

# THE WALER HORSE – A UNIQUE AUSTRALIAN.

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Submitted in partial requirement for the degree of Journalism  
and Media Studies at the University of Tasmania.

October 2004

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Thesis  
ROBINSON  
M.J.M.S  
2004

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### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Thanks to Lindsay Simpson for her guidance and encouragement.

Thanks to Prudence Cotton and Luella Meaburn for welcoming me into their lives, and helping me learn about Walers through their unique Australians - Poppy and Paterson.

Thanks also to Walers - Dardanelle and Anzac Parade.

I especially thank Jacqui and Ben for allowing me to be part of a Great Adventure.

Long may it continue!

P.R.    OCTOBER 2004

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*RUNNYMEDE, TASMANIA*

JULY 7<sup>TH</sup>.2004

The Horse-Handler enters the round yard but the wild colt munching hay takes little notice until she removes the remaining hay. That gets his attention and he looks at the Handler suspiciously, out of one eye.

She talks to him softly, reassuringly. He is not used to such close contact and reacts nervously. He stands very still and his sides quiver, his breath coming noisily, steaming in the icy Tasmanian air. He begins trotting around the yard close to the fence, hooves thumping on the muddy ground. Sometimes he snorts, tossing his head.

The Handler has a small whip and she flicks it - not on the horse, but behind it.

Around and around he runs, with the Handler standing in the centre of the yard, and turning her body in his direction. Sometimes she walks towards him. Whenever he stops, she flicks the whip. He is a prey animal. In his mind she is a predator. He is afraid to face her, but watches her side on, with one cautious eye, ready for flight.

The sky is gloomy and it is bitterly cold. I'm dressed in thermals and waterproofs and I huddle under a tree for a little shelter as I watch.

The colt sometimes breaks into a canter then just when I'm beginning to lose concentration he turns and looks directly at the Handler.

This is what she has been waiting for.

She immediately turns her back, letting the whip fall to her side, and walking away.

The process is repeated until the colt stops running, and stands irresolutely by the fence facing her.

She picks up a long branch from a gum tree, with some leaves on the end, and uses it to scratch the horse's nose, then his neck and sides. She talks to him, as she replaces the branch with her whip. It has a different smell but the colt continues to stand quietly. The Handler offers hay, and the horse eats it from her hand. She rubs his neck and side with her hand. The horse is wary but doesn't run.

The Handler picks up a halter, and holds it with the hay. The colt lifts his head up and takes a step back. The Handler gently slides the rope over his neck, then talking to him quietly and reassuring she slips it over his nose and up over his head, attaching it at the side. It all happens so calmly and naturally it's hard to believe I've been watching a wild horse that has never been touched by a human before.

SANDFORD, TASMANIA

JULY 16<sup>TH</sup>. 1974

*At 18 years of age I had several boyfriends. One was Jeffrey who drove a racing car. He was also a keen horse rider, and managed to persuade me to go to Sandford, near Hobart for a 'ride'. I knew nothing about horses, so Jeff organised for me to have a beginners' class in the morning, while he was in a more advanced class. What a humiliating experience.*

*I was with children. I couldn't climb onto the horse without the teacher pushing my bottom up, and I had no notion whatsoever about controlling the animal in any way. The horse – I think I nicknamed him Devil – was badly behaved. I kept waiting for the instructor to notice and give me a smaller, more controllable mount. It didn't happen. The instructor was probably too polite to tell me that the problem was nothing to do with the horse.*

*After what seemed too short a time to learn anything, the class was over, and I still didn't have a clue how to control the beast. Oh, yes, the beast had already summed me up, and was being as naughty as a disobedient child. He kicked, bit and pushed other horses. He even tried to jump over a fence. Fortunately he couldn't, because I wouldn't have been able to stop him.*

*Jeff came and found me, all bright-eyed from his fun morning, and oblivious to the agony I had been in. They were going for a ride in the bush, he told me. Would I like*

*to go? Well, the alternative was to sit in Jeff's car alone for hours with nothing to do.*

*What could I say? We'll all help you, everyone said. You'll be fine.*

*I'll never forget that ride! During the next two hours, everyone in the group advised me about how to sit, how to get into rhythm with the animal (I never got that) how to hold the reins, how to stop it (Devil) from kicking their horses, etc, etc. All I tried to do was stay alive and on it's back. The worst time was when we came over the crest of a hill. The riding school was down below (relief) and I looked for the path we would ride down, to get there.*

*But oh no there was no path.*

*We went straight down.*

*Have you ever seen film of mountain horses going slipping and sliding down what looks like a perpendicular slope? Well that's what it was like. I was terrified, and clung onto the reins, which made my horse toss his head around and try to throw me off. Everyone was yelling at me to hold the reins loosely but I had to hold on to something! Somehow we made it to the bottom in one piece. I struggled off the awful brute's back and demanded to be taken home. Now.*

\* \* \* \*

**The first horses, Cape Colony Barbs, arrived on the continent of Australia with the first fleet in 1788. These were to be the foundation stock from which the Australian horse, the Waler, would develop. Australians called these horses 'stock horses'.**

**When the remount trade began, supplying horses to the British army in India, the name 'waler' was coined to describe these tough, durable horses from the colony of New South Wales. Even after horse breeding for export began in earnest in other parts of Australia, the name 'waler' remained.**

\* \* \* \*

As I stand in the courtyard of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery explaining the beginnings of Hobart Town settlement to tourists, I am sometimes overwhelmed to think of the enormous undertaking of the first British settlers arriving in Australia, whether voluntarily or not. It fires my imagination to picture their tiny sailing ships entering what is now Sydney Harbour. Essays written about the first horses arriving, have led me to imagine what it would have been like...

*I can see the forward hold of the Lady Penrhyn heave open, the horses that have been cooped up in the stinking dark for so long, lifting their heads and sniffing the salt air. Scents of land come to them and they move their feet restlessly...*

*A big black stallion snorts and rolls his eyes as two convicts throw a rope around his neck and hold it tightly, and two more slide a canvas lifting-frame under his belly. It is buckled firmly then the horse whinnies in fear as the frame lifts him from his feet and swings him roughly by man-hoisted crane, over the side of the ship. As his legs hit the cold water he thrashes, snorting, throwing himself around to escape. He feels the welcome of the water, but the trap of the harness.*

*The convicts waiting in the water curse and fling themselves backwards to escape the flailing hooves, then swim in quickly, ducking and diving until they have undone the rough metal buckles and extracted the canvas trap. In the same swift movement one gives the horse a hard whack on his rump, sending him swimming towards the shore. Two clumsy dinghies follow him keeping him on the pre-determined course. His feet connect with the sand and he heaves himself from the water, foam running down his shining sides. He gives a whinny of pleasure to feel solid ground beneath him then staggers as he attempts to gain his land balance.*

*By this time a mare has followed the same undignified landing, then two more mares, a colt and two fillies. They come together on the beach of Port Jackson, rolling with delight on the sand.*

\* \* \* \*

*The most I can do for my friend is to be (her) friend.*

*Henry David Thoreau*

\* \* \* \*

Jacqueline Kindblad (nee Dickson) and I first met when my family moved to Lindisfarne, on Hobart's Eastern Shore in 1954. We were in Grade three together. We shared birthdays, and a love of music. We performed Christmas concerts for family and neighbours.

Jacqui spent a large proportion of her time riding horses. I spent mine singing and entering Eisteddfods. We made no demands on each other. She rode horses, I sang.

We met for coffee at Salamanca Market one Saturday morning in April 2004.

Jacqui's eyes were shining, and her silver hair flowed around her face as we hugged hello.

"Have you heard our news?" she asked, but didn't wait for me to answer, she was so excited.

"Ben and I are going to the mainland to find some Walers, bring them back to Tassie and begin breeding all over again."

"What about the Walers you've already got?" I asked.

Jacqui had bought her first Waler stallion, Dardanelle, in 1990, and she had been very satisfied with his progeny.

"Denny's getting a bit old now. He's still breeding good babies, but I need new blood."

She and Ben had come to a crossroads, she said. They either had to abandon breeding horses all together, or begin anew.

Jacqui abandon horses? I could *never* imagine that happening.



“So, we’re going to Victoria then we’ll either travel north into New South Wales, or West towards South Australia. It’s a matter of asking the right questions, finding the right contacts, and searching until we’ve got the most authentic Walers we can.”

Her excited laughter drew more than one look from other tables.

“I know you’ve done this before.” I said. “But how will you bring them back?”

“We haven’t a clue,” she laughed. “We’ll make it up as we go along.”

I tried to imagine finding wild horses in the Australian outback, rounding them up, and finding a way to truck them back to Tasmania. I couldn’t.

Our lives had developed so differently. Although I also have a hunger for adventure, I spend a long time planning and thinking through every detail first.

