



"Goo-ee!"

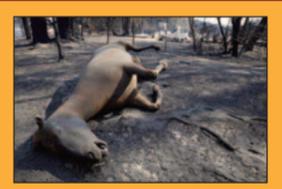
BNT

TRACKS



NEWSLETTER OF THE
Bicentennial
NATIONAL TRAIL

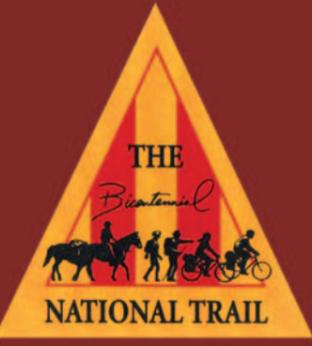
INSIDE:



Ravages of
bushfire



The end of
paper maps?



March 2020

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From the Chair and the Board

I WOULD like to start this message by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land through which the National Trail traverses. I would also like to honour Aboriginal people's connection to the land and recognise their importance to the future of the Trail.

I want to thank my fellow Board members for their confidence and support in electing me as Chair of this inspirational volunteer organisation. Particularly, I acknowledge outgoing Chairperson, Nick Jacomas, for his outstanding contribution and commitment as an exceptional chairman over the past ten years.

Much thanks also goes to Sue Cumming, the outgoing Treasurer, for her dedication and long contribution. Sue is one of those people who is always keen to help out and willing to roll up her sleeves and do whatever is needed.

Thanks also to Barry Lewis as outgoing Deputy Chairman for his significant contribution. Welcome to my fellow new Board members.

Importantly, I also want to acknowledge the invaluable contribution of the forty-two section coordinators and all the other volunteers who are the backbone of the organisation and without whom the Trail would not function.



As a new Board we are conscious that the National Trail is much more than a marked route stretching the length of the eastern spine of the Country. Rather, it is a complex web of interactions between people from many walks of life, bound together by a love of the outdoors, and a belief in the value of our iconic Trail. We are determined that these relationships are protected and respected as we build on the momentum of the first thirty years of the Trail and plan for the future.

The new Board feels that it is time to develop a Strategic Plan to articulate and guide our way forward. This Plan will describe how the National Trail will operate in the future, create and grow awareness and support for the Trail, and will be used to underpin our fundraising activities.

We know that the Trail has huge potential for increased use by both Australian trekkers and international travellers. The remoteness of long sections of the Trail and the adventures it has to offer

through a wide variety of environments, along with Australia being a politically safe country, means we can offer a world class trekking experience.

The Board also feels it is time to consider how we continue to grow the relevance of our *BNT Tracks* Magazine and make it more easily available to our broad spectrum of members. To this end, we are considering how we can produce an electronic version of the magazine that can be easily distributed and more cost effective, while guaranteeing its accessibility to all members. We will be careful to ensure that the key purpose of the *BNT Tracks* Magazine is maintained. We believe its real value is in sharing stories of the Trail, strengthening the network of our trekkers, helping develop knowledge about the skills and preparation required to tackle the Trail and fuelling dreams.

We recognise that these past few months have been difficult in much of eastern Australia with on-going drought, occasional flooding and the extensive and severe bushfires. Our thoughts are with all of those who have been impacted by these events and we wish them the best as they regroup and rebuild. Our heartfelt thanks goes to the firefighters and everyone else who has helped in the emergency management efforts.

Please feel free to contact me with any ideas or suggestions for improving the management of the National Trail.

All the best,

NEIL WARD (0419 010 744)

Colours of the magazine

WE ARE sometimes asked why we use different colours in the headlines and other features in *BNT TRACKS*.

The original cover page was designed by APN designer at the *Coffs Harbour Advocate*, Tom Wainwright, as a freelance project for which we paid. Tom's brief was to use the colours of the Australian bush.

The blue colour is actually a blue-grey, Pantone 5493EC, the colour of blue gums, and is the same colour used for decor in Parliament House in Canberra in the House of Representatives chamber.

The red is the colour of earth from the Red Centre, and also of soil from volcanic eruptions along the Great Dividing Range,

including the BNT, such as the rich potato-growing soil of the Dorrigo Plateau, and around Ebor, NSW. Tom chose Pantone 181EC. It is also the colour of decor in the Senate chamber in Parliament House.

The gold is of course the wattle flowers, often used in Australian designs. He chose Pantone 143EC.

Using different colours like this is unusual, and we feel it gives the magazine a distinctive and attractive appearance. It is also useful to use contrasting colours for different features. We hope you like them.

News

Life Membership



Sharon Roberts

SHARON'S adventures with horses began in Kalgoorlie West Australia, where her family had a couple of horses housed in stables in the back yard. Every day after school, she would jump on a horse and head out into the bush for a few happy hours.

Skip forward about a decade and Sharon was in a corporate job in Melbourne, however, she realised that the city and its lifestyle didn't agree with her. Bravely, she made the life altering decision to leave the city life and head out on the relatively newly named Bicentennial National Trail to have a horseback adventure.

The adventure took her from Cooktown in Queensland to Healesville

in Victoria, starting in May 1989 and finishing March 1991, two years of her life which she has never regretted.

After her trek, Sharon volunteered precious time and energy to promoting the BNT, including producing a video, which is still being used on the BNT website. And it was a great honour for me to recommend Sharon for BNT Life Membership

Sharon still loves trekking and goes adventuring with a packhorse or on foot through sun, wind, rain and snow, whenever and wherever she can. She is presently in Tasmania walking the 3 capes.

NICK JACOMAS

New BNT Chairman

I HAVE owned and bred Australian Stockhorses for over 30 years and have worked in national park management in Victoria, Northern Territory and NSW.

Through my work in parks I realised the importance of involving Aboriginal people in land management, for both the health of Country and as a contribution to Australia's reconciliation with its first people. Consequently, for the last 20 years, I worked with Aboriginal people in south eastern Australia to help strengthen their voice and involvement in land and water management.

I have a deep interest and love for the Australian bush and my favourite thing is to go riding in areas where there are no fences. I became a member of BNT in the early 1990s because I saw the importance of the Trail in helping people experience the Australian landscape and connect with nature.

One of my major ambitions is to ride all of the BNT. In the meantime, I felt I want to contribute to ensuring the Trail continues to evolve and grow as an iconic trail, recognised nationally and internationally.

NEIL WARD

New BNT Board members



Tanya Bosch

I FIRST rode the trail in NSW supported in aid of the Children's Cancer Institute in memory of my son who died of cancer in 2015. I have done many smaller trips unsupported since, despite living in Sydney. I was a physio and am now a semi-retired cycling coach.



Rob McLaren

I FIRST rode the BNT from Killarney to Aratula with my father in 1988. I have travelled Section 6 close to my home in rural Queensland. I now hope to ride further sections with my daughter. I am excited to help build the Trail into a robust, world-class institution.



Kath Ryan

I AM a horse rider and registered nurse married with three married daughters and seven grandsons. I live in Seaforth in North Qld in the middle of sugar cane country. I am passionate about the BNT and with the Breakaway Horse Club have ridden the tracks in our region several times.

Snaffle bits



John and Tom Studholme with Bridie Campbell on the Corn Trail in Monga National Park.



Furthest trek

AUSTRALIAN explorer Geoff Wilson has cracked the record for the longest unsupported journey across the Antarctic, covering 5306 kilometres.

Dr Wilson, 49, skied into the Russia's Novolazarevskaya Station early on Saturday, January 4, 58 days after he set out, beating the previous record by 206 kilometres.

Setting out last November from Thor's Hammer, he took 23 days to reach the Pole of Inaccessibility, becoming the first Australian to do so unsupported.

The Pole is further away from Earth's oceans than any other place on the planet.

The explorer's wind kite dragged him at speeds of up to 50km/h. On his most successful day, he covered 208 kilometres, while on a windless day he was forced to drag his sled, covering just two kilometres.



The Major returns

OUR favourite bushie Les Hiddins has launched a user-pays website featuring his comprehensive digital database of bush tucker: www.bushtucker.com.au.

It allows people to search a location and season to discover the types of flora and fauna they can expect to find in that region.

Despite his now corpulent appearance he still has his signature weird hat, actually an Akubra Sombrero, popular in the NT.

Canberra's own Camino

CANBERRA man John Studholme walked five days and four nights from outside the capital to Nelligen to lobby for a capital-to-the-coast hiking trail.

Mr Studholme reached the already established Corn Trail, a 16-kilometre hike just outside of Braidwood which would be part of Mr Studholme's dream trail. He was joined by environmentalists concerned that section of the future trail would be jeopardised by NSW state logging nearby.

When he returned to Canberra he started his formal pitch for the Shoalhaven and Queanbeyan-Palerang councils.

"I've done things like the Camino in Spain. It's the same idea of a grand journey," he said.

