

Nineteen out of Twenty – Ain't bad!!!

Sue Todd asked me if I would write a few words for the ride book, so I got to thinking this would be a good opportunity to express our appreciation to past and present Shahzada Ride Committees, volunteers, land owners, vets and the towns folk of St Albans for all the great memories Shahzada has afforded Ray and me over the past 22 years. So thank you one and all including the many friends we have made.

1992 was our first introduction to Shahzada and the Forgotten Valley, we were invited by Helen and Allan Lindsay to camp with them at the then (and still is) premier camp site. In those days the TPR area was where the fire shed is and the trot out was up and down the bitumen in front of the Settlers Arms. The Porta Loo Showers were next to the toilet block and our camp had water views in front and the pub just across the road out the back—what more could one ask for!

I will go back to the start of my endurance career: Ray, myself, Helen Brown and Kit Cooley did our first Training ride together at Neville in November 1990. In 1991 we graduated to longer rides and the Lindsays said “You’re not an Endurance Rider until you’ve done a Quilty”! So Helen & I decided that the Tooraweenah Quilty in June 1991 was our opportunity to become “Real Endurance Riders”. Unfortunately Helen vetted out, however I managed to complete in some 20 hours riding a borrowed horse “Barry’s Buzz”. That Quilty was the biggest learning curve and my biggest personal achievement except for childbirth. Next thing the Lindsays said is, “you’re not a Fair Dinkum Endurance Rider until you’ve completed Shahzada”!

So in 1992 Ray took up the challenge with another Woodstock rider Lyn Trudgett. Lyn’s husband Paul (Nigger) and I, plus friend Anna Ross had the delightful experience of strapping for them! Boy what a marathon that was!! We learned to manage lots of little problems that cropped up during the week. I even got up and walked “Missy” (Karrana Mistique) in the middle of the night, as that is what strappers did those days! We also walked up Prestons to take drink and oranges up for our riders!! Anna has never volunteered again, I wonder why? Ray & Lyn were both successful with Ray being awarded First Heavyweight, so you can see, I did an exceptional job!

In 1993 Ray & I rode and were both successful however that was the end of Ray’s run as he vetted out in 1994 and has been strapping for me ever since, funny thing - “Pay Back”!

In 1993 I rode “Barry’s Buzz” a stock horse gelding owned by friend Barry Blinman. Buzz was out of an ASH mare we bred, “Karrana Rhythm” who was out of a TB mare by our ASH Stallion “Morrallie Quest”.

Buzz and I recorded my fastest time as Buzz was a rush or bust type of horse and consequently unnecessarily leapt up and down many things. Although he was very quick to learn to tail, I wish we had known how to do that up “Neds Hill” in the Quilty!

Wanting a more pliable horse for 1994 I chose “Karrana Kelly” an ASH mare also by our stallion Quest. Kelly’s mother was an Arab Pony cross and the Arab was “Aethon”. Kelly was just 14.3 hands, no oil painting and had little pony paces, however she was reasonably comfortable, obedient and tough, although a little strong willed at times I grew to trust her completely. Kelly vetted out lunch time Thursday at her sixth Shahzada but went on to complete successfully the next two years to earn

us seven buckles. On retiring Kelly and putting her in foal I realized I needed to find another Shahzada horse and bought "Shadow". Shadow was obviously an Arab Stock Horse cross but of unknown breeding, he had spent his young life on a feed lot and was very smart working cattle and a great gate opener. Now twenty he is teaching his young riders Team Penning among other things at his retirement home with the Whatman girls.



Shadow was (I think) a true legend of Shahzada learning very quickly all the tracks and telling me where to get off and on. I tailed both Shadow and Kelly up and down all the steep hills usually in a headstall and knew that they would stop when I asked them. I preferred to go behind them down the hills, that way I wasn't obstructing their view and if I fell I was clear of their hooves. Shadow earned seven Shahzada buckles and we were there the year of EI so perhaps that tally might have been eight. Retiring Shadow in 2009 I started to look for his replacement but not quickly enough for the 2010 Shahzada, so at the 11th hour I decided I would ride Kelly's son "Karrana King". King looked like a big Warmblood not in the least like his mother. My friend Donna Tidswell had been re-educating King to take to the Manilla Quilty where they were successful, so he was fit enough. Only problem was that Donna had clipped his mane so there was nothing to hang on to going up the hills and getting on would be a problem as King was over 16 hands, (would the rocks be high enough?) Despite his size and spooky nature King handled the Shahzada tracks very well although we very nearly had a drastic accident going up the steps on Friday afternoon. This was entirely my fault, King didn't listen when I asked him to stop, I was so used to Shadow that I took him for granted. However

the big fellow was very athletic despite his size and managed to get himself back on track and arrive safely at the top. He then successfully vetted through at the finish. Later that same year King carried another friend around the State Championships at Woodstock so he did the Big Three with three different riders.

Proving that you can be three times lucky I found "Billy" aka ("Stratfield Gayth") and purchased him to be my final Shahzada and retirement horse. Billy wasn't ready to do Shahzada his first year in 2011 and my goal that year was to hopefully get my 10th Quilty Buckle at Mount Pleasant. Consequently we did the Mini Marathon and Billy got me that Quilty buckle and King also got one for Ray, who rode with his two new knees, so we were both pretty chuffed.

The rest is history as Billy has now earned three Shahzada buckles, he is a more talented athlete than his predecessors, however I can't trust him like I did Kelly and Shadow and ride him in a bridle all the time. Unfortunately for Billy he has drawn the short straw as I now find the joints are stiffening up at a fast pace and although the mind is willing I find some of the physical challenges of Shahzada difficult and he has to bear the burden.

This year the weather gods and my ancestors took pity on me and we didn't have to climb Boyds or Prestons. I can tell you I was overjoyed when I heard that Wednesday morning's leg had been changed. A few friends (Shahzada Tragic) tell me I have to go back next year for a possible but not very probable 20th buckle. I am sure Billy would be keen but I swore to him this year that it was definitely the last. Guess time will tell? Perhaps I will manage to do more riding next year and get fitter and the body clock will rewind and I can get younger!! Boy wouldn't that be something??

Karen Rhodes