



TRACKS



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Letter to the Editor

GREAT people I have had the privilege of meeting: the Nation Trail walkers, horse and donkey riders and two-wheel riders have an amazing impact on me.

I have been blessed to have so many stay at my place and continue to be in touch long after leaving.

The diversity between them is amazing, from solo to families, men, women, kids, makes no difference, they are all accomplished in their dedication, planning and happiness at being on the Trail—no matter the conditions—they excel. Their endurance is spectacular.

I am truly blessed that they share a day or two, even longer in some circumstance with me. I am the one who benefits from their exuberance.

They exemplify tenacity, endurance, the spirit of a bygone era and are the current pioneers emulating those of long ago times.

In some funny way they take me with them vicariously (in a way that is experienced in the imagination through the actions of another person). They inspire!

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Their motto seems to be: You may accept but never expect. What a wonderful philosophy.

So many people: Max and Storm, Max jumping the fence to save Kip (my dog) from Storm, turns out most donkeys and mules don't like dogs.

Vincent who thought Kip was the strangest cattle dog ever: Kip is a King Charles Cavalier and definitely not a cattle dog. Probably the most photographed dog around. Carol Geraghty and her amazing journey with the boys.

Zoran and Rhonda, what a superb horseman he is.

Tom and Teagan, Tom invented a beer bottle top attached to a hose that stopped all the water draining from the house while he rerouted the water.

Kimberley the sweetest thing ever. Alex and Fred under the trees discussing philosophy. The list goes on: Lucy, Maryanne and Fraser, Arthur and Lyn, Teddy, Belinda Flori and little Miss Amie,

Dietmar and Jenny, who took the time to come back and see me.

Thomas, Ken, Alison. There have been so many more and such memories that I will never forget.

Thank you all and I am really sorry I kept you all out of bed so late into the night.

I seriously hope that I will have the pleasure of sharing my home and your stories for many years to come to anyone on the Trail.

Thank you all so very much.

HELEN ROBINSON



HELEN Robinson has been a feature of the National Trail for some time.

Once a Section Coordinator for Book 2, she is no longer active in that role but still follows the progress of trekkers and welcomes them to her home.

She is an ardent supporter of *TRACKS* magazine and has provided many contacts for stories.

She has lead a very interesting life, managing a cattle station west



of Townsville and submitted a wonderful story about her father, Demetrious Constantinou, walking around the world for *TRACKS* to publish.

News

New Book 9 signage for lost trekkers

HELLO ALL, in July we worked with the local landowner at Dunrovin off Crown Station Road, Capertee.

We erected four posts with National Trail markers to assist the numerous trekkers that have become partially lost in this area.

It also keeps them away from another neighbour who is not so pleasant.

The landowner has been very supportive of the National Trail over the past 17 years and gladly provided the posts, paint and digger. All we had to do was attach markers and put them in the ground.

MAL and DENISE KEELEY
BNT Section Coordinators
Book 9 Maps 8 to 12



Support for blind trail ride

ROWENA DOWLING, who is totally blind, aims to ride the National Trail from Cooktown to Healesville next year.

Rowena was already blind in one eye, but working as a nurse in Brisbane when struck down with unrelated glaucoma, losing the sight in her good eye.

Riding the National Trail has been a dream of hers since she was a child. "I guess this is one of my ways of saying anybody can make their lives extraordinary," she said.

Rowena plans to begin the Trail in May 2022 and aims to raise awareness for Vision Australia, Guide Dogs Australia and Diabetes Australia.

"I'm going to be using it as a fundraising expedition to raise funds for those that have made a



Blind horse-trekker Rowena Dowling
ABC Sunshine Coast: Amy Sheehan

huge difference in my life."

Rowena is looking for people to help support her on her journey, from those who can ride the Trail with her to others who can be her eyes on training rides leading up to the event.

But she plans to do a lot of training before hitting the National Trail. Rowena said she was looking for riders in her local area, on the Sunshine Coast in south-east Qld.

"I'm looking for riders that can pick me up and provide transport for me and my horse, so they have a horse float and their own horse. emotionally for me.

* Contact nationaltrail.com.au

National Trail Working Group — Victoria

A LETTER to the Minister for the Environment, a few emails and a couple of short teleconferences has resulted in the National Trail entering a formal working relationship with Victorian land management agencies.

The National Trail Working Group held its first meeting in early September and is made up of Parks Victoria and Department of Environment, Lands, Water and Planning representatives and Glenn Joiner (Section Coordinator), John and Jo Kasch (Section Coordinators) and Neil Ward representing the Trail.

The Working Group is aiming to develop a formal agreement that will see the security of the route that the

Trail follows enhanced, negotiate improvements to the route along short sections of the Trail, improve some campsites and signage and work together to promote the Trail.

We will also look at how on ground projects that improve the Trail can be undertaken collaboratively and provide policy level approval for the work that is undertaken locally. Opportunities for funding will also be sought.

"After many years of not having a strong relationship with Victoria, I look forward to the Working Group resolving a number of long-term issues, achieving real on-ground improvements to the Trail and seeing the Trail promoted in a Victorian context, as well as nationally and internationally", Neil Ward, National Trail Board Chair, commented.

Freedom in Charter of the Forests



THE CHARTER of the Forests of 1217 (Latin: *Carta Foresta*) re-established for free men rights of access to the Royal Forest that had been eroded by William the Conqueror and his heirs.

It did not consist only of trees, but included large areas of commons such as heathland, grassland and wetlands—productive of food, grazing and other resources.

When Royal Forests were the most important potential source of fuel for cooking, heating and industries such as charcoal burning, and hotly defended rights such as pannage (pasture for pigs), estover (firewood), agistment (grazing), or turbary (cutting of turf for fuel), this provided economic protection for free men to forage for food and graze animals.

Some clauses in the Laws of Forests remained in force until 1970.



A handy way to carry eggs on an adventure

FARM Pride's egg powder is perfect to pack in your kit while going away on a grand adventure across Australia like the National Trail.

Just add water and stir to rehydrate the powder into an egg mix for binding and baking.

Four tins 150 gram, \$25.00.

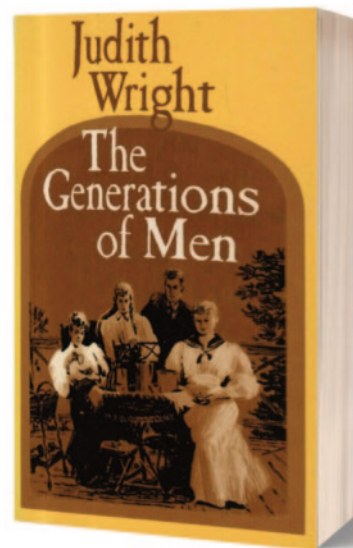


Brollies work well

WHY spend upwards of \$300 on a high-tech parka when for only a few bucks you can get full coverage with a good old brolly.

You will be surprised how well they work and they can be useful for lighting a campfire, etc, in the rain.

