

Retrospective ‘Rumination’ Perspectives

This section began as part of ‘Anecdotal Reflections’ but I felt these opinions were too subjective to be compatible with the objectivity of reflections. I therefore created an additional compartment to accommodate this expression.

John Morgan



“From where did you acquire this taste for luxury that life should be fair”?
“Life is a risk. If you do nothing it’s a risk. If you do anything it’s a risk. Life is a risk”.
(Sir Humphrey Appleby ‘Yes Minister’)

There is little doubt that following Murray Bain the most influential veterinarian to practice in Scone has been John Reginald George Morgan (JRG M). Not a great deal has been written about him but John offers the following pearls of wisdom laced with “just a little bit of (characteristic) latitude”. This is the quintessential Morgan rather than the ‘mad dog’ variety! Bill Stewart, Sue McCubbery and Jamie Barnes did concoct an aphorism relating to ‘Morganization’ and being ‘Morganized’. I have always speculated cognitively on the real meaning of this epithet. John explains it as the result of failing to follow detailed instructions and experiencing difficulties as a result!

Reminiscences and Ruminations of a 'Guru'



John Reginald George Morgan (JRGM).

I came to Scone at the start of the 1968 season (August) returning home to Newmarket in December. I was immediately impressed by the more laid back Australian approach to practice and stud management compared to England. The lifestyle appealed to me. Here was – and still is – a country of great opportunity. I returned to Scone accompanied by my family the following year (1969).

I had been working in the old established practice of Reynolds and Partners in Newmarket where a former army colleague of Murray Bain Bob Crowhurst together with Fred Day were legendary long term partners. This formed the initial link between the two practices which was maintained and I think strengthened following the formation of Morgan Howey Fraser & Partners.

This exchange of a junior member from each practice joining the other for the breeding season ('shuttle seasons') has spanned over thirty years and in my eyes has been a great success for all concerned. From our point of view having an extra dependable pair of hands arrive in Scone every spring season was ideal and well accepted by our clients.

On my arrival here I was particularly impressed by Murray's record keeping. He maintained a detailed record of every mare and foal treated or examined by the practice. Sadly we later failed to keep this up possibly because of pressure of work but mainly because the studs themselves began to keep their own. Secondly, having an 'in-house' laboratory run by a competent bacteriologist in Shona Murphy was an enormous aid in the diagnosis and correct treatment of infections. Thirdly, the ultra high standard of veterinary hygiene created by Murray in installing sterilizers on every stud serviced by the practice was very prescient. Mare speculums were sterilized between each and every mare to a remarkably high standard. Murray always maintained that 'not if but when' something turns up transmissible mechanically we will be prepared.

Unfortunately he did not live long enough to see the day. Later it was suggested internationally that we took all these precautions in addition to culturing some mares anaerobically because we had already encountered a particularly nasty organism. If this were true Murray would certainly have published the findings!

Every day was a challenge. You didn't really know what we were going to see. You had to put your best foot forward and there were no excuses for bad workmanship. You had to set standards and maintain them. The veterinarian made 100 or 200 'on-the-spot decisions' a day and was really a decision making machine. Assistants in particular quickly learned to be innovative and independent especially if they found themselves way out in the Bylong valley without recourse to back up late on a Saturday night!

1977 was the year of the 'Jubilee Clap' (CEM = Contagious Equine Metritis). I actually came back from a UK visit with inside information that year. We were forewarned and fore-armed so we knew what to look for. That year I was in France with an employee of ours (Sue McCubbery) and she said "Funny thing, we've got two mares out of the stud, they're not in foal and they won't let us bring them home". I thought "Hello, that sounds to me like they have CEM!"



"I'm the one who's right!"

I said to Bill "Any suspect stallion we'll only serve two mares and any imported stallion we will swab the mares after the second or third day". In the case of one imported stallion the first three mares covered were found to be oozing pus and CEM was diagnosed. The interesting thing was that two stallions in France sent to America had CEM and spread it to forty stallions on the farm in Kentucky. Sadly they weren't doing what we were doing with aseptic precautions in serving mares and separate washing

jugs. Because of the knowledge and the setup and early decisions made we avoided the full-scale epidemic they had in Kentucky.

Scone in 1969 was small community. Everyone knew each other. You only wanted the slightest excuse for partying. There really was a lot of comradeship and everyone in the main stream and the practice got on well. We tended to get on well with other practices because we had nothing to fear from them. We were just busy doing our own stuff. AMB could be a difficult bastard! He could also be entirely unreasonable. We all saw that and occasionally bore the brunt of it. He had a great belief that what he thought was correct. I think everyone's entitled to that but frequently he built it into he was right and you were wrong! In his most vituperative mood he could be an 'avatar of malice'.

Murray was perfunctory with trade people coming around. A salesman of a MIP (Mare Immunological Pregnancy) Test explained it and claimed that at 42 days this is a 99.5 per cent sure test. Murray pulled himself to his full height and said "I am 100 per cent. Go away and perfect your product!" (No arguing!).

