

HISTORY OF RDANSW TALL TIMBERS CENTRE – 40 YEARS

1972 Pearl Batchelor held her first disabled riders class in April at West Pennant Hills. On the 23rd October 1972 a meeting took place with the name and constitution being established.

1974 Margie Randall won a Churchill scholarship and went to England visiting RDA groups to gain more knowledge about disabled riding.

1976 Due to pending land development at West Pennant Hills, the Kellyville property of 5 acres was purchased. (Subsequent committees purchased another 5 acres and again in 1987 another 5 acres giving a total of 15 acres, all paid off through fundraising and donations). Margie Randall moved into the house and became the first Manager of Tall Timbers.

1983 Pearl Batchelor was presented with the Medal of the Order of Australia “in recognition of service to the Disabled”.

1987 Nan Everingham, a physiotherapist for many years, and President of Tall Timbers Centre, was awarded Order of Australia Medal for her services to the disabled, three days before she lost her struggle against cancer. Tall Timbers celebrated its 15th Birthday with a dinner dance at Macquarie University with 140 people attending. The night enabled many old friends to come together and feel a sense of pride with the results of their endeavors. Vaulting for people with disabilities commences with two RDA riders from the North Rocks Blind School trying this opportunity. 10 year trophy for horses that have worked at RDA started – the first three names are: Smarty, Brandy and Showy. These wonderful ponies were part of the original horse team owned by Pearl.

1988 Ride for Mobility – Sue-Ellen Lovett and her team have hit the road. Farewelled in Cairns on June 18th they rode to Brisbane. Our F100 Ute also did this trip as a support vehicle. “A Country Practice” cast and crew comes to Tall Timbers to use RDA as a part of one of their upcoming episodes. Shan Symons (staff coach) had a few lines to say for her TV debut.

1989 Aileen Davis, who had witnessed the success of harness driving in RDA groups overseas, organised a specially adapted cart, which can accommodate wheel chairs to be brought out from England. Together with members of the Hills District Harness Club, interested RDA instructors and “Peter Pan” Tall Timbers Centre harness pony, carriage driving was launched.

1991 A wedding, a first for Tall Timbers, was held in the indoor arena with the happy couple being married on horseback.

1992 Dressage Championships Adelaide, SA. Eight Tall Timbers riders, coaches and helpers represented the State for this event. Rider’s comment “This was a thrill that will long remain in our memories”. Inaugural interstate vaulting competition held in Brisbane including several classes for RDA competitors. Six hundred dozen lamingtons made and sold to raise funds for Tall Timbers Centre.

1993 Tall Timbers Centre celebrates “Coming of Age” with a 21st Dinner Dance.

1994 Drought has kicked in with feed and water bills growing.

1995 Margie and Graham Randall both retire from Tall Timbers at Easter. Between them they have worked tirelessly for 46 years! 90 friends braved the coldest June day on record for a very moving luncheon.

1996 Pending loss of the 25 acres “out the back” grazing paddock to Landcom, now on month to month lease. After many hours of training and support from RDA Tall Timbers and Ryde, Sharon Koneman Tall Timbers rider for over 20 years has been selected for the Paralympic Equestrian Competition at Atlanta in August.

1997 Straddle a Saddle – after three years of planning the weekend of August 2/3 arrived. This was a national event to raise awareness of RDA. Tall Timbers organised a huge Family Fun Day at Castle Hill Showground that took a virtual army of helpers for setting up. Many outside organisations participated in this event to help make it a success.

1998 Greg Pike and his Coach/Whip Ken Thomas attend the first World Championships for Drivers with Disabilities in Germany. Due to pending housing development, announcement made of the planned move to a horse property of 27 acres at Box Hill.

1999 Farewell to the Kellyville property party with 180 Tall Timbers friends attending including Baulkham Hill Shire Council members and some of the people involved with Tall Timbers from the earlier days. Pearl Batchelor could not attend as she was recovering from surgery. The evening was filled with happy memories, dancing and some sadness. Horses moved to Box Hill in December with as much as possible following. The largest item moved was the roof of the indoor arena, which was dismantled, sent off for sand blasting and taken to Box Hill to be erected over the existing outdoor arena. Even the native turtles, with help from WIRES, were relocated to the Box Hill dam from Kellyville dam before the bulldozers moved in.