I recall travelling overseas alone in 1983, to take up a Music Scholarship at the Welsh College of Music and Drama. I planned every step before I left Hobart...right down to a guided tour of Munich and Verona to hear opera (I wouldn’t have dreamed of going there alone). After that there was a Music Summer School in London, and visits to relatives in Yorkshire. My accommodation was pre-booked, and almost every day accounted for.

Jacqui is so spontaneous.

It occurred to me that in the fifty years I had known her I had never asked her how her love of horses began.

She told me about her Uncle Ted who used to be a Jackaroo in Arnhem Land. Stories about his droving days caught her imagination. Uncle Ted had a half broken horse called Dick. When he went to bring in the sheep, Jacqui, her brothers and cousins, would climb onto the tank stand in the middle of the paddock to watch.

“Uncle Ted would get hold of this horse, who’d stick his head between his knees and buck like billy oh, round and round and round us, and then he’d go flat out up the paddock and up the road. We’d be sitting there absolutely enthralled. Uncle Ted would be hanging on.”

Uncle Ted taught Jacqui to ride when she was six.

By the time she was thirteen, she had her own horse.

I smiled at my friend. We had both grown so much older, but she still had that beautiful round face and soft skin. Just a few more wrinkles – like me. Three years ago she met Ben Kindblad when she was ballroom dancing. They married eighteen months later. Ben grew up in Sweden where his favourite sport was Team Driving with horses and buggy. They had a love of horses in common, before they discovered so many other things to love about each other.

\* \* \* \*

TASMANIA.

MARCH 3<sup>RD</sup>. 1955

*When I was 10 years old I was attacked by a Cairn Terrier while having a family picnic at Salmon Ponds. As I tried to flee, the dog ran beside me, jumping up and biting me on the legs. It was a traumatic experience. From that time on, I was fearful of all strange dogs.*

*After my unpleasant experience with the horse, as an 18-year old, I gave all animals except cats, which I had always loved, a very wide berth.*

\* \* \* \*

By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, a unique Australian horse was beginning to evolve. It was a combination of many existing breeds including

Thoroughbred	Norfolk Roadster
Clydesdale	Yorkshire Coacher
Suffolk Punch	Hackney
Cleveland Bay	Arab
Lincolnshire Trotter	Percheron

Velda Chaplin. A Brief History of the Waler Horse.

“What evolved from the fusion of these breeds was a horse sought by many. From the pony he has gained agility and hardiness. From the draught, mighty bone and strength. From the Suffolk Punch, a big gut so he could do well, broad back and magnificent hindquarters. From his coaching predecessors he gained good wind, hard hooves and iron legs. From the thoroughbred he gained speed, grace, and courage, good shoulder and deep girth and well formed joints. Couple with these qualities an amazing temperament, intelligence, versatility, with a true liking for humans and you have a special horse. A unique horse.”

Breeding was encouraged, and spread throughout the country. There were no physical boundaries in the vast outback, so horses roamed freely, and developed the ability to live frugally, needing little pampering as had their forebears.

Many of the first horses that arrived in the colony came by ship from Africa. As shipping improved and steamships made travelling quicker and easier, fine-breeding animals including notable thoroughbreds arrived from Britain. Newspapers were the means by which settlers learned of the development of the horse industry.

## ***Sydney Gazette***

4<sup>th</sup> March 1804

**“...the breed of that noble animal the Horse, has experienced in this colony a valuable improvement, owing as we understand, to the munificence of his Grace the Duke of Northumberland, from whom a stallion has been brought into this colony by Major Johnston about two years since : the colts [yearlings] from which are of the most promising nature.”**

From the Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser.

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The first official meeting of the Waler Horse Society of Australia Inc. was held on the 9<sup>th</sup> April 1986 at the Empire Hotel in Hobart. The meeting was organised by Janet Lane, a twenty-five year old Waler enthusiast.

There was a good attendance – horse lovers were interested in saving the endangered Australian horse. Janet made contact with interstate horse breeders, who proved invaluable in initiating the removal and re-location of Walers from properties where they were going to be eradicated as feral pests. As a group, these Waler enthusiasts were so much more powerful than as individuals.

Three years later, when Jacqui became concerned for the plight of the Waler, she placed the following ad in The Mercury.

**THE MERCURY**

**HOBART, TASMANIA**

**12/ 2/1990**

**DO YOU LOVE HORSES?**

**ARE YOU KEEN TO SAVE THE WALER?**

**You are invited to come to a barbeque to meet others who feel the same. There will be demonstrations, and opportunities to discuss any issues you may have. Hear about what is happening to our original Australian horse, and find out what you can do to help.**

**Date: 26 /2/ 90 B.Y.O.**

**RSVP TO JACQUI PITCHER Phone 43 9987**

She was pleased with the response. Many people were interested.

Janet made contact, and told her about the Waler Horse Society of Australia Inc.

Shortly after, Jacqui became President. This enabled Janet to be more accessible for travelling throughout Tasmania to classify Walers.

\* \* \* \*

When the Boer War commenced in 1898, Australian men volunteered to join. Many of these volunteers were bushmen – rough and ready, and with an excellent knowledge of the land, and animals. Although the British Army asked for infantry, what they received was troops of mounted men, and their Australian horses - Walers both of whom proved to be invaluable. They became known for their bravery and skill.

Travelling with them to South Africa in 1899 was war correspondent, 35-year old A.B. 'Banjo' Paterson. He gave detailed descriptions of the daily struggle for survival, and the horrors of war, alongside his enthusiasm for the Light Horsemen and their Walers.

**SYDNEY MORNING HERALD 28/12/1899**

**From our war correspondent in Cape Town 2/12/1899**

**A.B. 'Banjo' Paterson**

**“When our horses came ashore after five weeks solid travelling they walked as briskly as possible, and not one of them showed the slightest wear and tear from the trip... They were led about and had a roll and a saddle was tried on one or two, and lo and behold, before the day was out they were all doing slow exercise without seeming stiff. And this after 35 days standing on a ship’s deck, sometimes in a very heavy sea...They looked light and wiry alongside the English horses, but the authorities here pronounced them the finest lot of horses yet landed... no better advertisement for the Australian horse could possibly be made. They are the sort known as ‘walers’ in India, and are first class walers at that.”**

During their training the men enjoyed the sport of riding their Walers to hunt wild emus. The Government gave approval for the wearing of an emu plume in their slouch hats. It became a distinguishing emblem of the Light Horse.

\* \* \* \*

When the First World War began in 1914, the Australian Light Horsemen and their Waler horses were sent to join the fighting in Egypt. With the New Zealanders Mounted Rifles they numbered over forty-thousand men and almost the same number of horses. They worked as a team, man and horse. They were as tough as each other. They suffered lack of food and water together, heat and privation. The men had nothing but admiration for their wonderful Walers. They said they were utterly dependable.

“Once you got a good Waler you looked after him,” said 22-year old Trooper Rex Hall.

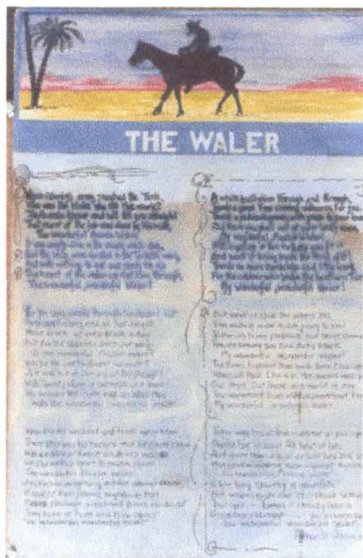
On October 30<sup>th</sup> 1917, many of these brave men and their horses became part of history, with a daring and unprecedented charge on the town of Beersheba, securing essential water wells to enable the British front line to advance.

When peace was declared, on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918, the men were horrified to learn that their horses could not return to Australia because of quarantine restrictions. They were to be sold.

The men protested so strongly that the idea of selling the Walers was abandoned. Instead, the horses were classified. Some would be sent to the Indian cavalry units, while others that were older, and in poorer condition would be shot. Many men chose to claim that their beloved and faithful horse was in a poor condition. They chose to have them shot rather than leave them to an unknown fate.

Captain Frank Hurley photographed every regiment, squadron after squadron. They held one final race meeting then the horses were led away to olive groves outside Tripoli. They were tethered, given a last nosebag, and shot by squads of marksmen. Many of the Light Horsemen couldn't speak of this occurrence. It was too heartbreaking for them. Some, however, committed their thoughts to poetry.

One poem, written and decorated by Arthur Adams, as he returned to Australia in a troop ship, was found at Castlemaine. This is his legacy. Nothing else is known about him.



[photo of original – copyright granted]

The Waler

When Allenby's army smashed the Turk,  
Who was the bloke who did the work?

