes severe muscle pain in the limb, and days later the bite site can break down forming a nasty wound. Allergy to snakes is rarer than winning lotto twice.

Final tip: not all bitten people are envenomated and only those starting to show symptoms above are given antivenom.



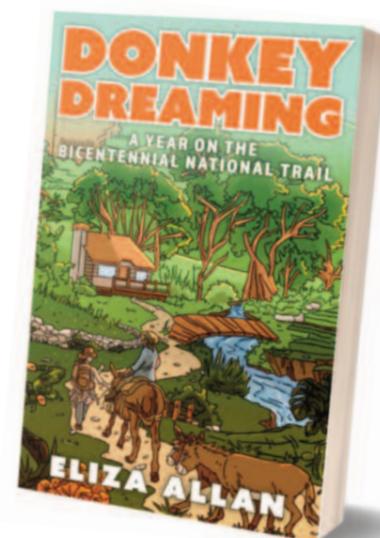
Trail runner strangles young mountain lion

WILDLIFE officials say a man who fought off a young mountain lion on a Colorado trail killed the animal by strangling it.

The man was running alone near Fort Collins when the lion attacked him from behind after the movement apparently triggered its hunting instincts.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife say he did exactly the right thing by fighting back as hard as he could by sheer will. He was hospitalised with injuries and puncture wounds to his arms, legs and back.

Book review



A TEACHER by trade, Eliza Allan completed a full BNT trek in 2017 with a horse, two pack donkeys and her 11-year-old daughter Zadee. Part of the trek was also tackled on a tandem bicycle.

Eliza is a very good writer and has contributed some excellent articles for *BNT TRACKS* magazine – on travelling stock reserves, and trekking with kids.

Now she has self-published her book about the trek. It's a richly detailed and intimate blow-by-blow account of her adventure which makes fascinating reading, especially for those considering a trek.

Eliza goes into great detail about preparation, gear and packing, mistakes and disasters on the Trail, illustrated with descriptions of the country they are travelling through. Unusually, she includes dialogue with characters she met or who assisted them as they travelled.

She also describes without fear or favour the time when she summoned a rescue helicopter with her EPIRB:

"What made you think you needed to call us?" she spun around and demanded angrily of me. "We were told a horse had fallen on a young child! There's nothing wrong with this girl."

"No that's not what I said," I choked back ...

Highly recommended if you are looking for both inspiration, practical tips and a reality check on problems and difficulties.

Donkey Dreaming
Amazon
\$23.24 for paperback
\$11.23 for Kindle version

Annual meeting at Kilkivan

WHEN I am asked to attend an AGM, I immediately think of the possibility that I might end up with a position or job to do, that I am not really committed to.

However, the BNT Board recognises that everyone is busy, that unless you have a passion for the position you will not serve for long enough to learn how the BNT works and how you can contribute whilst fulfilling your own interests.

When 40 people gathered in Kilkivan last October 2018, the Board had received nominations to fill two of the three vacant positions. Secretary Jenny Costin had served a number of terms and was keen to hand her extensive notes to someone else. Jenny continues as a section co-ordinator in Canberra. Tracey Beikoff from Mareeba had resigned her position earlier in the year, continuing to be associated with the BNT through the Mareeba working group and Sue Cumming also stood down after many years serving on the committee but continues to assist the section co-ordinators of south-east Queensland. Appreciation for the great efforts of these outgoing Board members was expressed, whilst welcoming Simon Tellam and Roger Fryer.

With an entire weekend to fill, many people arrived earlier in the week, settling in to share stories, catch up with each other and gather information. Passing trekkers such as Lucy took a break to share their stories and learn from those who had gone before. Section co-ordinators from near and further afield discussed ideas, shared problems and solutions and caught up with trekkers who had passed through or were shortly expected. Overseas visitors were there too! Gary, a former trekker from the UK, was visiting and came to rekindle friendships forged on the Trail, as did Tom and Teagan of 'TNT on the BNT' fame, all the way from Sweden!

By Saturday lunch, most people had taken the opportunity to view the timeline presented on a long roll of paper, with news articles, correspondence, photos, letters, and official documents. This illustrated 30 years of volunteer time and energy



Lesley Haine and Sue Cumming.

which has contributed to the creation, management and maintenance of the Bicentennial National Trail.

After the official meeting had taken place, every person present had an opportunity to introduce themselves, ask questions and make comments and suggestions.

For me, the best part of the weekend was to be inspired by the presentations of those invited to share their experiences with us. I appreciate how difficult it can be to speak in front of others and the time put into creating an interesting presentation. Thank you!

Clemmie and Andrew shared their love of brumbies, finding sponsors and the enormous investment of time in which to learn the skills required to take on such a trip with pack animals.

Ben moved everyone with his heart-stopping and confronting video, shared for the first time outside his family circle, where he recounts how exhaustion and outside pressures such as timelines can influence you to make decisions you would/should not take. He also brought along his homemade pack, bedding, etc, that he used on the Trail. Wow!

Tom and Teagan showed us a pictorial along the length of the Trail and on to the tip! Their enthusiasm for the lifestyle and their joy for life was infectious.

Good food, good company, great entertainment – that's what an AGM should be all about! So if you can make it to this year's, put it on your calendar as a great weekend that will have you planning your next trip on the BNT.

LESLEY HAINE



ABOVE: Along the track to Pine creek.
INSET: Leaving Howitt Hut.
RIGHT: Camp alongside Howitt Hut.

Howitt Hut to Knockwood

My very long journey to complete the final Victorian section of the BNT November 18 to 22, 2018

By **ANGIE LLOYD**

THE original trip starting from Healesville in October 2016 with a wind storm blowing down 58 large mountain ash on the Donnelly's Weir track had us turning back on the first day.

Restarted the next day I rode two days to Marysville where I was getting snowed on and the weather report had a blizzard at Kepples Hut so I rang a friend to take me home until the front passed (I live near the start) but unfortunately Hubby developed a bunging disc and was unable to walk for two months so I had to delay again.

Rescheduling in April 2017 I rode as far as Knockwood where a slip on the downhill track had Magic getting kicked and I had to give them a few extra days off to ensure that there was no lasting damage.

Scheduling with my support team (aka Hubby) meant skipping the next section. Five days later I started from Howitt Hut riding to Omeo. This is the story of the final section.

Originally planning to do the missing section in December 2017, 200mm of rain the weekend I was due to leave and rivers too high to cross so I had to put it off until Autumn, then there was a bushfire in the area and the track was closed for about eight weeks.

A friend remarked that she was not surprised to hear that I was riding the BNT this week as the weather was such rubbish (more rain in four days than we have had in months), another suggested that I should hire myself out to the drought areas until I pointed out that I would get an extreme weather event not necessarily rain.

Started from Howitt Hut Monday morning after a lovely evening was nearly a disaster when I left my bum-bag on a post and had a panicked return where it was safely where I left it.

The ride to the camp at Pine Creek was a bit of a slog with continuous up and down arriving at about 1.45pm. The ride enlivened

by a large variety of native flowers and orchids and views to die for.

The camp had a pond which trickled across the track and a reasonable amount of grass and I was lucky to meet up with another rider heading north so we exchanged info and tips and the next morning were up early as we both wanted to get going before the bad weather, which was due that day.

Tuesday I travelled to McAlister River camp, the first section was steep downhill for about 8-10km then a lovely ride beside the river with about 10 river crossings. Again the flowers were beautiful including some banksia, Brandy and Magic are troopers gently making their way downhill and splashing happily across the rivers.