Mr Studholme said the whole trail closely followed a cultural and trade route used by Indigenous people across the region, later used by Europeans to haul wood and food from the coast.

He said that, just like the Camino, this trail would see hikers passing through small villages, clearing their heads and meeting new people on the way.

"It's a dream," he said. "It could take 20 years. It's about building legacies for future generations."

Plan your own trekking route

THE Eastern Ranges Trail links existing trails with side adventures to create a 6,000 kilometre trekking corridor from the Grampians in Victoria to the tip of Cape York.

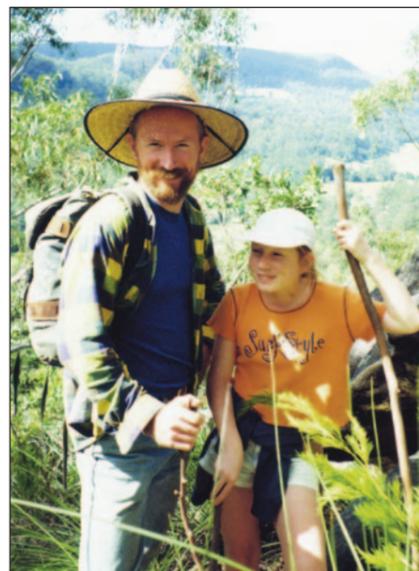
Along the Eastern Ranges Trail you can take a break from what could be a long and arduous challenge to go kayaking, cross-country skiing, gliding, canyoning, caving or birdwatching, etc.

With an environment and community focus, the Eastern Ranges Trail provides opportunities to volunteer or contribute to community initiatives along the way.

Free to join, the Eastern Ranges Trail provides tools to create your own adventure, to explore ways of funding it and to find sponsorships to raise money for worthy causes.

www.easternrangestrail.org

Adventure, community, culture, conservation



Creepiest hiking trail

IN ATLANTA, Georgia, in the USA, is one of the strangest, most disturbing hiking trails in the world, the Doll's Head Trail. This 1.5-mile course is lined with creepy doll heads that seem to be following you with their gaze as you walk by.

Atlanta carpenter Joel Slaton originally used the junk he found on his regular hikes through Constitution Park to build artistic displays, but the trail gradually became a collaborative project of several regular hikers in the area.

Nowadays, it's considered public art built by the public, and anyone can contribute to it as long as they use junk found on Constitution Park grounds.

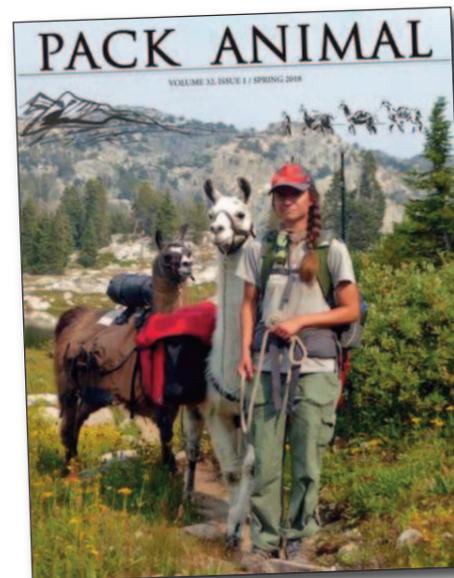
Yes, a pack animal magazine

PACK Animal is a quarterly, full-color print magazine that tells the stories of people exploring the great outdoors with llamas, goats, donkeys, yaks, horses and other animals.

The magazine also prints stories that matter to the hiker, the fly fisher, the conservationist, the hunter, the climber, the painter, the nature photographer, the mountain biker or the backcountry skier.

Every issue contains regular columns about navigation skills, camp recipes, public land advocacy, minimum impact camping, accessibility, conservation, and more.

One year (4 issues) digital subscription \$US10.00. Print subscription \$US33.00 outside continental US and Canada.



Pack Animal Magazine
P.O. Box 961
Golden, CO 80402 USA
www.packanimalmagazine.com

E-bikes okay on US trails

ELECTRIC bicycles in the US are now permitted to ride in all national parks on any trails open to pedal bicycles.

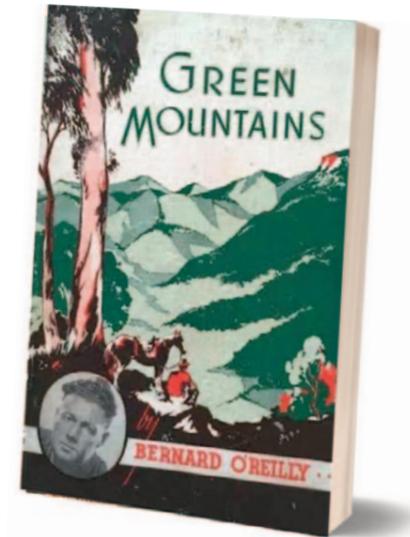
The new decree came in the form of an order signed under the Trump Administration by Interior Secretary David Bernhardt.

It reclassifies electric bicycles as "non-motorized bicycles" on national park land, removing them from the category of dirt bikes, motorcycles and other gas-powered vehicles.

The move comes at a time when electric bicycles are becoming increasingly affordable and thus more popular.



Book review



ON 19 February 1937, a Stinson Model A airliner carrying five passengers and two crew disappeared on a regular flight from Brisbane to Sydney. After a week searching, authorities concluded it had crashed into the sea.

However Bernard O'Reilly, a pioneer farmer of the Lamington Plateau in the Border Ranges, realised the aircraft had failed to land as normal at Lismore airport, further south in NSW. A violent storm the night the plane disappeared, and reports from neighbours they had heard it flying too low, led him to believe it had crashed on the plateau.

After searching for several days through near-impenetrable rainforest, he located the wreckage and two survivors, one with a gangrenous broken leg. A third critically injured survivor had gone for help but was later found dead.

O'Reilly bushbashed to nearby Lamington town and raised a rescue party which transported the injured men to safety using packhorses.

Green Mountains is O'Reilly's own story of that drama, as well as some history of his family's pioneering of the Lamington Plateau and development of the well-known O'Reilly's Guesthouse. Binna Burra Lodge is also located on the plateau, burnt down in the recent bushfires.

There are many reprints by different publishers, some bound with *Cullenbong* – the story of the O'Reilly family in the Blue Mountains.

Green Mountains
Bernard O'Reilly (1990)
Angus and Robertson \$14.99



Trail supporter Neil Booth's house at Georges Creek succumbs to the flames.

Editor's note: This was the situation in early January. As we go to press, much of the Trail is experiencing flood rain. A full catalogue of Trail damage will not be possible until next issue.

Bushfire damage along the Trail

IN THE wake of the fires, the Board reached out to the Trail's trusted network of Section Coordinators to learn of the state of the Trail. From south to north, their responses were:

John Stubbs (Guidebook 12)

At this stage no one should be on the Trail in this Section.

I've attached a map from DEWLP

Swifts Creek Incident Control Centre 23/01/2020. This map covers pretty well most of the country which the BNT passes through in the guidebook. Section north to Tom Groggin has burnt extensively. It shows the extent of burnt country which the Trail passes through. I have marked the Trail with a blue texta.

The section Omeo south has not been impacted too much – fire burnt areas showing along the Trail are mainly control lines which have been put in to try and stop the fires spreading, but there is still an active

fire burning at the bottom centre of the map and which extends west towards Dargo. The hut at Dogs Grave is safe.

From Bindi Station onwards there has been severe fire impact. Active fronts are still present on these fires and there are massive efforts being put in to build more containment lines. This whole road section is closed. I don't know the fate of Davies Plain Hut. I think that Dogman's Hut on the Murray may be safe.

State Forest and National Park is closed along the length of this section of Trail. It's anyone's guess when these will be opened. Not sure what the priorities will be in removing burnt trees from edges of tracks in remote areas.

Peter Cochran (Guidebook 11)

Peter sent a quick text from his phone letting us know that 'things are a bit fragile here at the moment'.

Jenny Costin (Guidebook 10)

We have had rain on Monday in the ACT but our local rangers in Namadgi National Park, where the trail leaves the suburban ACT, are doing enormous fire breaks on the southern and western borders. Learnt after 2003, ACT have a drone which seeks infrared on the ground.

The trail through suburban ACT drought stricken but not burnt by fires. Although the southerly border area of Namadgi National Park, where trail passes, has been closed for weeks but not burnt with the fire threat of huge Adaminaby fire just a few kilometers from the Yaouk Valley and threat to ACT. Going past Caloola farm into the Namadgi National Park and Naas Valley definitely not recommended with fire risk and fuel load. Naas just puddles.

Namadgi National Park Visitors Centre should be contacted for current conditions.

