

Merrijig to Hollywood, on the back of a horse

by PAUL DUNLOP

IF Australian actor Eric Bana wins an Oscar for his turn in the upcoming movie blockbuster *Helen of Troy*, it's a fair bet his acceptance speech will feature a big thankyou to Charlie and Glenda Lovick of Merrijig.

Bana, who will star alongside Brad Pitt in the epic tale, has been learning to ride a horse at the Lovicks' property in preparation for his role.

Bana is no stranger to the Mansfield district having spent time here during filming for the Australian classic *The Castle*.

When told he needed to look at home on horseback for the upcoming Greek-Trojan drama, the Lovicks immediately sprang to mind.

"A friend of my wife's recommended them and I'd heard about their trail rides over the years," said Bana who had ridden a couple of times before but was, in his own words, starting from scratch.

"They've been fantastic, Charlie made me feel like I knew what I was doing - long before I did."

Charlie, who was the horse trainer and a crack rider in *The Man From Snowy River* films, said the popular actor had been a quick learner.

"He's doing really well." Bana has won acclaim for his roles in *Chopper*, *The*



GETTING READY TO RIDE: Actor Eric Bana takes a break last week from riding lessons with Charlie Lovick. *Nugget* and the upcoming movie *Hulk*. So far, he's had about five riding lessons. "I reckon five lessons with Charlie is worth 105 with anyone else," he said. Filming for *Helen of Troy* begins soon on location in Corfu, Malta and in Mexico. It's all a long way from Merrijig, but when local people see Bana riding fearlessly at the head of a huge army sometime next year - they'll know Charlie taught him to ride.