Sea to Summit trekking umbrella:
www.traveluniverse.com.au



Book review

POET Judith Wright's story about her pioneer ancestors' epic history, from the settled districts of the Hunter River, NSW, to the harsh cattle country inland from Rockhampton, in Queensland, was once a Year 12 text.

Australian literature has moved on a lot since this book was first published in 1959, and new readers may find the style of prose archaic.

Wright was an early proponent of the environment movement, but this book unashamedly highlights the paternalistic and harsh attitudes of the pioneers to the natural world and Indigenous relations.

It's an informative account of history and a sensitive exposé of the follies of empire building, the results of which did not always withstand the ravages of time.

Despite the title, the "men" face tragedy and failure—only women save the day.

The book begins at the family seat, Dalwood, in the Hunter Valley, now a prime wine-growing region, and finishes at Wongwibinda, on the eastern fall of the New England Tablelands, where the book's protagonist, May nee Mackenzie, Wright's grandmother, is buried in 1929.

The Generations of Men
JUDITH WRIGHT 1959
Unavailable and out of print
Some copies for sale on eBay

Trailers a thing

STUART Holmes is one of several people walking the National Trail towing a cart.

Stuart is raising funds for the Black Dog foundation.

The photos were taken as he left Redhill Organics Farmstay to descend to the Kunderang Gorge.

"Stuart was a pleasure to meet and we wish him well on his journey," said Louise Clarke of Red Hill Organics Farmstay.

The property is located off the National Trail on Kangaroo Flat Road, Yarrowitch via Walcha.



Another trailer

I ARRIVED in Collinsville, after I think the most enjoyable section of my journey so far ... both the outstanding scenery and some wonderful trail food treats donated to me along the way have made this a lot of fun.

"Will spend a week here and about before going on to Nebo."

DEBBIE WOODHOUSE
via Facebook

LEFT: Re-inventing the wheel? It's not a new idea.



Dan Anderson, Sue Wesson, Michael Dowie, Bernie Connor, Greg Bryant, Evan Jones, Bob Edwards, Paul Dorrington, Kim Rockman, John Green, Phil Ryan, Neil Ward, Joe Van Beek, Tran Nguyen, John Kasch and Peter Jupp. Thanks to Elizabeth DeFriest, Rob Gibbs and Australian Alps National Parks.

Pack horses the only way

OVER three days in March 2021, National Trail members, bushwalkers, and rangers worked together to clear 9km of walking tracks and horse trails in remote areas of the Southern Alps.

These remote areas pose a real challenge to Parks Victoria, with tracks and facilities that need to be maintained being in near-inaccessible places.

Following discussions with local National Trail Section Coordinator Glenn Joiner (who raised the issue of fallen timber blocking the rugged and steep Dry River Track), Parks Victoria involved volunteers from the Ben Cruachan Walking Club, Bushwalking Victoria and members of the National Trail and their four-legged friends.

The Howitt Plains sit on the edge of the Great Dividing Range, several hours' journey away from Gippsland communities such as Sale and Heyfield, and Mansfield in Victoria's North East. This part of the Alpine National Park is an unforgiving landscape of dense bush, tall grass, rocky

outcrops and steep climbs. The only way to get gear from Howitt Hut to Dry River is the old-fashioned way—by packhorse and mule.

"To get the job done a camp was set up at the junction of the Dry River and the National Trail," said Joe Van Beek, committee member and volunteer with the Bushwalking Tracks and Conservation (BTAC) a standing committee of Bushwalking Victoria.

"Invaluable support was provided by members of the National Trail who used their horses and mules to cart equipment, supplies and camping gear for the volunteers and Parks Victoria rangers down into the Dry River."

"It was extremely rewarding to see our Remote Area Rangers working with mules and horses and bushwalking groups to deliver this work," said Mike Dower, Area Chief Ranger for the Southern Alps, Parks Victoria.

"The track from Howitt Hut into the Dry River Valley is part of the National Trail – a 5,330 kilometre trail that stretches from Healesville in Victoria Cooktown to in north Queensland. It is a remarkable trek through some of Australia's wildest, most inaccessible country and it's important we help to do our bit for

that internationally-recognised experience."

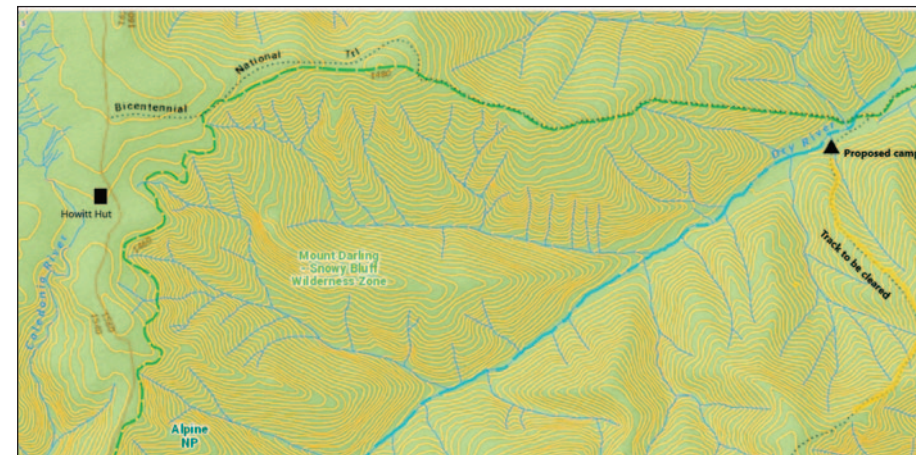
"Sometimes the mountain landscape doesn't call out for technology but needs an old-fashioned approach to get the job done."

This challenging work has resulted in a high standard of maintenance of remote area walking tracks and horse trails, only made possible thanks to volunteer group's collaboration with Parks Victoria.

NATIONAL Trail Chair's footnote:

A very special thanks goes to John Kasch (Section Coordinator for the Healesville end of the Trail) for organising most of the four-legged power which was supplied by a great group of blokes who worked hard, who were great company around the campfire and unperturbed by the inclement cold weather.

Thank you, Dan Anderson, Greg Bryant (the biggest beard on the trip), Peter Jupp and Rob Morgan. Thanks also to my two mates Phil Ryan and Kim Rockman, who not only worked hard, but shared the eight-hour drive. Lastly, huge thanks and credit to Parks Victoria for their positive and innovative approach and thanks to our bushwalking friends for their hard work and companionship.



Clearing the track.

BELOW: Dry River camp.



Horse and three pack mules.



Kim Rockman loads the chainsaw onto the pack saddle.

Annual General Meeting 2021

WE WERE hoping that last year was a one-off for the AGM via Zoom and this year we would be able to meet in person, catch up with friends, and have the AGM at a location along the Trail.

Well, at this stage with the various border and some local government authority's movement restrictions in place, this would appear to be a stretch. With these uncertainties around members' ability to physically attend an AGM, the Board has decided this year's AGM will again be held online via technology like Zoom or similar services.