Mal & Denise Keeley (Guidebook 9)

No photos as most of the state is burnt out and only sad to see. There is no water, no feed and many parts are burnt out. BNT closed through this section until conditions improve. Fires have burnt out much of this section. No grass or water at any of the normal locations due to the prolonged drought. Tracks are still closed due to fire damage and the threat of falling trees that are still smouldering. BNT remains closed in National Parks and State Forests in this area as of 14th Jan 2020.

Will remain this way until further notice.

John Dwyer (Guidebook 6)

The Trail in Guidebook 6 has suffered the most extreme drought possible with no effective rain for ten months, since March 2019. However, just this last couple of weeks in January, we have seen quite good storm rain, not really summer rain, but tending to be patchy. We hope this a new beginning, whereas last year we had no summer rain and just the one rainy period in March. The fires were a nuisance too, especially on (New) Maps 5, 11 and 14.

There is one small section in Map 5 (1.8-2.7 km N-S) on the Dividing Range escarpment that will require some chainsaw clearing of fallen trees.

For Guidebook 6, autumn is always the best time for trekkers, and as of now, prospects are good.

Mike Teuwsen (Guidebook 3)

All fine here!

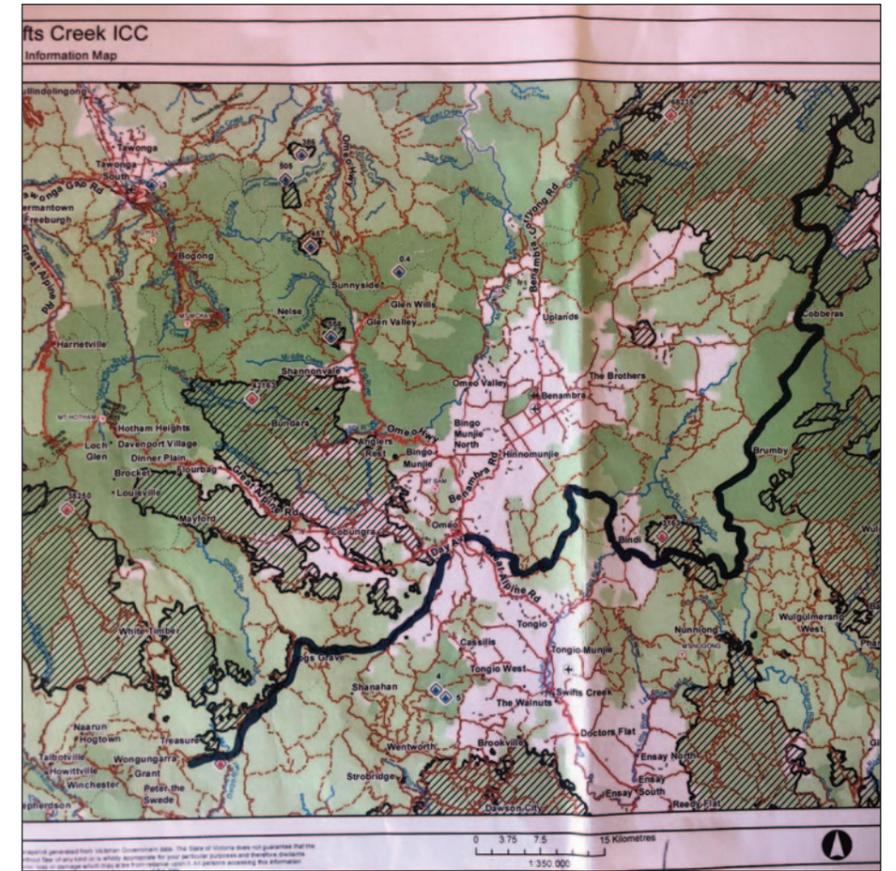
Tim Daniels (Guidebook 1)

Conditions up north are about to normalise albeit very late judging by the BOM forecast. The Monsoonal trough is predicted to form over lower Cape York tomorrow and remain for some days so the North should enjoy some "wet season" conditions for the next few days at least.

Herberton and surrounds have been receiving build up thunderstorms over the past three weeks, in fact since Boxing Day. I hope that conditions further South do not deteriorate into flooding as that will add further misery.

Our thoughts are with all the use Section Coordinators who have been affected by these huge conflagrations.

ROB MCLAREN - Trail Coordinator



A MAP from DEWLP Swifts Creek Incident Control Centre 23/01/2020. This map covers pretty well most of the country which the BNT passes through in Guidebook 12. Section north to Tom Groggin has burnt extensively. It shows the extent of burnt country which the Trail passes through. I have marked the Trail with a blue texta. JOHN STUBBS

View recent satellite imagery

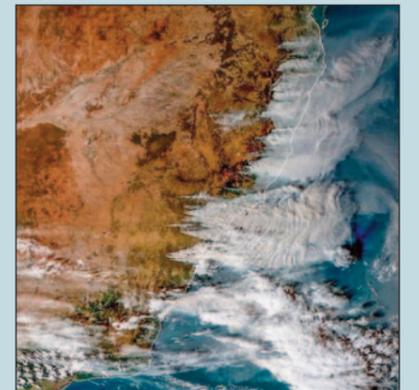
RECENT satellite imagery is available with images updated every few days, far more frequently than Google Maps.

Unlike Google's images, which always show clear skies, these are not handpicked images. And you can go back over 90 days to see changes in your local area. Images are taken across the Australian continent from the same angle every five days.

Images are often updated more frequently in overlapping images from different angles.

The images are not at the same high resolution at those provided by Google but they include multi-spectral data so you can see vegetation, bodies of water and urban land cover.

The information can be used to see the effects of floods and droughts as well as tracking changes to vegetation, forests and coastlines and seeing the effects of fires and changes in climate.



Go to nationalmap.gov.au. On the left side of the screen choose Add Data.

From the list of items, select Satellite Imagery and add both Sentinel-2 A and Sentinel-2 B.

Once the map loads, zoom and scroll to find the location you are interested in.

Use the slider at the bottom of the screen to scroll across the timeline.



Crossing the Condamine River with little water in Section 6 in September 2019. INSET: The same crossing in April 2019.

Dodging fires and drought

IN APRIL 2019 we completed Section 6 of the Bicentennial National Trail. Then we flew to Cooktown and rode our bikes all the way to the end of Section 5 by July.

After a short break, in September 2019 we recommenced our trip on the BNT. To rejoin the Trail we repeated some of Section 6 and boy, what a difference five months of drought makes.

The Carrai bushfire seems to have started with the storm we sat through when we were at Middle Hut in Section 8 in the Kunderang. We were only aware of the fire as we left the valley and it is shocking to see that most of this area is now marked on the NSW Fire Maps as being burnt.

October 31, 2019 saw us traversing the Glen Alice Trail in Section 9 of the BNT. The National Parks and Wildlife officer had informed us that we could get through and that there was a fire in the next valley but it should not impact on our trip.

When we emerged at Grassy Mountain Hut we stopped to take in the view but were surprised by all the smoke and then the appearance of a waterbombing helicopter over our heads. Rather than stay at the Grassy Hut, we continued down into the Capertee Valley to ensure our safety.

