



April 2018

Next Ride

When: **To Be Confirmed**

Where:

Next Meeting

When: **After ride , 22nd April**

Where: To Be Confirmed

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Upcoming Ride

The executive is endeavoring to get a ride organised for this month, along with our quarterly meeting.

If anyone else has a ride they can pull together quickly, please let Debby Sharbaugh know ASAP.

Ride Report

David has prepared a report on two ATHRA rides he participated in during February and March.

Once again in early March Geordie and I ventured into Victoria's north-east. This time we travelled with members of Kyneton & District Trail Riders to Tolmie for a 3-day weekend. Never been there before! It was a very early start for us, with Geordie being loaded at 4.30am and getting underway in the dark. Initially I had planned to drive up Friday night after work but was glad I'd changed plans when we encountered the very windy road up to Tolmie. Wouldn't have like to have done that after night fall.

We arrived at the beautiful Tolmie Recreation Reserve about 8.45am, in time to get him fed and watered before morning muster. A nice group of some 15 riders rode out into the bush at 10am, for a short ride of 22kms. We rode through bush tracks and gravel roads before we headed down a rather steep and windy 4x4 track down to Blowfly Hut, which sits just above a small stream. This was our lunch stop, on a rather warm day. After lunch it was a bit of a crazy canter back up the steep track towards the top of the valley. What fun that was. And all our horses managed it well.

That night we all piled into the courtesy bus which delivered us at the Tolmie Tavern for a night of merriment and good food (oh, and a fair bit of alcohol too!!). We were serenaded by a few different bands over the course of the evening and were surprised that a pub in the middle of nowhere could attract such a big patronage. Some of us even gave the pool table a workout.



The Tolmie group



Amy looking reflective at Stringybark Creek

Ride Report Cont.

Sunday morning was a bacon & eggs cook up, along with pancakes (enough to feed an army!) compliments of Amy and her club members. It was a cool morning so the cooked breaky went down well. Sunday's ride was to be a longer one of about 30kms, as we rode through the pine plantations and state forest to get to Stringback Creek, the site of the famous shoot out between Ned Kelly and the Constabulary. Here we had lunch and a history lesson as we traced the events of that long-ago day. After lunch it was back through the bush, getting back around 3.30pm. It had been another warm day, so we were all rather bushed and in need of alcoholic revival!

Sunday saw us all pitch in towards a great BBQ dinner, complete with desserts. After that it was time for a game of cards. I can't remember the name of the card game, but it was the most politically incorrect game I've ever played, and it generated loads of hysterical laughter well into the night! The campsite went quiet about 11pm and we all enjoyed a sleep-in the following morning, before packing up and heading back home. What a fun weekend it had been, with a great bunch of riders from various other clubs across Victoria. Well done Kyneton.

A week later saw Geordie and I participate in a ride a bit closer to home. The Ballarat Social Trail Riders had asked me way back at the beginning of 2017 to assist them plan a ride incorporating a trip on the steam train from Maldon to Muckleford. Due to various reasons it took until March 18th this year for it to eventuate. My role had been to provide some local contacts, scout the locations and float parking, and plan the trail ride back to Maldon.

It was a very unfriendly morning with gale force winds, windblown dust clouds, some pathetic showers and colder temps. But we still had about 15 riders arrive at Muckleford to register



Find us on Facebook!

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/BTR.ATHRA/>

Ride Report Cont.