Details of the technology being used will be communicated to all separately, as this is still being arranged. If circumstances improve in the interim and enough notification can be provided to you, we will try to facilitate a face-to-face meeting.

This year's AGM will be held on Saturday 23rd October 2021 at 11.00am AEDT via on-line service

Let's hope that next year, as many as would like can come together in person for the AGM.

Board positions vacant

THE National Trail's Board consists of seven directors. At this year's AGM there will be six Board positions due to current Directors' terms expiring. Several of the existing Directors plan to re-nominate but members are encouraged to nominate.

Prospective Board members must be nominated and seconded by existing financial members. Board members are required to follow the National Trail's Constitution and decisions ensuring its governance for our members and section coordinators.

Directors take on tasks or projects to improve the National Trail and encourage membership. Duties include attending at bi-monthly meetings via Skype (or more frequently if required); enforcing the Trekking Code when necessary; responding to feedback from Section Coordinators regarding Trail changes, updates on trekkers and landowners or detours to avoid an unsafe situation; solving problems that cause a break in the Trail's continuity.

For more information, please contact the Mr Neil Ward – Chairperson 0419 010 744.

The new National Trail maps

HI EVERYONE, here is a quick update of the Mapping Project, as at 16 August 2021:

- Whole-of-Trail A2 sized 'poster' is now available.
- Whole-of-section A3 sized 'charts', to assist trek planning, are being created as each section is completed. The chart for Section 10 is shown. Charts for Section 5, 6, 8 and 9 are being produced as this Tracks goes to print. (File attached to email)
- Very soon each map will be purchased and downloaded as a packaged 'bundle'. Map bundles for Sections 5, 6, 8, 9 and 10 are being compiled now. These map bundles will contain:
 - a. An A3 sized PDF file of map (a single day's trek),
 - b. An A3 sized Section 'chart', and
 - c. two to three GPS track line files that can be uploaded into a trekker's preferred device.
- Maps for Section 3 and Section 4 will be created in Dec 2021-Jan 2022. Maps for Section 1 and Section 2 will then be tackled in May-Aug 2022. I am looking forward to travelling to these sections to both ground-proof the maps and visit the section coordinators.
- Maps for Section 5 and 6 are available for members.
- Maps for Section 7 is at the top of the To Do list, and the plan is to begin creation in Sep 2021.
- Section 8 is very exciting, as it has split into two – Section 8 West and Section 8 East. Section 8 West is the old 'Nundle bypass' which has been in use for twenty years and never mapped. The maps for Section 8 West are being finalised now and will soon be available. Section 8 East, the

route over Barrington Tops which has been unavailable for 20 years, continues to be actively negotiated with landowners.

- Maps for Section 9 are paused to confirm alignment with Section 8 around Aberdeen, NSW.
- After consulting appropriate section coordinators, the Board has shifted the change-over location of Section 9 and Section 10 to the township of Wallerawang, NSW. This will allow trekkers to be oriented during planning and arrive at a point of resupply should they choose to complete their trek at the end of a section.

- Section 10 maps are available for members. Section 10's change-over locations have also changed to Wallerawang, NSW, and Yarralumla, ACT.

- Section 11 has a new northern start-point at Yarralumla, ACT. Maps for Section 11 will be compiled Mar-May 2022.

- The Trail through Section 12 is being negotiated with Victorian government departments. Maps for Section 12 should be completed Mar-May 2022.

By the 2021 AGM, the Board will have achieved an unprecedented mapping of five sections in eighteen months.

This would not have been possible without the active support of section coordinators. Due to their tireless support to me during this period, I would like to acknowledge the sterling efforts of John Dwyer (Section 6), Paul Jones, Helmut Klein and Mushgang Hammerle (Section 7), Chris Hodgson and Tanya Bosch (Section 8), Mal and Denise Keeley (Section 9) and Jenny Costin (Section 10).

One Board objective that stems from the mapping project is compiling all the local flora, fauna, geographical and cultural heritage information, that was contained in the old guidebooks that cannot be included in the new maps.

This vital material remains of interest to all of us as we journey through each section of the Trail.

With the mapping of five sections (Sections 5, 6, 8, 9 and 10), 36% of the (currently) 259 maps required for the Trail have been created, confirming 2,147km of Trail.

The cost of the mapping project to date has been approximately \$20,000, or approximately \$300 per map. Sponsorship of maps, at \$200 per map, has contributed \$8,800 to offset that cost.

With their names proudly printed on each map, thank you to the wonderful people who have contributed so far. From north to south, they are:

Capricornia Bushwalking Club

Karl Benzer

Kate Ahmelm

Symone Mercer

Paul Neesken

Rob McLaren

Julie Koskopf

Guy Fawkes Heritage Horse Assn

River Horse Training and Trekking

Charles Williams

Mal and Denise Keeley

Beth Stone

Marcus Clarke

Jenny and Graydon Costin

ACT Equestrian Assn

Monaro Horse Trekkers

Simon Buckpitt

Karen Carter

Mick Casnave

Onyabike Cycle Coaching

Neil Ward

Chum Ck Horse Rides and Huts

Why not join this impressive list by sponsoring a map for as little as \$200, and give your National Trail a boost in the right direction? Contact me now to find out which maps are still available at admin@national-trail.com.au.

Safe and happy trekking.

ROB MCLAREN
MAP COORDINATOR

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

THE BICENTENNIAL NATIONAL TRAIL

11.00AM (AEDT) 10.00AM (AEST) SATURDAY 23rd OCTOBER 2021 via online technology

Nominations for the Board of Directors to be submitted on this form by Friday 8th October 2021. Post to: PO Box 55, Gundagai, NSW 2722. Alternatively scan and email to: info@nationaltrail.com.au.

Please provide and attach a brief profile of the nominee.

We/I (Nominator)

(Seconder)

Being a current financial member/s of the Bicentennial National Trail Ltd hereby nominate:

For the position of

On the Board of Directors of Bicentennial National Trail Ltd.

Nominator's signature:

Date:

Seconder's signature:

Date:

Nominee name in full:

I accept this nomination:

Nominee's signature:

Date:

Proxy Form

The Bicentennial National Trail Ltd

Proxy Forms to be submitted on this form and received by Friday 8th October 2021.

Returning Officer, PO Box 55 Gundagai, NSW 2722

Or scan and email info@nationaltrail.com.au

I

of

Being a member of the above named company hereby appoint:

.....

of

Or failing him/her the Chairperson as my proxy to vote for me on my behalf at the Annual General Meeting of the company to be held on by Friday 8th October 2021 via online technology and at any adjournment thereof.

SIGNED this day of

.....

* Strike out whichever is not desired. Note: In the event of the member desiring to vote for or against any resolution, he shall instruct his proxy accordingly. Unless otherwise instructed, the proxy may vote as he thinks fit. Clubs have two delegates, therefore entitled to two votes.