The Aussie knows and he'll tell you straight  
That most of the work was done by his mate,  
The Wonderful Aussie Waler.

It was umpty-nine in the shade each day,  
And the wells were spoiled in the Turkish way,  
But with nothing to eat and plenty to do  
The heart of the Waler carried him through  
The Wonderful Wonderful Waler.

For ten long weeks through the desert hot  
He plugged along and all that he got

Was a drink or not a drink a day  
 But did the stamina once give way  
 Of the wonderful Aussie Waler?  
 Was he the one to desert his mate?  
 Just watch him coming up the straight  
 With twenty stone of harness and man  
 No wonder the Turk was an also ran  
 With the Wonderful Wonderful Waler.

When drinks were not and feeds were few  
 There still was his harness that he could chew  
 With a nibble or two at another's mane  
 He plucked up the heart to march again  
 The wonderful Aussie Waler.  
 And when everything eatable seemed stale  
 A hair or two from a neighbour's tail  
 Makes pleasant meal and there's no doubt  
 They took it turn and turn about  
 The wonderful wonderful Waler.

A white Australian through and through  
 There's a good time coming old horse for you  
 There's a paddock green with grass to your knees  
 And there you shall roll at your lordly ease  
 My wonderful, Aussie Waler!  
 With a gallop or two to keep you fit –  
 And won't it bring back the thrill of it!  
 There's no more hardship and little work



For the cobbler who broke the heathen Turk

My wonderful, wonderful Waler!

But what is that the orders tell

This mate of mine they're going to sell

To the old home paddock you'll never come back

They're selling you to a dirty black

My wonderful, wonderful Waler!

The times together that we've been through

When all that I had in the world was you

Out there! Out there in a world of men

You were more than a wife or a sweetheart then

My wonderful, wonderful Waler.

There was trust and mateship in your eyes

A horse has no soul! All lies, all lies

And more than a kiss or soft lips that speak

Was your muzzling nose against my cheek

You wonderful Aussie Waler.

A life long slavery is your fate

Not while a mate can still shoot straight.

Your eyes – I need a steady Hand

Goodbye old chap – you understand

You Wonderful wonderful Waler.

\* \* \* \*

*ABERYSTWYTH, WALES.*

*2<sup>nd</sup>. January, 1984*

*It had begun raining on New Year's Eve, and hadn't stopped. I was driving alone through the countryside of North Wales, supposedly doing the tourist thing in mid-semester break from the Music College I was attending in Cardiff. But the rain was definitely beginning to irritate me. I had been given a letter of introduction to a retired professor and his wife in Aberystwyth, so phoned and arranged to visit. I was very impressed as I drove down the sweeping avenue to their three-story country home. The rain had made their pastures very green and lush, and their horses and cattle stood under dripping bare trees. As I stepped out of my car I was literally bowled over by two young, noisy and very muddy Labradors. I picked myself up from the ground, endeavoured to push them off, brush the mud off my black trousers, and meet my hosts with what remained of my dignity. They seemed unaware of my concern about their dogs.*

*Ian said "Sorry about the dogs. They're just babies. They haven't learned any manners yet."*

*He and Gwen laughed. I pretended to join in.*

*Great. A beautiful place to visit – charming people, but two horror dogs.*

*All animals seem drawn to a person who dislikes them. These two were no exception.*

*During dinner, they sat under the table, and stuck their big heads into my lap, nuzzling my tattered and now filthy black trousers, and ignoring all my efforts to kick them away.*

*When I went to bed, they scratched at the door for hours trying to be admitted.*

*Eventually Ian came and took them away.*

*Did I imagine it or were my hosts slightly cool towards me next morning?*

*I had put on my only other pair of trousers – navy blue. They were covered with dog hair and mud within a minute of my appearance for breakfast.*

*Gwen asked "Would you like to go for a horse ride this morning?"*

*I wanted to laugh out loud. Could anything worse be suggested? I made a very lame excuse for hurrying back to Cardiff, and left shortly afterwards.*

Dogs and horses – there was no place for them in my life.

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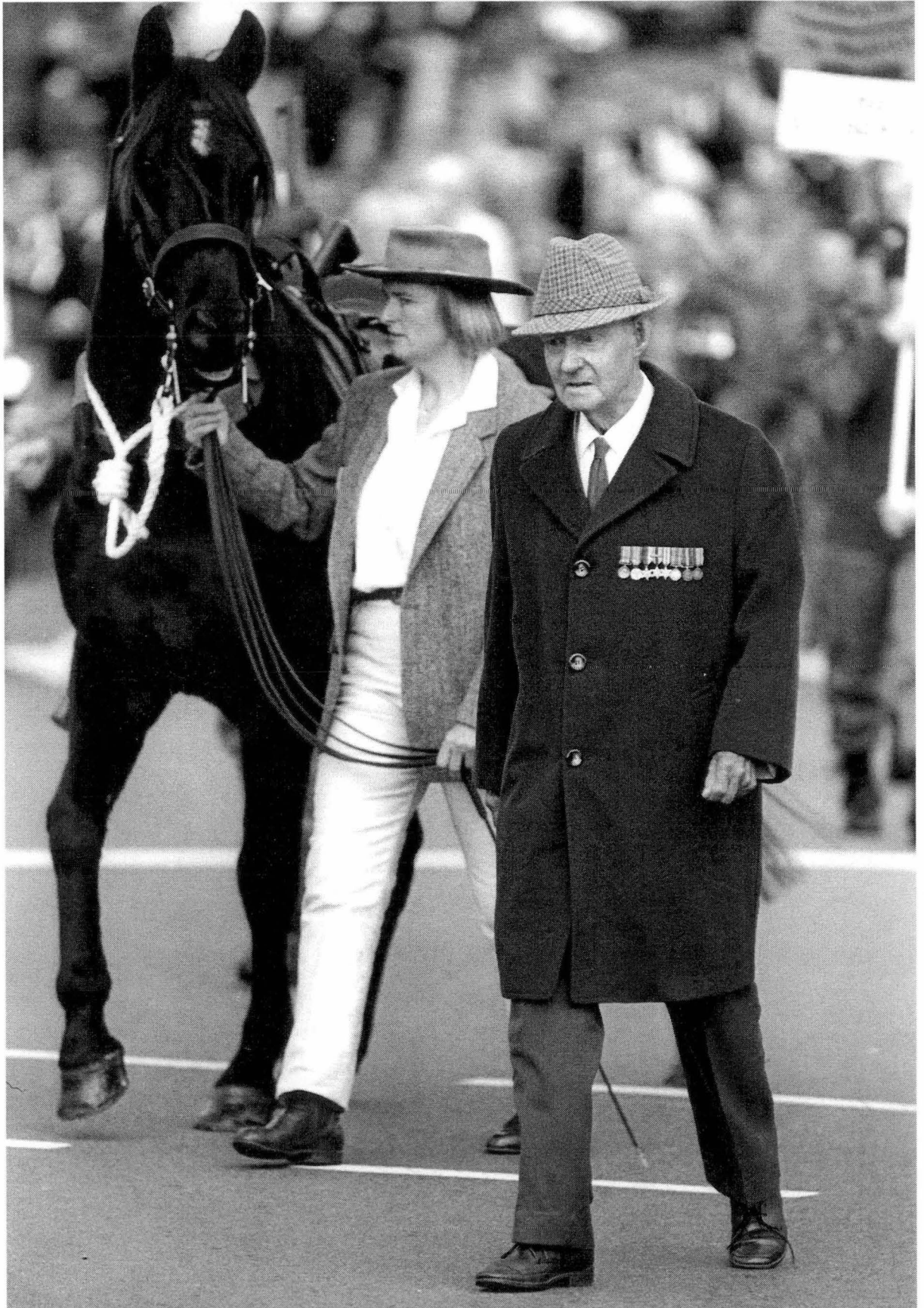
Jacqui picked out her first Waler at a horse sale in Melbourne in December 1989. He was a stallion covered with scars and bites. He was emaciated, but he was her choice. The sellers tried to dissuade her, saying he was too old, but she persisted. She had heard of animal culls on outback stations on mainland Australia. Among the brumby horses being shot, or sent to meatworks, it was rumoured there were descendants of the original walers. Jacqui's grandfather was a Light Horseman who rode a waler during WWI. Believing these horses were in danger of extinction, she made the decision to find and breed some.

"I brought the stallion home and it wasn't until about three months later when we'd managed to catch him and have a look at his teeth we realised he was about seven. You wouldn't normally even think about breaking in a seven year old. Let alone a stallion. Let alone one that had been in the wild".

She used him for breeding, but Dardanelle, as she had named him, had the Waler temperament. He was gentle, amenable, and intelligent.