2000 Reduced number of classes commence due to small horse numbers. Everyone is coping with the “makeshift” facilities as we settle in. HRH Princess Anne visits Tall Timbers on the morning of the Opening Ceremony of the Sydney Olympics. Princess Anne watched various demonstrations including a class of riders from Roselea Support Unit, a vaulting display and then a carriage driving display and spoke to everyone during morning tea. She also wished us every success for the future. Jan Pike who started her riding career with Tall Timbers was reserve rider for the 2000 Paralympics and rode as a Grade 1 “test rider”. Julie Higgins wins two Grade III gold medals at the Sydney Paralympics.

2002 We are now 30 years young! Drought again has parched the paddocks and we are buying in water. Unfortunately we do not meet the drought relief criteria. Web site launched.

2003 Massive hail storm hits our area, trees down, two horses injured and the majority had hailstone welts on their bodies. The place looks like a disaster zone. Even after this storm, water is scarce. ABC Creature Features films a segment focusing on a 12 year old rider and her passion for riding.

2005 Due to ongoing differences with the Board of RDANSW the Tall Timbers' committee resigns and RDANSW takes over the management of the Centre. Plans for the development of the property and new building continue. Farewell for Doug and Jenny Denby who between them have served RDA with enthusiasm and commitment for over 45+ years. The outgoing committee was also presented with tokens of thanks for their great efforts over the years.

2006 New “working” committee formed with the centre still under Board management. Development plans submitted to Council. After three submissions, a grant is finally received for large cement water tanks. With 200,000 litres of storage in the tanks we will no longer need to purchase water.

2007 Rotary Club of West Pennant Hills & Cherrybrook sponsored horse yards are built. The shade structure kindly donated by Joan Edwards and her Aunty Phyll. Primary Club of Australia assist with the cost of the arena extension. State Dressage competition held at SIEC on the infamous Equine Influenza (EI) weekend, which resulted in our horses having to remain in lockdown until permits were granted, 3 weeks later. Tall Timbers centre closed due to EI. Earthworks and development have started, drought breaks and now we have mud, mud and more mud. The founder of RDANSW and Tall Timbers, Pearl Batchelor, has sadly passed away aged 92. Pearl will always be remembered for her dedication to RDA.

2008 Fundraising still continues even though classes are not operating. Horses coming back into work and simulated classes in preparation for start up again. RDANSW takes over maintenance of the house and front paddock that is to be rented out with proceeds to benefit RDANSW. Committee elected and resumes management of the Centre. Our development finally completed. The new facilities at Tall Timbers Centre are officially opened by Sonia Phillips Mayor of Hills Shire Council on 26th April. We celebrated with a “Happy Hour” or two with approximately 150 representatives of our supporters, client groups & schools, past and present volunteers and riders and many more. The Centre has certainly strengthened its ability with our new facilities and it feels like we have grown professionally. Promotional DVD for RDANSW filmed at Tall Timbers.

2010 10 years at Box Hill. It is now hard to imagine how the property was when we first arrived, so much as happened and changed. Over the years many small steps and some giant ones have been taken to improve the facilities for RDA use. We celebrated this event with our volunteers and supporters in October with a delicious morning tea and demonstrations from riders in a class situation, dressage and mounted games and a carriage driving display. Tall Timbers was announced winner in the Community Service/Non Profit Section of the Rouse Hill Times Business Achiever Awards. These awards honour excellence and acknowledge the significant contribution of small businesses to our local community. Carriage Driving continues at Rossmore under the co-ordination of Janet Muspratt and team. The F100 that drove from Cairns in 1988 is still in use. A sensory garden is being developed for the enjoyment of our participants and visitors.

2011 The Centre stars in a segment for the Kerri-Ann Show on Channel 9. We purchased a Carriage Driving pony. We are recognized by UWS for participating in their Classrooms without Borders Program raising awareness of the educational benefits of RDA. The Centre represented RDA at Equitana.

2012 Our 40th year - the water tanks and dam are full and the grass green. The property continues to be improved with new paths and replacement of boundary fencing. We purchased a new tractor. The horse yards have been upgraded with an improved rubber surface laid on concrete for the benefit of horses and volunteers. A Carriage Driving Program has commenced at the Tall Timbers site at Box Hill. Plans for a Living Skills program and building are underway.

**We continue on, working together as a team,
to provide equine assisted activities for people with disabilities to develop and enhance abilities.**

Thank you for joining us to celebrate 40 years of Tall Timbers.