Detailed historical research

AROUND the time of the Bicentenary in 1988, when the National Trail received its inaugural grant, horse riders on the south coast of New South Wales became concerned that knowledge of historical bridle paths would be lost as the old folk who knew about them passed.

Among them was Ricci Simpson (Simmo) who was a carpenter with an entrepreneurial streak and Peter Mass, an experienced local bushman from the mountains. Together they built an army of supporters, including state and federal MPs, and applied for a grant to research and document historical bridle paths.

Completing the grant application was a fearsome task, but with Simmo's persistence a final was submitted after several iterations. The plan by then had become to restore one single trail—The Corn Trail—from the top of Clyde Mountain down the coastal escarpment to Buckenboursa, a beautiful cattle station with easy access from Nelligen.

The Corn Trail was one of numerous pack-horse routes linking the woolgrowers of the Monaro Tablelands with the coast, where produce could be shipped out and supplies unloaded onto wharfs which were built on sand out to deep water where shipping could anchor.

The grant application was successful, and a team of locals were recruited under the Work-for-the-Dole scheme to find, map and clear the path.

It was a great party and the job was completed in good time,



LEFT: Simmo in camp at the bottom of the Corn Trail before Buckenboursa.

BELOW: Simmo and Peter Mass at a wet Corn Trail opening.



signage installed, dignitaries invited for an opening and the Corn Trail became a feature of the Kings Highway along which Canberra public servants travelled to their holiday homes in resorts around Batemans Bay.

Mum could drop off dad and the kids at the parking area on Clyde Mountain and pick them up a few hours later for a picnic at Buckenboursa.

"Access For All" then set about gathering information, mapping and riding selected routes to protect them from the looming threat of closure following declaration of wilderness areas.

They published a booklet about the Deua River Track and successfully lobbied the National Parks and Wildlife Service who hired Kath Lawler to produce some full-blown research for a horse-riding in wilderness areas plan.

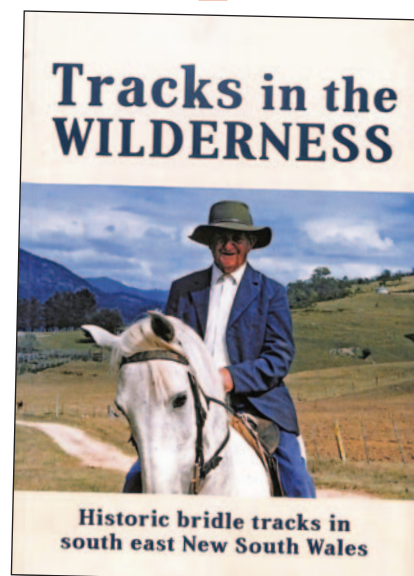
Tracks in the WILDERNESS, Historical bridle tracks in south east New South Wales was published as a result and many of the historical paths are now protected and regularly ridden to keep them open. There's a glaring omission in missing the track to Wamanderra, ensuring it remains a secret valley.

Lawler's forensic research and the impact it had is an inspiration for anyone wishing to preserve Australia's heritage. At the beginning is an apology that the information is in no way complete.

A number of tracks are listed but focus is on one main track as an example—The Tarlinton Track.

Despite the weath of historical detail it contains, much of it creating a context in the wider history of pioneering, the book had only a small print run and it is now out of print. Copies of it are almost impossible to obtain, it is not on sale anywhere and NPWS don't seem to have any left.

However *TRACKS* magazine has obtained a high quality PDF copy which you can download here:



Good hunting! RF

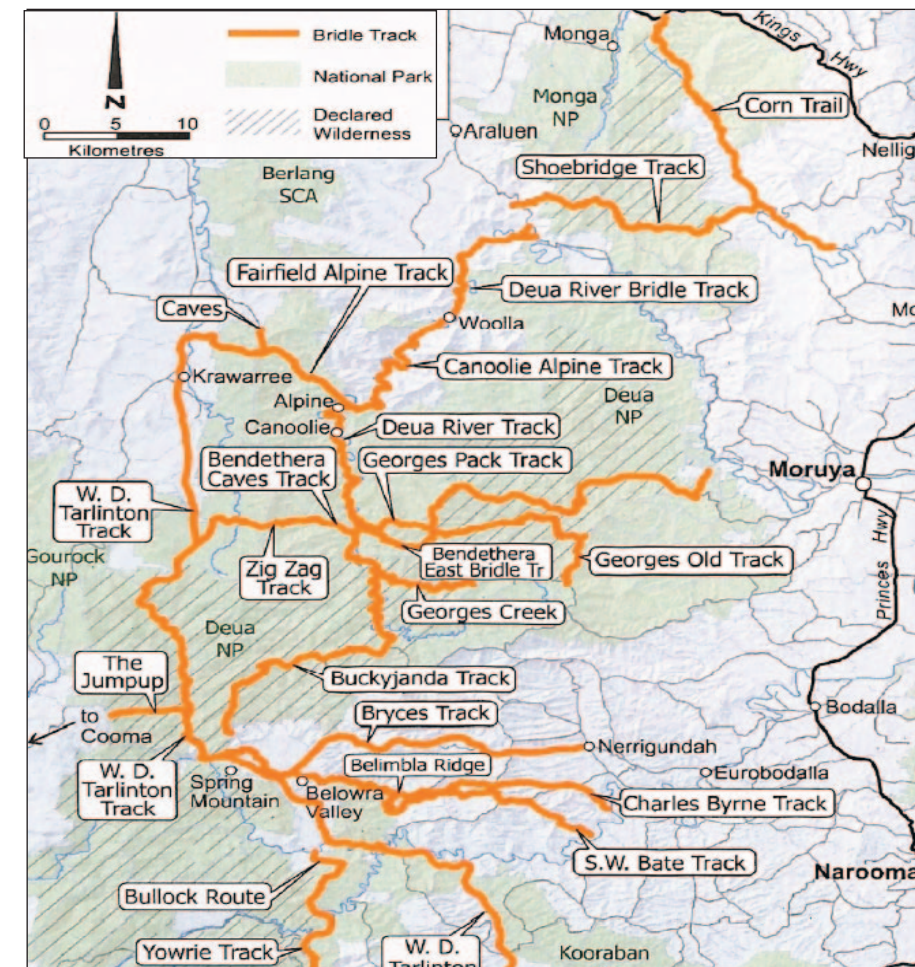


Figure 47: Ted Bradley arriving at Neringla with a load of wattle bark from Wyanbene, March 1941. Photo courtesy Catherine Lawler



Figure 53: Warren Solway, Colin Sutherland and Richard Tarlinton, descendants of W.D. Tarlinton, at Yowrie before departing for Belowra on the W.D. Tarlinton track 1990. Photo courtesy Richard Tarlinton



Legends of the Trail meet up

MAX WATKINS, who has done the full National Trail a number of times, met up with another two legends recently while travelling west with his two new mules.

He is now headed to Innot Hot Springs where he will be picked up and floated to Tim Daniel's Wilderness Expeditions to help Tim out with a group of people.