"Two months after catching and breaking him, we had him leading the ANZAC Parade through Hobart. Old Ray Chatterton, from the Light Horse walked in front, and a brass band was behind him. It was just extraordinary. He walked down that street as if he'd been doing it all his life. I was so scared I couldn't touch him, because he'd know how scared I was. I just lead him. I didn't know what he was going to do. You've got people with umbrellas, and pushers, and bands and flags".

Jacqui Pitcher leads Dardanelle at the head of the ANZAC Parade Hobart 1990. Beside her is walking Ray Chatterton, a war veteran of the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Light Horse. There are riding boots reversed in the stirrups to acknowledge the Light Horsemen who died at war.



They prepared him by riding him with a transistor on his back and waving sheets on sticks around him.

“Ray Chatterton walked all the way with us up to the cenotaph, and when we got to the top he walked up to him and grabbed him by the bridle and he looked him in the eye and said:

“I’ve ridden many a mile on you, old chap”.

“I nearly cried. It was just gorgeous.

Ray died the next year – that was his last ANZAC Parade”.

\* \* \* \*

**“With Walers the head is carried high. This comes from the army horses being encouraged to keep their neck and head in front of the rider for protection from bullets, lances, and sabres”.**

Janet Lane 2004

\* \* \* \*

***A friend is the present you give yourself.***

***Robert Louis Stevenson***

*HOBART, TASMANIA*

AUGUST 1<sup>st</sup>. 1964

Jacqui and I attended different secondary schools, but found ourselves together at Teachers' College. We moved into a tiny flat in Sandy Bay. It was one roomed, except when one opened the wardrobe door, which shut the bunk beds off from the rest of the room. The ceiling was painted blue, with silver stars all over it and the shower in the corner had a door six inches thick, a round porthole, and a lock on the outside, but not the inside. It had an open fireplace and we had fires even when we didn't need them to create 'atmosphere'. We lived on tinned food except when our mothers brought us casseroles. Our favourite time was late at night when we'd been studying for final exams. We would walk along Nutgrove Beach eating chocolate and discussing our lives. I heard a lot about Jacqui's future dreams concerning horses.

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After WWI, the Australian horse – the Waler – was in demand worldwide. Huge breeding programs were underway throughout the country. Sir Sid Kidman, known as the "Cattle King", owned more than 100,000 square miles (or 100 million acres) of land, and owned or controlled sixty-eight stations. His properties ran from Western Australia to Queensland, and also through South Australia to King Island in Bass Strait.

Although he was called the "Cattle King" Kidman also was a horse breeder, and ran a huge horse sale every year. Thousands of horses were moved from his northern properties to Kapunda in South Australia. Indian Remount buyers, South Australian and Victorian farmers attended, and there was even a Ladies Day, when ponies and hacks suitable for carriages were sold. The entire sale lasted up to a fortnight.

Many businesses in buying and selling horses for overseas markets flourished.

On the eve of WWII, mechanisation brought about the demise of the horse trade.

Station owners began replacing their stock horses with land rovers and motorbikes.

The Indian remount trade finished – replaced by motorisation. The Light Horsemen were superseded by motorised vehicles – jeeps and tanks. Horse breeding programs were no longer required, and indeed, horses were not fashionable. The lack of a specific waler studbook meant that this horse appeared to have no future.

Station owners all over Australia, either sent their horses to be made into meat, or simply opened the gates and let them run into the outback where they joined the brumbies.

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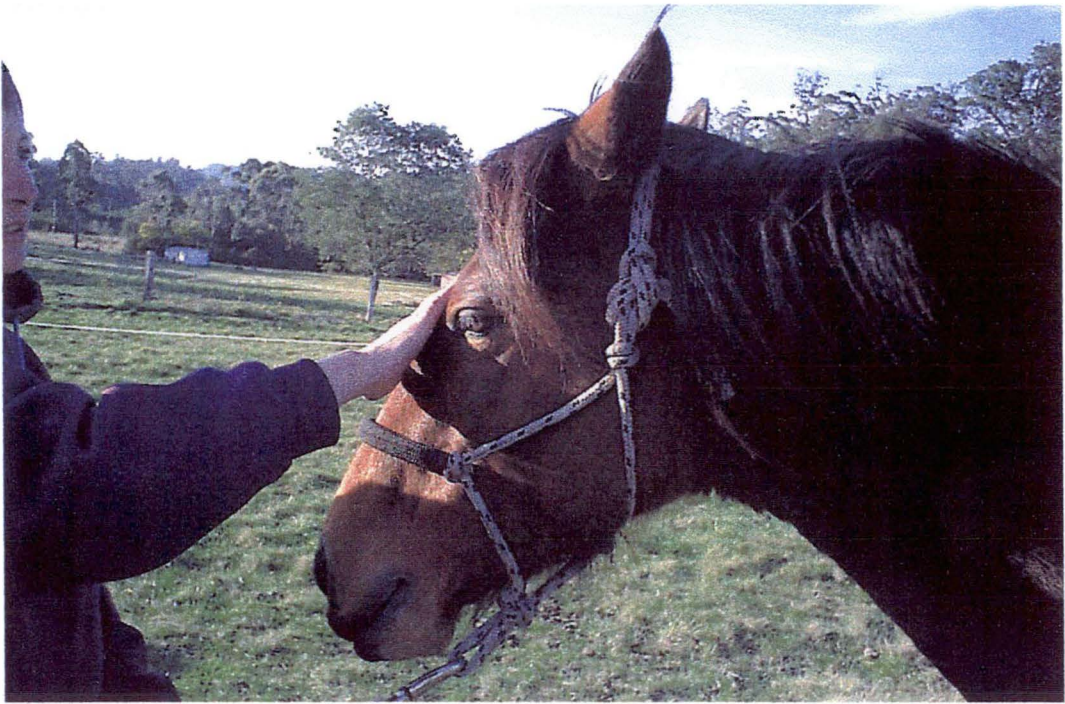
From the time of early settlement, many horses escaped into the bush and outback. Fences were almost non-existent. Some breeders returned to England, or moved on, and left their horses to run wild. A pastoralist/ soldier, Lieutenant James Brumby, was believed to be one of the first horse breeders to do this. He was transferred to Van Diemen's Land in 1804, and left his horses to run free. Settlers around the local area would comment about 'Brumby's horses', and how they were flourishing in the wild. So it became part of Australian folklore that wild horses in Australia were all called 'brumbies'.

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**When Janet Lane classifies a Waler, she must begin by gathering some preliminary information. Firstly, the background must be established. The horse must be from a station that bred remounts or stock horses, and hasn't had other breeds there since the end of commercial breeding, in the 1940s.**

**Secondly, it is important to check that there are no congenital faults that the particular horse might pass on. These include deformities of the mouth, feet or legs, or a bad temperament.**





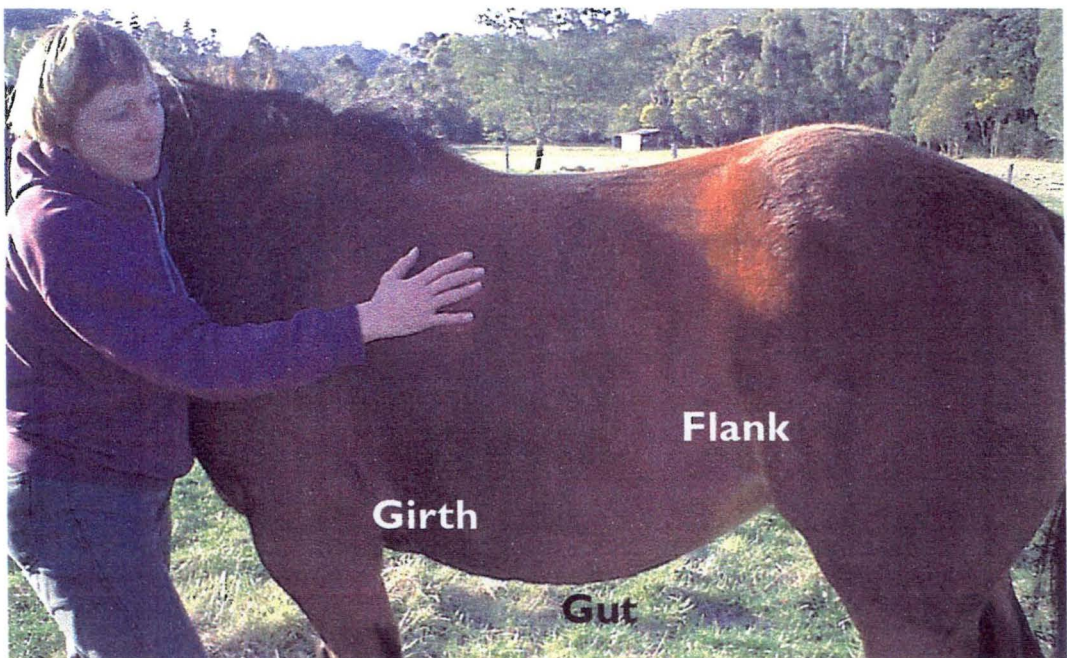
"A Waler's head can look chunky – it is strong rather than pretty.

