



# Mates at Billabong

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Norah is the pet and close companion of her father, as she also is of her brother Jim and his friend Wally. When cousin Cecil arrives at Billabong, with his city airs and disdain of the ways and amusements of Bush life, the fun begins.

## Mates at Billabong Details

Date : Published by Project Gutenberg (first published 1912)

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Author : Mary Grant Bruce

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# From Reader Review Mates at Billabong for online ebook

## Highlyeccentric says

I can't believe that I, as a child, religiously read and re-read this book which contains a full chapter detailed account of a cricket match. I'm also kind of confused because the opposing town name is that of an area now an outlying suburb of Sydney - what were they doing in rural Victoria? Etc.

Again, the racisms. MGB keeps describing turban-wearing characters as 'hindu'. That's... not how it works.

Also notable: the sharp shift in gendering in this book. Norah's a bit older, and there's a LOT of emphasis on her 'womanly' traits as counter to her practical tomboyisms. And the demonisation of cousin Cecil! It's basically all 'lack of rugged masculinity = evil and also selfish'. Just. I really felt like the DEATH of Bobs the pony was unnecessary here, even given Cecil's established character. A good fall from the horse and a long walk home would've taught him his lesson, and then he could be rebuked for un-permitted pony-borrowing. The death was just excessive, and really only served to prove that the unmanly man was INHUMANE so there.

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## Brenda says

Billabong, a vast property in rural Victoria, was home to Norah and her father as they worked the cattle and the few sheep they had. Norah's brother Jim was in his final year of school in Melbourne and in the lead-up to Christmas, he would be home for good. She couldn't wait to see him again. But before that could happen, a cousin, Cecil, arrived for a visit from Sydney. He hated the bush and everything it stood for – it made them wonder why he had come.

Jim and his mate Wally arrived by train in due course. The farm hands plus Mrs Brown (Brownie) and her girls in the house all prepared for Christmas. Norah, at fourteen was excited. But the most enjoyment she derived from her days was riding Bobs, her mare, and helping her father on Billabong. Life was good - nothing could possibly go wrong.

*Mates at Billabong* is the 2nd in the Billabong series by Aussie author Mary Grant Bruce, and was originally published in 1912. For a book which is 106 years old, it was a delight – totally enjoyable with quite a few laugh out loud moments – mainly because of the antics between Jim, Wally and Norah. But there were some sad moments as well, and I will admit to needing the tissues. This one, and a few of the others in the series, are available for free through Project Gutenberg, which is where I picked up this copy. Highly recommended.

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## Leonie says

I picked this book up for free on Amazon, and decided to take a walk down memory lane with it, and also read it as part of my contribution to the AWWC 2013. I first read it as a child in the seventies, when my mother introduced me to Mary Grant Bruce's Billabong books. I was intrigued to see if the book would live

up to my memories of it.

As I read, I was impressed by the quality of the writing and also the story telling. One of my concerns in re-reading it as an adult, was whether I'd be annoyed by either sexism or racism, as revisiting some of my old favourites from years ago has been an uncertain process. *Mates at Billabong* was first published in 1912 - one hundred and one years ago. When you take that into account, I came to the conclusion that Mary Grant Bruce was an amazingly advanced thinker for her time. Obviously there are some significant differences in character portrayal than there would be in current writing - I'm thinking about Norah, the main character in particular. She's a fourteen year old girl, who despite riding astride (still somewhat revolutionary at that time), chasing bullocks, cracking a whip and being able to handle a revolver, she is still considered too fragile for attending to veterinary tasks. Having said that, for a woman of her time, she's portrayed as much more independent than the average female.

There are several characters of different races portrayed in the novel, but Mary Grant Bruce has characterised them as real human beings, even if some of the comments in the story sound "wrong" to a twenty first century reader, and would actually be considered offensive by today's standards. If you consider the cultural thinking of the time, then the author was probably quite brave to write as she did. I actually enjoyed reading her descriptions and I did wonder if she had ended up in any trouble as a result of them.

So did the story hold up as well as I thought it would? Absolutely. I found myself swept up in the story, and I read until later at night than I'd first planned. I was just as (view spoiler) as I was at the age of twelve. I loved the descriptions of the Australian bush, and probably because "boiling the billy" has been a major part of my life, I could almost smell the woodsmoke and eucalyptus (with a hint of spinifex and mulga!) wafting through the room as I read. I found myself wanting to re-read all of the books again. Will I go looking for some more of her books? Yes, I think I will. I'll wander down memory lane and listen for the sounds and smells of the bush, and for a few hours be transported back to my childhood.

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### **Julie Williams says**

You can't beat a classic!

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### **Sara says**

This the second book in the *Billabong* series. Although still a children's book, there are some surprisingly dark almost mature themes. A city cousin comes to visit Norah and her brother Jim out on the cattle ranch during school holidays. He is not a good addition to the group and his behavior ultimately creates some near-tragic situations.

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