Then out of the blue Tom Richards of TNT fame arrived only this time on a motorbike which he purchased in Cairns and is now headed to Brisbane and his new job. He knew Max was around so he decided to kill two birds with one stone.

Max was here for six days and Tom arrived yesterday, both have left this morning. Tom will be travelling via Charters Towers.

The only person that was missing was Tegan, but I am sure I will see her again. Might add it was a very long night eating, drinking, laughing and telling tales — really fantastic.

Can't thank them enough for changing their plans, just to visit me.

Thanks guys it was amazing.

Love and wishes Helen.

Trailer on the Trail

By **CRAIG SHARP**

WHAT was supposed to be a year of hiking on the trail only lasted six weeks.

My journey on the National Trail started about five years ago when I was hiking with students from my local high school, training for the 50km Brisbane Kokoda Challenge.

The euphoric sensation that I felt after completing that challenge got me thinking what else is out there? I knew about American long distance hikes, like the PCT, AZT and the Appalachian Trail but didn't want to go overseas. I searched for LDHT in Australia. I found hikes like The Great Ocean Road, and the 1000km Bibbulmun Track in WA.

Then I came upon the BNT or what is now called The Nation Trail, 5300km, the longest trail of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere. I thought that sounds like my type of thing, if you're going to do a trek why not go for the longest one, it would be a hell of a journey.

To Page 14



So I started my planning. I didn't want to do it with a pack animal, with the added stresses of trying to find feed and so on, I wanted to do it unassisted. I needed some way to carry bulk food and water as some sections are very difficult in getting supplies.

I also didn't want to carry a huge pack on my back or go ultralight. If I was going to be camping for up to a year, I wanted some comfort.

I searched Australia, but couldn't find anything that suited me. That took me overseas. It turned out most people cycled long distances with trailers but there were no hiker setups. Then I found a company in Germany called Monowalker. The owner Kai was manufacturing a new piece of equipment for "Bug Out" purposes, it's a prepper term, called the Monowalker. I sent Kai an email to enquire about the trailer. After a few weeks of emails, I decided the Monowalker is exactly the right thing for me on the track.

It's lightweight, super strong, made with aircraft aluminium that can hold up to 100kg (that's this version) it was capable of carrying everything I needed. I was super excited when it arrived and couldn't wait to assemble it, it was like building a big Meccano set.

Now came the task of testing different setups, over the next few years. What you see here is the final setup I choose for the National Trail.

A 110lt duffle bag, two x 25lt side bike panniers for my food, a rear bike pannier that stored my full kitchen setup, a backpack for smaller trips that had my tent and some camera gear in it. The duffle bag held all my other gear and extra food snacks.

I made a chain system for the water where I could attach four x 2lt water bottles but more if needed. The weight was somewhere between 45-55kg but mainly on the back wheel. Weight placed on me was anything from 11-15kg depending on setup.

The Monowalker has a quick-release harness that attaches to the



Mountain bikers on the Bump Track. On the right, a fifth generation of the original bump track men.



Weinert Siding is the original tramway track from Stannary Hills to Irvinebank.



On the way to Rudd Creek Camp.



Y junction heading to Mutchilba.



Brian's Shed is just outside of Irvinebank, full of great relics.



Wairuna Station. Reminded me of Devils Tower out of *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (movie).

arm extensions, which helped balance it. A 20watt solar panel sat on top of the pack, charging up a 35000mAh battery which kept everything charged, and my PLB which breadcrumb my position every five minutes to family and friends.

It was a total package, carrying over 30 days of food, cooking two meals per day and snacks. It's a very impressive setup and something I had no issues pulling.

The only times the weight was an issue were big hills like the Bump Track, Stannary hills and Mt Misery, but the disc brake made it easy to pull up, rest for a bit and chat with some lovely people I met. The Fat Max tyre is Kevlar based and puncture resistant. It glided over every bump, and all those cattle grids.

The Monowalker was custom made to suit me but newer versions are adjustable but carry less weight. It was easy carrying all that weight, but still some northern sections were very challenging.

I planned to do the Nation Trail in one year but as I approached Keelbottom Creek, I started having issues with my left shin. Swelling up every day it was quite unbearable to hike on. I pushed on for five days through the pain, but it just got too much.

I decided to pull out of the Trail and managed to catch a ride to Mingela, where my sister was close by at Home Hill in her camper. She was able to give me a lift to Townsville, where I caught the train home to Brisbane.

I found out I had shin splints and as they can take up to six months to heal that was it for me on the National trail in 2021. It was cut short, but let's hope I can find the time in the future to get back on the track.

One thing to add, if it wasn't for the people who lived on the Trail bringing you into their homes offering a place to sleep and a meal it would make the track so much harder. I hope that will never change, so a huge thank you to all that helped me on the Trail.



Part Two of our NT adventure

By **BELINDA TOMLINS**

THE last time we spoke, we'd been enjoying a week off to celebrate Christmas with family. We'd made it to Biggenden and we're probably thinking: "Well, we've survived the crocodiles, fires and a hospitalisation, surely the rest would be akin to a saunter along a European trail?"

We were anticipating bubbling mountain streams full of trout, fields of wildflowers (shows you how delirious we were if we were expecting spring flowers while clearly heading into autumn), and a sun that was going to temper our tans into a lovely olive.

Of course, the National Trail laughed in our faces. We imagined her thinking: "Well, you survived the first half, but welcome to the south, ignorant Queenslanders, population, non-stop rain, flash floods, mice plagues, broken bikes, monstrous mountains, bloody cold frosts, and trail so overgrown that you'll need two and a half days to complete 15km."

You'd think all of this would depress us, but, au contraire, we'd never felt more alive.

Our favourite section is still the 15.9km stretch between Jack's Hut and Boundary Falls National Park which lies off the Gwydir Highway near Glenn Innes.

It should be a straightforward section: follow Dry Creek and turn off at the s-bend. We'd anticipated that we'd complete the section in a day. No problemo!

On the first day we managed 6.9km and did not get out of Dry Creek. We literally had to push our bikes inside this creek because the 2019 bushfires had replaced the pre-

viously canopied banks with our old favourite, the 1.5-metre-high grass/nettle/holly combo. Following the creek was strangely quite fun. Just us, rocks, fox/dingo poo, random animal (we hope) bones, and a lot of fallen trees. Zero riding! Plus, we were cutting right through Washpool and Gibraltar Range National Parks, so hardly the worst place on Earth to be.

Despite all the fun we were having, it was taking us a little longer than usual to clock the old k's. We were actually surprised at how slowly we could push bikes. We may be contenders for the Guinness Book of Records slowest kilometres on the NT record. Eventually Flo went up ahead to do some recon and reported back that we would have to ditch the bikes if we were to ever get out of this creek alive! There were simply too many fallen trees coming up and water was resurfacing in the creek, adding a further challenge.