(The head) shows strength in many ways.

"Noses should never be concave, but straight. A Waler should be able to regard things off to its side and periphery without having to swivel its eyeball back. It has a wide range of view.

"Jaws are strong with good bone and muscle.

"Walers have plenty of brain room, their forehead is wide."



"They should be well sprung around the barrel, with the front ribs (true ribs) flatter than the back ribs." This means the saddle is more secure.

"The gut should be full from flank to girth – the tummy is usually bigger looking than most breeds."



*SOUTH AUSTRALIA*

MAY 25<sup>th</sup>. 2004

Jacqui was grateful that Ben was driving. She was mesmerised by the monotony of the South Australian desert landscape. It was only a month before her 59<sup>th</sup> birthday. She had said to everyone “ Well what else does a person do when they’re about to turn sixty? Start a new breeding program, of course.”

But secretly she was glad that she had the help and support of Ben – dear Ben – who was entering into her latest crazy adventure full of enthusiasm.

When they arrived in Melbourne they were unsure which direction to choose.

“Let’s go west.” Said Ben. “We’ll avoid the traffic that way”.

So west they had gone along the Calder Highway as far as Woodend.

It was then they saw a lovely property for sale, already designed to cater for horses, and they had bought it! Jacqui smiled to herself. She just imagined how her dear Mum would have pursed her lips and shaken her head in despair at her reckless daughter.

During their journey they secured the phone number of a property owner north of Adelaide. He had Walers for sale.

On the phone he had told them: “They’re young. Their parents have gone to the Peterborough Meatworks. I just let them run free. If they survive they survive. That’s what I’ve got for sale. Are you interested?”

Jacqui stirred from her reverie and Ben gave her a smile.

“We’re nearly there”.

She smiled and looked around her.

The area they were driving through was suffering from drought. Bare flat earth stretched as far as the eye could see, scarred by dry creek beds. There was no grass. The sky was clear and blue, and the air was cold, as they drove towards the property

owner's homestead, in a tree-less shallow valley. The size of the property was evidenced by the huge sheds, grain silos, and farm machinery parked all around. Half a kilometre from the house they came to the cattle yards, also huge, made of metal, and very sturdy. They spread over a wide area.

The first thing they noticed was the noise and smell of many animals, and almost as many men. There were pens of Brahman bulls, and pens of animals being hand fed, because there was no feed for them in the dry paddocks. There was a big yard full of an assortment of horses, and three or four pens of young horses. The property owner, Ted, greeted them. Tall and wiry, with twinkling eyes, he immediately made them feel comfortable. His manner was friendly, and he had a genuine interest in all they had to say.

He took them to some of the yards of horses.

"These are my buckjumpers." He said. "They work in rodeos."

Then he showed them more pens of horses.

Jacqui's heart beat a little faster.

She had studied the physical characteristics of the Waler so closely she could see that there were Walers among these brumbies.

They were beautiful - young, wild, and terrified. They huddled close together in groups of families and friends – there was no way they were separating from each other. It was hard to see what they were looking at, as they milled around and milled around. The Kindblads had specific needs in their choice of horses. They wanted mares and maybe a colt or two, for themselves, and there was the shopping list for friends in Tasmania.

Ted said, "Look. I've got some more out the back. If you want to come for a drive we'll have a look at them."

They left the ute just as it was, doors open, keys in ignition, cameras and mobiles on the seat, and climbed into a high powered four wheel drive. In the back paddock behind the house they saw two little seal point black horses that looked almost

# Tasmanian Buyers

Luella Meaburn

Colt

\*\*with a bit of

BNY / FEISTY  
(calls him PATERSON)

"presence" – not  
timid

Pru Cotton

Filly

\*\*for breeding.

CHESTNUT  
young / bright

Going to call her  
"Poppy"

Shirley Roberts

colt

\*\*kind, gentle.

✓

young

Rachel Treasure

filly - young

\*\* not too big.

May be pregnant?  
(hope not - too young)

Kind, sweet-natured.

Trudy Young

filly

\*\* specifically to

Luella will  
break her in  
for Trudy

breed with Akabar.

Doug Treasure

colt

\*\* pick the same sort

(VICTORIAN)

✓

we'd pick for

ourselves

identical. Ben recognised a unique opportunity to purchase two horses he could use for team driving. It was rare to see two horses so alike, and which obviously travelled together. This could be a very special combination, so although Ben had not planned to purchase any horses for himself, these two were added to the list. They called them the PEARL FISHERS.

“I’ve got more in a paddock across the road.” Ted suggested.

Three hours later, they were still bouncing along over dusty dry flat country, dotted with occasional bushes or trees. There seemed to be nothing for an animal to eat in this barren desert. Ted showed them a handful of sand. He shook the dust off and there were little seedpods left.

“Horses like those.” he said.

They finally spied a mob of about ten horses. Even from the distance Jacqui and Ben could see that they were in good condition and well covered, considering their environment. But these were wild animals and they couldn’t get any closer than about a hundred metres before they ran away. So they began driving around in a big circle, and Ben would say “Oh that one looks nice” or Jacqui would say “That’s a lovely one.” Ted pointed out the horses he would use for buck jumpers, and then the ones he knew had a good Waler bloodline. It was a dizzying experience. The horses’ hooves thundered as they galloped, throwing up blinding dust. The three in the ute looked hard through the dust cloud to try to choose the particular horses they wanted while they swerved in one direction then another.

Jacqui spied a horse she really liked in one mob. It stood above the others, and she was particularly looking out for a nice colt for her daughter, Emily. The horse was leggy and tall.

“We’ll definitely have that one.” She said. “We’ll call him BUTTERFLY”.

They saw a pretty little dappled grey filly, and chose her for one of the Tasmanian buyers. Then they picked out two rose greys for themselves.

Ted put his foot on the accelerator, and they began driving in another enormous circle, then Ben threw out a hand and yelled “There!”

They made a beeline for the dust cloud left by the horses running in fright.

“We’re gaining” yelled Ted, then “Hold on. We’ve got trouble.”

At the same instant there was a loud scraping metallic sound, and the ute came to a sudden stop.

They jumped out and ran around to the front, where the ute lay at a rather drunken angle.

The wheel had come off.

It was lying on the ground.

They had lost all the wheel nuts except one, lying on the ground next to the wheel.

They went to the back of the ute, and did a stocktake.

One tow bar - two axes and one spade.

No spanner, no jack and no spare tyre.

Jacqui walked a little way back over the ground they had driven, and found one nut.

They looked at each other in dismay. Ted was embarrassed. His phone battery was flat, and his car radio wasn’t working. Jacqui and Ben thought with regret of their two phones sitting in their ute, back at the homestead.

Something had to be done. They were too far from the house to walk.

Ben played around with the radio, and connected a few wires. He popped the bonnet and held the wires onto the battery, and called

“Try the car radio now.”

It worked!

A phone call to Ted’s son, and half an hour later, a jack and spanner were delivered.

The repair took no time at all.

“Let’s go chase Walers!” Ted grinned. They smiled tentatively back – there were only three nuts on that wheel. Nevertheless, off they went at a rip-roaring speed. They finally caught up with the mob again, and Jacqui noticed a nice coloured horse

galloping along. He was dark brown with just one dot on the side. They selected him and immediately called him TURANDOT.

So the crazy drive continued for some time, but the sky began to look ominously dark.

“Maybe we’re in for some rain at last.” Ted said as they drove back to the homestead.

They made plans in a cosy kitchen, sitting over a pot of tea and freshly baked pumpkin scones.

“You can go sightseeing.” Said Ted. “I’ll get all the horses in so you can make your final choices. But if it looks like we’re going to get rain we’ve got to move. You’ll have to come then.”

He was emphatic.

\* \* \* \*

At Kapunda, in South Australia, Jacqui and Ben received a call from Ted.

“Hey mates. The rain has come, in case you haven’t noticed! I’ve got the horses in, but I need you to come *now*.”

Twenty-four hours later they were back at the Station.

They were amazed at the sight. There were still pens of Brahman bulls, but now all the horses that had been running wild were in pens – buckjumpers, Walers, and brumbies all mixed in together. Some yards had as many as 150 horses.

Ted said, “We’ll get the buckjumpers out, then I’ll have to leave you two to sort out what you want from the rest.”

Ben put on his stockman’s coat and well-worn boots, while Jacqui donned her Japara and wellies. They both pulled on beanies, and began a long, challenging job.