McAlister River camp is where the Caledonia River meets. It was a warm day and the expected change hadn't come so I took advantage of a bit of a wash in the river, pretty cold but nice to be clean.

Leaving one horse roaming with the other high-lining during the day allowed them graze. The rain started at about 5pm with lightning and thunder so I just climbed into the tent until the morning.



Next day heading off from McAlister River camp, up Black Soil Gully track, very slippery after the rain but the girls trod carefully and managed brilliantly, as the day's trip was only 16km (and the following section was a planned 30+ km day). I had planned to camp a bit past Rumpfs Flat and ended up finding a lovely campsite 4.5km up the track. Seeing a bit of wildlife, few wallabies and lots of birds including some robins and I heard some deer honking and calling in the night from very close by.

Thursday again woke to rain, some of which had dampened the end of my sleeping bag but I hoped to dry it off when I got to camp.

I knew I had a big ride ahead so up and ready to go by 6.30am. The ride heading up the hill along Middle Ridge Road was lovely, not too steep (5.9km marked as good water is actually a river crossing). The rain however continued; not too heavy but getting colder and my hands were freezing even in gloves which became saturated quickly.

At the 23.5km mark I decided to keep left as the rain was turning colder and didn't want to ride on the exposed ridge. It was a great decision as the Barkley River Road is a lovely track, with lots of ferns and springs on the side of the road, as we had snow, sleet and hail I was also glad not to be on the exposed ridge.

Getting to the top, I stopped for "breakfast" at 12.30pm at what was a cold, exposed, very wet campsite so I continued down Lazarini Spur in the hope that there would be a sheltered area to camp.

Lazarini Spur track starts off a steady downhill until the 14km to 19km where it becomes a very steep, downhill ridge track;

the surface is either loose rocky shale or red clay, both very slippery with eroded channels (full of flowing water as it was still raining).

There wasn't anywhere to camp so we had no choice but to continue. With both girls getting tired, I was off and walking from about the 14km mark (on the Lazarini- Knockwood section, we had already ridden an additional 30km by that time).

The hill work I have done with them pre-ride really helped, they just carefully took very small steps watching the track and taking their time and we made it to the

bottom in one piece (two hours later). My legs were exhausted by that time but at least walking kept me a little warmer. Magic (who was tied to Brandy's saddle) just followed without any drama, she is such a trooper!

Still no suitable camp, I decided to continue to Knockwood as it was only another 7km to go – a very long 7km, only getting on Brandy to cross the two rivers but otherwise walking – did I mention it was still raining?

We arrived at Knockwood about 7.30pm after an exhausting 57km. It is a lovely campsite with lots of grass, friendly birds (had a visit from a king parrot, kookaburra and magpies) however there is no phone reception at all.

I high-lined the girls, (who were very glad of the lovely abundant grass) put up my tent with the tarp over the gear and tried to get out of the rain. Too tired to cook dinner I just took off my boots, changed into my waterproof "snow pants" which was my only dry-ish gear and lay down to sleep. Everything was a little damp, including my sleeping bag but with no choice I had to make the best of it and I was warm enough. I heard some deer honking close by but it was otherwise quiet.

It was our last campsite and the next morning when Graham arrived the girls both whinnied at the float, I think they were glad to be going home – until next time.

With his swag on a trike!



Aaron in Grafton on his way home to Phillip Island, Victoria, after holidaying in Byron Bay.

Triumph against adversity

By DEAN CUNICO

TO GO riding on an Australian Stock Horse, through some of the most beautiful and untouched country in Victoria, has been one of my dreams.

They say the track is a test of resilience and self-reliance. I agree.

You see I had three strokes at the age of 15, I was given up for dead and had my last rights read to me. I survived the night and was transported to Melbourne.

I spent three weeks in the Royal Melbourne Hospital. Seven months in the Royal Talbot Hospital in Kew, four years as an outpatient. Receiving intensive speech, physio and occupational therapy.

Now when I go horse riding, I wear a brace strapped to my right lower leg and foot. The actual brace came from my neighbour Derrick.

The brace keeps my right foot from bending at the ankle and following the contour of the horse's belly. It works by pulling the right side of the ankle back to where it should be. It took many years to perfect. I can't explain how much it hurts if I don't wear the brace.

Support Crew: Murray Broughton and David Jackson.

November 2017

WE left from John and Jo Kasch's place (Narbethong). We had planned to ride from Narbethong to Omeo. Alas we only made it as far as Big River.

"I think I'll call it quits now," my mate said. I was devastated. No words can describe it. So this time I tried it on my own. I tried to start from Big River, but the Targa High Country Rally was on and I chose the next best spot.

Lazarinis Spur, 11 November

THE day was upon me, up about 5.30 or 6 getting ready by 7. I had to ensure Meg was eating well. I mixed her food with water to



My boots, at Howitt Hut.

make a slurry. I did this to make sure Meg would consume the electrolyte. It was also important to ensure that Meg used her bowels.

The army track led us down to the Goulbourn River. It looked absolutely beautiful, now Lazarinis Spur, it hit you in the face like a prize fighter would, a steep, unforgiving rock ledge and it kept on climbing.

She picked her path without fail. I thought we had reached the top, it was only the enticer. We went on and on, nearly the whole day was climbing. We heard a trail bike, I signalled to him, slow down! He did, he drove past very slowly.

I could hear another trail bike, we just turned around and faced the sound. He came around the corner, not expecting to see a horse. Hit the brakes, he was so apologetic. He was the lead rider for a group of 11, all South Australians. They all

turned their bikes off, walked them past me and continued on. Respect!

We finished that little spur, we were in contact with Murray who said he met the first motorbike rider. He was tracking a course via GPS for a motorbike enduro. He asked Murray which direction I had come in from, because in his eyes the track was too steep for horses.

The bloke couldn't believe it, when told which way I was going. "I crashed at the first hill, I couldn't get up it", he said.

Barkley River Jeep Track 12 November

THE track is only 750 meters long but it's made of boulders and rock, any slip was almost certain death. I remember thinking on the descent, "I'm like the Man from Snowy River – in slow motion."

My heels were up around Meg's ears, my back was on her rump, my good hand was



Waiting for my support crew – David? Along Butcher Country Track.

brushing trees away while my crook hand had the reins. We were finished in a blink of an eye! Felt like eternity though! I didn't know what to feel! Exuberant or just that I remained seated, I was still alive.

Middle Ridge RD was the one I wanted. That turned into Middle Ridge Track. This was one of the most deceiving tracks I've been on.

A steep little rocky goat track, I think it was the speed of her traversing down that kept me in the saddle. Because it was slow it gave me time to feel where to position myself in the saddle.

All I could say to Murray was, "You wouldn't believe how steep it was." The next camp over had invited us for dinner. They had cooked three roasts lambs. They made us feel like we were around at Grandma's. Tomorrow was a rest day for Meg, and I.

McAllister River 14 November

IT RAINED a bit, all that day and night into the morning. It was raining when I woke up, not very heavy, just enough to make everything wet. I sponged down Meg with a dishcloth, I hit the road.

I camped at the bottom of the Butcher Country Track, it was a further 10km on, six river crossings.

One of the river crossings went up to Meg's belly. All I could do was think how cold the water must have been for her. Murray was going home, David was coming in on the track.

Butcher Country, 15 November

HIT the road by 7, up Butcher Country Track. We had camped at 333m. Howitt Hut was 1530m, so we had a fair uphill climb. It was quite hot and muggy when I left camp. After climbing up just a few hundred metres it was cold and wet. I couldn't believe the dramatic weather change.

Meg had proven herself through the mountains, the least I could do was get off and lead her along the flat ground.

