

## Riders in the Rubicon

by Rubicon Forest Protection Group  
convenor Ken Deacon

ON Friday, May 20, a group of young horse riders rode from Rubicon Valley Horse Riding to see a magnificent area of mountain ash forest currently under threat by planned logging.

The horseback expedition came in the wake of helicopter flights over the Rubicon-Royston Range and a conducted 4WD tour of logging coupes organised by the Rubicon Forest Protection Group on Monday, May 16.

The riders had a 'before and after' experience of the impacts of logging in the Rubicon Forest.

They followed a four kilometre ride along a once tranquil and picturesque road that has been abandoned for riding because of scenic loss and logging traffic.

A 55 hectare area of mountain ash forest, now a proposed coupe named Calvin, was their first stopping point.

A gravel access road, including a bridge across the Royston River, is being put in to open up the entire western flank of the Royston Range for logging.

Calvin is listed on the 2013–2016 Timber Release Plan and while no specific date has been set, harvesting could start at any time in the coming months.

The riders enjoyed a picnic in a beautiful area of creekside rainforest containing myrtle beech, sassafras, blanket leaf, blackwood and many different ferns and mosses.

They proceeded to a site of bare earth strewn with unwanted timber which is soon to be burned and re-seeded.

Mountain ash will be seeded from the air, but the rich biodiversity and wildlife habitats will not return for a very long time, if at all, and studies of the 2009 fires indicate that the regrowth will be more fire prone than the preceding mature forest.

Because of the dangers now posed by logging traffic, it has been some years since the gentle clop of horses' hooves has been heard along this stretch of the Royston River Road.

But on Friday, the roads were strangely empty and the forest silent, but for birdsong.

We thank VicForests for apparently halting logging operations for the day, thus ensuring the riders' safety and enjoyment

