



**The Incredible Adventures of Clifton Riding Club Inc.
on the
Tasmanian Trail**

January/February 2008

Participants

Helen Gay & “Brandy”

Robyn O’Keefe & “Sim”

Lynne Lucas & “Dan”

Lyndon Rycroft & “Jack”

Lynne Waters & “Robbie”

Leanne Goodluck & “Wirra”

Wendy Steele & “Pritchard”

Ashley Steele & “Kirra”

Liz Knott & “Buddy”

John Robb & “Mirth”

Also



Bev & John

Leanne’s mum and her husband John saw us through the good times and not so good. Beautiful meals cooked for us, gear stowed to the ceilings of the floats, always cheerful and obliging. We were so lucky to have their company and their help along the way.

Both totally “Unhorsey” but nevertheless they listened patiently as we rattled on with our “horsey” conversations and technical discussions.

Always proving to be a great commonsense sounding board for any problems that we faced and we are so grateful for their help and companionship - without them our wonderful trip just couldn’t have happened.

DAY 1 THURSDAY 17TH JANUARY 2008

Hobart to Latrobe or “A Wobbly Start”

Quote of the day.....”How do you ring someone to wake them up so they can go to bed when they are already asleep in the chair?”

We set off from Lauderdale around 9.30 for the long drive to the North of the State. After 12 months of meticulous planning, frequent meetings and discussions about “What if....??” and “How much.....??” we were on our way at last.

The trip was uneventful, only punctuated by a stop at Campbell Town for a coffee and a short break for some, a picnic lunch in the carpark at Epping Forest for others. Feeling rather like a ‘travelling circus’ laden with everything we could think of, we finally arrived at the Latrobe Caravan Park at Bell’s Parade in the mid to late afternoon. While some of us unloaded and got sorted, Lynne L had a blonde moment and forgot to undo poor Dan’s rope, resulting in the unfortunate horse catapulting out of the float unceremoniously and wrenching some muscles in his neck. A great start.! Frantic phone calls to our Chiropractor Ken Green’s Equine Therapy resulted in an appointment organised for later that evening.

Unaware of these dramas, Robyn and Leanne had wandered off for a look about the pretty town of Latrobe to do some last minute shopping and bumped into a lady who had parked her float in town on her way home from a ride. Thinking this may be a “hay opportunity” they approached her, only to find out that she was Pam, a rider from Latrobe who already knew Lynne L and Karen. She was very interested in the Trail and had hopes of completing at least some of the journey herself. So she very kindly went off home and returned with some bales of hay for us. This was just the start of a tradition of welcoming and helpful horsey people we would meet wherever we stopped. After settling the horses into the paddock and sorting out water, we took some photos of the paddock and the horses grazing - all obviously happy together already after their long trip.

We changed into our “going out clothes” and walked along to the Lucas Hotel where we were booked in for dinner. Here we met Lynne L’s extended family, Mum - Audrey and her sister Aunty Marj (90 and going strong). Also joining us were Lynne’s cousin Murray, and Camp drafting friends from Sheffield Evie, Sheena and Jenny as well as all 4 of the Steele family - 20 of us in all.

Drinks, photos and dinner were followed by a walk back to the horses where we waited anxiously in the twilight for Ken the Chiropractor to come and attend to Dan and also Brandy who had a sore back - not a good start for these boys. Dan took a little manipulation and seemed fine, but Brandy was still a little tender and Ken offered to check him again



after a day or two if necessary.

After our big day we retired to our cosy house across the road at the Latrobe Caravan Park, had a final cuppa and readied ourselves for another big day tomorrow – already some anxious and sleepless moments for Lynne L and Helen to start the trip. Lynne W was also anxious about Roger, who frequently falls asleep in the chair each evening. She tried to phone him to fill him in on the day's events and our safe arrival, but of course he wouldn't answer!! The classic question hung in the air as we made our way to bed....."How do you ring someone to wake them up so they can go to bed when they are already asleep in the chair?"

DAY 2 FRIDAY

18TH JANUARY 2008

Latrobe to Sheffield (28.6 km)

Or "The Good, the Bad & the Ugly"

Although our alarms were set for an early start, we were woken by Leanne even earlier as she had spotted from her top bunk vantage point that Jack and Brandy were behaving very strangely indeed. By the time Lyndon and Helen rushed over to examine them they had settled - but Brandy had a tell-tale piece of Jack's rug stuck on his head collar buckle - the two boys had been clipped together at some point in the night. Luckily apart from a ripped rug, there was no further damage.

Jenny and Evie had returned ready to ride and we were pretty well organised by 8.30, even allowing for the large contingent of 'paparazzi' in attendance to take all the historic photos (and whata lot of those there were).

As the horses hadn't eaten a lot of their hay overnight, we decided to leave the remainder for the resident horses and cows after we left.

We clattered up the Main Street of Latrobe waving at the early shoppers and holding up traffic as we went out in style. We wound our way through some very pleasant rural scenery beside the Mersey River and then were able to have a couple of trots and canters along some bush tracks and gravel roads. We took along quite a lot of



'passengers' however in the form of small, black sticky flies. They plagued us all day and began to be quite annoying.

Along the Native Rock Road we had a most exciting encounter with a pivot irrigator, which was rotating and spraying over the road. We made a dash through in small groups, but Wendy's young horse took exception to the "beast" and Wendy had to hop off,



slowing her run through substantially, and making for a very wet saddle to get back into. Lynne L's plan was to trot through at a steady pace and just get a little damp at the end, as it was quite a warm day. Unfortunately you don't get a 'little damp' with this kind of watering system - a very wet Lynne and Dan was the result! A stop at Lions Park in Railton for morning tea is a must, especially to buy goodies at the shop over the road. Apparently Railton is yet to recover from the sight of Lynne L crossing the road to buy icy poles at the local supermarket,

looking like a soggy, waterlogged road worker with her bright safety vest and distinct wet patch on her behind. (They say the theme from "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly" played as she strolled over the road and into the shop.)

Our horses behaved impeccably all day - we were very proud that no-one made a mess in Lions Park - and they coped with some interesting vehicles like a concrete mixer, large tray truck and a road grader along the way.

We had a lovely canter up along the track past the Norman Sykes Sanctuary and along the old rail tracks into Sheffield. Jenny took us on a slight detour through some magnificent deciduous trees - almost Paradise.

We watered the horses at the waterhole looking towards magnificent Mt Roland, and we had finished our first day! We camped on the Kentish Pony Club grounds. A big thank you to Jean Treloar and the Pony Club for making their lovely grounds available to us. We set up an electric yard for the horses on a yummy patch of grass and pitched our tents for our first night's camping. A shower and out for tea at the local Chinese restaurant, where we had booked for dinner. It was a real Chinese restaurant — very little English was spoken by our waitress, and our booking for 10 had somehow been miscalculated, as we had 15. For those

who are wondering, yes it is possible to fit 15 people around a 10 person table. Our meal was divine - the first of many fine dining experiences along the trail - and we returned to camp just on dark to have a few more drinks before bed. This of course turned into a dirty joke session, ending up in a competition between Sheena and Jenny as to who could tell the "bluer" jokes. Poor Bev's early night probably did not work out quite as well as she had planned.



DAY 3 SATURDAY 20TH JANUARY 2008
Sheffield to Gog Camp Site (28.8 km)
Or “Freddie Kruger Was Here!”

We were woken early by the sound of magpies warbling as the sun rose at about 6.30. After we had packed up camp, cleaned yards and saddled up, we left at about 8.40 after the photo line-up.



Jenny and “Queenie” joined us for the beginning of the day to escort us out of Sheffield. We passed along some pleasant country roads moving towards Mt Roland and Paradise. Just before we passed Sheena and Evie’s house some misty rain developed. Most of us pulled out some wet weather protection, although poor Lyndon’s plastic rain sheet had had a hard trip and he rode along with a gaping hole down his back, getting wetter and wetter as the damp soaked in. It looked like he’d had an argument with Freddy Kruger. Luckily it was only a soft drizzle and riding along kept us warm, although it gradually became heavier as we moved closer to the mountain. Wendy was pleased that she’d stopped and undid the zippy ties holding her coat onto the back of the saddle, despite Jenny’s (obviously a native) comments “What’s wrong with you ? It’s only a bit of drizzle and it’ll stop soon.”

Evie and Sheena came out to say “Goodbye” as we passed by their beautiful old house, and Jenny turned back at this point as well (maybe because she didn’t bring her coat?) As we were heading down hill on a gravel road a man and his wife pulled up beside us looking for “John Robb’s daughter”. We sent him ahead to the group in front. Our visitors turned out to be Kevin Norris and his wife Sandra, who are the ‘protectors’ of the Gog Camp on that section of the trail. They had already kindly led Bev and John into the Campsite and taken John back for the second vehicle, saving Bev the dusty (or slushy) drive out again.

The boom gate had apparently been difficult to re-lock, and it had taken all 3 of them 45 minutes to relock the gate which steadfastly refused to cooperate. As the rain was getting a little damper, we tried the “Snowy Mountains Trot” to eat up a few kilometres of bitumen and narrow road verges through Paradise and beyond. This involves the horses walking in single file and the rear horse then trots past everybody to the front. When they begin walking the new rear horse trots off. In theory this works well with quiet minded horses, but some of us on the clever Arabs and Thoroughbreds soon learnt when it was their turn to trot and begin getting a little too excited while they waited. However we persevered for a few kilometres and the brainiacs began to settle. One good trick was for the last 2 horses to trot together, which forestalled the anticipation a little.