We finally reached Howitt Hut, David had started a fire. Beautiful the feeling of warmth from an open fire in Howitt Hut, it was freezing outside. I unsaddled Meg and let her graze. The temperature had dropped to below zero, I had to do something to keep Meg warm. So I cut two holes above the sleeves of my Dryzabone coat, rigged up a girth strap using the belt straps from my swag and attached a breastplate. Beautiful.

Two blisters had appeared on my ankles, they will be right!

I laughed when David suggested some Thar's ointment. Well it worked on one ankle. I had been in the saddle for 11 hours and travelled 40km. The next day was a day of rest.

Rest Day, 16 November

A GROUP of 15 young ladies came walking into Howitt Hut, they were on a 30 day hike. Their plan was to camp one night at Howitt Hut, move onto Dry River Track tomorrow, camping half way down.

The girls came over to give Meg a pat and to listen to me talk about the BNT.

Three vehicles camped beside us, One of the older men came to tears, reminiscing of the olden days. He took quite a few photos of Meg and I, to show his mother! He wanted to take more when I rode off.

The Dry Creek Track 17 November

IF YOU looked hard enough you could see the actual depression in the ground where people had been walking. The track was more defined the steeper you got. And steeper it was a goat track. At the bottom I knew where I was, where the river was, where the sun, I knew the contour of the mountains.

Mapping the light fantastic

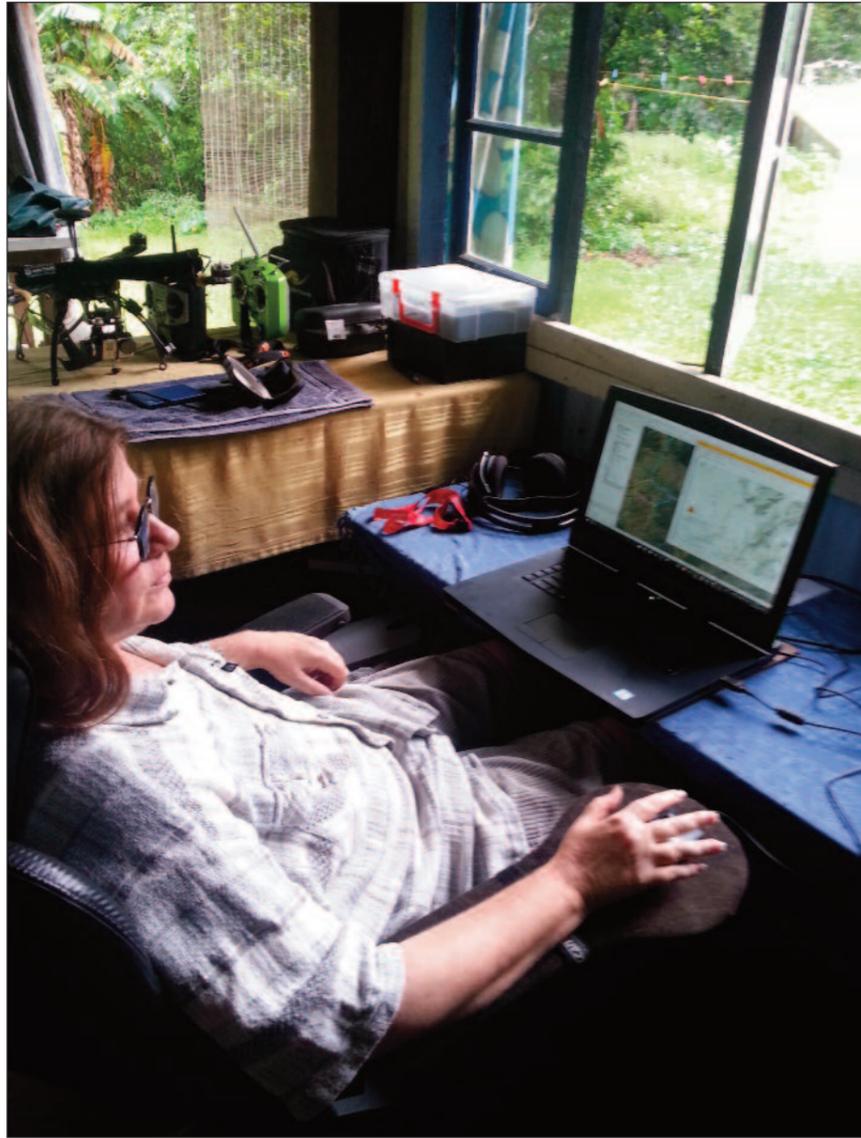
THE National Horse Trail came into being in 1978 through the efforts of R. M. Williams and many others. Documentation was basic and mapping done by many people including the original trail pioneer Dan Seymour. In 1988 this Trail morphed into the present Bicentennial National Trail with substantial grant funding.

Guidebook Notes Edition 1 of 1988 had yellow covers and maps were in a separate section to the notes which were North to South only, except Book 12 Victoria which was South to North. For Queensland, the hand-drafted maps were "supplied by the Surveyor-General, Queensland and reproduced by arrangement with the Queensland Government". Edition 2 guidebooks had a red cover, maps next to the notes, again a red line for the route and were funded by the Bicentennial grant. This much-improved mapping was done by Lands Department cartographers and surveyors (such as Steve McFarlane who still passionately supports the Trail) based on revisions by Mike Allen and Brian Taylor.

Edition 3 notes were only done for NSW by Col Roberts and the Land and Property Management Authority on topographic maps. These were produced between 2003 and 2010. They have trail notes in both directions. Edition 4 was an updated version of book 9 only and published in 2010.

This Edition 3 book format became the goal for Queensland Edition 3 books when Mal Keeley started rewriting the six Queensland books in mid-2000s with trail notes now written in both directions. Mapping for book 6 was undertaken by the Queensland Government; however the GFC forced massive budget cuts and no further books were mapped. It was intended the books be available in digital format right from the outset along with downloadable GPX files.

Mapping became a major delay in the process as no affordable commercial alternatives could be found. While Andrew Graham explored newly emerging options many of these were problematic with



Nicole Austin at her workstation in Cairns, FNQ.

reproduction rights issues. Finally some draft workable maps, along with precise KML alignment files, were produced using the Queensland Government Queensland Globe based on Google Earth; insert maps (a concept approved by the BNT Board for tricky sections of the Trail) were then produced on the Public Domain imagery of ArcGIS Explorer (a free download).

Queensland Edition 3 Guidebooks struck many other difficulties – some arising from 21st century perceptions of land ownership as well as far stricter expectations in Government legislation including duty of care to trekkers.

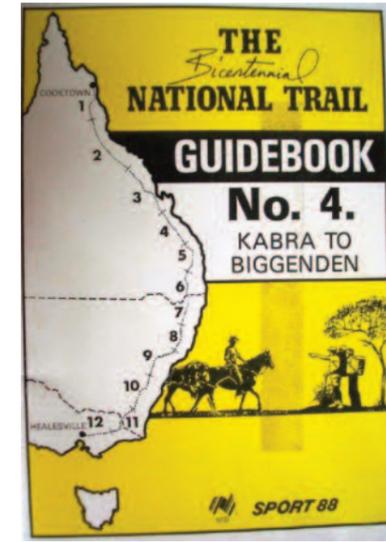
Recognition of and respect for land tenure is becoming critically important. Trekkers need to know exactly where the Trail runs and remain on it so they don't trespass on private land with subsequent loss of significant portions of the Trail as aggrieved land owners block their sections.

Conversely, the BNT needed to know where it had legal access on surveyed but unformed roads, as provided for by the Queensland Government.