We decided to camp where we were because there was enough room to pitch the tent and the creek level looked relatively stable. We

would leave at first light with the minimum gear, find the North West Fire Trail (which we presumed would be in better condition than the NT), and return for the bikes when we were physically, emotionally and directionally better prepared.

Of course, it rained for the remainder of the day/night, leaving poor Flo cooking damper in the rain, and me sleeping in a puddle of water. We had also run out of nappies, so Flo copped it again when Aimee "relaxed in her sleep".

On day two we awoke full of energy/nerves ready for what may lie ahead for us that day. Would we find the turn-off? Would we find our way out of Washpool National Park? Would we be forever lost in the wilderness? The only way to find out was to pack our panniers and head on up the creek. We stashed our bikes high up on the bank and said goodbye, hoping that they would be in one piece (and still there) when we returned!

We were glad we'd gone ahead on foot, because we never did find the turn-off to the official trail. Instead, we continued to follow the (relatively) dry creek due south which would eventually lead us to the North West Fire Trail.

It was an interesting day, full of challenges big and small. The recovering spider population all seemed to have set up their webs at Aimee's eye level. She was not pleased! The creek also eventually became more overgrown, entering rainforest and leaving the dry bush.

Of course, the inevitable ended up happening—the creek ended. Well not so much ended but reached a wall of rock. From the top of the rock a waterfall was tumbling down into the creek below. Flo clambered up first to a) see if it was worth climbing and b) check the level of difficulty. We got the thumbs up for both and while he guided up Aimee, I chose to climb up on hands and knees. Not glamorous, but as I always say, "safety first".

After "summitting" the waterfall and initiating Aimee into the art of



taking a nap on rocks on the side of a mountain, our next challenge was finding a way around the boulders to the peak we hoped would lead us to the trail.

Eventually we found something passable, so again Flo went ahead to assess the conditions. After another set of thumbs up, we scrambled up to the top. It was amazing to finally be at a height where we could appreciate the full size of the national parks we were straddling.

Mountain after mountain stretched in each direction. If we didn't have a good compass and GPS, we probably would have burst into tears. It truly felt as though we were the only humans on the planet. Thanks to the bushfires, we felt like we were the only living species too.

But we were confident in our direction, so instead, after a 3km day, we peacefully set up camp on the ridge. We'd left the mats with the

bikes, so instead we used our emergency blankets to provide insulation.

We were now on day 3 of a 15.9km section. We weren't sure how far we'd make it that day, but we were well-rested and optimistic. Unfortunately, our GPS was not. It hadn't let us down before, but it appeared to have gone on holidays. It couldn't find us at all.

Luck was on our side though because the sun had decided to make an appearance for the first time in three days. Sure, we had our compass, but the sky is much quicker.

We took off due south, taking our time to pick our way through the remains of the bushfire. Eventually Flo heard water. I can't say I wasn't relieved.

We were taking a chance today that we'd find either water or the trail quickly. Lucky for us, the park was full of fast-moving creeks.

Soon after filling up, we discovered an old fence. A leftover from when cattle was run in the area we suspected. In the absence of a GPS and as it seemed to be heading south, we decided to follow it in the hopes that it would come out at the Gwydir Highway, which we kept hearing. The fence soon ran out, but by this stage we'd gained a bit more elevation and were able to get phone reception. As a precautionary measure, I phoned Mum and Dad to update them on our status and give them some clearer directions should we be unable to get out.

Lucky for us we didn't need to call in the cavalry. For the same vantage point allowed our GPS to locate us and we were just off the fire trail. Didn't we whoop with delight when we stumbled upon the wide, maintained path.

Aimee got so excited she practically ran the remaining 8km to Boundary Falls. As we collapsed onto the picnic tables to finish off our packet tuna, a couple arrived and happily enquired as to whether we'd done the Boundary Creek Waterfall hike. We didn't know whether to laugh or cry. After two and a half days "lost" in the wilderness, a bushwalk was the last thing we felt like doing. We tried explaining the NT and having to ditch our bikes, but they just nodded politely. They possibly thought we were high.

The National Trail is all about getting out of your comfort zone. This theme continued through NSW, catching up with us in Canberra when five pregnancy tests confirmed that I was pregnant. Obviously, I asked Florian to take a couple too to confirm that it wasn't a false positive. We had been trying since the NSW border figuring that with my geriatric status we would need at least six months.

They say Victoria is hard. Well, let me tell you morning sickness and the high country of Victoria do not get along well. I had had very little morning sickness when I was pregnant with Aimee, so my body decided to give me a real show this time around. Luckily up at Davie's



We reach the highest point of the trail ... and it ain't warm!

Plains Hut, I discovered a bottle of ginger beer and lived on those for the remainder of the trail.

On Monday the 24th of May we finally made it to Healesville. So how did we feel? Sure, there was relief, but there was also the sense of unfinished business. My morning sickness had forced us off the trail more than we would have liked in Victoria and onto the rail trails. Plus, we are still itching to get into Guy Fawkes, which has recently reopened.

So how are we settling back into life off the trail? The National Trail gave us three gifts. The first was the gift of nine months of uninterrupted family time. We are living in an era when family time is considered a luxury. Something to fit in between high-powered careers and endless structured activities that will ensure our children also gain high-powered careers. Yet we seem so surprised at the increasing divorce and suicide rates.

The second was the gift of meeting people who lived a very different life to the rat race we are part of in

Brisbane. People like Helen, Louise, Bill, Mushgang and Lynne were living proof to us that life does not have to be a conveyor belt of day-care drop-offs, pen-pushing, and pollution.

The third was the gift of the mental space to think. Modern society does not encourage thinking because it is dangerous. Thinking makes you spend less and give more. Thinking makes you fight less and love more. Thinking makes you find similarities between people, not differences.

After nine months as a family on the National Trail, we are now a true team. We know what we want and don't want and are moving as a unified unit to achieve this goal. We are growing our own vegetables, making our own yoghurt and jam, working more sustainable hours, reducing the rubbish we produce and increasing the time we play together.

If you are thinking of attempting the NT, even just a day on trail, just do it. Who knows? It might just change your life.



Muskett Flat National Trail Section Four

IN 1870 the township of Musket Flat in Queensland was a bustling community of hotels, stores, blacksmiths and a butcher shop.

Today little remains except some ruins and the legend of an elusive treasure, Mr Robert James Grout, an early owner of the Musket Flat Hotel.

In the mid-1870s Musket Flat was a popular camping spot for bullock drivers as they passed through to various townships to the south.

Money was plentiful and people spent freely, especially teamsters who were fond of a wee drop of rum, which was of primary importance and made Musket Flat a popular waterhole. Drinking contests were frequent, with the winner decided by who could drink most in the shortest time.

It was not uncommon at Christmas time for the contest to last up to three months or until their credit or the liquor ran out. As always good things seem to come to an end and on one occasion the grog ran out.

About this time an individual known as Big Jim conceived the idea of an illicit still as he was sure the supply of cheap grog would be an excellent profit-making speculation and soon put his idea into practice and made a big trade for himself until the legal hoteliers discovered their trade was falling away.