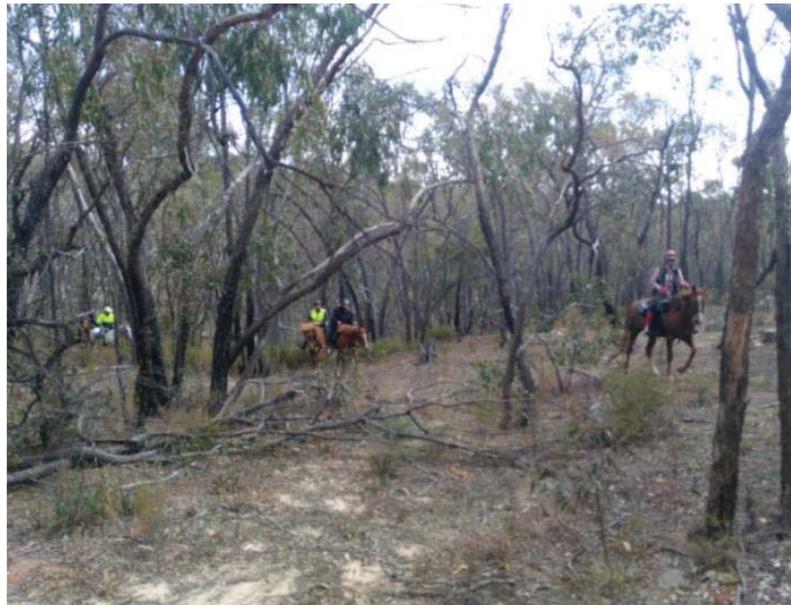
for the ride (3 of us from BTR, Jennifer Williams, Debbie Austin and myself), saddle up and tether our horses to trees, before relocating our floats back to the Maldon Railway Station precinct in preparation for our steam train trip back. Fortunately, Alan Salter had conscripted 4 or so volunteers to stay behind and mind our horses while the rest of us rode the "Iron Horse" back. Our arrival at the station caused some upset amongst the horses, despite the train engineers creeping in and using minimal steam. That coupled with the huge wind gusts and mini dust storms left a few of the horses very agitated, which caused an accident shortly after leaving the station, on our way to the Rail Trail. No major damage done but it was time for that rider to retire to a safer mode of transport, as we set off before the next steam train was scheduled to arrive.

The train trip down from Maldon was rather fun, but brief. One of our group was celebrating a birthday, so it was a case of lamingtons all round, with a candle topping Birthday Girl's lamington. That set the tone for a rather friendly, relaxed day for us all. Once we got going, we had a few kms beside the railway line and then it was off into the bush, along some nice tracks I'd managed to fine. I'd set the trip for about 15kms in total, but after lunch we again came back towards the railway line and found that we had to waste some time so that we didn't arrive back at the station just when the train was scheduled to pass our floats again.

So, we decided to head off into uncharted areas and see if we could again regain the station by another route. Wrong! I earned the nickname of "Dead End Dave" as we trundled

through the bush, and through a rather deep erosion gully before coming to a stop at a dead end; locked gate. Bummer! Nothing for it but to turn around and backtrack. It was a bit of fun and everyone enjoyed the detour, and it added 5kms or so to our ride, but it did mean we missed that steam train passing the floats, as planned.

We were able then to take our time to unsaddle, chat a bit, say goodbyes, before loading the horses and heading home again. It was a fun sort of day to help with planning, and everyone got into the mood of it too, and made the most of the ugly weather. Thank you to Alan Salter and the Ballarat Social Trail Horse Riders Club for inviting us along on the ride and for making us all feel so welcome.



Just read all the details please...

Something that I have noticed happening of late, is people in all clubs, reading the headline of an event and the date it's taking place, but not all the details contained in the information.

This is annoying for the ride coordinator as that person then must answer numerous questions (usually) when the answers are clearly articulated in the ride info details. Things like "do I pay a ride fee?", "who to?", "how long is the ride?", and my favourite "what time do I have to be there?". The list of needless questions goes on, and I notice this with all clubs that I have ridden with.

The ride information is published for the benefit of those attending so that they can all make the necessary arrangements to facilitate an on-time arrival and an on-time ride out. This helps the ride officials who have enough tasks to attend to without continual interruptions on the day, or indeed in the days leading up to the ride/event. Also, please be aware of any RSVP requirements in advance of a cut-off date.

So please can you read all the details contained in any ride information details, not once but twice so that you are aware of all the requirements.

Curio: the Legend

David came across this while researching his upcoming ride in South Australia. Words by Fred Hausler

Australian race goers remember Phar Lap as the greatest of them all, and Garryowen is just as famous in the show ring, but when the men who battle the buckjumpers gather to discuss the best that ever was, a little strawberry roan mare's raw courage and talent places her well above all others in the hall of fame. Anyone who saw Keith Steven's famous photo of the first time Curio was ever ridden wondered how Alan Woods ever managed to get back in the saddle.

Macumba Station in the far North of South Australia holds the secret of Curio's birth. The heart of this 4000 square mile station is some 25 miles north-east of Oodnadatta and less than 60 miles from the fringe of the Simpson desert with its seemingly endless near-parallel sand ridges, restless, shifting and forbidding. The name Kidman has had a long, unbroken association with this station, a mere fragment of the vast sprawling empire over which the Cattle King rules – an empire which at its zenith covered a breath-taking area of 100,000 square miles. It was here at Macumba in July 1945 that Reg Williams (RM) wrote the first lines in

the saga of Curio. Reg was on a dual mission; 10 coloured horses were to be selected for Adelaide buyers and 10 likely buckjumpers were required by the Marrabel Rodeo Committee. It was but a small consignment and numerically it suffers by comparison with the mobs of 2000 Kidmans which during and immediately after World War 1 arrived at Kapunda by road, but it included Curio, the most famous animal that ever left the quiet, unpolluted inland for the outside world. None knew it then!

