

# ECHUCA NAV RIDE

By Leonie Tainsh

The navigation ride at Barmah near the murray river in north central victoria was held on sunday (?? date) on a truly old fashioned winters day. With the hint of rain clouds and threatening rain plus a whisker of sunshine peeping thru the clouds from time to time it was like a winters day that many young horses and children had not yet experienced in these times of drought.



Our group of six riders and horses from the goulburn valley area on our first nav ride mission, turned up with an hour to spare for a cup of hot home made soup from the canteen at the old Barmah racecourse, to ride off at 10 .10 at 5 minute intervals.

The old racecourse grounds are now the home of the nathalia pony club where many a one day event has been held for the past 35 years. The nav ride took us down sandy and gravel roads and bitumen with delightfully wide verges thru gum trees and native vegetation. the most picturesque part of the ride was approx 4 ks beside the meandering Broken river which was flush with water and birdlife. The optimum speed was 7 ks per hour over a 25 km course, so a fair amount of trotting was required with a moderate amount of canter and time for some good long relaxing walk in between. The questions on our sheets really made us keep our wits about us as one was never sure just when to move up the pace or when to stay slow so as not to miss the clues. Over the whole day there was no one with a 100% correct score sheet! Many had time faults which was nice to see as this kept the mood of the day relaxed and friendly. Many horses were barefoot... some trimmed to natural parameters, and some, well, just barefoot!! Making it a very social day for our group we all rode home for the last kilometer together and as a bit of fun rode in 6 abreast at the trot boasting our tough hoofed horses! It was a good feeling to know that the horses were given the opportunity to remain sound without the concussion and jarring that was evident as some horses overtook us on the hard tracks and bitumen. After the ride with the horses all settled and munching on hay with a cosy wool rug to keep the afternoon chill off their backs we stood around the campfire where the officials kept their tails warm for the day! There was many a story about adventures on horseback in the Barmah forrest and mustering stories from the outback! We were dissappointed not to be camping for the night to hear some more. The friendly atmosphere of the organisers, Echuca Adult Riding Club, together with the old gum trees and campfire converted us to wanting to do more nav rides in the future with our sound and happy natural barefoot buddies!!

Photo from left to right, Mick O'Neill with 'Skelly' , Lorne Quick on 'LeRoy', Aspen Quick with 'Spring Valley Thomas' , Sara Thomas with 'Impy', Aislinn O'Neill & Leonie Tainsh, Echuca ARC members with son & father respectively, "Isle of Roulston" & "Isle of Salisbury"