Just as we approached Minnow Creek, Jane Becker (Forestry’s Northern Communications Officer) found us for a chat and a photo opportunity. She took the group photo which is on the title page of the website.

The horses had a drink and a paddle in the creek, we all had photos taken from the bridge and had some morning tea while we chatted. After leaving Jane we headed up the slope and crossed the road into the Gog State Forest, which has some excellent



gravel tracks (if you're not driving a car). As we were a little lost last time, it was good to know how to get there, as the tracks criss cross each other and the markers are at times quite hard to spot. We found one lying in a ditch and propped it up as we moved along.



Getting close to the camp site with the Gog peak on our right we met Jake Tammens and a friend riding towards us on their Endurance horses.

Apparently there were a

group of them camped further along the river. They had heard about our trip from hearing Helen speaking on the ABC Country Hour and wished us the best of luck on our trip.

Already we had met other people who had heard about us and were waving and wishing us all the best as we rode along.

We had a very quick bite of lunch at the boom gate so that we would have enough energy to get the horses organised and put up tents before 'afternoon drinks' time was upon us.

We arrived at the camp at about half past 2 - it seemed sooooo much longer than 5 km from the boom gate (a phenomenon which we were to experience almost daily — the last 5 km is definitely twice as long as the first) Clifton Riding Club's Theory of Relativity anyway.

Certainly some of the horses agreed as they were looking forward to camp too.



Unsaddled - lots of wet gear. Set up a large yard near the river bank and away from the thistles (as best we could). Although a damp kind of day it wasn't cold and Wendy and Ashley took their horses and Brandy into the river for a bath and a splash. The horses then all went into the yard and promptly rolled in the dirtiest patch they could find (of course.)

After putting out hay, setting up tents and beds and grabbing a cuppa and a sit-down, we began to hear squeals and shouts coming from the river. The children,

Ashley and Tom could resist it no longer and had begged Anthony (their dad) into letting them have a swim. (I don't think he took a lot of persuading.) They were having so much fun Wendy raced to join the family, closely followed by Lynne and Lynne. Robyn and Helen came to see what the fuss was about and we were all in. Leanne and Lyndon joining us shortly after with John and Bev looking on with bemused faces. Sadly we didn't succeed in getting them in. It was a magnificent swim, as the river was powerful enough to swim against without moving anywhere, or if you tried really hard you could make some headway and get up river to the safety of the ford, then zoom down again. The water was a really refreshing temperature too as the sun finally came out at the end of the day.

Dinner was Bev's marvellous Chicken Casserole and we were soon in bed looking forward to the following day's adventures.

We had now begun to develop a schedule which began at 6.00am to catch and feed horses. Then a quick breakfast (muesli mostly - it was fast and filling, but some of us longed for our toast and vegemite.) Pack up bedding and tents and move to the "people horse float", sort out lunches and clothes for the day, find the clean saddle blanket and then saddle up. Pack rugs and feed bins away in the "horsey horse float", and after our group photo we were ready to go around 8.30 each day leaving Bev and John to finalise the packing and move out for the day.

DAY 4 SUNDAY 20TH JANUARY 2008

**Gog Campsite to Quamby Pines Chalet (35 km)
Or “Homer Simpson’s Hang Out!”**

We rode for 8 hours.

Quote of the Day from Lynne Waters : “Isn’t it nice to sit with your legs together.”

It had rained all night and stopped just before 6 o’clock when we all emerged from our tents to a

‘misty moisty morning.’ We were ready to ride just after 8 o’clock and after photo shoot line-up and photos of us fording the Mersey River (easier for some than others - for those of us who went first it was very noisy but the bush was so thick it was hard to see any action.) Eventually the Young and the Arabs made it across without taking a swim, their riders regretting waiting until last instead of following the “old hands.”

This ride took us through some lovely bushy forestry trails and country roads. The scenery looking back towards Mt Gog, and the atmosphere after the rain was beautiful. We only became ‘geographically challenged’ once when we missed a turn while enthusiastically “Snowy River trotting” along the Forestry Roads. After back-tracking a couple of kilometres down the hill we found the carefully hidden turn-off and immediately discovered a lost mobile phone. Luckily it still had enough battery to ring it’s owner who had been cycling the trail, and we returned it a day or two later by post from Deloraine. Climbing the very steep hill which had confused us last trip, we managed to find the track along the top of the ridge eventually. This area had recently been logged and the markers were not all that helpful - one pointing straight up a tree in the opposite direction to the one we should have been aiming for! We had a morning tea break and gave the horses a rest after their climb before descending towards Lobster Creek and then the Mole Creek Road.

After a thankfully uneventful 7 kilometres along the side of the highway (there are some large holes hiding in the lovely grassy green verge and even larger milk trucks on the road), we turned into Montana Road. The oasis of Tony Dixon’s house stood on the top of the hill – holding water and shade for the horses. Tony (at the time) was the President of the Mountain Cattleman’s Association and was kind enough on one of our trips last year to offer us water and a place to stop. We made sure it was ok to visit again, and the horses had a good rest and a nibble of grass. Anthony came to collect Ashley and “Kirra” and take them reluctantly home.

After lunch we lead the horses for the next 4 kilometres to rest their backs, as the road has little verge and it was all downhill anyway. Finally on Forestry tracks again and the lovely

Montana Falls- Long Ridge Road section of the Trail. We had a lovely trot along the wide edges of the Lake Highway, with a stop for photos at the Meander Valley intersection (where Bev and John live.)

Some great trots and canters through the Forestry Trails, with a surprise just before descending the steep hill down towards Quamby Brook Road - a “Homer Simpson” toy lynched from a tree branch in the middle of nowhere. A VERY long 5km to our



Meanwhile Bev and John had done the quite lengthy float shuffle from the Gog Campsite. We were pleased to hear that they had managed to find time to “do lunch” - even if it was just a double honey ice cream each at Chudleigh. Dinner was Bev’s memorable “Curry Veg Casserole” followed by much sorting, washing and drying of gear and coaxing of very tired horses to eat their dinner before heading off to their grassy home for the next day or so.

Rest Day at Quamby Pines Chalet Bedn Breakfast

A lovely slow start to the day with an egg and bacon brunch at 10.30, complete with a cake and 48 candles organised by Bev to celebrate the birthday girl!



The horses have also been developing mucky eyes from the hordes of sticky little flies which spend every minute with us, so we decide to go into Deloraine to try to get some ointment and fly veils.

Deloraine didn't know what had rolled into town! We visited every shop in the place in a well-orchestrated onslaught - after all it would be our last taste of the 'Big Smoke' until we hit New Norfolk. The Chemist, Ron Morgan at Beck's Hardware and Saddlery, the Post Office, Chickenfeed, the Camping Shop, the Laundromat, the Vet, the Butcher, Roberts, the Supermarket, a very helpful Lois at the Visitor Centre (to see ourselves online from mobile phone photos sent in to the website by Lynne L) and finally Chillies for Cappuccino, cake and of course the famous Raspberry Tart.....mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm.....hence Lyndon's now famous quote.

Following our entertaining shopping spree we set off to see Bev and John's lovely house overlooking the Meander Valley. Leanne had gone with Bev and John and decided to go for a walk and meet us along the way. Unfortunately the shopping and tarts took so long (as well as a slight detour to check out a camping spot) that she'd walked for an hour and a half (in her thongs in the midday heat) before we happened along. A good thing she was the fittest of us all.

Afternoon tea at Bev and John's was followed by an absolutely side splitting trip back to Quamby. One of Wendy and Lynne L's missions in Deloraine was to wash clothes and horse



gear at the Laundromat, but time ran away and the washing was still damp. Wendy came up with the super bright idea of holding the washing out of the car windows to speed it dry on the way back. Luckily no-one's knickers were involved, but the sight was still pretty bizarre.

The demure, perfumed and dignified creatures who emerged from the vehicles for dinner at the Empire Hotel's Thai Restaurant were certainly not the same ones invading Deloraine and the surrounding countryside all day-were they ? A magnificent menu

- which we still talk about, and great company topped off a wonderful, if not exactly 'restful' rest day.

DAY 6 TUESDAY 22ND JANUARY 2008

Quamby Pines to Bracknell (32.2km)

Quote of the Day:

"Message".... "Message"....."Message "....."MESSAGE!!"

Our mobile phones have proven invaluable so far on the trip, apart from the bits where they wouldn't work (then the phone companies got a pasting!) One of our better ideas (although Bev may not agree now) was to each give Bev a wallet/purse with some money and credit card for safe keeping and also so she could buy necessities for us as she drove past shops. This particular day however, Lynne W decided not to take her mobile phone with her and put it in Bev's strong box with the money. So picture Bev happily driving on to the next camping spot when a deranged metallic voice began to screech - at first softly and then persistently growing louder and angrier "Message" "Message"until the final.."MESSAGE" was followed by a blood curdling angry scream from what must have appeared to be a trapped and increasingly enraged Pixie somewhere in the back seat! Poor Bev- she says she's not sure how she stayed on the road.