The ground was muddy and slushy, and the young horses were very scared. It was going to take a lot of patience. There were thirty horses in the yard and Jacqui and Ben wanted to choose only fifteen. Their plan was to walk quietly and calmly around the yard, picking out a horse that might interest them. They would hopefully be able to single that horse out and drive it into another yard where they could have a really close look at it.

The task was long and exhausting, but in a way, exhilarating. These were Walers – wild and untamed, and their futures were to be so different, so varied.

Amongst the running, frightened mob, Jacqui caught sight of Butterfly, but she looked with dismay. Not only could she see clearly now that this was a filly not a colt, but also she had suffered damage to her fetlock – a great open wound showed where all the skin had been sliced off, exposing ligaments, muscle and bone. Jacqui's heart went out to her. She was only a baby, maybe one year old, and she was trying to keep running with the mob, until in the end she couldn't run any more. It was obviously too painful, and she stood and watched the others go. Ben pushed her out into another yard so she wouldn't run away, and she stood as close to the fence and to her mob as she possibly could. It was a miserable sight.

Eventually, amazingly, it was all over. They had chosen sixteen horses, and paid in cash. Ted was delighted.

They slept the sleep of exhaustion that night, then set off early to travel to Melbourne, and prepare for the arrival of the horses.

An empty transporter travelling through the district in the next few days would deliver the horses to a property Yarramalong, in Victoria belonging to Peter Fischer. Fischer, as one of the originators of the Waler Horse Society of Australia Inc. was only too happy to help.

Just before they left, Ted approached Jacqui as she stood at the fence looking at poor sad little Butterfly being left behind. He was a kind man.

He knew the only future left for this horse was to send her to the meatworks, and he could also recognise Jacqui's concern.

"Tell you what, mate," he said, arm around her shoulder. "I'll let you have her for half price if you like, and I've just spoken to Peter on the phone, and he'll care for her until you move to Woodend."

So Butterfly's life was saved.

Thirty-six hours later, the transporter carrying the Walers arrived at Yarramalong. The animals were very fearful. The truck was all metal and their hooves made a loud clanging noise increasing their fright. Those that bumped into the sides added to the noise with a rattling and banging. The rain was pouring down, and a cold wind was blowing. Everything was muddy.

Moving them off the truck was a long freezing process, but eventually they were all yarded – without any casualties.

After coffee and a quick sandwich, six mares and a gelding were re-loaded onto a truck, and Ben drove them to their new home at Woodend.

There was no ramp to get them off the truck, just a steep narrow gangway, but here there was no problem. These wild horses that had lived in the desert surviving on a meagre diet, saw lush grass for the first time.

In Ben's words they said to themselves

“I've never seen this in my life. Let me at it.”

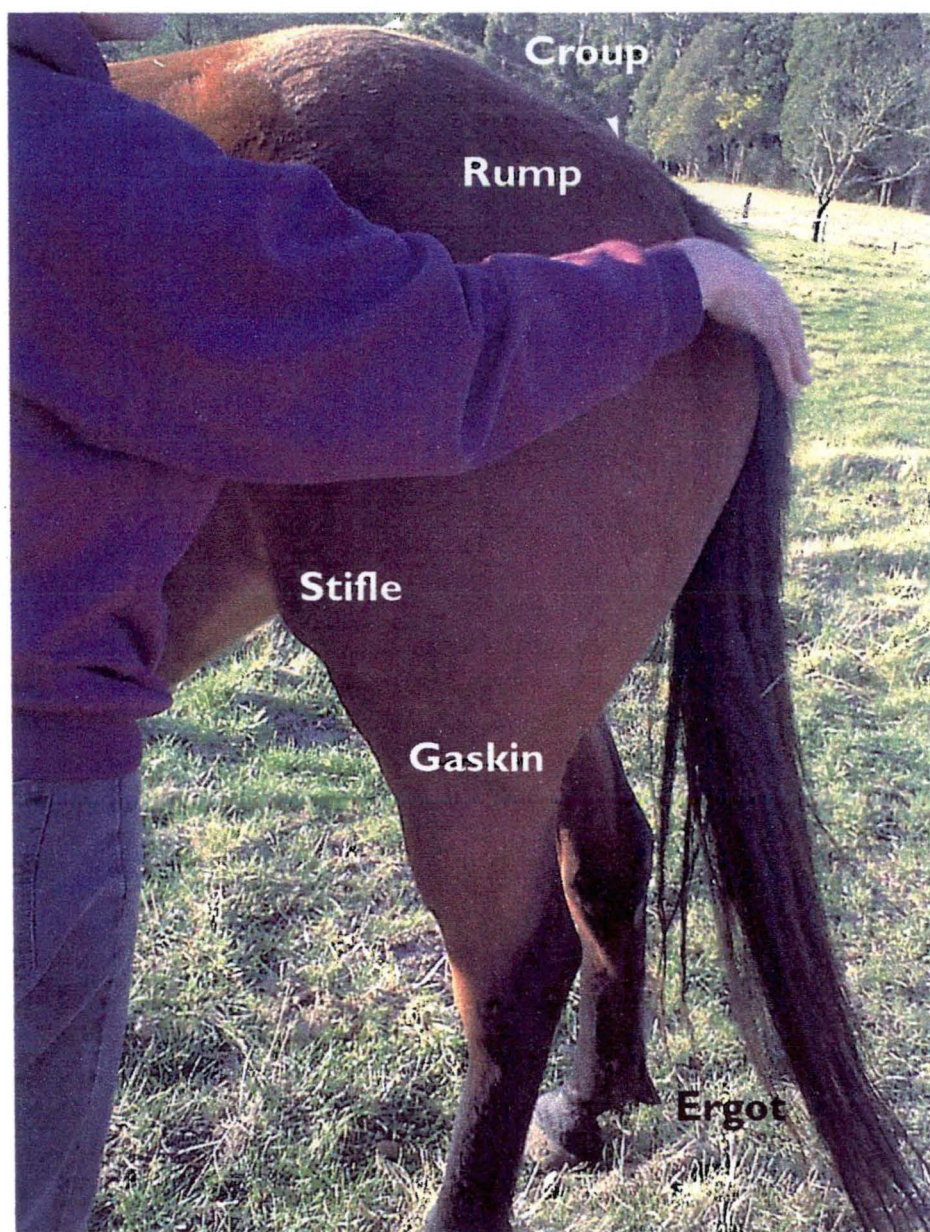
They didn't even try to distance themselves from the fearful situation they had been in, but put down their heads and started eating.

It was a joyful celebration at Peter's house that night. The men drank a bottle of whisky between them, but no one really needed alcohol to feel intoxicated with their success. There were many toasts to the future of the Waler, before everyone fell into bed.

Within three days the remainder of the horses were on the move again, this time on the final leg of their journey to Tasmania. An overnight trip on the Spirit of Tasmania, shut in the cargo hold, then four hours driving through the Tasmanian countryside, brought them to a property at Evandale. It was the end of an unforgettable adventure, and the start of a new life for the Kindblads.

\* \* \* \*





It's a good indication of a Waler if ergots are present. These are an obsolete toe and are found on the back of the fetlock.

"A Waler has a deep hindquarter, generous broad rump, and sloping croup to a low set tail. (It also has) strong powerful gaskins and a broad strong stifle." This is an important muscle, which makes a Waler ideal for Dressage.

The characteristics of a Waler that the Society want to retain and develop are intelligence; a quiet temperament; frugality – a horse that's easy to keep and doesn't need fussy diets; good easy action (that is, the way it moves); and extra indications that point to Waler heritage, such as 'wolf teeth', ergos, and pistil marks.

After these basic aspects have been ascertained, Janet Lane views the horse, not only to make sure it is a Waler but also to make detailed records, which are essential in preparing a Stud Book.

Everything of significance must be recorded, so that the future progeny can be recognised as being bred from particular sources. This is also a way of eliminating or enhancing particular aspects.

Janet is also required to recognise when a horse presented for registration as a Waler does not qualify.

\*   \*   \*   \*

*HOBART, TASMANIA*

JANUARY 29<sup>TH</sup> 2003

*For the past year I have had the job of home deliveries of the local newspaper. This requires me to be out walking around the suburb by 5.45 am, six days a week. It is inevitable that I see animals – dogs mainly – while I am around the streets. I have come to the conclusion that I have to try to overcome my fear of animals, which seemed to have become irrational after so many years. I started carrying doggie biscuits in my pack, and if a dog seemed unresponsive to being spoken to in a friendly way, I would seduce it with a biscuit. I soon had friends.*

Australian wild brumbies and Walers can increase by 150 thousand each year.