Police were watching Big Jim and were able to stop the supply of sly grog but could never find trace of the still. Unable to get rid of the sly grog and keep his freedom, he began to drink heavily.

Big Jim loved the grog but was not too fond of hard work. It required money to buy his grog and he took to bushranging. After committing several depredations the police went after him. Several times they chased him coming close to capture, but Jim knew the bush pretty well and got away each chase.

After many attempts to capture, police gave up chasing after Big Jim and after several months in hiding Jim decided it was safe to venture out to Musket Flat and began drinking at the hotel.

The police waited until Jim drank himself into a stupor to arrest him. Before he was taken away to stand trial Big Jim made the following statement:

"Boys I know I am done for, my sentence will be for life. I have a lot of money planted in a cave. There is a kettle filled with Sovereigns that will be of no use to me now and some of you may as well have it and the police will never find it."

As Big Jim was hauled away residents believed he was a failure at whatever he did and just laughed it off, while others believed Big Jim was a successful bushranger.

While in prison Big Jim managed to smuggle a message out to one of his friends which said the kettle was about seven miles from where the creeks meet.

"Look for the high rock and a rock bridge across the creek. You won't see them until you are right up against them. Search there for a cave. So long."

It's still a mystery whether the information given by Jim was correct as many have tried to discover the cave but failed to do so.

Mrs JOYCE DALE



A chilly morning beside the Macleay River with Dad and the Plunketts.

To wend the windings of an aimless amble

By **THOMAS LEWTHWAITE**

HOOKED by my first multi-day hike around Ireland's Kerry Way, I began Googling "Australian trails". The National Trail popped up and the introductory snippet had me leaning in. Clicking the link was my topple into the rabbit hole.

Over the next three years it became a dream that wouldn't let go. So the guidebooks were ordered and gear filled my loungeroom. A patchwork of maps and lists covered every table top. Realising I was serious, my parents sat me down for "the talk" and my friends believed I would die. But I'd survived 200km through Ireland; how much harder could 5000km through Australia be? Heck, going that far why not add the little at each end and put a line through two other bucket list locations as well? It was decided; I'd warm up with the Great Ocean Road and finish at The Tip. Simple.

Leaving Warrnambool on 28/9/2018, I thought about going home 10km later. The weight, the bag's hip buckle breaking, being peppered by micro hail and then a sleepless night bracing each corner of my tent against the strongest winds of the entire trip; day one blew away any illusion of this being simple. Cutting across the cliff tops to Bay of Islands,

I then joined the road until the "Great Ocean Walk" turnoff. A week's work at Skenes Creek ended with my shoulder dislocated by a sneeze. While the look of continuing along the beaches in a sling mightn't have inspired much confidence, I was starting to believe I may actually be able to do this and started fundraising for "Kiss Goodbye to MS."

From Queenscliff I avoided Melbourne Cup by taking the ferry across to Sorrento. Tracing the Mornington Peninsula to Healesville, I stepped onto the National Trail on the 20/11/2018. The hills were flecked with spines of charred scars bared to the branch by the Black Saturday fires. Passing beneath these skeletal sentinels watching over their young, I arrived at Marysville and met my first trail legend

completing his second lap—Max Watkins and his donkeys.

Compounded by the challenge of carrying three weeks of food, the Victorian hills nearly broke me. Arriving in Dargo with abs I hadn't seen in a while, my first stop was the shop. Breakfast was a sausage roll, vegemite scroll, iced coffee, tube of Pringles and two packets of Tim Tams. Then, taking buses and trains, I snuck home from Omeo for a Christmas morning surprise.

Returning three weeks later led to a trap. North of Khancoban was burning. My friend Marg visited and next thing was driving me to meet her daughter, a four hour round trip for each of them. Dee took me to Canberra and the Harmer family looked after me for a fortnight while the fires fizzled out.

Resuming from Khancoban, the summer nights were cold but the views had opened up and the enjoyment was back. A highlight was a side-trip to the intimidating limestone landscape of Coolemon Plains. I stopped for another week of fun with the Harmers on route to Goulburn where I'd catch a train home for my brother's engagement party.

Back three weeks later, I began my rock tour. Wombeyan was followed by a detour to Tuglow and Kanangra Walls; encored by Jenolan, the pagodas of stone through Wollemi and later Timor. At Aberdeen I had another two weeks off, couch surfing between friends. I talked Dad and a mate into coming down the Kunderang, spruiking how flat it'd be along those headwaters of home. I was proven very wrong. Oops. Then one afternoon Dad told me of troubles at home, beginning six weeks off in Kempsey while things calmed.

Back again, rangers drove me up the New England spur through a bushfire. I was feeling torn until meeting Mushgang, whose passion for the trail is infectious. I left Ebor much happier into my favourite section, the Guy Fawkes. Every brumby's skin was cryovaccinated over their ribs and a dozen carcasses were circled by signs of starvation. This meant the sad benefit that the river flats were cropped to stubble, perfect for walking. About a week before the hellish fire season began, 30-8-2019, I climbed into reception and my phone dinged with 27 voice mails. My parent's marriage was over and so was my walk.

This back to back with Covid grounded me. So when borders reopened I skipped to Toowoomba and restarted by being spoiled by Lynne Anderson on the 11/11/2020; leaving with my hands, belly, mouth and bag full of her famous Chilli Chocolate Cake. South Queensland was tough. Sweltering. Little shade. Less water. Ants and prickles everywhere. All this plus being back for the wrong reasons; I was hating it. But my timing of summer was with hope of reaching North Queensland just after wet season.

After two weeks road-tripping with friends I came my closest to quitting. Then the Trail's magic introduced me to Craig Landy whose stories rekindled my dwindling flame. A week of crabbing in St Lawrence led on to Collinsville. Despite arriving with trench foot to news of a cyclone threat and the Burdekin dam in flood, it was to



Taking advantage of my sling from Skenes Creek for the fundraiser.

become my favourite Trail town. After a 10-day postal delay, I circumnavigated Lake Dalrymple to Charters Towers. My perseverance paid off with the pleasure of meeting the gorgeous Helen Robinson.

The weather was cooling and water lay in abundance. From cover-to-cover, Guidebook 1 was my favourite. Dave Wallace gave me a Daintree tour and closely monitored the Creb Track conditions. After a rest week in Cooktown I took Lakefield National Park to the Peninsula Development Road. Joining the Old Tele Track, it was the biggest but most straightforward month I had. An extraordinary coincidence and treat on the "last" day was meeting Kimberley Delavere whose blog was my original inspiration.

I had two weeks living it up before flying back to colour in between the lines. The sudden temperature drop from Toowoomba was harsh but the scenery was astonishing. Ticking off Glen Elgin, I then shot to Ebor to walk those last 7km where I'd been carried through fire. Initially thinking 7000-ish kilome-

tres would take 8-9 months, three years later I was finally finished. I celebrated the 5/8/2021 with Stewart Holmes (current north-bound walker) and Mushgang; just in time for another Covid lockdown.