Upon arrival at Saddleworth the horses were walked to Marrabel in charge of Johnny Cadell. On the journey there, Curio, as though loathe to be parted from the rugged outback which had been her home, several times jacked up on Johnny, but that infinite patience and understanding with horses which seemed to be born in him enabled him to coax her southwards to her new home, Marrabel. Still only a 3-year-old, she made her debut as a buckjumper in October of that same year. There was no fanfare or trumpets to herald her appearance – she was just one of the string of 10 "might or might not"

buckjumpers on trial for a regular place in the Marrabel team. Noel Bottom, a rider of more than average ability, drew her, and was disposed of quickly and clearly.

However, it is doubtful if any other than Noel remembered her. He was over for Marrabel again in 1946 and by a strange coincidence again drew Curio. Once again with mystifying speed and power, Curio repeated her 1945 success. The Marrabel committee sat up and took notice. She was served up again and this time Les Cowan, one of the best rough-riders South Australia had produced since the days of World Champion Andy Middleton, was to be the guinea pig. Later that same day Lou Reichstein completed her hat trick when he bit the dust in the surcingle event – again very quickly. Curio had graduated. Rough-riders gave her more than a passing glance. She was a challenge that could not be ignored.

Johnny Pearce, "The Iron Man" prevailed upon Harold Rowett to elevate Curio to the role of Feature Horse and asked to be given the first ride on her. And so, it came to pass! The record book reveals that Curio

Curio: The Legend Cont.

again emerged triumphant after a short, sharp, decisive battle. Even the Iron Man had been 'ironed out'. Five wins in a row!

Curio continued on her merry way. The name Curio was by now a national one. Around distant campfires, in busy shearing sheds and wherever ringers and rough-riders gathered, her name became a byword. Increasing crowds flocked to Marrabel to see this rugged, tempestuous ball of fury in full cry.

The stage was set for an epic battle when in 1953 Alan Woods, the man who was destined to put Feature Horses out of business, was the chosen one to do battle with Curio. Those who were privileged to see this contest will never forget it. Fortunes fluctuated with bewildering speed. The movie camera captured this drama most faithfully for it showed all phases, but a still photograph taken by Keith Stevens is particularly revealing.

Anyone not knowing the ultimate result and viewing the photograph of Alan hovering high above Curio's back with the offside iron most peculiarly placed, would cheerfully have laid a TV set to a grass seed about him ever getting back in the saddle. But

get back he did, and he rode out the storm. In doing so he set in motion one of the most heated controversies that has ever followed a feature ride. The decision was disputed but the fact remains – Curio was ridden. Many thousands poured into Marrabel for the return fight between these two in 1954. Alan Woods, conscious of the crowd's partisanship, was grimly determined. He survived and tempered Curio's early attempt at a K.O. and at five seconds, conscious that the crisis had passed, settled down in his own inimitable fashion to show how champions ride on a champion. There could be no argument about the decision this time.