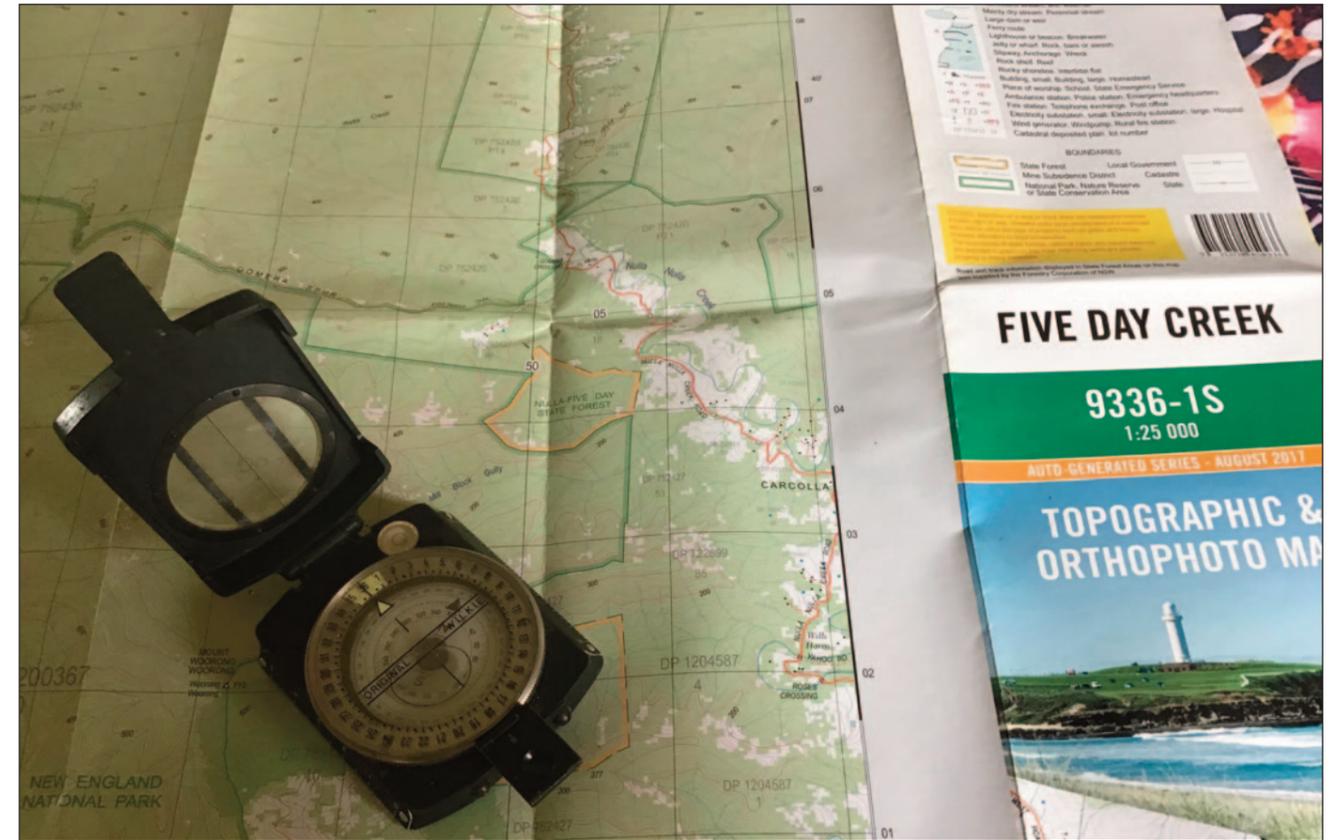


The Carrai fire on 18 October, 2019 from a distance.

We captured some of our most beautiful shots along the Glen Alice Trail further north which was not impacted by fire at that stage.



Capertee Valley Section 9 from the very smokey Grassy Mountain Lookout in October 2019.



Is this the end of paper maps?

SOME government departments which have provided paper maps for sale have given up in the face of declining sales but will provide downloaded high resolution PDFs which you can print yourself.

While there are many advantages to digital maps, they are only useable if your viewing devices are working or in an area of mobile coverage.

The large sheets of paper maps also give a much better idea of scale and distance not shown on a phone or tablet.

While you can print your own maps off the PDFs, there is the problem of paper quality, but this can be rectified by printing on greater weight silk stock and by laminating.

Geoscience Australia, which produces larger scale maps for the whole country, announced on October 4 last year it would stop selling paper maps altogether from December 13.

Spatial Services, the government agency responsible for mapping in NSW, said in September last year it would cut half of its range, which then numbered more than 1000 smaller-scale, more detailed maps than those produced at a federal level. This

includes the standard 1:25,000 bushwalking maps. It has also stopped reprinting the remaining maps that were not cut a year ago.

The Queensland Government no longer sells printed copies of topographic maps. The maps you download from QTopo contain the same information as traditional printed maps, and they say the quality of the printed image will depend on the printer type, settings and paper.

Mapping services in Victoria have not declined in the same way they have at a federal or NSW level.

“There are currently no plans to change map distribution arrangements,” said a spokesman for the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, which has about 300 maps available both online and in hardcopy.

In a world of Google Maps and GPS navigation devices, people simply are not buying them, according to Geoscience Australia chief scientist Dr Steven Hill.

“The demand for printed hardcopy maps has decreased quite rapidly,” he said.

“The costs of storing and maintaining those maps, and updating them in a printed form, is becoming increasingly large, so the

value proposition is not there in the way that it used to be.”

Dr Hill acknowledged the decision to cease the printing of its maps disappointed some, but said the opportunities of digital mapping technologies were exciting.

Print your own maps

BNT TRACKS contacted two companies to get quotes for printing maps. Both sent back quotes for printing on Silk high quality paper 170gsm.

Kwik Kopy Printing Centre Newcastle, 38 King Street, Newcastle NSW 2300 phone (02) 4926 5188 print@newcastle.kwikkopy.com.au 580x680mm map – \$22.00.

Cartodraft Australia Pty Ltd, enquiries@cartodraft.com.au, 2 Barina Downs Road Bella Vista, NSW 2153, (02) 8850 1044, Mobile 0411 345 989 – \$20.00.

Add on estimated postage cost of \$3.00.



From east to west

When the BNT is closed due to drought, follow your dreams

By STEF GEBBIE

AT THE beginning of 2018, various events in my life fell into place to make the next year the perfect time to complete the Bicentennial National Trail.

Growing up with horses and always having a love of expeditions, the BNT had been on my radar since I was a child galloping bareback around the paddocks on my sweet old grey pony and dreaming of adventure.

2019 was going to be the year. All set with a trusty steed, my 17 year old Arab Mr Richard, and both the funds and the time, I

was ready. I started undertaking some vague planning, then headed off overseas to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, where it was fully inspiring to see just what horses are capable of.

Coming home in September, I quickly realised the extent of the drought and the extreme unlikelihood of the BNT being open to horses by the coming April.

For a few weeks I shelved my epic horseback plans, until one night I had a dream that Mr Richard and I were riding across the Nullarbor. It seemed such a perfectly outrageous idea that I decided to give it a go.

I think a lot of people would be appalled at the amount of planning I put into this trip, or rather, at the lack thereof. I did a lot of googling of saddles and hoof boots and read everything put out by the Long Rider's

Clifftop views of the Great Australian Bight.

Guild, and spent a lot of time looking at satellite images of the continent to work out a route that would take us through as much grassland as possible...

And then Mr Richard and I set out in April 2019. We started at the mouth of the Snowy River and were headed to Margaret River, for no reason other than it sounded poetic and lined up quite nicely on a map.

We picked up Micky, aka Tickle, in Omeo, after I realised that an eight month trip is a different undertaking to a three week trip. We needed the flexibility of a packhorse, and found a dream horse in Tickle, a shy three year old stockhorse bred and trained by the Connley family and hailing from impressive mountain heritage.

Finding a good horse and then an excellent packsaddle in a tiny town sounds like an impossible feat, and would have been

anywhere other than Omeo. I am forever indebted to the community there who took such good care of us.

Heading off from Omeo, we rode up to the Murray, then followed the river west through Victoria and the Riverlands of SA, leaving it at Morgan and striking out towards Port Augusta then picking up the Eyre Highway towards Ceduna.

The kindness and hospitality of the people I met along the way stills leaves me speechless and humbled. From the countless numbers of farmers in beat-up white utes full of fencing material and kelpies to the generous strangers who offered us a place to stay, we met only kind souls curious as to why I would take to the road with my horses for no real reason except that we all have to do something.

I started a blog, and it was inspiring and humbling to watch such a supportive community grow around me. The most impressive moment was when we were somewhere in South Australia, and I received a message from Alex to offer herself and her vehicle as support across the Nullarbor.

We met up just before Ceduna, Alex's float full of hay and 800 litres of water. And so started the easiest part of the trip, the approx. 1,200km from Ceduna to Esperance. With Alex's gift of time and support, it meant we could cover more ground and not have to worry about finding feed or water. The whole of SA and then the Nullarbor, especially the epic sea cliffs of the Great Australian Bight, were complete highlights of the trip.

After waiting out quarantine, we were back on the road, Alex heading back to Canberra, and me and my boys facing the final 700km to Margaret River as the heat increased and the wheat harvest started.

This last five weeks were the hardest of the trip. With most days reaching the mid-30s or higher, I was up at 2.30am every morning, trying to get as many kilometres done before the heat became unbearable and the flies drove me insane.

The feed dried up, and the boys were living off wheat. And then, only 310km from the coast, Mr Richard suddenly got so sick I thought he was going to die. Whatever the strange mystery malady was, he quickly picked up but I realised he would not be able to finish the journey, as we had to make the last truck east before the New Year.

So I made the decision to arrange for him to be floated to Margaret River. I cannot thank the people who helped me out



Arriving on the West Coast at Margaret River.



Riding past the Wirrulla General Store, SA.

over this time enough, from Carol who drove him the hours to the coast, to Kathy and Ross who hosted me for a week as I sorted logistics, to Jodie who gave me and my boys a home at Margaret River when we finished.

That final 10 days was a bit of a challenge, just me and Tickle in the heat, but we made it to Margaret River and a recovered Mr Richard, 4,500km and 235 days since setting out.

I can't compare crossing the country east to west to crossing it north to south, but what I can say is that if you are thinking of

long distance horse travel, there is nothing to stop you from simply riding out across the country, following back roads and searching out feed.

