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Bush Christmas

UK / Australia : 1946/47 : dir. Ralph Smart
: Children's Entertainment Films / Rank / ABFD : 77 min†
prod: Ralph Smart : scr: Ralph Smart : dir.ph.:
Nicky Yardley; Michael Yardley; Neza Saunders; Morris Unicom; Helen Grieve
Chips Rafferty; John Fernside; Stan Tolhurst; Pat Penny; Thelma Grigg; John McCallum

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω	8	∞	M	⊗	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
2237b	3.5	10	4	949	-	-	-	-	-	No	unseen

[† The Children's Film Foundation reissue was "revised" down to 62 min]



Strewh! Have they got marsupial **horses** down there now, Bruce?
Source: Winchester's Screen Encyclopedia (1948)



A chorus of "Frosty the Snowman" is called for, and howled down derisively.

Presumptively left to right: Helen Grieve, Morris Unicom, Nicky Yardley, Neza Saunders and Michael Yardley.

Source: NFT bulletin

Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 1996 review:

"Solid little adventure about some children who set out across the Australian bush in pursuit of horse thieves. Holds up quite nicely; kids should enjoy it. Remade in 1983. *** "

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review (but transposing 1947 into 1974):

"Over Christmas schoolchildren tangle with thieves and this leads to unusual happenings. The film will primarily appeal to children and is entertainingly made. ***"

Halliwell's Film Guide review:

"Australian children on holiday help catch horse thieves. Rather stolid family feature which got a reputation it hardly deserved."

Australian Cinema 1970-1985 note:

"The Ealing films were typically more serious-minded than the other British ventures of the post-war years. These included Ralph Smart's good-natured children's adventure, "**BUSH CHRISTMAS**" (1947), recently remade.. Anthony Kimmins' "**SMILEY**" (1956) and its sequel "**SMILEY GETS A GUN**" (1958), both chronicling the adventures of a likeable small-town boy who craves a bicycle (in the first film) and a rifle (in the second), and Jack Lee's "**ROBBERY UNDER ARMS**" (1957) with Peter Finch

following his "**SHIRALEE**" success in the leading role of Captain Starlight."

The Australian Film Book review:

"When three thieves steal a valuable horse the owner's children pursue them. The children become lost in the bush and have to fend for themselves. They track the thieves to a ghost town where a search party comes to their aid just in time. "**BUSH CHRISTMAS**" proved enormously popular with Australian audiences in 1947."

Children's Film Foundation Catalogue & Index of Films 1972 listing:

"A family of Australian children, riding home for the Christmas holidays, meet two strangers and tell them about their father's new and valuable mare, Lucy. An exciting adventure about horse thieves. A Children's Entertainment Film donated by the Rank Organisation and re-edited by Anvil Film and Recording Group Ltd. Produced and directed by Ralph Smart."

Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89 review – also giving the year as 1974:

"Some school kids run afoul of a couple of thieves on Christmas Day. Highly unusual drama, depicting Yuletide life Down Under. Recommended. *** "



Source: *Children's Film Foundation Catalogue & Index of Films 1972*

Winchester's Screen Encyclopedia (1948) note:

"Adventure. In the Blue Mountains of New South Wales, five children recapture some stolen horses."

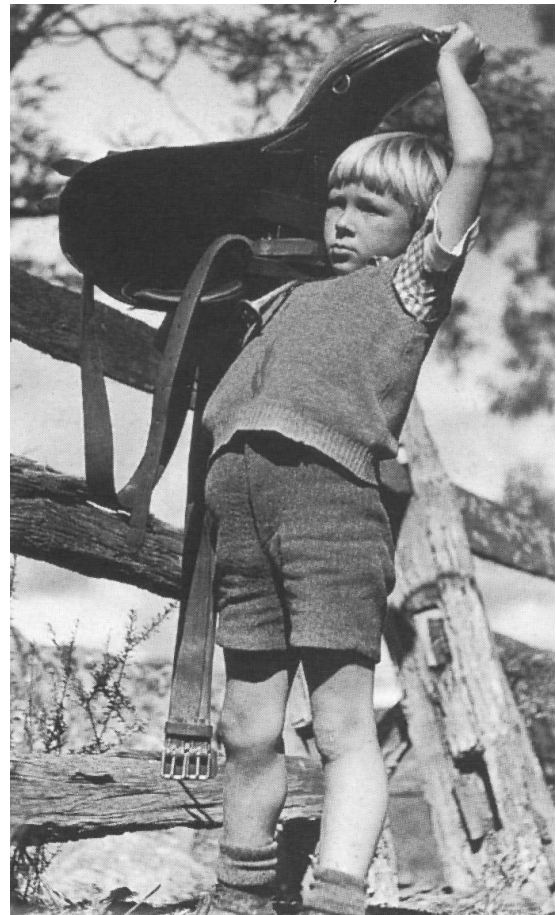
NFT Bulletin – September 1972 – review:

"A classic British children's film concludes this first International Children's Film Festival at the NFT. **"BUSH CHRISTMAS"** (Australia/G.B. 1946) was one of the major successes of Children's Entertainment Films, set up in 1944. A family of children track down a gang of thieves who have been stealing horses in New South Wales and recapture the animals but then are themselves cornered."

NFT Bulletin – July 1994 – note on the Museum of the Moving Image's children's film evening:

"50 years ago, during World War 2, the short film **"TOM'S RIDE"** spearheaded J Arthur Rank's mission of producing films specially for children attending Odeon Saturday morning cinema clubs. NFT programmer Terry Staples talks about and illustrates the development and influence of Children's Entertainment Films, as Rank's unit was called, over the six years of its life, and beyond. As well as the

whole of **"TOM'S RIDE"**, there will be clips from **"BUSH CHRISTMAS"**, **"OUR CLUB"**



Nicky Yardley – "Now those bastards have taken my horse, **someone's** got to wear that pricey new saddle!" dad growls. Source: *Moving Picture Boy*

MAGAZINE" and "THE DRAGON OF PENDRAGON CASTLE"."

The Moving Picture Boy entry on Nicky Yardley:

"With his elder brother Michael, the aboriginal Neza Saunders and the bespectacled Morris Unicomb, Nicky was the junior member of a notable quartet in **"BUSH CHRISTMAS"**, one of the first Australian-based films to achieve world-wide popularity. Ralph Smart was to direct him again three years later in **"BITTER SPRINGS"**, but perhaps his best part came in **"EUREKA STOCKADE"**."

[no listing in "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

See the subject index under **CHILDREN'S ENTERTAINMENT FILMS** for an excellent contemporary survey of their output from the *Winchester's Screen Encyclopedia*. The bare plot of kids haring after crooks/smugglers/poachers could almost be called the primary template for children's films, so often and so mechanically has it been reworked (it just **had** to be *five* children, didn't it!). But even given that critics tend to be over-generous on the rare occasions when they do review a children's production, this one attracted unusual compliments, and may particularly be worth a look. The generous Australian film funding regime of the 1960s meant that the novelty of material from that country soon wore off for UK audiences, but in 1946 interest would still have been fresh. Nicky Yardley was 6, but nothing is known of his brother or the other children.

See the 1985 remake (universally ignored), and subject index under [AUSTRALASIA, CHRISTMAS, FOLLOW THE LEADER \(CHILDREN'S GANGS\), HORSES & PONIES](#) and inevitably **KIDS OUTWIT THE CROOKS**.