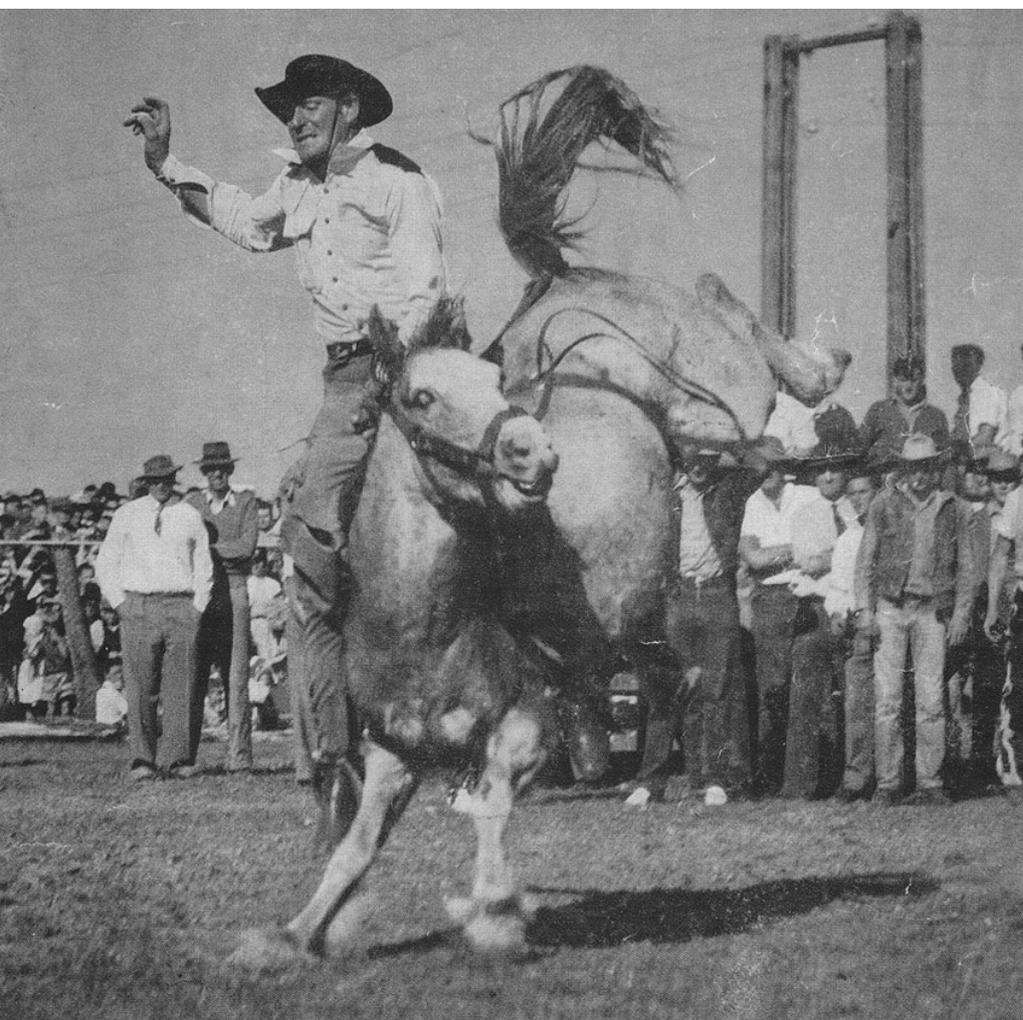
Alan Woods had given a superb exhibition of rough-riding. It was not a happy day for Curio or her fans and, when she came out later in the day and Buddy Gravener was still aboard after 10 seconds (although the judges ruled that he had touched down), there were many who feared that this grand brumby mare had been finally tamed. Spring and Rodeo came again to Marrabel in 1955, but Curio had other thoughts more exciting than Rodeo on her mind that year; at the age of

13 she was to become a mother for the first time. The rodeo did not seem quite the same at Marrabel that year. There was something missing.

Was 1956 the year of her greatest triumph? She and her six-months-old chestnut colt foal, Son of Curio began what was to prove a new era – Curio and family versus the rough-riders. Once again Curio moved up into Chute 1. Once again, the crowd waited hushed and expectant with eyes riveted. The question which was uppermost in many minds, "Will she come back?" The answer was quickly given and reported in Hoofs & Horns thus;

"Curio! That rugged equine rock, on which during the last decade, the fond hopes of many of Australia's most renowned rough-riders have been wrecked, stole the show with a well-staged and devastating comeback. The stirring strains of 'Curio' froze 8000 spectators into a state of hushed expectancy as with eyes riveted on Chute 1 they watched dusky Australian, Billy Austin, clamp down on the celebrated strawberry roan outlaw. The gates swung wide and Curio with disarming nonchalance loped on to the arena. The crowd's sighs of disappointment were strangled at birth for suddenly it happened. There was again that well-remembered shoulder drop, twist and 'suck back' and Billy was with the birds. Time 2 1 seconds. Then how the welkin rang!"

Yes, Curio was back! There was an even more stirring and moving moment yet to come. Before the applause had died down, the Son of Curio was let out to join his triumphant mother in the arena. This too was recorded in Hoofs and Horns; "And then there swept from the still-open chute with shrill piercing neigh, pricked ears and clean prancing legs, a rich chestnut foal with an even white blaze, but six-months-old. He reached the centre of the arena, wheeled with the majesty of a thoroughbred, and shrilling youthful defiance, pranced disdainfully towards the Riders' stand, where the sole victor and the many vanquished by his mighty dam stood and watched. The Son of Curio had thrown down the gauntlet!"



Curio: The Legend Cont.