There are challenges and logistics involved, the most significant being the time of year, but there is nothing more liberating than simply riding, day after day, the only thing of significance to think about being the welfare of your horses.

The gift they give you, that huge gift of their trust, is something so large and humbling it has to be experienced to be understood.

Somewhere, over the rainbow ...

Healesville to Cooktown on mountain bikes

By ARTHUR AEBISCHER

WHEN Lyn suggested we should do the Bicentennial National Trail I didn't take long to make up my mind. We had many long pack hikes and some extended mountain bike trips behind us and life on the at times remote trail would not be anything new for us.

Going through the guide books we soon realised that the Victorian Alps would be physically the most demanding part. A three week ride through the Snowy Mountains two years ago gave us some indications on what to expect.

Due to several factors we decided to start in Healesville in early February. Living in North Queensland we would be heading home and get the hardest part done first.

However the main reason was to move north as the weather gets cooler and to be in Queensland when the south-easterly wind sets in.

With six weeks to go and flights to Melbourne booked, Lyn's knee became sore and was diagnosed as a torn meniscus.

However the knee soon started improving and we got back to finalising our preparations for our planed departure.

On the 4th of February we rode out from Donnelly Weir, elated that we finally were on our way. We made our way up Mount Monda, enjoying the great mountain ash forest and by mid-afternoon made our first camp by the Monda Yards.

Mount Terrible wasn't only the introduction to the long steep climbs. it also taught us that the weather can change very fast as a rain storm moved in just before we got to the top. As the weather turned from pleasant to wet and cold we were glad to make it to the hut.

Brayshaws Hut, Namadgi National Park ACT. FRONT PAGE: Lyn at a creek crossing on the Bump Track, on the way to the coast from Mount Molloy.

We soon got into a routine, getting away early in the morning and setting up camp by mid-afternoon if possible or even earlier if we had had a hard day.

This gave us enough time to rest and go on the next day and we always managed to enjoy the beauty of the countryside and keep our sense of humour, even if it required the two of us to push one bike at a time to get up the many steep and long climbs, or walk the bike down the other side since it's too steep and dangerous to ride.

We had to collect a food drop at Licola and our intention was to ride up Tamboritha Road and rejoin the trail at Howitt Plain. But after the rigours of Mt Terrible and Lazzarini Spur we decided on a

somewhat easier route to Dargo. We headed east at the end of Tamboritha Road, following Moroka Road to Horseyard Flat then via the spectacular Pinnacles Lookout down the very steep Billy Goat Bluff track to the Wonnagatta River.

From there it was an easy ride to Dargo and back on the Trail. After crossing a few more mountains we got to Charlie Creek camp and I looked forward to the following day's ride to Tom Groggin via Davies Plain, with its 1200m descent a befitting end to the Trail in Victoria.

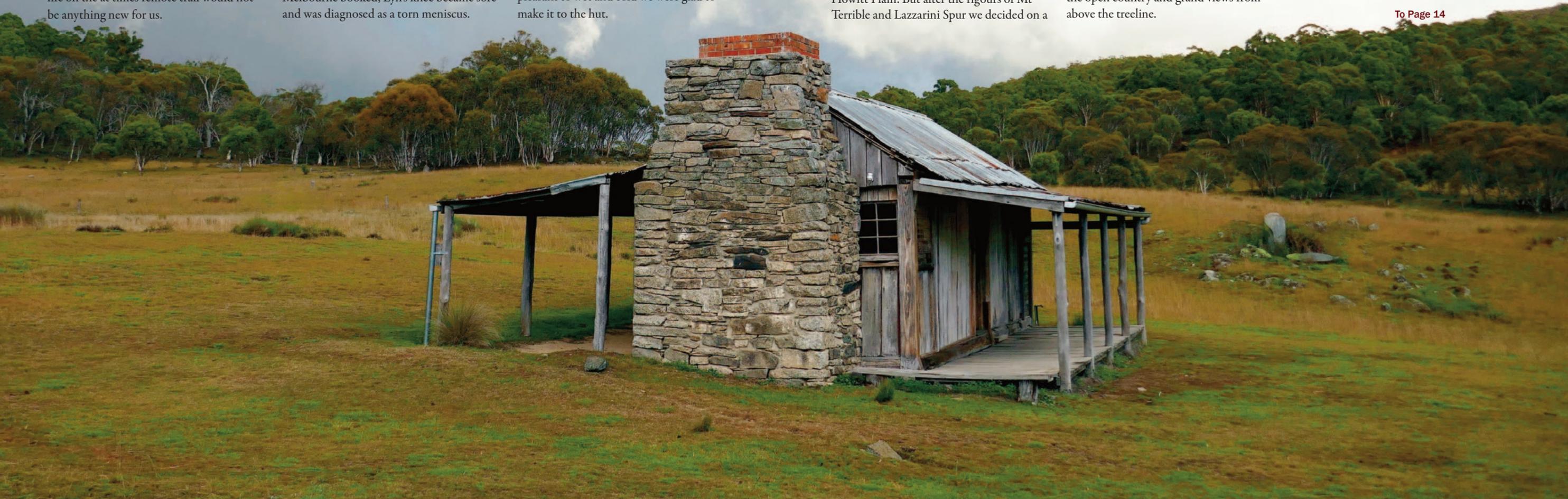
In the Snowy Mountains the terrain became somewhat easier. We appreciated the open country and grand views from above the treeline.

Since leaving Healesville our focus was on getting to Canberra. Crossing the ACT border, with Lyn's knee not only having stood up to the punishment but slowly getting better and no disasters along the way, we became more confident that we could make it to Cooktown.

One of Lyn's daughters drove from Newcastle to meet us as we rode in to Canberra on the 7th of March. We enjoyed two days of rest.

The open farming country, with several rural towns along the way to Jenolan, was a sharp contrast from the isolated mountainous areas we travelled before.

To Page 14





At the start of the BNT at Donnelly Weir in Healesville.

From Page 13

It made for a few days of enjoyable and easy riding, but we were glad to get back on some quiet firetrails and forest tracks as we got to the Blue Mountains.

After a visit to the caves we left Jenolan in the rain. The damp weather continued for the next day. With limited accommodation options in Wallerawang we rode on to Lithgow to dry out our gear and give the weather time to improve before tackling the next section of the Trail. We were warned that the track through the Gardens of Stone National Park and the Glen Alice trail were badly eroded in places but we didn't want to bypass this section. Admittedly rough and steep in places, we found the section from Wallerawang to Widden to offer some of the best scenery on the BNT and some exceptional riding.

The drought became very evident riding down the Widden Valley. The lower country was extremely dry till we got back in to the higher country after Nundle.

Water was no longer an issue along the Kunderang Brook trail. After crossing the brook 59 times and the Macleay River another five times on the way to Georges Junction, we were glad to get away from the river and we followed the Kempsey Road out of the valley. Point Lookout with its grand views was a worthwhile side trip along the way to Ebor.

With everyone advising us against it we decided to stay away from the Guy Fawkes

River, especially since our bikes were heavy with 10 days of food when leaving Ebor. After crossing the Blicks River we turned in to Hardens Road and then followed Chaelundi Road to Dalmorton. From there the Old Glen Innes Road took us to Newton Boyd and back on the Trail.

The next challenging section was north of Boundary Falls, a steep descent and a 2km section along Dry Creek, following the creek bed or cattle pads till eventually picking up Upper Rocky River Road as a little-used farm track. Getting to Billirimba Road, we left the Trail again and turned in to Rocky River Road to go to Drake where we had a food drop to pick up. This way we avoided going to Tenterfield to get supplies and also avoided potential issues with private landowners on the way to Sandy Hill.

The ride along the Timbarra River and Long Gully Road to Drake is great for bikes and the country with some delightful scenery along the way. The answer to the drizzly weather in Drake was a night in a comfortable bed at the Lunatic Hotel.

The Bruxner Highway had wide enough shoulders to ride on, but it was nice to turn off in to a quiet gravel goad at Sandy Hill.

From here on it was mostly along quiet gravel and sealed roads in a rural setting. Crossing the rabbit fence on the Queensland border made us feel closer to home, yet we still had just over half way to

go. After the recent rain the countryside was green and lovely to travel through. However dams and creeks were still dry from the long drought.

With supplies more readily available and the Trail mostly following rural roads the riding became easier than on the forestry and firetrails in Victoria and NSW.

After Killarney the Condamine Gorge and the mountain backdrop of the Main Range National Park were the outstanding features on the way to Toowoomba, where we spent a few days with my daughter and got the bikes back into shape. Then it was more pleasant riding through green cattle paddocks to Blackbutt. Pushing our bikes out of Emu Creek, we met the first and only horse rider on the entire trail, Emma, who was riding from Blackbutt to Withcott.