However back to the beginning.....we waved "Goodbye" to Heinz, Cely, the pet platypus, deer and cattle and set off down the tree lined drive towards Bracknell along quiet back country roads. We'd halted for a toilet stop at a track sheltered by a couple of grand old pine trees, and were only just back in the saddle when a rather handsome young farmer zoomed up on his 4 wheeler driving a cow before him. He also had heard about us on the radio and was just about to move the cow across the road into the paddock opposite. We all jumped at the chance to go cattle mustering, and blocked the road in case there was a run away. We were very successful in our first attempt and the cow popped straight in the gate. (I'm sure we were more of a distraction -she had probably done it on her own for years -but we felt useful.)

Moving closer to the Cluan campsite we found a small stream to water the horses before



heading up onto the Cluan Tier. We tried our Snowy Mountains trot for a while, but the waiting proved too hard for some, so we split into two groups. Helen, Leanne and Robyn set off up the track for a spanking trot, while the rest ambled along at a slower pace as it was a warm although overcast day.

Just before lunch we met a couple who were driving along the Trail and walking sections as well.



Our lunch spot was in a banksia grove right on the top of the Tier under Dry's Bluff and overlooking a spectacular view of the Northern Midlands, with Bracknell and the Highlands stretching out before us.

We wound our way down into Myrtle Gully, stopping to talk to a little old man who was a local farmer out for his daily constitutional - he walked down to the main road and back every day. He had lived in the area for 50 years and was still going strong.

On the main road we found lots of irrigation water flowing in ditches along the side of the road, which the horses found very refreshing.

An unfortunate incident occurred just as we were almost into Bracknell however. We were passing a house when we were spotted by one of the resident dogs — whose favourite sport is obviously frightening unsuspecting horses. He sprinted flat out from the back of the house towards the fence without a sound — his trick was to crash as loudly as he could onto a sheet of galvanised iron which was part of the fence near the road - making a very loud “Bang”. Several horses had already passed, but poor “Pritchard,” the baby of the group was right beside it when he hit. “Pritchard” leapt forward into the road, which was very slippery. His hind feet shot from under him and he fell in the middle. We were very fearful that Wendy had broken her ankle, both of them escaping with cuts and bruises, but no lasting damage (apart from Wendy's riding boot, which was broken right through.) Luckily Ken Green was already meeting us at Bracknell on his way home from Launceston to check on “Brandy,” “Dan” and “Robbie,” so “Pritchard” received a good massage and seemed happy enough. Poor Wendy had to battle on without much TLC though.....a good glass of champagne and she seemed much better however.

Bracknell was a larger place than we imagined, but we finally found our way through and down to the river, escorted by a small creamy pony who had undone his moorings and thought some visiting horses would be lots of fun. He refused to be caught by anyone, but finally just went on home in time for dinner. On our way into the Camping ground we saw two very pretty grey horses in a roped off area



grazing on the verge of the road. More interesting adventures to come.

We put our horses into their bed for the night, prepared our tents cleaned up and sat down to drinks under the shade of a hawthorn hedge. Lyndon did the right thing and jumped in the river, but the rest of us weren't tempted for once.

Greg and Barb Rowsell joined us for a drink and met us for dinner later that evening up at the Pub, which had very kindly opened up just for us. After the most magnificent steaks we returned to have a chat to our neighbouring camper, the owner of the two grey horses. His name was Cliff, and he was waiting for his friend to return from Launceston with some food and supplies. He was on his way to the Mountain Cattleman's weekend, which he attends and competes in every year. He said he had spent the past twelve years on the road with his horses and his dog, "Bobby". He was very familiar with the trails over the Central Plateau and was very interesting to talk to, as he told us how to avoid the Poatina Highway by riding a trail around the edge of the lake. We weren't very confident however, that we would find our way without someone who was more familiar with it, to lead us.

DAY 7 WEDNESDAY 23rd JANUARY 2008

Bracknell to Blackwood Creek (20.6km)

Or "Erection of The Blue Room"

Our intention today was to have a short ride to the bottom of the 'Caves Track' as it is known, take a rest day and tackle the very steep and incredibly rocky track after a good rest on fresh horses.

As luck would have it (we do live in Tassie after all), we found out about our next stopping point by sheer coincidence. Being very thorough and having done lots of homework we had actually ridden most of the legs on the Trail in small blocks

previously. On one of these weekends we had stopped at a house just before the Lake Highway to ask for some water for the horses, as we could see a sprinkler going and it was an extremely hot summer's day. As we were talking it developed that the kind lady's brother lived at the bottom of the 'Caves Track' and would probably let us camp there. This is how our relationship with the amazing Gabby family began.

The prospect of a relaxing day's ride along quiet country roads meant that we had a little lie in and left Bracknell at about 9.30. John collected 2 bales of grass hay and 1 lucerne which we had bought from Barb Rowsell, before he and Bev shuttled the floats along to the Gabby's and established our camp in a pretty paddock under a magnificent old blackwood tree.

Our ride was fairly uneventful, although the scenery was lovely with the Highlands now looming above us. The road verges were quite wide and well grassed so we stopped every now and then to have a little "snack." At the junction of the Blackwood Creek road we were stopped by a farmer in his ute to have a chat. He'd been waiting for us to come along, having kept track of where we were via Helen's radio interviews. We were beginning to like being treated like celebrities. Our camp site looked so



inviting when we rode up to the gate. A huge rocky mountain loomed up over us, and John and Bev had set up our table under the shade of the blackwood tree - all ready for “party central.”

We unsaddled and set up an electric yard and after the usual tent building etc the girls settled in for afternoon tea and “drinkies”. However John and Lyndon decided that as we had a rest day next day and no toilet facilities, they would “dig a short drop.” The magnificent “Blue Room” came into being; constructed of blue tarps and lots of baling twine, adorned with Lyndon’s brand new camping toilet seat and a very functional toilet roll holder from an old piece of fencing wire.

We soon had visitors pouring through the gates. Lynne L’s Campdraft buddies Jane Taylor and Sandra Morris who both live reasonably near, popped in to say “Hi” and to see how we were managing. While the tea, coffee and champagne began to flow along with some yummy cakes, dips and bikkies, Sandra told us the very upsetting news that Heath Ledger had died. This was the first piece of World News we’d had for days as we were so wrapped up in our day to day nomadic lifestyle. We were all very sad about it.

Jane was keen to visit ‘Wirra’ as she had bred him and wanted to know how he’d been going along on the Trail, so Leanne had lots to talk to her about. “Wirra” received some carrots and pats from his first Mum and enjoyed his special attention. The Gabby family arrived to meet us all after tea (yummy barbeque). Marlene and Michael were so friendly and hospitable, as were their two lovely daughters, Katie and Holly. Both the girls rode horses as well so we had lots to talk about and interesting things to find out about the area and the tracks. Marlene kindly took our mobile phones home to recharge them for us overnight, and after a lovely evening we went to bed with the knowledge that it was a sleep in and a rest day in this beautiful spot.

DAY8 THURSDAY 24TH JANUARY 2008

Rest Day at Blackwood Creek or

“Piglets. Ponds and the Rise and Rise of John the Horse Whisperer”

After a peaceful night’s sleep we all began emerging at about 8 o’clock to feed the horses their breakfast. Leanne found that “Wirra” had pulled off a hind shoe in the night. Lynne L rang our Northern back-up Farrier, Brian Armstrong and arranged for him to come out after tea.

After breakfast we took the horses out for a walk up the road to have some grass on the verge which was growing prolifically. Our friendly ‘neighbour’ in the house over the road, home of a very magnificent big brown horse we had all been admiring as he pranced around his corner paddock showing off for us, came out to say hello. (We found out that he was a young Thoroughdale’ - Clydesdale x Thoroughbred, and owned by her son who was planning to compete with him at the Mountain Cattleman’s weekend.)



Her name was Karlene Smith, and she was in fact Marlene Cabby’s cousin. Karlene very



kindly offered us a large paddock behind her house for the horses, so they spent a very contented rest day munching and resting. Taking a leaf from their book, we did the same. Marlene and Hollie popped in later in the morning with our phones and in the course of the conversation we found out that they had some baby piglets, so off we went to meet them along with a menagerie of assorted animals. After taking some photos and tearing Lynne W away (she is a bit like Mrs Noah and wants to collect all kinds of pets), we decided to get

organised to do some washing near the creek and have a dip ourselves as well. It was a very hot day and lying around in Blackwood Creek seemed like the right thing to do really- although we were industrious enough to do some washing as well.

By “Wine O’clock” we had learned that Marlene knew the local Logging Contractor and Helen gave them a ring to let them know we would be riding on the Poatina Highway the following day. Rodney and Glenis Bye were very helpful and told their drivers to watch out for us accordingly. The rest of the “session” was taken up with suggestions for a name for our Trail Recipes section for the “Best Seller”.....Trail Tucker was the popular choice. This tack in the conversation was probably prompted by the smell of Bev’s meal for the night bubbling away - “Beef and Vegetable Hot Pot.”

Our next day looked pretty good - however, BIG disappointment when we went to the paddock to feed and rug the horses - we found that “Brandy” was quite lame. Lyndon massaged his back and Helen bathed his legs in the cold water of the creek, and then rubbed them with Ken’s miracle cure ‘R-Iodine.’