Because horses are hard – hoofed, they cause erosion around water holes, and destroy fragile native plants – the food endemic species need to survive. When the water is scarce the horses find it by digging holes in the desert sand. After some time, water slowly soaks into the holes, enabling the horses to drink. The wildlife has to compete and many species are unable to. One third of all mammal species in the arid regions have become extinct since feral animals gained a foothold. This feral animal population includes camels, goats, rabbits, cats and horses.

In some Australian States such as the Northern Territory, where the feral animals are causing great destruction, the Conservation Commission wants to remove them all from national parks, to reserve these parks for native plants & animals.

Cattle breeders are also interested in removing horses from their land because they compete with the cattle for feed.

There are few parasites and little disease in the outback to provide a natural cull.

From the 1970s onwards the size of the country and the extent of the feral horse population made it easiest to conduct brumby culls from helicopters, shooting horses as they attempted to run away. Horses not shot were rounded up, yarded, and sold for overseas meat export.

This caused public outrage, both in Australia and internationally.

The resultant publicity led Janet Lane to form The Waler Horse Society of Australia Inc. The Waler was classified as a breed, and a Stud Book opened.

**Peter Fischer, first President of the Society:**

“The Waler Horse Society of Australia Inc. is the original Breed Society for the Waler Horse. Its basic aims are to preserve and promote the breed. We cannot re-create the old blood... We have however, gathered descendants of these horses, today found amongst genetically isolated herds in inaccessible outback areas where they have continued to (breed)”.

When Ben Kindblad was growing up in Sweden, it was considered a luxury to have smoked horsemeat sandwiches, and butchers would pay more for a horse to slaughter than for a cow.

Horse meat is eaten in many European countries where it can take the place of beef. There are two meatworks in Australia preparing meat for exportation, at Peterborough in South Australia, and Caboulture in Queensland. They are both owned by a Belgian company. Imported sausages could contain horsemeat.

\* \* \* \*

*EVANDALE, TASMANIA*

JUNE 20<sup>TH</sup>. 2004

*Today I visited the property where the Walers will arrive. The owner, who is also buying one of the Walers, introduced me to her three dogs, and other Walers she has bred.*

*Her dogs are boxers – big and snuffly, pushing their noses against your hand and asking for attention like the dogs I met in Wales. I patted them, played with them, and even put one of them in the front seat of my car to drive it back to the farmhouse. I wonder whether an approach like this would have helped me back then. It seemed so easy to be friendly to these great big trusting animals.*



SANDRINGHAM, NORFOLK

21 January 1987

I am delighted to know that The Waler Horse Society of Australia has been set up to promote the Waler as a registered breed of horse.

Walers played a most important part in the history of the Australian Army as well as the Indian Army and the British Army in India, both for war and for sport.

I am sure there is a great future for the breed once a Stud Book has been established and a careful breeding policy has been introduced. There is a strong and growing interest in the equestrian sports in many of the countries of South East Asia and the Far East and this should provide a ready demand for such a versatile breed as the Waler.

Best wishes for the success of the Waler Horse Society of Australia.

During the early 1990s, The Tasmanian Branch of the Waler Horse Society of Australia Inc. ran advertising campaigns in newspapers, especially around Show time. The campaigns were designed to inform and educate the public about the value of the Waler and its impending demise. They held an exhibition at a Horse Expo in Launceston, and, dressed in period costume, joined the Grand Parade for the Hobart Show, riding on Walers. Unfortunately the public were not interested enough. The Royal Agricultural Show Society has no record or photos of their efforts. Eventually financial restrictions dictated that advertising must be stopped, and the Waler lovers simply got on with breeding Walers to ensure their future as a viable species.

Janet Lane wrote a letter to Prince Phillip, the Duke of Edinburgh and told him about the Society's formation. Prince Phillip had been instrumental in saving the Cleveland Bay horse from extinction, and in fact chooses that breed for his sport of team driving. They felt he would be encouraging and they were very pleased when they received his reply.

*EVANDALE, TASMANIA*

JUNE 25<sup>TH</sup> 2004

*The Walers arrive today. It's become so important to me, that I'm excited, nervous and apprehensive as well. This is like the start of "city girl goes bush" because I feel out of my depth – out of my comfort zone if you like. I don't know how to behave with horses – actually I don't know how to behave with any farm animals having had little experience with them, but I'm caught up in Jacqui and Ben's adventure, and the enthusiasm of their horse – loving friends, to re-instate the Waler breed as an important part of twenty-first century Australia, just as it was an essential part of colonial Australia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.*

*I drive to Evandale and arrive just after the truck carrying the precious cargo.*

*Horses' heads look out through the top of the enclosed back section. They are silent.*

*They're not even moving their feet.*

*Their apprehension hangs in the air. It's hard to imagine what they've been through in the last short while. Roaming free in the heat and barrenness of drought-ridden South Australia, they've survived on their wits and intelligence, and the ruggedness of their breed – the very essence of Waler.*

*Not only have they endured the terror of being rounded up, penned, trucked to Castlemaine, penned, and trucked again, but also an overnight sea voyage in the cargo hold of the Spirit of Tasmania, and another long drive. What do they think of it all? They're wild creatures, and they're trapped. Will they look for the first chance to run away?*

*It's a wet day. Can they smell the richness of the damp air? Can they sense the difference of the terrain, surrounded by bush, lush pastures, and fences?*

*It seems to me that the natural instinct of any wild creature, captured, is to escape at the first opportunity. If not escape, then attack the captor. Maybe there is that possibility also.*

*Jacqui and Ben and their friends work quickly and methodically organising a run for the horses to move from the truck into a small pen with high fences.*

*The big moment comes. Other horses – also Walers - have gathered around the fence to watch the arrival. They are like a crowd at a football match vying for the best position, and all attention.*

*I imagine they will all bolt for freedom, or race out of the truck wild, like films you see of rodeo horses, but no. Ben must put his arms through gaps in the side of the truck and do quite a bit of poking and pushing before one horse finally walks down the ramp. He is a young bay colt and he takes his time, moving carefully and seemingly oblivious to his situation. I imagine his heart beating wildly and all his senses working.*





“Walers have far stronger teeth than other breeds – tough native grasses, even spinifex and sword rushes, do not wear them down.

“It’s a good indication of a Waler if wolf teeth are present. These little teeth, about the size of a match, usually come through at about four years of age. They are evident in both mares and stallions.

“There’s a safe area of the gum between front and rear teeth for the hand.”



“Legs are very important and should give an overall impression of soundness and strength. Joints are large and well formed. Knees flat at the front. Well developed, powerful legs are a Waler’s pride along with good nature and a big rump.”



*The next horse emerges, already named "Poppy" after the poppies of Remembrance Day, and the Walers association with the First World War.*

*She is quite small and we can't see her properly until she runs out of the holding pen. Jacqui and Ben quietly and firmly manoeuvre her towards the gate of a round yard, and she walks carefully in.*

*While the others discuss her in "horse terms" I look at her shiny brown coat, black mane and tail. One of her hind feet is white and she has a white blaze down her nose. But it is her stance and presence that enthrals me. She holds herself erect, watching, listening and taking in every detail of her new surroundings. Then she runs around the yard, springing lightly, head and tail held high, a picture of grace. There is an element of wildness about her.*

*Two grey horses come down the ramp and are left in the holding yard. Then the colt goes back on the truck to be delivered to another destination.*

*The first consideration for the horses is water, because it is at least twenty-four hours since they've had a drink.*

*There's also a coffee break for the workers. The travellers have much to tell.*

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While horses went out of fashion in the mid twentieth century, horses for sport are now in great demand. They are used for Olympic disciplines like dressage, Show Jumping and Eventing, but most of today's sport horses are being imported from Europe. Jacqui Kindblad says "What are we doing! Instead of looking to what we have already bred, we've turned them loose as feral animals. We're bringing in almost the same mixture of breeds, and paying hundreds and thousands of dollars for them. Australia has horses out there – the Walers - that have been breeding and doing really well. They are the fittest of the fittest because they've come down through the deserts and survived. They are tough!"

\* \* \* \*

*EVANDALE,*

AUGUST 4<sup>TH</sup> 2004

**BREAKING IN A WALER**

**FIRST LEAD AND LUNGE LINE**

It is four weeks since I watched the colt have his first lesson. Today I will watch another horse, the filly “Poppy” that arrived in Tasmania in the same truckload as the colt, and began her training at the same time. She has a different Handler, who is working in the same way as the Handler of the colt.

The filly has become used to wearing a halter, and the physical contact of the Handler. She has accepted the Handler as the leader, and willingly faces her, and walks beside her.

Today, the Handler begins the workout without a halter. She is encouraging the horse to respect her, to listen and obey because she’s trained to do it rather than because she is being pulled along.

The Handler walks slowly across the yard and the filly walks beside her. She changes direction, and the filly follows.

The sun warms my back as I lean over the fence. Parrots and ravens call.