Positives from these early Edition 3 efforts include establishing good relations with several Regional Councils and seeing the BNT included in their recreation planning schemes; gratitude from trekkers who trialled new maps and digital alignments; and identifying the "continuity gap" south of Mutchilba which is now being rectified in the new alignment being developed. A range of errors in Queensland Edition 1 and 2 notes, particularly a number of very wrong co-ordinates in GB 1, were gradually found during the mapping and with trekker help.

In contrast to the problems in Queensland and New South Wales, in Victoria, the better land tenure arrangements for the alignment provided for greater stability and little need for realignment and remapping.

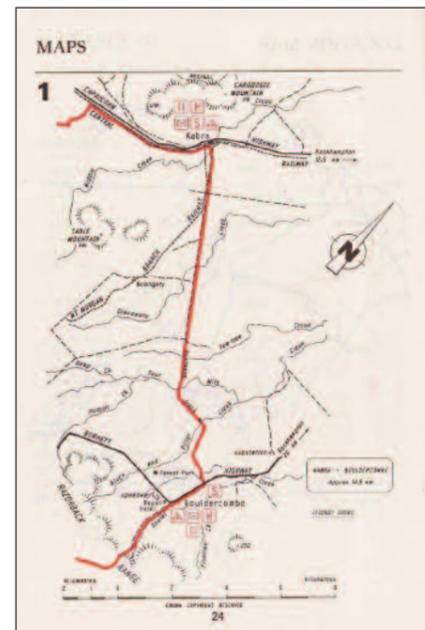
Dr Nicole Austin from North Queensland is currently leading a new mapping team accessing recent technology to create digital mapping using professional ArcGIS mapping (ArcGIS is a geographic information system {GIS} for working with maps and geographic information). Nicky also uses QGIS software at times but current plans are to use ArcGIS as the BNT standard as it seems the best option. Nicky has currently submitted an application for a Not For Profit licence for the BNT (one spin-off from the new Not For Profit status of the BNT).



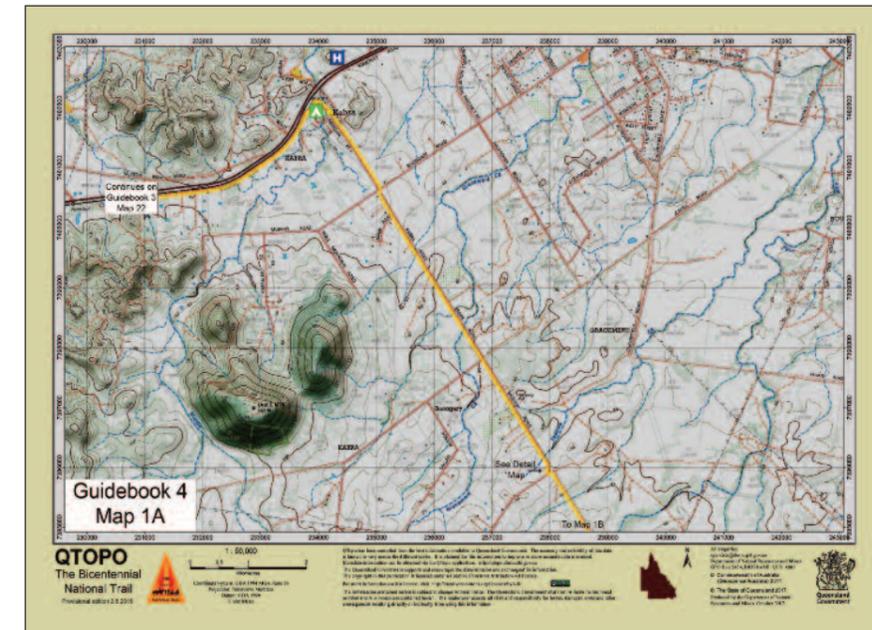
BNT Guidebook First edition.



BNT marker book 9.



GB 4 First Edition Map 1.



GB 4 Map 1 A 50K PDF QTopo.

Jenny Costin along with Nicky has spent a great deal of time reformatting Guidebook notes into Excel spreadsheets. With support from Section Coordinators they are digitising the notes into waypoints on online maps for viewing. Jenny and Jean, coordinator for guidebook 7, have tested out workflows for editing in ArcGIS Online which have worked very well.

Nicky has also used QGIS software for some tasks (QGIS is a free and open-source cross-platform desktop geographic information system application that supports viewing, editing, and analysis of geospatial data).

Currently Owen Salkin is helping out John Dwyer (Guidebook 6) by testing out QGIS for editing and producing PDF maps with some instructions and data Nicky sent him. Recently some updated Guidebook 7 PDF maps were produced using QGIS. All the Guidebook 7 PDF maps need to be updated as soon as possible.

Nicky has also been working on Guidebook 6 to add to ArcGIS online for John Dwyer to test checking and editing. From there her plan is to move on to Guidebook 1 which most likely will involve fieldwork as mapping has started on a new alternate inland route.

The current plan is that once the initial base layers, which include the track lines and waypoints with notes, are set up then the coordinators, using a set of instructions for software of choice, can update as necessary. This would mean then that the BNT would only need a GIS person in the future for some more complicated processes such as creating routes with embedded 3D distance information that can be used to obtain waypoint distance measures using spatial analysis tools.

Also once the tracklines and waypoint notes are digitised they can be transformed into various formats to be used in different GIS software and devices, eg Garmin GPS.

There are numerous public web map sources under Creative Commons Licence (including commercial use) which can be added to the PDF and online maps via url links (they can also be downloaded as georeferenced images/PDFs to use as basemaps in GIS software).

All up this is an ongoing major task with a need to check every reference in notes on a mapping screen and to have everything (maps and notes) proof-read by an independent map-literate person so it really is a case of all hands on deck. Nicky and her team would appreciate all the help possible in this big task.

ANDREW GRAHAM, DAVE McLEOD, MAL KEELEY and NICOLE AUSTIN



Christmas in October 2014 Barrington Tops.

The importance of navigation, snow, maths, heat-waves and gloves

By **AMANDA HAY**

IN OCTOBER 2014 I started south on the BNT from Pigna Barney TSR.

Miles I ride in a dressage saddle, fitted with D rings for saddlebags. On Havoc his stock saddle, bike panniers slung across the seat, gear sacks stacked atop, strapped with nylon webbing fitted with cam-buckles

Havoc carried 45kg. Miles carried 76kg. As we trekked, sturdy Havoc grew muscle, I added to Havoc's load by 13kg, while lessening Miles' load.

Early one evening on Barrington Tops I heard outside my tent a very loud Boom

Boom! Boom Boom! Boom! Boom! Then the jingle of my horses hobbles, and, Jingle Boom! Jingle Boom! In thermals and boots, I jumped out of the tent, hoping to look brave at least. I took in the magnificent sight of seven-eight bright bay, tall, fit, handsome brumbies challenging Miles. I dove into the tent for the stock whip and chased those beautiful brumbies away!

I woke at 5am to a wondrous dump of snow. The horses had already lost their winter coats and couldn't stay yarded in snow too comfortably. I had prepared with this in mind as I was trekking in Barrington Tops during spring, so in the

event of snow, I was prepared for: a) one full day out in the snow, enough to bring the horses below the snowline, and b) I could stay in the tent for four–six days if needed. I would add winter gloves and contact lenses to my preparations.

The horses were rested. The landscape before me was white, occasional prints of animals crossed our path, it was beautiful, eerie, stunning, and snowing lightly. I knew I would never have such a beautiful experience again. I was at risk of many dangers, including ones I would not know about, and my margin for error was nil. I decided to relish every moment and remain vigilant.

