

For Isabel 7/1/18

Hullo , im Stewart and I have been working at wombat park for the last 31 yrs , the last 21 with Isabel , ...our lady of wombat.

When wombat park was sold in 1996 I thought that would be the end of my time at wombat and possibly the end of wombat park as we knew it, little did I know what great days lay ahead

Under isabels caring stewardship wombat park has been brought carefully into the 21<sup>st</sup> century , having purchased a some what rundown property from her friend Mrs Brooke , a property founded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century , but stuck in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century , long and careful work transformed the house and parts of the garden as well.

Isabels knowledge of plants was formidable but it was her ability to maintain the feel and atmosphere of the house and garden that was unique. The much improved house , it now has electricity in every room , still feels like the house of old . The semi lost world , frayed at the edges feel of the garden is now a more purposeful maintained state , rather than an on going state of terminal decay . It has still maintained that air of mystery and that " I wonder whats around the corner" feel to it . Just as it has for decades

Working with Isabel in the garden and around the farm was always easy , her respectful and considered consultative approach made planning and decision making easy

She bought the property for its garden , its history and its cool climate , she got them all in spades .....

She lived it , loved it and left it . but left it better than she found it

She had a great love for animals , well ...all creatures really , be it native animals , her various dogs , the sheep on the farm or her horses

While going around the sheep at lambing time in the ute she would chat to them out the window and call out encouragement and when we were both on our knees delivering a stuck lamb , me at the business end , her holding the ewes head she d be telling it don't worry everything will be alright while stroking its nose

But a special place was held in her heart for our great black stallion .....Loch Invaar

Having bred him herself their bond was long and close and as he aged she doted on him .....as his teeth diminished she would grate carrots into a bowl , pull her coat on and walk up to the stables , often in the rain , loyal dogs trotting behind , as he ate from the bowl he would gently lean on her , she would put her arm around his neck and talk quietly into his ear telling him what a good old boy he was .....

Greater love hath no horse than this .....

When he died she felt it terribly , and we all lost something special that day.

Over the last few years as Isabel slowed down , slowing down being a relative term for Isabel , she spent more time at home at wombats , reading the paper , listening to music or just sitting by the fire , this provided great opportunities , when time permitted , for extended conversations

Always a treat to listen to her reminisce about her childhood , the war years and stories of her beloved Alistair

Isabel read the age everyday , in detail , cover to cover , so when I popped in towards midday she would be ready to discuss and analyse the stories of the day , the state of the nation and the world in general, we shared many interests but for my slow brain to keep up with fast one I have gotten into the habit of getting up earlier in the morning , in the dark and reading the age online so as to be up to date with details and to have some chance of being on top of so many subjects that she seemed to manage with ease,

When I cancelled the age at the newsagent this week I cried a little , knowing it was more than just a newspaper I was putting a line through.

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But I didn't stand a chance when it came to the New Scientist magazine , she was a subscriber and it came monthly and was devoured cover to cover , sometimes in a single sitting and if anyones had a crack at it its no light read , she loved it but then when I came into the kitchen I was left flat footed as she nimbly skipped over the details of super colliders and particle acceleration

Her enquiring mind and thirst for knowledge lasting right to the end having read the age at the table on the Friday before that fateful Saturday

Although she never really got over the loss of Alistair some how she managed to move on , getting to know her knew town and making new friends , no easy thing given that she was now in her eighties , how she enjoyed her lunch dates with that lovely group

Her involvement with the friends of the gardens group brought many more wonderful friends and a great connection to the community

and a great sharing between the two gardens not seen since  
stanbridges time

The respect and admiration held for Isabel by the people she met  
and dealt with in this town is extraordinary , the same goes for the  
tradesmen and other workers who have come to wombat over the  
years , no matter how busy they would always ' come for isabel' .  
And today a small army of people turned up to transform the hall  
and this church , all doing it for Isabel

This town loved Isabel , it loves wombat park and it loved how she  
cared for it

And of those people a very special word of thanks to Beth Quin ,  
isabels Dr for her years in Daylesford , we thank her for her diligent  
and professional care of Isabel over those years

I'd also like to acknowledge neil and trish barron who were at  
wombat for isabels first 10 yrs and ironically for her last 10 min

To David and Rosemary , your loyalty , friendship and support were  
so valued and enjoyed by Isabel and helped keep who independent  
and positive and I know how much she looked forward to your visits

But wombat parks biggest thank you must go to Stephanie who s  
devotion to Isabel over so many years has been extraordinary , to be  
aware , alert and available 24 hrs a day through so much can only be  
done if you truly love someone..... without her efforts we may  
well have had this gathering some time ago

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And so we are left with our memories..... A vision of her weeding  
in the garden , standing bent from the hips weeding between her  
feet , a technique also used by mrs brooke ..... The look on her face

as the pipe band came up the drive on her 90 th birthday.....her sitting in her chair at the kitchen table , the aga behind her , reading the paper or ....at the end of the day sitting by the fire in the little lounge with monty the kelpie at her feet .....all signs that all was well at wombat

And so for steph and I she was our other mother , and in her kindness she referred to us , along with david and rosemary.....as her other family or her wombat family

And so for her wombat family , for mary gabe and ruby, for graham eve and Juliet, it has been an absolute privilege to have had such a wonderful person as our friend.....

The like of whom may not pass this way again

Thank you