Curio did not take an active part in the 1957 rodeo but her fans were warmly appreciative of the appearance of her and her son, as they rushed on to the arena through a guard of honour composed of riders whose hopes Curio had halted in years gone by. Alan Henschke, a fine all-round horseman from Mildura was set the task of stopping her in 1958. The contest didn't go the distance. The result was no-ride. Curio was a freak for contorted effort. She was the only buckjumper whose head and tail seemed to be heading in the same direction as she wound up for the KO. It was as though she wanted to look up and see for herself whether her hindquarters were sufficiently high in the air. She need not have worried as they were, and her hind legs were even higher.

It was left to her son to uphold the honour of the family and he did his job well. It was an auspicious debut – for Son of Curio – not for Mildura rider, Max Healey, who won the draw from the hat. Son of Curio, unrestrained and sensing freedom, burst tempestuously into the arena. There was a flash as an equine rocket, on twinkling hind feet, pawed challengingly at the sky. Then, as though conscious of an irritation near his withers, this breeding experiment exploded. Healey hurtled earthwards. In 1.2 seconds a dream had become a reality.

In 1959 Curio was again the feature horse. The story followed a now familiar pattern. True, the crowd was larger – 11,000 was an all-time record – but the silence was just as deep, just as intense. There was still that same air of expectancy. The booths were deserted. All eyes were on Brian Gill as he clamped down carefully.

Then the gate swung wide and Curio flashed from the chute. Momentarily it seemed as though it was not to be – but then it came., She stretched herself with girth almost touching the ground. A convulsive tremor, sudden and devastating, swept through her body and Brian, kneeling far above her wither, had had his moment. Curio drifted away from beneath him and all was over. Only two seconds and she had the job done. The stillness was swept away by a spontaneous burst of acclamation.

More than 16,000 came to Marrabel in 1964 for what was to be Curio's last appearance as a buckjumper. I had hoped that she would have been retired in all her glory before those who had never seen her buck at her terrifying best began to doubt the merit of her unique record. It was not to be! She was again ridden for the full 10 seconds, this time by Dick White, who was at the time South Australia's outstanding rough-rider. He did the job almost casually!

Curio was but a shadow of what she had been. The spirit was still willing but the flesh was now weak. Gone was that grinding, pounding spread of forefeet, with simultaneous lift of hindquarters, high in the air, and hoofs, even higher.

Gone was that convulsive, sinuous shudder which rippled from step to stern. The whirlpool of destruction, as

exemplified by her famous suckback and lightning shaft to the off, was something of the past. Even her tail, for long a buckjumping barometer, no longer waved high in contemptuous triumph. The end of an era had come. From now on her sons were on their own. Curio passed away in 1970.

How much Marrabel and rodeo in general owe Curio can never be assessed. During her lifetime, attendances at Marrabel trebled. She made rodeo to what it is today, and its people will always remember the legend, Curio. As a Feature Horse she created a legend that will continue way beyond our time. During the 25 years of her association with Marrabel she worked, in all, less than 5 minutes! Her leisure hours were many, for neither she or her 4 sons, Son of Curio, Curio's Special, Curiosity, and Curio's Fairwell were ever asked to work anywhere else but at Marrabel.



Curio: The Legend Cont.

In between rodeo's she watched (within sight of chute 1) the seasons come and go, deservedly she lived life to the full. And so now her remains are buried within the rodeo grounds at Marrabel, her home forever, and her resting place is marked for all to see by a bronze plaque. Her spirit remains unconfined. It lives as a legend and has become part of Australia's heritage.

From out of the desert she came unbroken and untamed! She left us still unbroken and untamed. Her passing was peaceful – she did not suffer. Curio became in her own lifetime a legend – a legend that is destined to live long after those who loved her are forgotten.

Ride Calendar 2018

January	21st January	Campbell's Creek Ride	Sally Foran
February	18th February	Limestone Track Winery Ride & BBQ, Guildford	David Wallace
March	10th-12th March	Barmah Forest Camp (Labour Day w/e)	David Wallace
March	30th March - 2nd April	Easter Holidays	
April	22nd April	TBC	
May			
June	16th-17th June	Weekend Winery Lunch Ride	Alison Jeynes
July	15th July	Newstead Pub Ride	Debby Sharbaugh
August	19th August	Avoca Day Ride	Jennifer Williams
September			
October	21st October	Mt. Cole Ride, Possible Camp	Cecelia & Vanessa
November	18th November	Taradale Ride	Justine Image
December	16th December	BTR Christmas Ride	TBC