We would climb 300 metres before we started to descend; I had made a habit of studying my route and maps the night before. The snow came faster and thicker, Miles copped heavy snow dumps on his neck from trees; he strode on unperturbed. Havoc kept up with Miles' enormous strides with no encouragement from me, trotting every few paces, I looked at Havoc's pack. I looked again. I had fallen asleep!

In now blizzard conditions, my objective narrowed to keeping awake. I created a physical task for my hands, my core for balance and legs for bringing Miles closer to Havoc, with unnecessarily

checking Havoc's load each 10 minutes, I did not allow myself to miss a check.

I kept my mind focused by attempting to calculate distances. Repeatedly I got the wrong answer, I could not even remember the question, however attempting to do so kept my brain active enough to keep me awake. During this time I have no photo or video, the horses didn't falter, for safety I thought like a rider, in reality I felt like a passenger and I relied on the horses to carry me to safety.

I shivered once, a tremulous shiver, which warmed my entire body including internal organs for a period of time that felt like five minutes. After the warmth passed, I

wished I could shiver like that again, and knew enough to be thankful I didn't.

The blizzard opened and with soft, deep snow underfoot, I saw a road to the right, heard crashing, and watched as snow-laden branches caused litter upon our road to the Dingo Gate! I decided to take the longer route, with a wider road. I regret not taking a photo here.

Descending, I walked to warm up, sightseers passed to see the snow and life returned to normal. We reached the southern Dingo Gate at 1pm. I found phone coverage at 3pm, and my support suggested I phoned the section coordinator.

To Page 14



Day one, north of the Dingo Gate.

From Page 13

I will never forget Sue and Don, their kindness, generosity, spirit, helpfulness, and support cannot be described, the best I can say is the horses and I were scooped up off the mountain by Sue and Don and cherished and nurtured by them for four days as we recovered. It really is amazing how much the cold and 36km can take out of you. Havoc slept flat out in their paddock the full four days while Miles ate his fill each day. Thank you Sue and Don.

White Bridge to Sandy Hollow via a few places

AT WHITE BRIDGE there are trout that swim across the causeway. I camped on public land, next to private paddocks. The landowner visited and relayed a story of a camper who set his paddock alight with a campfire that got away. Now 35 degrees, dry and windy his concern seemed reasonable; I cooked on my stove in a dirt patch with the flame very low and sheltered.

Next morning through to Upper Rouchel – 20km. Found a locked gate listed as unlocked. I followed the fence to the right angle of my direction of travel, which took me down a steep gully, and back. After

following the fence along my direction of travel, I found a tree across the fence where the horses crossed safely.

Rode into Aberdeen – onto the highway, a train honking behind, trucks squealing in front, cars everywhere. I halted the horses and waited for a break in the traffic, Miles went when asked and Havoc turned to road furniture! I dragged him across. The spasms in my back were not letting up ... A man lent out of his car window, taking photos, he followed me for over 10 minutes. I asked: “Who are you?” He said he was doing a photo documentation of BNT trekkers coming through Aberdeen. I’d like to see some of those photos. He asked me to smile; I think I managed a grimace due to pain.

It was hot. After two rest days and three nights I was on New England Highway at 6am and crossed the bridge north of Aberdeen without incident.

We came to the cattle yards, they were in the guidebook, I was meant to pass through them, yet I couldn’t open the gates! I asked myself how was I thinking? I was trying to open the biggest most tightly sealed gate, and if I got it open, there was another. I must be thinking city-like. I was at cattle yards! Country people work hard,

but don’t make hard work for themselves or their cattle. I needed to ask how would I move cattle through here? Now I could see the way. The horses drank their fill and rested in shade while I opened the way, led them through, and closed the yards.

We rode a long paddock, a beautiful relaxing ride forever etched into my memory. Three horses galloped close; nothing overly-threatening. Miles had seen the gate and heading for it with his longest stride, Havoc trotted up close, I swung the excess of Havoc’s lead rope around my head to make us all look bigger, the three horses moved in when I didn’t. Miles lined up the gate and presented me with the latch, Havoc got himself out of Miles’s way, hurried through the gate and around Miles, never once ahead of my knee or with any weight on me, Miles worked the gate so I just had to drop the latch back on. We were through in seconds, how they worked so well together to approach and get around the gate, how they each knew their part and how Miles presented me with my part was marvelous.

I left Sandy Hollow at 5:40am. Enroute I heard: “Would you like a cup o’ tea love?” Expecting 39 degrees and allowing for unknowns, wrong turns or locked gates, I sadly declined. I would gladly have stopped



Lucy Bartlett-Wynne turned up the Annual General Meeting in Killivan part-way through her full BNT trek. She was walking the whole way but decided to give mountain biking a try. No good! So she’s back on foot.

had the weather been cooler and I could have asked the horses to stand for 10 minutes or so. As it turned out, we rode into camp at 10:30 that day ... Marlene visited with 2.5 litres of delicious frozen tank water for me to drink, and a train driver honked a song after I waved in response to their tooting me. It was a social day of trekking indeed.

We came through Widden Stud and up to Myrtle Grove to stay at the hut for two nights, with abundant grass and water. Havoc’s belly had moved onto his chest, and Miles lost his belly and looked lean instead of gaining bulk. Both had the top-line of horses in work. We

all relaxed and rested before our next leg.

From Widden Stud we climbed 500 metres and the horses did not ask to stop. I rested the horses for 40 minutes, and then I walked 8km.

Riding into Dewey’s 40 was exciting, a friend was due to join me for a week, and I looked forward to riding into the horses’ home paddock in two weeks. Swarms of midge flies had attacked the horses. Both looked pained, and were extremely itchy. Welts increased in size and visibility all over their bodies and remained for weeks. I decided to stop trekking the horses and take them home to recover.

Who’s on the Trail

SCOTT PETRIE, horse trekker. Lockyer Valley to Tenterfield, completed.

TANYA BOSCH, bike. Taralga to Canberra, completed.

ROBERT KLEI, cyclist. North to south. Member from Canada who has previously trekked the BNT. Welcome back Robert.

THOMAS LEWTHWAITE, walker. Heading north, started on the Great Ocean Road to Cape York.

ANTHONY BEATTIE, walker. Had started from Cooktown and travelled south, but due to trail conditions, recommenced from Healesville and travelling north.

DARREL DUNSTON, horse. Gatton to Tenterfield, completed.

MARIANNE KRANENBURG (BNT Director) with Frasier Creese. GB6, completed.

CHRISTOPHER HART-SMITH, bike. Aberdeen to Jenolan Caves, completed.

IAN DREHER, horse. Healesville to Canberra.

TARIS MEEHAN, horse. Newton Boyd and return, completed.

MICHAEL THOMAS, walker. Healesville to Cooktown.

SUZANNE BARNIER, horse. Upper Rochel to Georges Junction, starting March 2019.

JODI MORTON, horse. Healesville to Canberra, completed.

CLEMMIE WOTHERSPOON, horse. Trek suspended due to trail conditions. Recommence at a later date.

LUCY BARTLETT-WYNNE, walker. Trek suspended due to trail conditions, recommence at a later date.

LYN KINCADE, Healesville to Cooktown by bike.

TAMI MILLS, horse heading south. Has suspended her trek.



Following the elusive red and yellow triangle.



Changing up my horses at Oldfields Hut – Costa was my pack horse, so I decided it was time for him to pack me for a change!

Life's lessons while on the Trail

THEY say that life begins at the end of your comfort zone. I'm inclined to agree with whoever said that, because life on trail is the epitome of living, and starting it was definitely out of my comfort zone.