While this treatment was happening Leanne, Lynne L and John left to wait for the farrier to arrive. We thought we’d better wait out on the road as Lynne’s phone directions were a bit ‘iffy’. “Wirra” is such a tough horse that Leanne rarely shod him around home, and he therefore wasn’t all that thrilled about his shoes anyway. So she had packed him a tub with plenty of food in it to keep his mind off what would be happening, but was rather nervous about his behavior with a strange man in a strange place.

Brian’s face when he was informed of this was fairly non-committal, but we could tell he’d seen a few like this before in his time. He quietly got to work with “Wirra” keeping a sharp eye on what was happening “back there.”

Inevitably the tub lost it’s charm when the hammer came out, and “Wirra” decided he should probably go back to the paddock now. However.....”John the Horse Whisperer”- who had been standing quietly holding the food tub for Leanne up to this point, suddenly took charge. He began a conversation with “Wirra”- rather like a kindly uncle chatting to a toddler. “Wirra” stopped the eye rolling and leg swinging and listened attentively as John jollied him along, rubbing his face and



chatting away. We were very impressed - He was a NATURAL.!

The rest of the shoeing went by uneventfully (much to Leanne's and Brian's relief) and John was toasted as the latest guru of the horse world.

"Brandy" arrived back after his treatments and before Brian the Farrier left he checked all his feet with his callipers, but found no soreness. There was no swelling or heat anywhere - it was very hard to see what was wrong - except that he was very lame somewhere in his off foreleg.

Our lovely day was now totally in disarray. After a long discussion it was eventually decided that our trip schedule would not really be thrown out if we stayed another day to see how he recovered overnight. Maybe it was a strain - but attempting the "Caves Track" was going to be something he wouldn't be able to do, so some discussion about floating him for the next

couple of legs was an option to be considered as well. It was a quiet night.

Karlene had been planning to come with us up the "Caves Track" so Lynne L and Robyn went to tell her the news and to see if she could come the next day.

Marlene came down to collect our phones and we all went off to bed with all our fingers crossed, hoping "Brandy" just needed a little more time to come right.



DAY 9 FRIDAY 25TH JANUARY 2008

A Very Creative Day at Blackwood Creek

Or "Ode to The Blue Room"

After breakfast we had another discussion after examining "Brandy" at horse brekkie time. At first he appeared not too lame, but then out on the road was even worse. It was decided to take him into Deloraine to the Vet and get him checked out. After phoning around and speaking to 2 Vets who wouldn't see him because he wasn't their patient (!) we found a third Vet who told us to bring him into town. It also gave us a chance for a bit of a stock-up of food etc.

After finding out a bit more about the terrain from the Gabbey family, Robyn, Lynne W and Wendy had decided to buy bell-boots before tackling the Caves Track the next day. In the meantime Anthony, (Wendy's husband) and children Tom and Ashley, along with Anthony's dad Murray, his friend Ron and his grandson Tyson all arrived to say "Hello". They had been camping at a shack at Interlaken, where "Kirra" was waiting, ready for Ashley to rejoin us when we reached Arthur's Lake.

Lyndon decided to stay behind and ride "Jack" around the neighbourhood to explore the Cabby's property and some Forestry trails nearby. Robyn and Leanne went for a ride up the hill towards the Caves Track, and Wendy remained with her family who all went up to visit the piglets and have a dip in the creek. Lynne L, Lynne W and Bev went with Helen into Deloraine to take "Brandy" for his visit to the Vet and do the shopping.

John thought he'd do some running repairs on "The Blue Room/" as the toilet seat had come under considerable strain - both Lynne W and Lynne L had had serious accidents while sitting on it this morning. (Although not hurt or otherwise defiled, it was a terrifying ordeal

for both of them which nobody else wanted to duplicate.) Also the ‘short drop’ - while fine for one rest day, had started to become shorter with each visitor, to the point where ‘drop’ wasn’t really the word you would use to describe it at all. Luckily Anthony (being an Aurora employee) had a car full of zippy ties, so John set to work reinforcing the now collapsible seat and doing his best to make the ‘drop’ drop.

Drinks later in the afternoon after all the different tangents people had gone in, resulted in a very informative “news” session helped along by a large dose of Lyndon’s “Raspberry Tart” purchased from Chillies on the shopping trip.

The information about “Brandy” was not good - the Vet had diagnosed ‘sesamoiditis’ which is usually seen in young racehorses. It is essentially a wear injury related to his age and work on hard surfaces. He required immediate rest for 8-10 days. Helen decided that she would float him onto the next campsite at Arthur’s Lake, then onto Skittleball Plain. We had the next rest day planned for there so he would go home on that day and hopefully rejoin us for the end of the ride into Dover. It was a very subduing decision, and one which anyone of us could have to make at any

time. We felt very sad for Helen as she so wanted to complete this ride - probably more so than any of us in fact. She was very courageous and put a brave face on it however – with horses you can never really know what’s around the corner at the best of times.

The mood lifted somewhat with John’s report on his productive day working on “The Blue Room.” He was happy to tell us that the zippy ties had worked wonders, and that our greatest danger from now on was getting fly blown. Lynne W said that that was OK as she had plenty of purple spray which had worked really well for her sheep.

The champagne or the raspberry tart must have had a strange effect because then we decided we should write a poem or a song about our “Blue Room” to add to the already extensive “Clifton Riding Club Song Book.” A few attempts at the first few lines blossomed forth, but Lynne L was suddenly hit by an attack of CREATIVITY and retreated quietly at first into her chair, then into her tent to pen the immortal “Ode to The Blue Room” which was read out to much applause after dinner.

AN ODE TO THE BLUE “ROOM”

A story in Rhyme by Lynne Lucas
With inspiration and encouragement from Many

Lyndon was a proud as punch.
He’d bought a loo for after lunch.
The Clifton Girls said they were tough,
A hole with a spade was quite enough.

But being spoilt by bricks and mortar,
At Camping grounds with loos and water
When we arrived at Blackwood Creek
The bathroom arrangements looked rather bleak!
The bubbling stream sparkled fresh and clear
But the Amenities Block did not appear.
Lyndon’s Loo now came to the fore
Dug out from the depths of the horse float store.



John and Lyndon surveyed a spot,
And dug a hole even tho it was hot.
A room with a view using okkie straps,
Two blue tarps & planks - resourceful chaps!

They proudly announced that “The Blue Room”
Would be open for business very soon.

And so it was, for Rest Day One,
The Clifton Girls had lots of fun.
Washing clothes, Washing hair,
Drinking & paddling with never a care!

Unfortunately at feeding Time,
Poor Brandy did not look too fine.
His leg was sore, he could not walk -
The Clifton Girls rerouped to talk.

The decision was made to take Rest Day Two,
To care for Brandy, to see him through.
The Blue Room, though- a One Day Design,
Couldn't cope with Two - let alone our NINE!

The blowies were thriving,
Leaving little black spots.
And the wasps were sky diving
Taking daring shots!

90 Kilos was it's limit,
Poor Lynne and Lynne both fell in it!
A loud CRACK! echoed throughout the
camp,
And both girls emerged a Trifle Damp.

Our magnificent Blue Room needed some tending
So with our Rest Days sadly ending,
John with his snappy ties did the job,
For one Last Night to service our mob!

Thank you “Blue Room”
Thank you Men!
The Clifton Girls are on the Trail again.



DAY 10 SATURDAY 26TH JANUARY 2008

Blackwood Creek to Jonah Bay (Arthur's Lake) 31.8 km

Helen's Birthday or "Up Before the Blowies"

We had decided that the climb up the "Caves Track" would be hot thirsty work, so we would leave as early as we possibly could. The first horse float shuffle was also leaving at about the same time so that they could meet us at the top with water for the horses prior to the long, slow and somewhat dangerous trip along the Poatina Highway.

Up at 5.30am, we planned a 7.30 start. Karlene Smith was coming with us, as she was very familiar with the track and rode it quite frequently. We were very

impressed with her beautiful little bay Arab x Percheron mare, "Sugar Pearl" who arrived with coat gleaming and feet oiled, looking as if she was off to the Show Ring instead of a ride in the bush. We regretfully packed up, tacked up the horses with every bit of protective armour we could find - bell boots, shin and tendon boots and breast plates, anticipating a steep rough ride up the track for the next 9.2 km.

We bade fond farewells to Marlene (Michael had popped in earlier on his way to work), and thanked her again for her hospitality. We all posed for the now routine morning photo and headed off up hill.

Helen led "Brandy" out of camp and over the bridge to see us off. It was so sad to leave them behind. The last thing we saw was "Brandy's" white cotton rug as we wound around the corner. Helen intended to leave him in one of Karlene's yards until after lunch, while the floats took our gear to Arthurs Lake. She returned later for him in time to meet us as we arrived at our next camp site.

The Caves Track

At first the track was wide and not too rough. It winds fairly steeply up around the valley, and we had to climb over 3 large trees which had fallen across. We stopped at the cave for several photos, it's so large we could stand together side by side.

Plenty of "cave drawings" but nothing very archaeological -just the usual 'Jenny loves Joe' done in white scrawl.