Having lived in Bundaberg years ago, we got in to more familiar country. With few climbs and generally good roads the ride to Biggenden was very pleasant. We forded the Burnett River by the no-longer-existing causeway. The tracks through the Goodnight Scrub National park were enjoyable and managed to get to Mt Perry without getting lost.

In Monto we met Teddy, a young German who was loosely following the BNT, walking from Melbourne to the tip of Cape York. He regularly covered 40-50km per day and we were to meet him again in Mareeba the day after we got to Cooktown.

We arranged to meet up with Lyn's son in Biloela on his days off work. This gave us a few extra days to explore natural wonders of Cania Gorge and Kroombit National Park with a great downhill ride on the Razorback trail at the end.

From here on we were mostly on good gravel roads and this made for fast progress. After Maryborough it was the busy Bruce Highway and on the other extreme following fence lines across the Waverley Plains. We called in at St Laurence for Lyn to have a large skin tear on her leg looked at, that was inflicted by the pedal when her bike got stuck in a sandy patch the day before. We were directed to the home of the honorary ambulance officer, who after attending to the wound told us that he was one of the horse riders of the National Mail Relay Ride in 1978.

We crossed tracks with Marianne and Fraser near Thornton in south-east Queensland. They were then on their way from Cooktown to Blackbutt and we met up again at the Eungella Dam campground for a lovely evening together, talking about our experiences on the Trail.

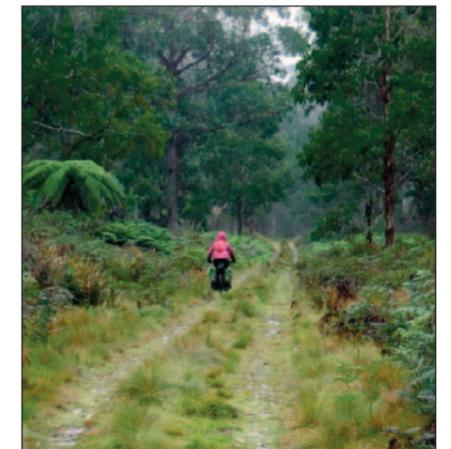
We hoped the Burdekin Dam crossing would be open by the time we got to Collinsville. It wasn't to be and we had a detour to cross the river on the Bruce Highway in Home Hill and rejoin the Trail at the small historical gold mining town of Ravenswood. After crossing the Flinders Highway the Trail crosses the Dotswood military training area and large cattle stations. North of Camel Creek station we met the riders from the Berowra BNT Challenge, a group on mountain bikes riding Guidebook 2 raising money for the Cancer Foundation. Completing Cooktown to Gunnawarra last year, their aim is to complete one section a year.

Past Nebo we found many of the roads freshly graded, with few climbs and the wind mostly behind us. However riding all day without getting off the bike to push created other discomforts and unlike Lyn, I was glad to get back into the hills and rougher tracks after Mount Garnet. It was much slower going, but we enjoyed the scenery through Stannary Hills, Mutchilba, Kingsborough and Font Hills to Mount Molloy.

We were looking forward to two more days in the wilderness along CREB Track but the Daintree River crossing was still waist deep, and with the possibility of crocodiles a place to stay away from till the river is very low. Downstream the ferry got us safely across and the tourist traffic was mostly in the opposite direction in the afternoon. After a night in a noisy tourist



Governors Chair Lookout, Main Range National Park. A short distance from the BNT.



ABOVE: Kevin, the Honorary Ambulance Officer in St Lawrence who was one of the horseriders in the National Mail Relay ride in 1978. RIGHT: Celebration Road, Enfield State Forrest.



The riders from the Berowra BNT Challenge, on their charity ride from Gunnawarra to Collinsville.

park we found us a very secluded and quiet spot to camp for the next night. Visiting friends and a drink at the Lions Den Hotel along the way we rode in Cooktown in the afternoon.

The next morning, after spending 20 wonderful weeks on the trail, we packed our bikes for the last time, rode up to Grassy

Hill lighthouse for a great view of Cooktown before riding to the official end of the BNT.

We both feel privileged for having being able to experience this great trail. Our thanks go to everyone who is involved in keeping the BNT alive, and the wonderful people who helped us along the way.



Custard, Emma, Burlesque, Thor, Michelle and Ruby setting off from Emu Creek.

A short term relationship

By EMMA SMITH

I LOVE following the BNT pack riders individual Facebook pages and would love to have my own epic adventure one day too. However, with three school aged children that time is just not now. A long term BNT relationship is out, but a casual fling could be just the thing, right?

My friend Michelle and I both happened to have holidays in April and felt like an adventure. We each had other commitments to work around but decided to make it happen anyway. Michelle had recently bought a new pack saddle and wanted to put it to good use. I had never done a pack ride before but I was really keen to give it a go. I knew that I'd probably be completely hooked once I gave it a try.

What could be better than combining three of my favourite things all at once: trail riding, camping in beautiful places and exploring somewhere new? I mean who wouldn't want to spend their holidays horse riding all day, sitting around a camp fire with a good friend at night, and spending time with our beloved equine pals? I

decided to invest in a pack saddle and learn the art too.

Phase 1: Pack horse training and adventure planning

SEVERAL months before our planned trip we started training the horses. I hadn't done much 'ponying' before. That was a learning curve in itself! We got ourselves tied up (with one horse on either side of a tree) many times. Custard, my led horse, was exceptionally good at setting a cracking pace and getting ahead of my ridden horse. He frequently cut her off and I felt like a charioteer trying to rein them both in. So messy! Eventually (with lots of help from Michelle) our practice and perseverance payed off and we began to look a little more like an organised team.

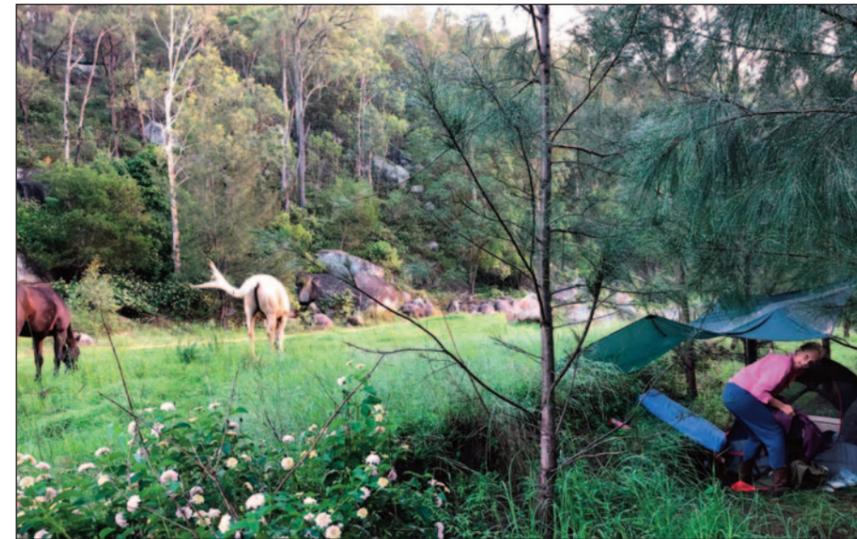
Once we could manage ponying out safely through the bush, we started training along our local road sides a few times a week. We then graduated to exposing the horses to the pack saddle. I was very glad that we'd ironed out the kinks in our ponying first. Surprisingly, we only had a

few small hiccups and then all of the horses took to carrying the pack saddle and bags, like 'ducks to water'.

We then needed to decide exactly where to start and end our journey. We must have changed our mind 100 times as we tried to work around other commitments and the simple logistics of getting four horses, ourselves, tack for two ridden horses and two pack saddles too and from the trail. Eventually we settled on a plan, but we soon learnt that flexibility is the key! We each decided to pack our own food and camping supplies. We wanted to pack lightly but also be prepared for varying weather conditions and unknown camp facilities.

Adventure 1

WE FINALLY began our trek at Killarney on Easter Monday with great excitement, great big smiles, and great ambition. Our kids waved us off as we crossed the Condamine River and we could hardly believe that we were actually doing it! You couldn't have wiped the smiles off our faces if you had tried. The 14 river crossings were



Camp, Emu Creek.

a challenge for my ridden mare but we made it through with lots of leg, lots of laughs and lots of 'follow a friend' (thank you Michelle, Ruby and Thor). The scenery was beautiful. When arrived at the first camp we felt so good that we decided to push onto the next one. Piece of cake. We regularly rode 30km out on the trails. We were soon to learn that 30km of walking feels very different to 30km with trots and canters along the way. Sore butt anyone?