No matter how prepared I thought I was, it was a steep learning curve once I got out there and every day taught me something new, even if it gave me a proverbial kick up the butt while doing so. In light of this, below are a few of the best lessons that Professor BNT taught me over the two and a bit months I was on the trail.

Two people can do the exact same trail and have completely different experiences

BEFORE I started the trail I talked to as many people as I could about their experiences and heard their stories, tips and tricks. I thought that if I learned from everyone else's mistakes, I'd make less of my own – it doesn't work like that. Where some trekkers had -9 degrees, I had 37.



Costa taking a break on Stockroute Spur track on the way to Dog's Grave.

Where some had dingoes fighting in the middle of their campsite, I didn't hear a peep of canine activity.

Where others I'm sure had ordered campsites, I had a horse leaning over my shoulder stealing my two minute noodles then using my gas canister cap as a chew toy. What I got from this is that everyone's trail experience is completely different (and since finishing, I've had an awesome time comparing trail stories for certain campsites with other BNT trekkers).

But outside of seasonal and/or equine differences, there are SO many extra factors that can influence your trail day. The weather, your fitness, nutrition, amount of sleep, aches and pains, the list goes on.

Personally, I found that sleep was a big factor on how I found the following day. For example, one night in Limestone Creek, I had my mate the black stallion come and visit me pretty much every hour on the hour during the night. You know, just to say hi and all. The next day I paid for those social

visits however. Doing the trail after pretty much pulling an all-nighter honestly makes those hills seem never ending!

You'll learn as you go what works best for you, and that will change along the way

TALKING to other trekkers, I found that there were SO many different ways of doing things. You know that cliché saying "there are many ways to skin a cat"? Well this applies to the BNT (although I assure you, no cats were harmed in the trekking of the BNT).

So many aspects of my trek evolved as we progressed through the trail. The way I secured my horses at night changed, my packing strategy changed, my average speed strategy changed and my diet changed (that one didn't change for the better – my daytime diet ended up consisting entirely of Shapes and M&Ms. You win some, you lose some).

One of the things that I found worked well for me, especially in Victoria, was walking my horses up the big hills. This was with the idea that if I need a break, they probably need a break. Might not work for everyone but it definitely worked for me. It also gave me a great excuse to eat half a jar of Nutella those evenings.

Knowing what's ahead of you, aka being mentally prepared for the day, is a complete game changer

CAN I just say, the new Guidebook 12 with the topographic chart on each page that tells you the detailed elevation changes for the day are an absolute game-changer.

This might be a personal thing, but being able to look at what we were in for that day made a long, steep day SO much more bearable. I mean, my legs still burned up the steep sections, however expected hills were a lot easier than surprise hills. Mt Terrible taught me that lesson. Never again did I skip looking at the topograph.

Trust your gut

IF SOMETHING doesn't feel right, it usually isn't. I guess this applies to life in general rather than just the BNT, but it's a pretty good lesson nonetheless.

There were a few times on the trail when I just had an uneasy feeling that something wasn't right. Sometimes I listened to that feeling, sometimes I didn't. I usually regretted the times that I didn't. One morning coming out of Brumby Hill it was



In the stockyards at Marysville – making ourselves at home in the amazing facilities there.



The team: CC (chestnut mare), Phoenix (Appaloosa) and Costa (pack horse).

a clear blue sky but I felt like I should be carrying my oilskin with me. I then told myself not to be an idiot and packed it in my top load. Guess who got absolutely soaked a couple hours later.

Things will go wrong and that's okay

IF YOU sit down and try and plan for all the possible scenarios when something could go wrong on the trail you'd be in a state of "paralysis by analysis" and would never leave your living room table.

Besides, it's the trail days when things get hectic that you really remember with a smile. Did I have two of my horses bolt off down the trail at Lazarini Spur? Yes. Is it hilarious now in hindsight? Also yes. But learning to deal with these 'oops' moments gracefully goes way beyond trail life – it helps when

you're back in 'the real world' too.

I can't even begin to cover how many aspects of my life have changed between the BT (before trail) and AT (after trail) period. I literally apply these life lessons to seemingly trivial everyday scenarios now.

Out of everything the BNT taught me though, I think the most important lesson is to live in the moment and freaking enjoy it. Now that I'm off trail and back in 'the real world', it feels as though those two and a bit months were just a dream and that they never happened at all. Really, this is just an incentive to start the next adventure.

Until next time, Professor BNT.

Eating on the BNT

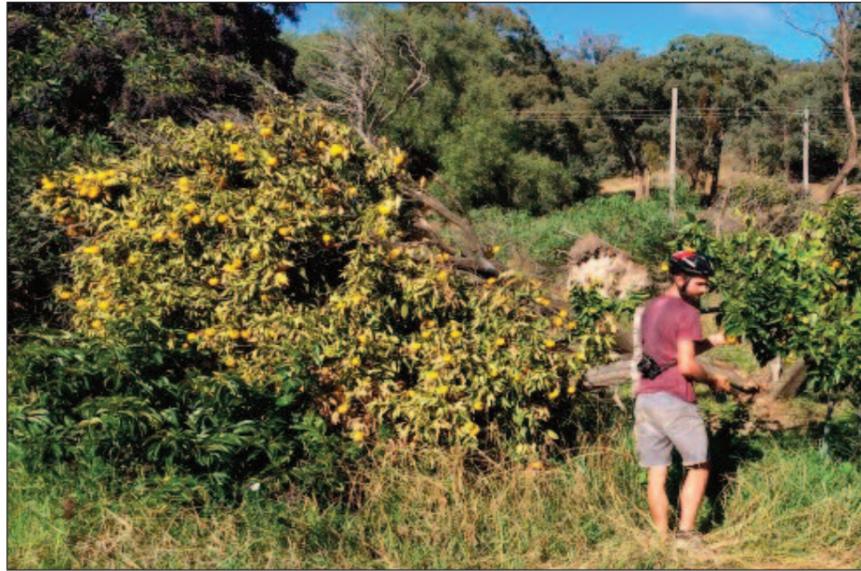
THERE are many ways to manage food on long distance trekking. We want to demonstrate eating on the BNT does not have to be a tasteless experience. In fact, for our trip, we ate extremely well and did not repeat a dinner until day 26 of our journey! Varying our food contributed to good moral whilst exercising each day. By sharing our experiences we hope others maybe inspired by bush trekking culinary delicacies.

Choosing a stove (or not having one at all) can determine how meals are formed. There are so many available on the market of varying weights, volumes, different fuels, robustness and water simmering to boiling speeds can change what you eat whilst trekking. We used a large Trangia, which is heavy and bulky as far as stoves go, it cooks slower in sub 0 temperatures, but is difficult to break, and easy to find fuel (methylated spirits). We did consider buying a lighter stove, but because we already owned a Trangia, it was one less cost to our trip. Another benefit to the Trangia is that it can simmer meaning we could vary our dinners a lot.

We wanted to be in control of what we were getting and have varied dinners to encourage us to eat. We researched shops and places for food drops along the BNT for resupply and worked backwards to figure out how many days food we needed. These resupply points were usually pencilled into the overview map at the front of each of our guidebooks. Arriving at a town was a good opportunity to eat at a local pub, café or servo and this was added to our meal plan when working out how many days food we required. We also had an emergency bag of rice in the bottom of our pack in case we got unexpectedly stuck somewhere for a few days.