After the cave the track quickly deteriorated, developing into pretty well solid rock, or large rocks, while the air became very misty. It was quite eerie at times walking along 'up in the clouds' if you were at the rear of the group, while those in front rode in sunshine. In places we were scrambling over boulders and had to by-pass a broken 'bridge' of large planks with a gaping hole in the centre. We were very grateful for Karlene's local knowledge and found it amazing that she considered this one of her 'normal' rides out. The other ride she often did she called "The Gut Buster" as it was steeper than this track, but made it a round trip for her. It was quite nerve wracking as we worried whether our horses would slip on the rocks and sprain something.





Finally though we made it to the top, pretty well spot on two hours after we'd left. We met the floats quite soon after and washed the horses down and watered them. We spent almost an hour resting them before we said "Thankyou" and "Goodbye" to Karlene and "Pearl" and moved on to the next stage of our trip.

Another little problem was now thrown in our path though, as "Sim's" near hind shoe had been loosened by the climb. Luckily we had borrowed several sets of 'Old Mac' boots from Ann Wright and were able to fit one on him for the trip down the highway. Our scheduled

'shoeing date' was not until Jones River though, and he couldn't wear the boot for that long as his feet were so small that even after this day his heel had rubbed in spite of bandaging and packing. We would have to solve this problem during the day as we rode along with a phone call to our trusty Southern Farrier, Roderick Le Fevre.



The 18 km ride along the Poatina Highway was slow and extremely BORING. We met the only log truck on the road at the top of the track as he had stopped to check his load before heading down the steep hill. He told us that the mill at Longreach was closing for a half day as it was a Public Holiday and he was the last truck to go through. That at least was one hazard we wouldn't have to cope with.

The Highway appears to be etched out of the rocks and the verge is about half a metre of gravel before it becomes scrubby bush growing between large granite boulders. There is simply

nowhere to get off the bitumen at all. It was a long hard tramp. We spent a lot of the time walking as well, to relieve the horses' backs and our own. Luckily there was a cool breeze for part of the journey- it would have been unbearably hot without it. This was another reason we had wanted to leave as early as we could.

Lunch was taken at the turn off into Cramps Bay at about 12.15. There were a few spiky grasses for the horses to pick at, and plenty of rocks for us to sit on, but no water! It was a fairly solitary day with not a lot of talking - it was hard anyway as we pretty well had to keep in single file. We met some scary flapping boats and many drivers who had no idea how to pass a horse — some drove so close you could touch them - and they didn't slow down either. A large cavalcade of motor



bikes went by (probably doing the same thing we were), but they were extremely courteous, slowing down and moving away to the other side.

Lots of thinking and ploddingthinkingplodding”CAR!”.plodding Robyn reports that she planned her whole year’s Literacy Programme (she’s a teacher). Wendy said she became quite fascinated by the roadside debris — “Pritchard” did too, but he spotted a very scary black sandal and some orange bricks and almost landed on the bonnet of a car. “Don” also began hallucinating, saw a ‘monster’ in the scrub and leapt into the path of a speeding station wagon. THOSE drivers will give horses a wide berth from now on anyway.

The horses were marvellous with the traffic - the imagined sights were worse than the real ones. For a while we practiced our Precision Riding Drills as we moved in formation from one side of the road to the other, depending on which side had a wider verge or better visibility. John told us our Fluoro shirts worked really well and were very easy to see, which was comforting to know.

We were all intrigued with “The Milk Bottle” tree - wondering who on earth would have a milk delivery here in the middle of the highway. The vegetation rarely altered from the scrubby grey alpine bushes alongside the road, with gum trees growing in the gullies where there was some soil and run off. At one point Robyn suggested she’d like to lie down on “Sim’s” neck and go to sleep. Wendy thought we could tie them all nose to tail like a camel train and all have a sleep, taking turns to lead them. By this time the dreaded sticky flies had caught up with us again, so “Dan” wore his fly mask most of the rest of the way, looking the “picture of sartorial elegance” and making the rest of the horses green with envy.



Around this time Helen drove past us on her way back to get “Brandy” and told us there was ONLY 5 KM TO GO!! FINALLY over a rise we saw the sea.! NO it can’t be the sea - it must be Arthur’s Lake ahead.....

We arrived at camp at what we now know is called “The Cow Paddock” at 3.00pm to find that Helen and John had erected a large yard for the horses and Bev was cooking Curried Sausages for tea. Ashley was very happy as it was her favourite. She had just arrived with “Kirra,” Anthony, Murray, Ron, Tyson and Tom, in order to rejoin us for the rest of the ride to Bronte Park. We must have looked exhausted as our kind visitors helped us to put up our tents. We certainly seemed to be moving in slow motion.

When we were settled at last we had a special birthday afternoon tea for Helen, complete with a fruit cake, candles and a rousing “Happy Birthday” sing-along. We intended to do the hand claps too, but she insisted that that wasn’t at all necessary.



DAY 11 SUNDAY 27TH JANUARY 2008

**Jonah Bay (Arthur's Lake) 29km to Skittleball Plain Homestead
Or "The Zip Symphony" aka "Weak bladders 'N Too Much Wine"
Or "Only in Tassie."**

We woke up at 6.30am after a wild, windy night. As there was a lazy, cold wind blowing off the Highlands we had rugged the horses up pretty well. All the tents stood the test, although Lyndon now had 2 broken poles bound up with gaffer tape. The horses were quiet all night in their smallish yard at the "Cow Paddock" where we were camped, undisturbed by the zipping and unzipping of tents during the night.

We packed up camp, ate our usual trail brekkie and set off under the electricity towers and around Arthurs Lake to Pumphouse Bay. We were very pleased that we had decided to camp where we had as the camping area was very full. However there was good grazing below the power lines and this would make a good campsite on a quieter weekend. We rode up the hill and crossed the Poatina Highway, taking a track to the right around the boom gate. Ashley climbed the tree stump and braved the spiders to retrieve the registration book (badly in need of new pages). We signed in and headed off uphill to the track beside the flume which we followed for the next 7 kms. As it was a nice flat gravel track we took the opportunity to have a few trots interspersed with walking as the ground was hard. Found some clean puddles for the horses to have a drink. Stopped for morning tea where the track divided to go left down into Tod's Corner (another trail marker is really needed here). We found good water here for the horses too, although we needed the collapsible bucket to access it.

The road from Tod's Corner wound around toward the Lake Highway. The vegetation was wildly beautiful, as there were many wildflowers out and a lovely scent filled the air. We had views into the Lake St Clair/Cradle Mountain National Park with Cradle Mountain in the distance. Cutting through this wilderness we could see cars seemingly zooming across the



shrubbery, as the road itself was invisible across the plain. As some of the horses hadn't been drinking we detoured into a fishing lagoon to offer them a drink. Wirra found the round green lumpy things (cushion plants) very scary.

On entering the Lake Highway we were pleased to find lovely wide verges which gave us an opportunity to trot and occasionally even have a short canter. At Shannon Lagoon we found lovely knee high grass and a stream, so we decided that this

would be a perfect spot for lunch.

We relaxed in the long grass and the horses munched around us contentedly, and for once didn't try to steal our lunches!

After an hour or so, we reluctantly left, crossed the Shannon Bridge and rode on up into Miena. After riding past some quaintly named shacks we crossed the road and made our way around the lake on a rough, rocky vehicular track. Although the going was slow it saved some distance on the winding route to the Great Lake Hotel, where our hearts leapt with delight at the 'Cappuccino' sign, and sank just as quickly when we realised that no one had any money. We considered offering pony rides to the adoring crowd gathering on the deck, filled with (only in Tassie) a family which Robyn taught at her school in Clarendon Vale!



The last stretch south to Skittleball Plain

Homestead (about 6km) passed uneventfully, pausing to give the horses a drink in the Ouse River, and then winding our way up the long drive to the amazingly atmospheric old farmhouse.

Not long after we'd arrived and settled in, our wonderful farrier, Roderick Le Fevre and his trusty assistant Geoff Wrigley turned up to re-shoe 'Sim', put hind shoes on 'Kirra' and new front shoes on 'Wirra'. We were extremely grateful to them for travelling so far to help us out, and it was enjoyable to have them stay for a BBQ tea afterwards.



As the weather was deteriorating we rugged the horses in their winter woollies, but Lynne Waters still said, "It's a pity we can't bring them inside with us."

We all snuggled down cosily in our beds in comparative luxury.

DAY 12 MONDAY 28TH JANUARY 2008

REST DAY at Skittleball Plain

Homestead "Rationing the Rashers" or "The Big Sleep"

We all had a lovely lie-in (including the horses) before rising to feed up and do the washing before another yummy egg and bacon breakfast. Miena grocery prices meant that we had to ration the bacon.! We spent a lovely lazy day just relaxing at the homestead, and catching up on little jobs like the laundry. Lyndon proudly showed us the hole he had worn in his joddies which he discovered when he began his washing! Wendy and Ashley went off for a ride to explore the area. Lyndon and "Jack" went for a walk toward the Little Pine Lagoon. Leanne and Bev wandered up to the old stock yards. The area has a wonderful isolated feel to it.



At about 4 o'clock Helen and her dad John Robb

arrived. Helen had brought back her empty float ("Brandy" was now at home resting up and seeing the vet), so that we could still transport our 'people' gear and John had brought his horse "Mirth" to ride with us on the next leg to Bronte Park.