A Boxer snoozes next to my feet.

The filly makes chewing motions that show she is relaxed and not threatened.

The Handler slips a red halter over the filly’s head, and clips on a lead. This is the first time the filly has had a lead, but there is very little difference. Because the Handler has gained control without a lead, the filly easily continues to obey, moving in one direction then another, and always beside the Handler.

“I never use any pressure really. It’s just a forward movement. It’s so gentle and so soft. I see people using a bit of strength and there’s absolutely no need to”.

Then the Handler steps in front of her.

The filly steps back. She becomes alert.

This is something she hasn't experienced before.

She is going to have a lesson in "lungeing".

The Handler stands in front of the filly and gently pulls the lead. The filly is very uncertain and stands her ground. The Handler clicks her tongue and talks to her.

"See if I can get one step. Good girl. Go forward. Go forward. GOOD GIRL". The filly takes a clear step forward, towards the Handler.

"There we go! GOOD GIRL. That's lovely you're beautiful".

The filly's concentration snaps, and she runs off around the yard.

The Handler lets the rope go and leaves her to run. She gives a loud snort then returns to stand quietly beside the Handler who hasn't moved.

The lesson resumes, and after several attempts she walks more than a few steps towards the Handler who is delighted and very encouraging.

"See now she's got that. LOVELY! Three! You are just the cleverest kid I know.

Well I'll be damned. Who's a clever girl."

I shift my weight. I'm concentrating as much as the Handler, but not as relaxed as she is. The filly is also concentrating hard.

The Handler leads the filly across the yard towards me.

"Are you going to come and talk to her?"

I climb through the fence and walk towards her.

The Handler tells me to just go quietly.

I reach out my hand & allow her to sniff it. Her nose is wet and soft.

I scratch the white blaze on her face. She steps backwards.

The Handler tells me that when the filly steps back I must step back too. Then I can try approaching her again.

"Keep your hands by your sides. Just step forward and let her get used to your smell."



“Good, trustworthy, safe natures are outstanding features of the Waler that it is vital to preserve. Being intelligent means a Waler is a safe ride. It looks after its human well. It’s safe to be around, and for children and inexperienced people to be around.”

She smells my hand by my side, but I don't lift it this time. I give her the chance to learn all she can about me. She gives a snort. Testing me out maybe? I don't flinch. She is a beautiful creature, and I am not scared.

\* \* \* \*

*Jacqui and I have known each other for fifty years. In that time our lives have sometimes flowed side by side, and at other times we've had no connection. We've lived on opposite sides of the world, different parts of Australia, and different parts of Tasmania. We've known the same people, and we've also had many different friends. While Jacqui was an air hostess, I worked in a pharmacy. While Jacqui studied ceramics, I was a school teacher. While Jacqui bred horses, I pursued singing and acting. Now both our lives have taken on a new direction. Jacqui with a new partner - both in life and business, and her beloved, precious horses, and me with adventures into writing and maybe horses also.*

*This could be a time when our lives can flow side by side.*

\* \* \* \*

## **BREAKING IN A WALER**

### **FIRST RIDE**

SEPTEMBER 1<sup>st</sup>. 2004

RUNNYMEDE, TASMANIA

The Handler is going to ride the Waler colt for the first time today, a month after she has begun taming him. I was there to watch the start – I am there to watch again.

Some swallows are building a nest under a nearby barn roof. They swoop low overhead, but within the round yard all is quiet, calm and slow.

The Handler's Border Collie settles down beside me, his nose through the rungs of the fence. He always watches the horse breaking.

The Handler must spend some time first, preparing the colt for his new experience.

She stands on a bucket for height, and jumps against his back, rubbing his rump with her boot. She rubs around his legs, and underneath his belly.

The colt alternatively tenses and relaxes, turning his head to see what she is doing.

He is apprehensive but he stands perfectly still.

She rubs his mane and hugs him around his neck then lies along his back with just her toe still connecting with the bucket. Then she sits up with one leg just across his back.

It is too much for the colt. His ears prick up, and he tenses.

She dismounts and walks away from him, giving him space, and showing him she is not a threat – they are doing this together.

After a moment he walks towards her, accepting her leadership.

Then she climbs on.

He turns his head – he is confused. He can't understand where she is.

This person who has been beside or in front of him has moved to a place where she can't be seen properly, and has her weight on top of him.

Then he kicks up his back legs and bucks her off.

She is ready, and doesn't really fall. Because she is riding bareback she slides off.

She climbs onto his back again, pressing her legs against his sides to encourage him to move forward. He is unsure of what is expected. She bounces to encourage him to move but he still stands irresolute.

He turns in a circle, attempting to see her, then stands still again.

Finally he moves forward a little. The Handler is ready with encouraging words. She keeps a loose hold on his lead, and holds his mane a little as well.

This lesson has taken more than an hour, and horse and handler have been totally absorbed. But they have finished for today, and he has earned a feed.

\* \* \* \*

***“Nothing in this life is to be feared.***

***It is only to be understood”.***

**Marie Curie**

*BRUNY ISLAND*

AUGUST 24<sup>th</sup>. 2004

I am riding on a Waler.

Jacqui is holding the halter and leading *Anzac Parade* along. I trust her implicitly. I know she will not let go unless I am comfortable. So I can sit on *Anzac*'s back – this Waler – and study the sensations.

It's high, but not as high as I expected. My legs hanging over the sides in the stirrups move gently out and in as *Zac* breathes. When he begins to walk there is perpetual movement, but it's slow and rhythmic – I can understand why a Handler strokes a horse rhythmically now – it's a natural feeling for this creature. I'm holding a rein but holding his mane as well, so I feel secure except when we're walking on the side of the hill. Then I feel as if I will slide off, but Jacqui assures me that I won't – I just need to grip a bit more with my knees and put more pressure on my heels, holding them towards the horse's sides, and into the stirrups.

We walk slowly at first, and I'm concerned about getting the motion right. Jacqui and Ben both assure me that it will just come naturally. Then we move a bit quicker.

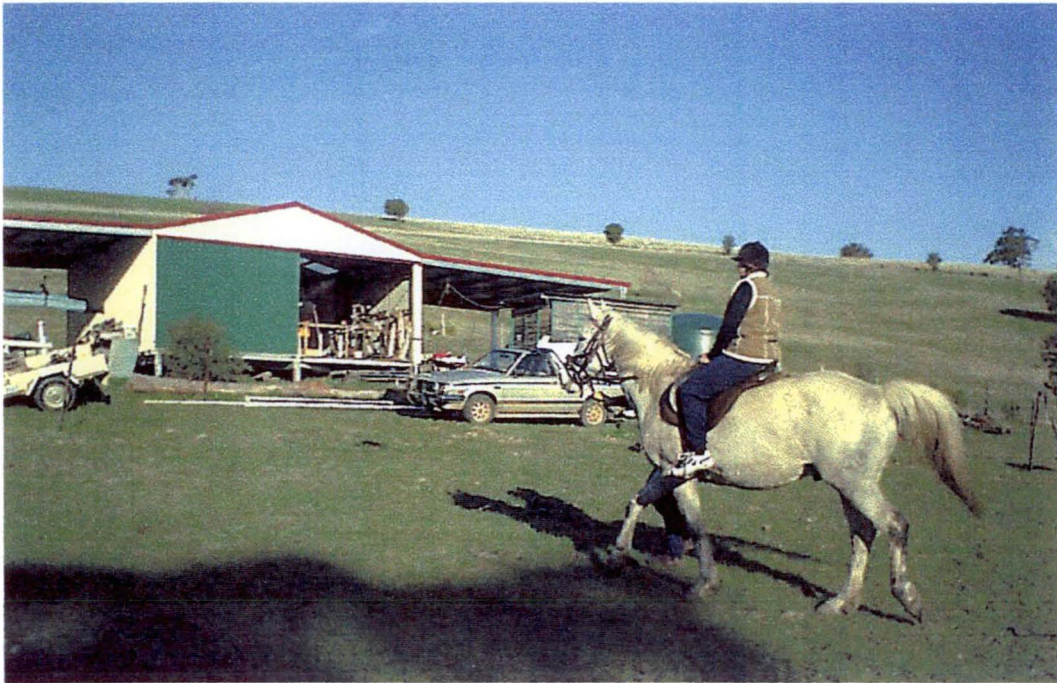
It's alright – I can manage.

*Zac* is very quiet – he doesn't make any noise, but occasionally he tosses his head.

How much does he understand about this person on his back? If I was feeling fear I'm sure he would know it, but I'm not. In a strange way I'm elated. I have a genuine sense of achievement.

I have ridden a Waler!





Patricia Robinson – First ride on a Waler.  
Bruny Island. August 2004



Jacqui Kindblad rides Anzac Parade.  
Bruny Island. August 2004



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