Thank you to the National Trail and all the volunteers at all levels; it is a living trail and not just in the way quoted by the books to excuse changes. It is a living trail in a much greater sense of the statement and that is through all the work you do in giving it life. Thank you to those affiliated with it who I got to meet and who went above and beyond caring for me.

Thank you to the past trekkers whose blogs or books hooked me and to those few I was so lucky to meet. As they would be well aware this trail has a strange magic of delivering the people or things we need at the moment we need them most and they were those people to reignite the fire for me to keep going when I was beyond wanting to be on the trail anymore.

Thank you for the toughest but best thing I've ever done.



THE NATIONAL TRAIL

Updated 1 July 2021
The National Trail acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which the National Trail passes across, and recognises their continuing connection to land, water and community. The National Trail pays respect to Elders past, present and emerging.



The National Trail gratefully acknowledges the sponsorship of this map by Dr Nicole Austin and Patrick Wilms, Kuranda, Queensland.

From the National Trail Board

GREETINGS National Trail Members from the National Trail Board, we acknowledge that the year has not been easy for many of our Members and congratulate and thank you for your ongoing support and enthusiasm for the National Trail.

While Covid-19 restrictions have hampered the ambitions of some trekkers, many trekkers have still been able to complete sections of the Trail, working their timing around ever-changing closures. Thank you all for your patience and tenacity. Despite everything, the number of Members continued to grow throughout the year, and we now have around 900 single and family memberships.

The date has been set for the AGM, which is to be held via Zoom on 23rd of October 2021 at 11.00AM (AEDT) 10.00AM (AEST).

Roger Fryer, our editor, once described the National Trail as being “a community of people, all dedicated to the concepts of adventure, self-reliance and respect for the environment”.

As an entity run by volunteers, I wish to call on “our community” to help keep the National Trail thriving and improving by volunteering as a Board member.

This year will see several Board members retire after a making significant contributions. Sincere thanks and appreciation go to Lesley Haine and Marianne Kranenburg for many years of service and to Rob McLaren who has been driving our mapping program.

Welcome and thanks also go to Sue Richards who stepped up to fill a vacancy during the past year. Sue along with Tanya Bosch and myself will be standing for re-election this

year, but we would dearly love other volunteers to join us. Simon Tellam is not up for election this year and is soldiering on, which is really pleasing. I can assure you that work as a Board member is very rewarding and not too onerous.

As part of the mapping renewal program, our team have developed a fantastic new poster of the entire National Trail, which is available for Members to download at no cost from the Store on our website.

Special thanks also go to retiring Section 2 Coordinator Mike Teuwsen. He has made an invaluable contribution for the many trekkers travelling through his patch. Our Section Coordinators are the lifeblood of our organisation. Luckily, we have two very capable and committed members who have volunteered to take Mike’s place. Welcome aboard Tracey and Tony Eastwick who live at Mackay.

Thanks also to Vincent Brouillet, who for many years has provided us with exceptionally good IT expertise and advice and has recently resigned from his pro-bono role. Vincent has made an invaluable contribution and will be missed by us all.

A special mention must be made of our brilliant editor Roger Fryer, who despite serious health issues, has pressed on and pulled together this edition of TRACKS. Thank you Roger, we all hope your recovery continues to progress and that you are back enjoying the bush as soon as possible.

Thanks, as always, to our Section Coordinators, Dr Nicky Austin our hard-working mapping expert and to Karen Carter who works tirelessly to keep the administration of our organisation moving forward (and puts up with me without swearing too much).

Stay safe and keep those dreams and plans for trekking the Trail alive; we hope to see you out there soon. All the best.

NEIL WARD

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Contributions

TRACKS welcomes contributions of photographs, news items, snippets, poems, stories and particularly treks and other activities carried out on the National Trail.

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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Ellebank Murray's homestead at Harness Cask.

Incident on Craig's Line

CONVICT Richard Craig escaped from Moreton Bay penal settlement in 1830 and with the help of the Bundjalung headed south aiming for Newcastle.

At what is now Harwood, he was stopped by a river so big it could carry ships of the line and followed it 50 kilometres inland to an immense flood plain crowded with valuable cedar timber.

He built a raft and crossed over to the south side, continuing his journey to the penal settlement at Trial Bay and reported his discovery. Because of his youth and as a reward for finding some straying stock, he was assigned as a servant instead of being returned to Moreton Bay to complete his sentence.

The "Big River" as it was called then was the Clarence, the largest coastal river in New South Wales. Both Cook and Flinders had sighted the opening at Yamba, but neither appreciated its significance.

The existence of the Clarence had been rumoured for some time—Craig was not the only escapee to have seen it—then in 1838 for £100

he agreed to pilot a cedar-cutters' schooner, the Susan, back to what is now Maclean to exploit this valuable resource. Other ships with the same idea were just behind. Thus began the recorded history of the North Coast of NSW.

Craig continued his new career as a pioneer guide, leading an expedition from the New England district down to "The Settlement", which was the furthest up the big river ships could go.

They drove a large mob of sheep—which later proved unsuccessful—for J.H. Grose, who had brought them from Lake George on the edge of the Monaro south of Sydney. They headed down the steep, rugged escarpment, crossing paths with the Ogilvie brothers who were aiming for the upper Clarence and Richmond Rivers in what became a rush to claim this extensive, fertile and well-watered region.

Edward Ogilvie claimed what became the famous Yulgilbar Station, built a stone castle, created a dynasty and later retired to Florence in Italy. The Settlement became

Grafton, the largest city between Newcastle and Brisbane, an archdiocese with its own magnificent cathedral.

On this particular journey an incident occurred at the headwaters of the Nymboida River during which a bullock died. The pioneers made the most of the situation, drained a cask of beer to store the harness in and buried it. The route became known as "Craig's Line"—line being a surveying term—and was extensively used until the coastal route from the south was established.

The area where Craig's Line crossed the Upper Nymboida became known as "Harness Cask" and was taken up by poet Judith Wright's family as part of their Wallamumbi Station featured in her epic work, *The Generations of Men*, reviewed on Page 7,

Many Wright descendants still live in the district and nearby Wollomombi until recently was a major supplier of beef to the nation through Woolworths supermarkets.

The National Trail crosses Craig's Line near Ebor, where there is a memorial to Trail pioneer Dan Seymour. It is worthwhile resting at Ebor between the rugged Guy Fawkes and Upper Macleay River sections.

There is an abundance of accommodation, from camping to luxury, horse agistment, beautiful waterfalls and spectacular views from the aptly named 1500 metre Point Lookout from which you can see the Pacific Ocean more than 50 kilometres away.

Section coordinators Jack and Lorraine Gordon farm beef and run Yaraandoo Ecolodge which has hosted National Trail meetings. Trail stalwart Mushgang has a home in the village and will always welcome you.

ROGER FRYER