As the afternoon drew to a close everyone showered and prepared to go out for a meal at the Miena Pub. As we drove out the gate who should we bump into but John Shoobridge clearing up rubbish from the roadside. We would be riding over his property when we reached Victoria Valley on the way to Ouse. Following a delicious dinner (John swears it's the best Mixed Grill in Australia!) we had a talk to some of the bar staff about the tracks in the area. We found out that there is an old stock track heading along the Ouse River to Skittleball Plain and then onto Little Pine Lagoon. We made plans to return to Skittleball in the future and do some local rides and exploring.

DAY 13 TUESDAY 29TH JANUARY 2008

Skittleball Plain Homestead to Bronte Park (26.3 kms) or "The Clifton Canter"

We rose very early (5.45am) due to the warm weather and were ready to ride out at 7.30 hoping to cover as much distance as possible before the day heated up. As we left the weather started to look very threatening, so we turned back to get the coats we thought we wouldn't need. We were finally out the gate at the main road at 8.00am, and with John and "Mirth" in the lead we ventured to suggest a bit of a canter to eat up a few K's. This turned into a mad gallop as old "Mirth" hadn't been out for a while and was nice and fresh. We managed to stop and let our puffing horses have a drink at Little Pine Lagoon before John led us into a part of the Trail which none of us had used before (and won't be using again either!) It was



marked to get horses off a narrow part of the Marlborough Highway, but was so rough and overgrown that we would have rather braved the traffic.

Due to some missing markers we almost lost our way at Little Pine River, but John led us safely out onto the logging road and onto what is left of the old Roscarborough Homestead for elevenses.

On over Pine Tier with it's beautiful views we could see the bushfire near Tarraleah in the distance. We went down the hill walking beside the horses and had lunch beside the incredibly picturesque Pine Tier Lagoon. The pleasant ride along the bush tracks and gravel road was interrupted by a visit to a small roadside creek. Leanne and Lynne L offered "Wirra" and "Dan" a drink. On finding the edges boggy "Wirra" pulled back, but "Dan" went trustingly forward at Lynne's urging, only to become bogged. He managed to extricate himself with two enormous lunges, breaking his breast plate and saddle bag straps in the process. As he was covered in mud up to the top of his legs, we decided to avoid those nice bright green grassy bits in future.

We reached the flume gate and were greeted soon after by Helen and some fruit cake for afternoon tea. Helen had walked out to meet us and guide us in.

Arriving at Bronte Park, we were very grateful to see the paddock already set up and water organised for the horses, who were now fidgeting about due to some nasty bitey midges. These bites quickly turned into pus filled sores, so cotton rugs, spray and face masks soon

appeared to help them out.

Our accommodation was the single mens quarters, which consisted of a little single cell each - all very comfy and untent like. We were joined by Lyndon's wife Karen and Lynne Water's mum Joan and her cousin John from Britain who drove up to spend the night with us. Liz Knott came up as well with "Buddy" to join our ride to Dover, and sadly Wendy and Ashley were leaving us until we reached Geeveston.

We were sharing the accommodation with firefighters from around the State who were dealing with the bushfires we had seen earlier in the day, and by an interesting (and again, very Tasmanian) coincidence met Robert Butler and Greg Bowman who were both from Bracknell and had seen us riding in there a few days before!

DAY 14 WEDNESDAY 30TH JANUARY 2008

Bronte Park to Victoria Valley (34.3 kms)

"Helen Back in the Saddle" Or "Dodging the Log Trucks"

Observation : Spare Mac Boots tied to the saddle make a handy receptacle for carrying sun glasses,
lollies, drinkies.....

The alarm clocks were set for 6.15, but most of us were up and on the go soon after 6. Robyn went out to check on the horses and found that 'Buddy' had let himself out of the electric string paddock to feast on the lovely long grass the others couldn't reach. The rest were not too bothered and had munched their way through their paddock happily. They were fed at 6.30 and we were all ready to ride at 8 o'clock. It's a lot quicker when there are no tents to pull down and we had enjoyed our night in the Single Men's Quarters.

Today Helen was going to get back in the saddle and ride "Mirth", so John and Karen provided an escort for us for the 6kms of highway we had to travel along before we reached the well-marked turn off we were looking for to Victoria Valley.

We encountered a number of log trucks on this rather narrow and winding piece of road and were pleased we had arranged the vehicles to help us out, although the horses were all very good and the drivers extremely courteous.



John followed us along the gravel road to Dee Lagoon where we had a lovely lunch break paddling and swimming. All the horses enjoyed a splash, Lynne L went swimming and Lyndon and 'Jack' had a very nice bare back wallow in this beautiful spot.

After lunch John and Helen loaded "Mirth" into the float ready for his trip home and

we continued on our way to Victoria Valley.

We stopped to speak to the driver of a huge low loader parked on the side of the road. He left ahead of us which was good as we wouldn't have liked him to interrupt our quiet ride. The ride along this road south of Dee Lagoon is lovely with the scenery changing from dry bush, then a small patch of incredibly massive mossy, rain forest eucalypts, then into pretty open farm and grazing land. The rolling pasturelands at the southern end of the road presented us with views of the quintessential Australian scenery with scattered stands of gum trees and grazing cattle. It was a warm day but not too hot and we were able to keep in the shade of trees along the way.

As we approached camp we could smell smoke from bushfires north of Ouse and the sky was hazy with smoke. Bev, John and Helen greeted us when we arrived at the corner of the Victoria Valley & Waddamana roads at 3 o'clock. We have worked out that we generally take one hour to travel 5kms when averaged out over a day, and including morning tea and lunch breaks (also comfort stops and photo opportunities!) - therefore a 35km ride takes us 7 hours. We have found 25 kms to be the ideal length for a day's riding.



After we had organised the horses into the permanent yard, we set up our tents, had a relaxing drink and ate a very welcome meal of Spaghetti Bolognese cooked on the barbeque. We then wandered over the fence and down the hill to have a look through the now very derelict Convict Probation Station at Nine Mile Marsh.

DAY 15 THURSDAY 31st JANUARY 2008

Victoria Valley to Ouse (24.2 kms)

Or "The Great Horse Race"



The peaceful night was shattered at 4.15am when the first log truck of the day rumbled past. Drowsy bodies emerged from tents (some later than others) for 6.30 feeding. Riding on the third of four consecutive days may be taking its toll! We got away at 9.30 only a little behind schedule, but not too stressed as we only had a comparatively short distance to travel - all day downhill - mostly on soft bush tracks and quiet country roads with good verges.

The day was cool and threatened rain, which didn't eventuate, but filled the sky with moody grey cloud against the blue background.

We had lots of trots and a lovely canter across farm paddocks before winding down Lane's Tier Road and along Victoria Valley to the Ouse main street, where we slipped and slid on the bitumen in our now worn and shiny shoes through town and up to the Recreation Ground Campsite.

As we were unsaddling we looked down towards the gate to see a large white 4WD (with 2 kayaks on top) and a white horse float heading towards us. It was Wendy and Ashley, with Anthony and young Tom! They had decided to continue the ride with us for another day.

We used the electric tape to extend the Ouse yards, putting "Robbie" and "Sim" together to eat their dinner as they are usually slower than the rest of the group.

The Lachlan Hotel at Ouse kindly allowed us to shower for \$2 each which was very handy. Lynne L had a nice wallow in the bath, and we all emerged fresh and ready for our counter tea.

Blair Richards from the Derwent Valley Gazette then arrived to take photos and talk to us about the trip for her newspaper article. She said she planned to meet us at New Norfolk to take a photo of us crossing the New Norfolk bridge the next week.

We then enjoyed an excellent counter meal at the Lachlan Hotel. John's Mixed Grill would have rivalled the Big Mac's Mixed Grill at the Lucas Hotel in Latrobe or Lyndon's at the Miena Pub!

Over coffee a challenge was laid down as to whose horse was the fastest eater! Lynne Waters and Robyn bowed out immediately, due to the delicate nature of their respective horse's appetites. "Buddy" and "Jack" were immediate starters and "Dan's" mother was quietly confident. "Kirra" was a late entry, and in spite of her colour, considered a 'dark horse'. Anthony was chosen as Impartial Feed Mixer. Rules were established, Independent Scrutineers selected, and on the count of 'THREE!' bins

were placed in front of eager muzzles. Competition was fierce, with enthusiastic owners encouraging their respective steeds. None of the horses lapsed in concentration for a moment. In a remarkably short time a winner began to emerge. Excitement mounted as the bins got lower. Would it be "Dan" or "Kirra"? But as judging was underway another 'dark horse' emerged....."Jack!"

Eventually a triple dead heat was declared - "Dan" - "Kirra" - "Jack"

"Buddy" had put up a respectable effort, but Liz says he comes into his own with round bales of hay, with 6 days being his Current Record!

Following all of this excitement, a quiet chat in the shelter shed before bed ended the evening nicely.



DAY 16 FRIDAY 1st FEBRUARY 2008

Ouse to Jones' River (27 kms)

Or "Why Skinny Horses are Better Sometimes"

We rose at 6.15, earlier than our planned time of 7.00. We had a leisurely breakfast together followed by the usual preparations - packing up of tents, saddling, cleaning up of horse manure etc. As we were about to ride out at 8.30, John Shoobridge arrived to say "Hello" and to see how we were getting on.

We turned left and steadily clattered up the main street of Ouse, until our peace was shattered by two pet sheep which leapt over two backyard fences and disappeared up a side street!