The view at the top of the Teviot Range was spectacular and we were pretty happy by that point to know that our camp was just down the bottom of that mountain. We made contact with our loved ones with the smidge of reception on offer and then started the long wind down. The sun was going down and there were quite a few cars out for an Easter Monday drive. There was not a lot of room on the verges but thankfully our trusty steeds were not at all concerned. We arrived into camp right on dusk and were surprised to find a campfire roaring. Maryanne and Fraser (BNT bike adventurers) had pulled into camp from the opposite direction. They gave us tips on the easiest track down to the creek to water the horses and we exchanged tips on the sections of trail to come.

BNT Lesson no. 1: Pick a nice flat spot to camp and then unsaddle the horses right there. It saves a lot of lugging gear around later!

After tucking the horses away for the night, we slumped down onto a comfy log and prepared the quickest meal we could find. A Cup of Soup and a Snickers bar never tasted so good! We enjoyed a quick chat around the campfire and then fell into bed. It turns out pack saddle adventures are hard work. Exhausted is an understatement!



Michelle, Ruby and Thor ready to cross the Condamine River

The next day we rose early and rode from the Teviot Brook camp to Reynolds Creek. The horses were not as fresh as the day before and it became apparent that Custard was quite footsore and wanting to get off the rocks. He had front shoes on but the combination of river crossings and a long, steep, bitumen descent the day before had worn his back hooves down significantly.

We made a lovely camp at Reynolds Creek and even arrived in time to enjoy an afternoon swim and some relaxation time in my hammock (Michelle tells me that this was an unnecessary piece of equipment for a pack ride but I beg to differ). We had intended to ride for four-five days but the next day we made the tough decision to cut our first BNT adventure short and return home to rest the horses and get rear shoes put on.

BNT Lesson no. 2: Four shoes are better than two.

Adventure 2

MICHELLE shot up to Warwick to volunteer her time at the Polocrosse World Cup but I had the BNT bug and was keen to experience some more. With great support from my hubby we decided to give each of our three girls a BNT adventure of their own. Miss 10 had a day off school to learn what the BNT offered to teach her. We set off from Mt Sylvia and climbed up the range. The views were spectacular and we had a very pleasant ride with a long lazy lunch stop at the beautiful Camp Lagoon Creek. Our hosts at Razorback Camp, Dianne and Brian, were amazing and offered the horses a big grassy paddock and some lucerne hay. We were so grateful for running water and a shelter shed to camp the night in. What luxury!

The next day my oldest daughter, miss 12, and I set out and rode to Rockmount Camp. At 26km this was her longest trail ride yet but she handled herself very well and enjoyed spotting those BNT markers and following the treasure hunt style clues of the BNT guidebook. My hubby and our youngest met us at camp and we enjoyed a dinner of cheese and bickies around the campfire. Rob was another generous host. Stock yards and running water! Another luxury. The next day it was Miss 7's turn for her BNT adventure but somehow the endless BNT packing lists did not include her helmet, riding boots or small stock saddle, and as the ride to Preston was along a narrow, winding road favoured by motorbike riders, we decided it wasn't safe this time. Home again and time for a short local ride with Miss 7.

BNT Lesson no. 3: Check your packing list. Check it twice. Check it again.

Adventure 3

A FEW DAYS later Michelle had returned and we were ready for our third and final pack adventure. We decided to start at the other end of Guidebook 6 this time. Michelle was exhausted by her service at the World Cup and decided not to ride that first day. I didn't want to miss out on the Blackbutt to Emu creek leg so I decided to ride that section by myself. I felt very comfortable riding solo but a little less comfortable with the idea of 'remote roadside camping solo'.

Hubby was not that keen for me to do that either so I managed to rope a friend into meeting me at camp for the night and then Michelle and her partner Brendan decided they would come and camp too.

From Page 17

I had a lovely ride that day and happened to meet Lyn and Arthur who were on route to Cooktown from Victoria on their two-wheeled steeds. What an inspirational couple!

Just before I dropped out of reception again I called my hubby to let him know that I was almost at camp. Luckily I did! Michelle and Brendan arrived at Emu Creek camp that evening and found that I was nowhere to be seen. This caused a little bit of stress and anxiety. Was I lost? Had I fallen off? Was I just really slow? They called my name, and searched in the dark, and then eventually drove back into reception to call my hubby and tell him that I had not arrived in camp. They checked my last known coordinates and the photos of the BNT guidebook that I had sent hubby and then eventually worked out that we were in different campsites.

Michelle had pulled into the old BNT campsite in Benarkin State Forest (complete with a great big 'Welcome to the BNT' sign) and was approximately 5km downstream from me. Luckily my other friend, Janelle, had found me. We were sitting down under my little tarp shelter thinking "Where the hell is Michelle?", completely none the wiser.

Solo BNT travellers, I take my hat off to you. Janelle and I let our imagination run wild that night. She hardly slept a wink. We'd made too many *Picnic at Hanging Rock* jokes before we went to bed and we could hear the eerie noise of a pack of wild dogs in the distance. Janelle told me stories that she'd heard of grown men being attacked and large animals being taken down. The horses were restless and we felt very vulnerable out there on a roadside all alone (Michelle is the brave one if you hadn't guessed). We woke to a glorious sunrise over the creek and the uplifting knowledge that we had survived the night. We weren't scared. Not now that it was daylight anyway.

Michelle arrived and filled us in on her adventures. We waved goodbye to Brendan and Janelle and set off with our four trusty steeds again. The riding between Emu Creek and Maria Creek was lovely. Mostly quiet roadsides and private property. We were relieved to find the sandy-bottomed creek flowing when we pulled into camp but were less relieved to see large fresh dog prints. Hmmm.

I told Michelle about the wild dog noises we heard the night before. "I'm sure



Miss 10 enjoying the amazing views on the way to Razorback Camp.

they're just farm dog prints," Michelle reassured me. There weren't too many flat spots to sleep and be close to the horses so we set up camp about 30m away from each other. This I would later regret. Michelle teased me before we went to bed, saying that she was going to come and shake my tent because she could tell I was still freaking out about the dogs. We were both tired and she's not really that cruel, but just before dawn the next day my fears were realised ...

We were woken to the noise of wild dogs howling very loudly and very close by. Like within 50m! I've never heard anything like it in my life and neither had Michelle. They were answered by other packs of wild dogs on the surrounding hills. My heart raced but I tried to lay very still and focus on not smelling tasty. I couldn't even whisper to Michelle. She was too far away. I tried to convince myself there was only one but no, there was definitely at least three or four. What if they attacked our precious horses who were conveniently restrained for the taking? Where was my brave husband (who once fought two pitbulls off a neighbour's goat)? Oh that's right, he was at home in our comfortable bed, holding down the fort with the three girls while I had my adventure. Bugger!

I decide to put my boots and jeans (aka big girl pants) on so that I was ready for anything (not that I knew what that anything would be) and then resume my playing dead act. After 10 minutes or so the dogs went silent. None of the humans or horses had been eaten. A BNT miracle! I waited until the sun was fully up before running over to Michelle. She had been brave enough to stick her head out of her tent to see if she could see them. Crazy lady!

After the excitement of the morning, we felt very alive. We enjoyed a final day of glorious riding through Eskdale Station and were even treated to a comedy skit by two local kangaroos who collided mid-jump in their haste to get away from us. We laughed more than two sane women really should, but hey, we'd just cheated a grisly death, so ...

Burlesque, who is usually quite forward, was feeling very tired and needed to be pushed along all day. It was hard work, but other than that it was a very pleasant ride and it was over before we knew it. If horses can smile, our four certainly did when they saw the truck pull up to take us home that afternoon. They looked so content in their grassy paddock and the allure of a hot bath, a soft mattress and a few days relaxing at home before returning to work certainly appealed to me. I wasn't ready for the adventure to end and toyed with the idea of doing three more days but decided that my trusty steeds had done enough for this holiday.

My first little BNT adventure certainly taught me a lot (don't pack too much, bring simple meals, be prepared for anything, don't be afraid to ask for help ...). One of the biggest challenges was having barely any mobile reception. It makes you realise how reliant we are on the ability to make contact with friends and loved ones at any given time. Despite the steep learning curve and the setbacks (did I mention that my boots fell apart when they got wet, and that time I got my pack horse hung up on a gate latch?) I can't wait to do it all again! I guess, like all the other equine travellers, we just need to wait on the rains to come, the grass to grow, and the creeks to refill. I wonder if the ponies will run and hide when I pull out the pack saddle again?

Annual General Meeting held at Yaraandoo



AGM held Saturday 12 October 2019 at the Yaraandoo Eco Lodge – Ebor – NSW.

Great location on a misty weekend.

What a contrast in countryside – coming up from Coffs Harbour through Dorrigo – lush green countryside, yet if you travelled via Armidale the impact of the drought and some recent bush fires at that stage of the year were evident.

Great turnout with some 30 plus attendees for the AGM on the Saturday, followed by the forum and dinner that night with a further catch-up on the Sunday before departures.