Our BNT diet was essentially a high carbohydrate, high energy (fat) diet, mainly one-pot wonders. We soon discovered meals had a hierarchy spectrum, of spoon, fork or knife. Meals eaten with a spoon were generally low on the spectrum, we thought we were civilized when we ate with a fork, and if we had to use a knife we were probably at a pub eating a steak or parmigiana feeling like royalty!

Doing long days of exercise sometimes in challenging terrain or weather conditions required our bodies to consume a lot of fuel! For us, we consumed 125-150g of carbohydrate for each breakfast and dinner,



Early settlers planted bush lemons and oranges near homesteads to help prevent scurvy.

but when our largest section between resupply was approximately 2 weeks that was a lot of food to somehow carry! We adapted some of our favourite meals (Thai green curry, spaghetti bolognese, Indian curry, mac n cheese, fragrant pilau rice, carbonara, Mediterranean couscous, chilli con carne, damper) for trekking, using ingredients accessible from the supermarket or prepared from dehydrated ingredients before we started.

The availability of fresh produce forces you to either prepare dehydrated fruit, vegetables and meat prior to leaving or find it along the way. Before our trip we had 2 dehydrators running nearly 24/7 for 2 weeks prior to our departure to Melbourne. We decided to dehydrate fruit and vege and buy meat (jerky, biltong, salami, salmon, tuna, sardines etc). We initially bought cheap fruit and vege at the farmers market to dehydrate. But we eventually bought pre-cut frozen & tinned fruit and vege on sale at the supermarket and put it straight into the dehydrators! The dried fruit and vege were put into approximately 100g zip locked bags, dated & labelled. We bought different carbohydrates (rice, couscous, quinoa, macaroni, angel hair pasta) split into zip locked bags 250-300g per person (125-150g per person). By portioning our food prior to departures, we could easily count how many days food we had and the temptation to accidentally eat too much (or too little) was eliminated. These were packaged up as individual ingredients to 'pick and mix' them into food boxes to be posted to post offices, pubs, servos along the BNT, mainly in the more remote areas.

We collected fresh seasonal bush tucker as we rode along. We ate tonnes of stinging nettle as a substitute for spinach. When

heated, the nettle's sting is neutralised and makes it safe and easy to eat. We also ate a lot of bush lemons, oranges, blackberries, chestnuts, wild pumpkins and water cress from creeks. We tried making sprouts in a peanut butter jar, which was great, but we just were not consistent enough to make worth our while. Tom had a telescopic fishing pole which fitted down the seat tube of his bike for opportune fishing in creeks. But with all things 'found' we only ate produce we were 100% certain was not going to make us sick.

We packed a spice bag, the secret to our tasty dinners. 6 teaspoons of varying spices including; pepper, garlic, ginger, curry, Italian herbs, Thai spices, cumin, coriander, garram masala powders and poppy & sesame seeds transformed our meals. We never really added salt to meals before this trip, and were surprised how much our bodies craved it and added a bit of salt to every dinner. Simple things like adding stock cubes and toasting seeds or nuts really transformed our meals and enhanced flavours.

Warm fruit porridge provided lasting energy every morning. We varied the recipe slightly each morning so not to get sick of it. From Canberra onwards, we added a scoop of protein powder which we felt sustained us better throughout the day.

Our snack food whilst riding, was kept in our handlebar bags or cycle jersey pockets for easy access. This generally consisted of muesli bars slathered in peanut butter or Nutella, fruit cake, damper, pumpernickel or dense rye bread with butter and golden syrup, nuts and dried fruit. We ate many kilos of dried fruit and nuts which were versatile for varying our breakfasts, lunches



Fish caught in little streams on a telescopic rod.



Young nettles collected with gloves throughout NSW and a good substitute for spinach. Docweed grows nearby and a good antidote for nettle stings.

and dinners. We tended to finish each day of riding with a cup of soup which allowed our fingers to warm up and make setting up camp and fixing equipment a bit easier. When making food boxes we counted 30 different flavours of muesli and fruit bars! Variety, and a mix of sweet and savoury we felt was key to not getting sick of one particular food.

Apart from a couple food dislikes, some foods did not travel well with us. Dry brittle foods such as rice crackers, rice cakes, 2 minute noodles, etc although delicious, turned to crumbs with the vibrations of travel and too difficult to eat. As much as we loved vegemite on rice cakes, it did not have the kilojoules needed to get us through the day, and the limited pack space meant we prioritised it for something else like fruit cake which contains a huge amount of daily kilojoules.

What we did is just one of many ways to eat on the BNT. We even heard of other trekkers successfully eating fresh roadkill and not taking a stove for the entire trip! But it's about finding a balance with what you are comfortable with. Hopefully this article has broadened some perceptions about food on the BNT and how it is very doable to eat well.

TEGAN STREETER & TOM RICHARDS

Marking out the Trail



All packed ready to leave home.



Well-earned treat for everyone. Tuglow River camp.



Breaking camp.

HAZEL and Martin McCort, Guidebook 9, Maps 13-14 Hampton to Jenolan Caves, have been out checking Trail markers.

"Markers are all good on this section," Hazel said. "We have had good rain over the last week so the feed and water situation should improve."

"We had intended to do four days but due to the unusually hot weather and lack of ground water and feed we decided to return home. Not worth

risking our horses. All the markers to the national park entrance are good. We will check out the remainder of this section when conditions improve.

"Trekks should check on conditions before travelling this section. p.s. Update on weather book 9 and 10. Grass is green but still in short supply. Ground water not flash but creeks are running. Not sure about stretch to Taralga, but would imagine it would be on the dry side."

- February 4



Meg at Howitt Hut, enjoying the fresh green grass.

Triumph

From Page 9

I just had to find the track! There was river rock every where, Meg's feet must have been sore. The ground was so unforgiving. But I managed to find Wonnangatta.

Wombat Spur 18 November

EVERY day some gobsmacking mountain to either ascend or descend. Wombat Spur Track was next, I can't believe the stamina of these wonderful creatures. Another uphill climb.

I was walking at this stage, the blister on my ankle had worsened. I needed to change my boots for my sandals. Walk without that feeling of immense pain.



Photo of my right heel upon completion.



Talking to the girls about the BNT.

Talbotville was upon me. I was not ready for what happened next. About 60 people from 4X4 Earth had camped there and everyone came out to say G'day.

Talbotville to Grant via McMillan Track 19 November

THE RIDE out wasn't exactly flat. I stopped for one vehicle, he had been listening to my adventure over the radio. With his radio on scan, he could track my position. He said he had to catch up with me as I was the talk of the airways!

We were back in the car not five minutes, my boys Nyoka and Shem soon let me know I was a father again. And that I had been away, they started arguing and fighting! The noise level went from peaceful to chaos, the normal chaos of life. It was my boy's birthday on the day we were pulled out. He was turning five!

Home

IT TOOK me four days to recover fully – I was both physically and mentally exhausted.

I just wanted to show my sons that all the frustration, time you spend in co-ordinating people, training, preparing trip notes. Making little things that can make the trip easier for you, that all of this can have a good outcome.

To a novice you can't explain how steep those hills are. Its not until you actually see for yourself and know the daunting, ruggedness and danger you've put yourself through.

It was a feeling of exhilaration and I loved every minute! Nowhere in Australia can you find such a track. Thank you to all the people involved in keeping the Bicentennial National Track open and alive.

deancunico@gmail.com. Thank you.

A good mate

By MAX WATKINS

I WOULD like to introduce you to a good mate of mine. He's not a big bloke, he's a bit stout, his hair is grey and his manner is mild and steady. But don't let appearances deceive you, he is as tough as a drover's dog.