Reaching the track beside the Repulse Dam road we were able to have a trot and a canter along the sandy track in the Shoobridge's pine plantation.

We all coped very well with John Shoobridge's fantastic drawbridge invention over the cattle grid on the Clyde River, then wound our way up to the wonderful lookout over Cluny Dam and the Derwent River and the valley beyond. The sky was hazy with smoke from the bushfires up at 'Black Bobs.'

However when we reached the Repulse





Dam bridge we were disappointed to find that the Hydro had put a pole in front of the 'garden' gate which we had to negotiate to get past the cattle grid immediately before the suspension bridge. The space was now so narrow that we had to unsaddle the horses and lead them through, then re-saddle after we had crossed over. We made a note to write to them and try to organise some other arrangement (This has since been rectified).

Just after setting off again after this delay we heard a log truck approaching. Robyn stopped the truck and asked the driver to let the others know we would be on the road for the next 2 or 3 kms. The driver was very helpful and friendly and happy to do this for us. Perhaps as a consequence we didn't meet any other log trucks before we reached our turn off onto the lovely bush track that lead us down to the Broad River. Some of the horses took the opportunity to have a drink, then we wound our way along another bush track (this was the scene of 'Warwick' the Standard bred's Gigantic Leap across a puddle from a previous ride.) We emerged onto the logging track again and found our way into the pine forest track on the left in spite of there being no trail marker here! We climbed up the bank and the shady pine trees looked to be a good spot for lunch.

Sadly there came a plague of nasty, invisible biting insects which worried the horses incessantly, so it was a very quick lunch and back on board for the last 10kms through the excellent sandy forest tracks. Then up Pillies Rd and onto the Ellendale Road, then into Jones River Road.

The views down the Derwent Valley were magnificent, as is the incredibly pretty campsite by the creek - a most welcome sight with its large paddock for the horses as well. Soon the tents were up and we had time to relax. Dinner was a delicious cold roast lamb salad (cooked for us by the Lachlan Hotel), who also froze our water bottles for us too.



Soon after, Chris Boden (Tas Trail Committee & Webmaster) rolled in with his caravan, followed by fellow Club Member, his daughter Catherine Clark and her son Riley, and Chelsea Gerrard (owner of the infamous "Warwick") and her son Joel. We all had an enjoyable chat and a drink around the campfire, kindly provided for us by the owner Mr Bannister. As it was a rest day the next day, even the early-to-beds waited until it was dark before disappearing into the night!

SATURDAY 2nd FEBRUARY 2008

REST DAY at Jones River

Or “Fun, Food N Family Day”

This turned out to be a Very Busy Day with lots of family members turning up to encourage us on to the end. It was lovely also to meet the generous owner of this beautiful spot, Mr Edgar Bannister (now deceased.) Liz had arranged for her masseur Peter Olechowski to come up for the day, and Bev and John kindly cleared their tent to set up Our Massage Parlour! He arrived at 10 o'clock and over the day had 9 eager customers - not all of them riders.



In between massages, Anthony Steele and Kerry Knott ran a shuttle service down to the end of the creek near the Meadowbank Dam in the back of their utes, where we were able to swim and kayak as well. Some of us were surprised to meet a very romantic couple in a motor launch around a bend in the river, while others were hoping for a little less wildlife - like a platypus!

Our helpful farrier Jeff Le Fevre and his girlfriend Sam arrived to deal with additional shoes during the day and they stayed on for a delicious barbeque tea provided by Kerry Knott, along with two magnificent desserts provided by Karen. The party went long into the night with lots of fun being had by all. Whether you went to bed early or not there wasn't much chance of sleeping until all the revellers had retired!

DAY 18 SUNDAY 3rd FEBRUARY 2008

Jones River to Gienora (27.1 kms)

Or “Meeting the Bush Tucker Man”

Elizabeth Shears and “Boronia” joined us for this leg, bringing the family along to see us all off. We rode up the hill from the campsite at 8.30 after many photos. We had great views over Meadowbank Dam even though it was an overcast day which again threatened rain, and as we entered Rockmount Road it began to drizzle. We stopped on the verge on Ellendale Road and clustered around a tiny radio to hear Helen speaking to Chris Wisby live on his ABC programme. She spoke so well and remembered everything -we were all very proud of her. Even the horses stood squashed together without wriggling or niggling as if they were



listening too.

Just after we had turned off the road and into the old Tip Site we were surprised to see a caravan, with Chris and Catherine sitting waiting for us! Chris Boden (the Bush Tucker Man) had cooked us a very yummy morning tea of Jam Tarts! He had strung a hitching rope up for us between the trees, and while Cat went around offering the horses a drink, we enjoyed cups of tea and tarts. After this lovely break we remounted and headed up the steep bushy track and across the

fantastic “Meadowbank” property. We had a couple of super canters up the sloping paddocks and along to the airstrip before heading down into the valley. Just before we reached the Meadowbank road we stopped for lunch at a water hole.

We wandered out onto Meadowbank Road, savouring the views of the Derwent as it rolled down the valley, then over the Tyenna River Bridge, where we found water running down along the roadside in a culvert which enabled us to give the horses another drink.

Reaching the magnificent driveway of Fenton Forest with its Poplars lining the road, we met a kindly neighbour who opened the rather difficult gate for us. He told us he had heard Helen on the radio and had been looking out for us to appear. Again, we thought we were rather famous! We met the farm manager a little further in, and he said he had heard her as well and had been keeping an eye out for us too.

We climbed the huge rolling hills, following the fence lines until the (now tiny) town of Glenora spread out below us with it's bright green rows of hops all lined up neatly and protective lines of poplars in between. We waved to Helen, John and Bev so far below us at the campsite at the Glenora District High School. Our little wooden shelter in the school grounds was very protected and cosy. Then it was the usual routine - horses, showers, tents and tea - Bev's Thai Chicken!



DAY 19 MONDAY 4th FEBRUARY 2008

Glenora to Lachlan (29.9 kms)

“The Best Pies in Australia” Or “Bet Your Bums are Sore!”



Following the now usual morning pack ups and a heartfelt ‘Thank You’ to Lynne and Clayton at Glenora District High School for the use of their excellent camping facilities, we headed off towards Bushy Park with Helen following in the car and float to provide an escort to the Lyell Highway. The scenery looking back down the valley was beautiful as we trotted in single file a lot of the way (where we could get off the bitumen.) The horses were marvellous, managing to cope easily with a huge B-Double log truck that came around a corner from behind and did a

good job to slow down before he was on us!

We covered the 5.8km in 45 minutes and after crossing the Lyell Highway we stopped to give the horses a drink from the float. We walked on foot for a while along the gravel road, until the going headed uphill. We climbed steadily up to a lookout where the view was incredible up the valley showing where we had come. The surrounding farmland looked parched and brown all around us here.

Upon finally reaching the top of the climb, and stopping again to give the horses a drink from the float, we started down the long, winding and often dangerously slippery road towards Magra. It was quite hot and the road seemed to go on forever, with the bitumen slippery and



the verge almost non-existent in a lot of places, so it made for very slow and careful going. We saw a rare snake on the side of the road and then reached the outskirts of ‘civilization.’ We had just begun to talk about the best place to stop for lunch when we stumbled upon The Magra Shop, which boasted a large and very attractive National Pies sign. None of us could resist the call of ‘Junk Food’ or the fact that there was a very handy hitching rail next door. We tied up and stampeded into the shop. Those pies were the best we had ever tasted! As we sat eating on the next door neighbour’s stone wall, the owner Mr Doug King popped out to offer us water for the horses and cups of tea and coffee for us. (He and his wife had heard our spot on the radio too.) We gratefully accepted the hose and bucket he provided for the horses and they all drank thirstily.

Our next challenge was the crossing of the busy New Norfolk bridge which we discussed travelling down the road past Fairview Primary School. Marlene Bone, who had done some work on the Tas Trail and had been following our progress on the website popped out here to say “Hello” to us. We were beginning to feel even more like Celebrities.

The horses all coped well crossing this bridge (most didn’t really even notice after some of the bridges we had been over), but we were quite surprised at how much traffic banked up behind us. Blair Richards was true to her word and took some great photos of us for the article she wrote about our trip.

Past the round-about and along towards Kensington Park a lady watering her nature strip had a quick chat. She asked where we had come from, and on hearing the reply “Latrobe” commented — “Bet your bums are sore!”

The trip to Lachlan was uneventful, with quite a lot of the verge wide enough at times to have a trot, but we were very pleased to see the Lachlan township appear and then the Recreation Ground where Bev, John, Helen and Peter O’Keefe and Rosemary Cloak were waiting to welcome us.

Following the setting up of the electric yard and some of the tents we had a nice cuppa in the wooden shelter shed and then prepared for dinner at the very hospitable Gavin & Yvonne’s Lachlan Valley Food and Wine Restaurant next door. We met Gavin and Yvonne and their family (a cheeky young golden retriever called “Saatchi” and his mother “Rani” and a little black piglet in the back garden!) We had booked out the entire place as



we had 28 for dinner, due to quite a few members of the Tas Trail Committee arriving to see our photos so far, and hear our stories of the trip so far, as well as the two Lynne's better halves Glenn and Roger who brought up a new battery for Lynne's car and to say 'G'day.' Following our film night and an excellent meal we said our Goodbyes and headed off to bed. Leanne, Lynne L, Lynne W and Rosemary decided that they would sleep under the stars (well almost,) setting up a slumber party in the shelter shed to save putting up tents.