People travelled far and wide to attend and renew acquaintances and make new ones. Great weekend. Great to have our

section co-ordinators and members to the event. Not going to mention all attendees, but a special mention to Mr Jim Cooper (life member) attendance and insights (along with the other members present).

Key items from the AGM:

- Life membership announced for Sharon Muir Watson (Roberts) for her achievement in completing the trail and ongoing involvement and association with the BNT. Post the AGM Mr Jacomas contacted Sharon to inform her of the life membership – she was overjoyed by the news.
- Board members stepping down: Sue Cumming and Clancy Lewis with Nick Jacomas transitioning off the Board.

- New Board members announced: Neil Ward; Tanya Bosch; Robert McLaren. Marianne Kranenburg who had joined the Board after the 2018 AG was also confirmed as a Board member.

- Chair and Treasurer's reports provided and thanks to all who have assisted through-out the year.

There are many people to thank for preparing and participating at this event – but a special shout out to Sue Cumming for her willingness to help out before and during the weekend – Thanks.

Details for the 2020 AGM will be communicated when details have been finalised. Keep an eye out for this.

Mushgang, Jim Cooper, Chris Hodgson and (in front) Ashley Cooper at the Yaraandoo Annual General Meeting.



Pity the merely rich



PULITZER Prize-winning writer and journalist Paul Salopek has spent nearly the past seven years walking with migrants across Africa, skirting Europe, and through Asia, in a journey to trace the meandering path early humans travelled from the cradle of civilisation as they spread out from Africa and colonised the globe.

The mother of all treks began in Ethiopia in 2013 in search of stories that reflect the eternal truths of the human experience in search of somewhere safer than whence they came, and ultimately a chance at the prosperity they see plastered across their social media streams.

Many of the burgeoning diaspora that move around the globe are residents pouring out of troubled spots in Africa and the Middle East, with many hoping to ultimately land in Europe.

By 2050, estimates suggest there could be as many as a billion migrants due to climate change alone.

Travelling the world on foot has allowed Mr Salopek to witness the best parts of humanity while also seeing the consequences of mankind's worst impulses as police and border control agents herd up those without the requisite identification.

He travels with the absolute bare essentials and almost every morning he wakes, he has no idea where he will be sleeping that night.

To date, he has walked more than 16,000 kilometres. The ultimate destination for Paul Salopek is the southern tip of South America – Tierra del Fuego – a destination he estimates he will arrive at in about five or six years, give or take.

“Pity the merely rich,” he says.



The Breakaway crew leaving the Weir Campground at Gattonvale/Emu Plains.

Huge smiles on the BNT



So many laughs doing bush pilates on our rest day and the beautiful Eungella Dam greeting us from Mt Barker below.

WITH 22 riders and another 22 backup crew Breakaway Horse Riders Club from Mackay took to the BNT Collinsville to Eungella track in the July school holidays.

People travelled from Clermont and as far south as Gympie for this ride. Collinsville Pony Club catered for us before we set out with a great barbecue tea and cooked breaky. First night's camp was at Gattonvale/Emu Plains overlooking the weir, then Amberkolly, Exmoor and Blenheim Stations before we climbed Mt Barker and rode down to the beautiful Eungella Dam.

After a lot of rain, our crossing over Little Bowen River was cut so we needed to find another crossing. We ended up with another spot on the Little Bowen River to have our rest day. Big shoutout to club members Mike Teuwsen BNT Section Coordinator and BNT Angel Noel Cowan who are just amazing in the bush and who worked out the new route.

Highlights included damper and camp oven cookoff, trivia and bush pilates complete with costumes on the rest day. The kids had a ball in Little Bowen River befriending Barry the eel they kept in a puddle for the duration and of course got no sleep together in the float – too much fun to be had. Noel had a ghostly encounter, there were some



tender spots throughout and by the end of the ride and some vowed never to have another bath in a horse feed bucket in the freezing dark again.

Well done to the reccie and backup crews, to all who came on and organised this trip and of course a huge thank you to Collinsville Police and all property owners along the track: Shane Watts at Coral Creek, the Cox families at Gattonvale/EmuPlains, Murrays from Amberkolly, Comerfords at Exmoor, Turners at Blenheim and Sunwater at Eungella Dam.

We also really enjoyed reading about the history of those stations before we went and the views riding down to Eungella Dam were just something else. Best fun ever. Love this country and the privilege of being able to ride and enjoy the iconic BNT.

ROXY APRILE

Photo gallery



The BNT forces you to be flexible and inventive.



The Old Coach Road between Blackbutt and Nanango.



With Mt Terrible it got harder.



The view at the top of the Teviot Range on day 1.



Stopping for a drink

Cooktown – the end of the Trail.



Stef Gebbie arriving at Bundy Bore Station, SA.



Crossing the SA/WA border.

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NEW SOUTH WALES

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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 or larger files via Dropbox or other Cloud program, 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.

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Cycling and women's lib

From Page 24

Bicycle shops, such as Massey-Harris Bicycles of Brisbane, Rockhampton and Charters Towers, were catering to female customers by 1896. Malvern Star was also featuring female cyclists on the cover of their cycling catalogues during the same period.

During the 1890s, cycling's popularity increased because it served several purposes, including transportation and recreation. It made parts of Australia more accessible to women than they had previously been.

In 1922, a committee in Australia investigated the benefits of physical education for girls. They came up with several recommendations regarding what sports were and were not appropriate for girls to play based on the level of fitness required.

It was considered "medically appropriate" for all girls to be able to participate in, so long as they were not done in an overly competitive manner, swimming, rowing, cycling and horseback riding.



Family group including women on a cycle camping expedition in the early 1900s.

During the 1920s and 1930s, Australian women were setting records. Edna Sayers tackled the Goulburn to Sydney cycling race on the same day as the men, setting off half an hour prior to the male professionals, lowering the women's record to 7 hours 41 minutes and 5 seconds in 1933. In 1937, Joyce Barry rode from Newcastle to Sydney

in six and a half hours. In September 1938 Barry established the women's seven day record of 1,107 miles. Valda Unthank set several records in the same era, including a 1938 distance record for her ride from Adelaide, South Australia to Melbourne, Victoria. Unthank broke Barry's seven day record by riding 1,438.5 miles.



How cycling led to women's liberation

WHENEVER humankind developed a new mode of transport, a social revolution was ushered in.

This is true for beasts of burden, the wheel, the horse, the motor car and the aeroplane. And for women, the bicycle boom opened up a whole new world of independence.

The famous American sharpshooter, Annie Oakley, was a big fan of the bicycle, or the wheel as it was called at the time. Known for her performances in Buffalo Bill's Wild West show, Annie Oakley didn't just shoot while riding horseback, she also taught herself to ride a bike without

touching the handlebars as she hit targets. "I am delighted with my wheel. I am equally as fond of it as my horse," she was quoted in 1892.

Freed from the watchful eyes of chaperones, women were finally provided with an easy escape from the drudgery of the house, as well as their first opportunity to develop physical fitness. Many of them took cycling up with relish, but not without opposition.

In 1895, the British writer Louise Jeye exclaimed: "There is a new dawn ... of emancipation, and it is brought about by the cycle. Free to wheel, free to spin out in the

glorious country, unhampered by chaperones ... the young girl of today can feel the real independence of herself and, while she is building up her better constitution, she is developing her better mind."

Guidebooks encouraged women to get out on their bikes, such as *Lady Cycling: What to Wear and How to Ride*.

However, the act of straddling the bicycle was viewed as unseemly for women, with widespread concern that it might cause sexual arousal.

A bicycle with both pedals on the same side was developed to allow ladies to ride side-saddle; others had the centre cut out of the saddle to prevent any rubbing that might cause unwanted excitement. One of the more common concerns was that women might exhaust themselves with too much exercise.

To the extent that over-exertion was a risk, it was caused in large part by the ludicrous clothing women were expected to wear while riding. Corsets and heavy dresses were damaging enough on a day-to-day basis but exercising in them was near impossible.

The adoption of more practical clothing was fiercely resisted as immodest and unfeminine, but women's newfound love of cycling ultimately helped to transform female fashion: it sealed the fate of the restrictive corset, while bloomers, which had been roundly mocked since the 1850s, came into their own.

By the end of the 19th century, bicycles had become symbolically linked to women's suffrage, in a way that is often forgotten today. And, for many women, the relationship between freedom and cycling continues.

Women's cycling was controversial during the 1890s in Australia. The issue was discussed in several periodicals of the era including the *Bulletin*. There was a question of whether women should be allowed to ride bicycles in the first place, an issue settled in 1895 of yes.

There was a question of the appropriate clothing to wear while riding a bicycle, if women should be allowed to compete in bicycle races, the most appropriate style of bicycle riding for women, if bicycle riding was good for a woman's health, and if the sport was appropriate for women to participate because of the possibility of making women more manly.