Of course I am talking about my four-legged friend Storm the donkey. It has been my good luck to know this fellow for the last 13 years or so.

Storm was originally one of Tim Daniel's donkeys from Herberton, North Queensland. He was born in a storm in December 2001, hence his name but not his nature.

We were both novices when we set out on our first adventure, the BNT in 2005. It was a steep learning curve for us both!

Having recently come from a long-term relationship breakup I had a bit of a temper. When I got cranky with Storm because I thought he wasn't doing what he should, he would fold back his ears, roll his eyes and plant all four feet firmly. He would indicate in no uncertain terms: "Get away from me you crazy man!"

There was nothing I could do, yelling and screaming made it worse. I would have to run out a rope to the nearest tree and boil the billy. After a cuppa and we had both settled down things would generally proceed in a better fashion. It was like an anger management course administered by a donkey.

We have had many funny experiences over the years. I remember an old bushie giving a rare complement: "Gee you have got him well in hand". Me feeling a quiet glow of pride. Next minute some spooking cattle set Storm off and we both watched as he bolted and bucked his way across the paddock with gear flying off hell west and crooked.

On another trip when we were up north in the headwaters of the Palmer River it was very hot. I was cooling off having a swim. All of a sudden there was this god-almighty splash, Storm had just launched himself off the metre high bank into the deep water to join me in the dip!

Recently I was trying my luck romancing a younger woman around the



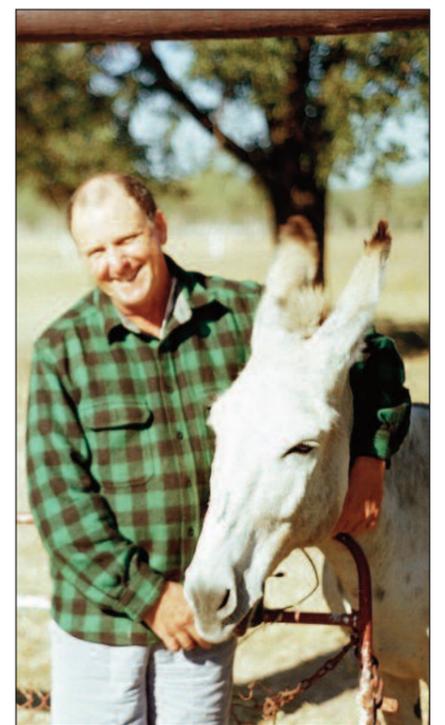
camp fire. Things were proceeding nicely when she asked: "Can you ride this donkey?" "Sure," I said and hopped on him. "He's pretty quiet," as Storm stood still. "I will ride him," she says. "Can you ride?" "Yes, yes."

I boosted her up and next minute Storm did his impression of a rodeo buck jumper! Splat, we picked her up, dusted her off and made sure she was alright.

Then me and the other guy got the giggles at the incongruous sight of a buck-jumping donkey and a starfish-style landing! Needless to say that was the end of any chance I had with that sheila.

On a more serious note, the other day I added up the kilometers that Storm has carried my gear for me, it is well in excess of 13 000km! By the time this article goes to print he will have completed his second end-to-end lap of the BNT.

A bloke relies heavily on his mates in the bush. Storm old friend you are awesome, a legend.



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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.

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

Phone 0427 559 575 for advertising rates.

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The most feared warriors of the high plains

THEY called themselves *Nermernub*, which in their Shoshone dialect meant “Our people”. They were only a scattered few thousand, pushed up into the infertile recesses of the Rocky Mountains and despised by the stronger and more sophisticated tribes to the east who called them *Komahs*, meaning “enemy”. This was heard by the Spanish as *Komantsia* and then Anglicised to Comanche.

They had no social or political structure beyond the blood-related hunting band and no agriculture, subsisting on roots, nuts and small game. Indeed, they were not far removed from the paleolithic hunter-gatherers who crossed the Bering Strait from Asia during the last Ice Age.

Some time in the late 17th Century, however, herds of wild mustang horses from escaped Iberian and Arab stock of the Spanish Conquistadores reached the *Nermernub* and changed this insignificant people into the most feared cavalry since Genghis Khan and his mounted bowmen swept out of Mongolia to terrorise Europe only a few hundred years before.

The *Nermernub* proved skillful horse riders and adept breeders, building large herds which allowed them to occupy the adjacent, seemingly limitless high plains to hunt the buffalo which grazed there in the millions.

This new-found abundant food supply and transport equipped the *Nermernub* to dominate a huge territory, holding at bay the Spanish, French, English and American empires for nearly 200 years.

The ability to amass wealth in horseflesh introduced the concept of property into the innocent social mores of the *Nermernub* and abundant meat gave the men new leisure. The younger men had to compete at something to improve their status so they could have wives and children. For this they chose warfare.



The native American tribes had always warred upon each other, sometimes ritually, often brutally. This is no innocents in the Garden of Eden story – captives were routinely tortured, bodies mutilated, women raped and children carried off to be slaves. Isolated settlements of white pioneers became increasingly the target.

The North American prairies span from Canada to Mexico in a featureless grassland some 4,000 miles by 1,000. The mustangs were hardy, tough, small and wiry like the *Nermernub* themselves, could live on grass alone and cover great distances without knocking up.

Raiding parties would ride 1,000 miles to attack defenceless homesteaders and then vanish into the vast oceanic landscape which intimidated Europeans. They were not fighting for territory, their object was plunder – horses, hostages to be ransomed, metal for arrowheads and anything of value.

The new-found wealth encouraged trading and a large population of Mestizo outlaws, known as Comancheros, grew to deal with the captured goods.

Warriors used little battlefield tactics, preferring single combat and attacking by stealth at night, especially during summer full moons which became known as Comanche moons. A Comanche warrior could gallop to within a few feet of his enemy, sometimes “counting coup” or touching him. He could hang off the side of his horse, using it as a shield, and loose 20 arrows accurately in under a minute.

They could literally ride rings around the US army, which fought on foot, using Napoleonic infantry tactics with single-shot muzzle-loading rifles and swords. Their only success lay in using Tonkawa scouts to locate Comanche encampments and slaughter the women, old men and children, which enraged their foe even more.

It was not until the Texas Rangers modified Samuel Colt’s revolving pistol to create the famed six-shooter in the 1860s that Europeans could match Indians for sheer fire power.

The Comanches harried the Spanish army but in the waning years of her empire Spain could do little in response. They drove their bitter enemies the Apaches off the plains, prevented the northern development of Mexico, kept the French and English off the prairie and held up western American expansion. It took the tough, practical and independent Texans to break through.

After the American Civil War, the federal government turned its attention to solving the “Indian problem” while disease and the decline of the buffalo herd were already taking their toll. Encouraged by General William Tecumseh Sherman, the army was issued with Winchester repeating rifles and used Texan tactics to doggedly pursue raiders while shooters brought the buffalo to near extinction for their hides. The *Nermernub*’s most isolated homeland, the mesas of the remote Llano Estacado, were finally penetrated.

In the mid-19th Century, rangeland indigenous tribes the world over were being overwhelmed by new immigrants under population pressure: in Central Asia, in sub-Saharan Africa, in Argentina and Australia, and replaced by cattle and sheep-herders.

Then followed the same litany of treaty and reservation betrayal experienced by the Sioux and Cheyenne, whose plight became the signature image of the Amerindian tragedy, with Sioux chief Sitting Bull joining Buffalo Bill’s travelling circus.

But without tribal structure and savvy in politics, the *Nermernub* just faded away. They were not reservation Indians – without his horses, buffalo and the prairie, there was no Comanche.

ROGER FRYER