DAY 20 TUESDAY 5th FEBRUARY 2008

Lachlan to Judbury (33.3 kms)

Or "Up & Over the Mountain" Or "Murders in the Mist"



John Robb and "Mirth" arrived this morning to ride part of the way with us up the Jeffreys Track. We left our new friends, Gavin and Yvonne, after the photo line-up at 8.40 and set off in warm sunshine. It promised to be a hot day and we were a little concerned about finding water for the horses. As we headed up the Jeffreys Track a car whizzed up to us and a lady leapt out, saying she had been following our progress on the website (which Chris Boden had been keeping up to date), and had then tracked us by following the horse manure on the road.

Her name was Penny Lamming (from Derwent Valley Riding Club). She wanted to wish us well for the final stages of our journey. As we gained altitude the weather began to change and we rode into drizzly mist. Ambling along the Jefferys Track a discussion between Lynne L, Lynne W, Liz and Lyndon developed. Having spent a tangible amount of the climb looking down into the impenetrable bush in the gullies as we rode along, we were wondering how easy it would be to commit the "perfect murder" and hide the body in one of them! We said goodbye to John and "Mirth" at the White Timber Mountain track and continued through this beautiful forest. The going was very rocky and rough underfoot."Dan" had a bad stumble and struggled to keep his feet, crashing hard onto his knees and scraping his fetlocks as well. After getting off and tending to all his grazes with the always helpful purple spray, we plodded on. We stopped for lunch at the now dried-up water hole. We only stayed for about 30 minutes as it was quite cool and cloudy. We were now beginning to find streams and puddles to water the horses along the way. Then we began the long descent down to Judd's Creek, where we again had a short break before finishing the 8km down Judd's Road to our campsite at the Judbury Recreation Ground.

After such a long, tough day we found it disappointing that there was very little space available for the horses - particularly as we had our last rest day before reaching our goal. John, Bev



and Helen had set up a long, narrow electric yard as the small permanent yard could only cater for “Sim” and “Robbie” our two smallest horses. The electric yard seemed to be filled with bull-ants and had to be negotiated around the cricket nets as the cricket team wanted to use them for practice. While we were in discussion Lyndon asked why we couldn’t use the paddock straight across the road. He and “Jack” marched across to speak to the residents, offering a pony ride for the children of the house the next day. Permission granted, we took the horses over, filled up the water containers from the handily placed tap on the corner of the building at the Recreation Ground, and proceeded to set up our tents beside the very pretty Huon River.

We had our tea in the shelter shed, being entertained by the cricket practice until our beds called.

DAY 21 WEDNESDAY 6th FEBRUARY 2008

Judbury REST DAY

Or “Rider Survivor” or “Pony Rides, Plotting & Paddling in Puddles”

After a lovely lie in we again lined up for our usual Trail Rest Day Brekkie of Bacon, the famous Clifton Eggs, Sausages & Tomatoes at about 10 o’clock.

Our day’s jobs included writing in the Travel Diary, feeding and watering the horses, as well as doing our washing. Following these it was time for Pony Rides for the children from across the road and for John and Bev. John had finally let slip that he would like to ‘have a go’ on a horse, so while Lyndon had “Jack” saddled up, he was hoisted on board for a walk around the Oval. Bev would also have liked a

turn, but the height off the ground was rather too off-putting for her to make the final ascent into the saddle.

After this entertainment a follow up on the “perfect murder” plot was begun. Today’s discussion was more along the lines of a ‘Conspiracy Theory’ as to whether this trip was really “Rider Survivor”; whether the first person into Dover would win the Million Dollars; and therefore how to knobble the other riders in order to be the triumphant winner. With no real end to the plotting, everyone then went on their separate ways to amuse themselves for the rest of the day.



We had a chat with our friend John Woolley and his wife in the playground with their grandchildren, and then Lynne W and Lynne L decided to go swimming in the river- Robyn had some concern that they would be swept away and have to be rescued in Huonville, so she went with them to write some notes in her diary and keep an eye on proceedings. She needn’t have worried though, as the depth actually made it hard to get wet at all. Both Lynnes crawled around on their tummies for awhile before surrendering and sitting in the deepest puddle they

could find.

Afterwards a few of us went into Huonville to buy more BBQ food for tea, as we had been invited to Robyn's brother's home at Glen Huon that night. Bev, John and Leanne decided to have a 'quiet night in, so most of us went along to tea. We had a lovely shower in a real bathroom for a change, and caught up with Robyn's niece Claire and her husband Luuk with their newest baby, a very cute Golden Retriever puppy. Heading back at about 8.30 the drizzling rain began to get heavier. Lynne L borrowed a coat from the Firies who were having their weekly practice night and put the rugs on the horses. We then had a cuppa with the Firies and caught up on all the local gossip. We met one of them (a young girl), who with her girlfriend, had WALKED the whole Trail last year in 18 days!

DAY 22 THURSDAY 7th FEBRUARY 2008

Judbury to Geeveston (30kms) Or

“Brandy Returns” Or “Bears n B&B's”

After a rainy night we woke to a cloudy but clear morning. At 6.30 we fed the horses, began pulling our tents down, eating breakfast and getting ready to ride by 8.30. Both Helen and “Brandy” and Helen's Dad, John Robb and “Mirth” had arrived, as they were planning to join us for a part of the way.



Our first challenge of the morning was the crossing of the large bridge at Judbury, which had surprised us by being quite a busy road, with a lot of trucks and a sweeping bend which obscured anything on the bridge from approaching traffic. Lyndon hung back to warn traffic from behind and we safely crossed and headed into Sheoak Road. All went well until about the 6km mark, then as we were trotting along, the horses squashed up together, causing a chain reaction which resulted in poor “Brandy” being kicked. Although he seemed to be OK, Helen and John decided that they would

head on back to the floats and organise to get him shod for the final ride into Dover. A very kind local lady named Pip Paul who lived in Judd's Road did this job. The rest of us continued on our way encountering showers of icy rain in between weak sunny breaks.

We had our morning tea break at the top of the steep climb through the pine plantation and then headed up the track towards Bermuda Road.

We came across some very big forestry machinery and then had a good trot up Bermuda Road before moving into the Forestry roads. Unfortunately the going on these roads was very rough and hard, with large chunky rocks making trotting difficult. It was going to be a long, slow day until we reached Four Foot Plain with its lovely button grass tracks. The ride down into Fairy Falls Road was really pleasant - very rain-forestry with lots of manferns and dense scrub. Everyone was tired and quite contemplative today. We reached our destination at Heritage Park, Geeveston at 3.30, sorted the horses out in their lovely safe yards, and wandered into the main street for a very welcome cappuccino and slice.

Helen and John joined us, closely followed by Wendy and Ashley who appeared as we went back to feed the horses and set up our tents before heading out to dinner at The Con-

tented Bear. They had decided to B&B it for the night rather than putting up tents, so we had a visit to their very cute accommodation at The Bears Went Over the Mountain. The whole place was filled with Teddy Bears of all shapes and sizes.

Following another delicious meal, it was off to bed early for the BIG FINAL DAY!



DAY 23 FRIDAY 8th FEBRUARY 2008

Geeveston to Dover (30kms)

Or “Whoo Hoo We Made It” Or “Dining in Downtown Dover!”

We set off promptly at 8.30 with the sun on our backs but a hint of Autumn in the air, with leaves dropping from the creek willows as we rode up Kermandie Road. With John, Helen, Wendy and Ashley we had 10 riders for this final day's ride.

There were superb views from the Blue Gum Saddle, but there had been lots of logging around. We travelled steadily along the very beautiful rainforest track along Boneys Road and across Swearin' Bob's Plain. We ate our morning tea at the old Oyster Shell dumping site in lovely warm sunshine, with the horses picking the heads off thistles when they could reach them.

On along the logging roads we had a few trots. A huge log truck came un-announced around a blind corner upsetting “Wirra” but the rest of the horses were pretty ‘Ho hum’. We found water for the horses in puddles, a stream, and then a fire-fighting water hole. On up through newly planted forests with great views (and photo opportunities) into the South West and Finders Peak.

When we reached Stormhill Road we decided to stop for lunch. It was still bright sunshine and we found some grassy patches to relax on, just before the track which descends gradually towards Dover.

Our last 7 kms actually went quite quickly, although we were caught in a rain storm just before we reached the crest of the hill overlooking our destination.



We stopped to appreciate the fantastic views over Dover, and saw Chris way down below driving up to meet us. As the rain had stopped we were able to take our coats off and wear our Clifton T Shirts down the hill, with bright sunshine welcoming us. Chris yelled out to us - “Put your hands in the air!” - a super feeling!

Beth Robb and her friend Chris were there to greet us, along with the amazing Bev and John - complete with Champagne, Party Poppers and a Champagne flute for each of

us covered in little red stars and Lemonade for Ashley! LOTS of photos at the Finishing Post.....

We then rode slowly along to the hospitable Clark family's paddock (past the pub and up a side road.)

We settled the horses just as the rain started again and put out the last of the hay, then into the floats and back to the Pub to SHOWER and eat dinner with all of our family and friends who came to celebrate our achievement and PARTY.!