We worked hard and played hard. But we all really enjoyed what we were doing and enjoyed each other's company by and large. We worked as a team and we used to fully support each other. There were ritual difficulties and late calls and coming back from Widden Valley and then having to go back again. We put a lot of pressure on ourselves by just working too hard and not working the business side of things too well. Luckily we all survived and didn't succumb to car accidents or depressions although we all had brushes with the 'black dog' at times and jousts with alcohol! You can't control your emotions and how you feel but you can control how you behave.



*'Blues Brother' and 'Molls' at Practice Party! 'All work and no play'?
Jenny Jenkins, Paul Ferguson, Karon Hoffman, Mark Wylie.*



‘Corporate’ Wisdom!

Astute observation and being acutely percipient are keys to success but some of it is just very sound common sense. For example treat every lame or ‘proppy’ foal as ‘joint ill’ until proven otherwise. The seven years I spent farming and going to farm produce and livestock markets were with a fairly dry difficult lot. It prepared me psychologically for the job ahead. It enabled us to deal with difficult clients! Talk about lessons in life! Brian Maher, Lionel Israel, Carl Powell, Alan Morrisby and Souran Vanian all had their moments. Brian Maher was the ‘bottom of the harbour tax evasion’ expert and said he’d build us a practice. We said “We’ll do that but probably finance it ourselves”. We did not want to play into his hands. [Manageress Lorraine Skinner thought that Siegfried Farnham (All Creatures Great and Small, BBC TV) and John Morgan were so alike it was untrue].

I think one of the good things for the people working for us is that we used to give them a lot of latitude and preferred it if they came back and discussed anything with us. They could have time off to go somewhere even on their weekend on. You can’t have it all ways. We expected them to give 200 per cent in the breeding season and you’re there seven days a week. We got ourselves a bad name in some areas because it seemed the sort of person we’d like to come in and work for us and be able to deal with clients well would be the ones who were still playing Rugby. We did incline to employ people who had played and were still playing because it suited us better. At one stage everyone

played Rugby except myself so the only person on call on Saturday afternoons was me. It was a very satisfactory arrangement mainly employing males and the sort of work we did. There was a lot of drenching, pregnancy testing cattle and physical stuff just like an endurance race every day. You got the satisfaction of a job well done with the absence of noise and a smooth flow. You know it's going well if there's no-one yahooing and yelling.

It was difficult for partners. One day during the famous party at the 'Castle' I left the kids at the swimming pool without supervision. Some man had picked them up at the pool. No one knew who he was or where they'd gone! It didn't affect me all that much because I'd just managed to get home and I fell asleep. I left it to my other half [Sally] to sort it out. Somebody had taken them home. She had no help from me. A fair few of us were 'unhelpful'. We didn't need an occasion. Bill put on a party and might I add that BH did not do things by halves! There'd be enough alcohol for a week just in case there were floods or something. There were people passing out everywhere. Not a great advertisement for temperance but not unpleasant! [Happy note: Good neighbour Norman Smith had recognised the signs and retrieved the Morgan brood for safe keeping!].

We had one or two good if not great practice parties. We traditionally hosted one in the Scone Cup Week in May. We would invite everyone to come. They were legendary and literally came in hundreds. Bert Lilley and his crew got stuck on the verandah at 106 Liverpool Street and just chundered into the street. When Tony Parker left we had a terrific party. When I came to Scone in 1968 I lived in the 'hole-in-the-wall' [Kelly Street] for a few months. One didn't spend a lot of time there. One went there just to sleep and get up and then get going. We used to leave quite early to drive to wherever we were going to. You could find yourself late on a Saturday night with a hundred miles to drive back.



Party Mode! 70 not out! Bill Howey, JRGM and Jim Rodger, Headingly Wool Shed, April 2001.

I got in very hot water because when I came back with my family in 1969 two or three people said "We didn't even know he was married"! It was a harmless remark but I don't know what Sally construed into that. You couldn't be pining away by yourself. You'd have to have a beer and debrief in the RSL Club. The place shut at 7pm in those days. 'Comeuppance' stopped me going to RSL. Rebecca was about 4 years old and had been here about 2.5 years. I'd been away all day said "I'm just going for a drink." She came up with a bottle and said "You don't have to go away, we have a beer here". That finished me! [Sally intuition?]



Reflective Mode – JRGM and Paul Adams.



Now just listen up – or else! JRGM and Robyn Woodward.



“There’ll always be an England”
Old habits die hard! JRGM in hunting mode!

Bill Howey

I could never have written about myself! I am totally indebted to my close friend and eminent racing journalist Brian Russell for the following biographical contribution. It is taken almost *verbatim* from Brian's excellent pioneer publication *The Australian Bloodhorse Review*. This article appeared in the April Edition, 1995. It was written just after the closure of the old White Park Race Course in Scone. I have Brian's absolute authority and complete consent to purloin it although modesty almost demands a degree of editing if not considerable censorship! Rather like Bert Lillye Brian has a unique writing style and special idiom with words and prose. I would not even presume to attempt to improve the original. When I asked Brian's permission to use this information he was typically modest and genuinely understated. He said: "I would be honoured if you used my humble effort"!

The Australian Bloodhorse Review, April 1995



Brian Russell profiles Bill Howey – already an elder statesman of Australian equine veterinary practice.

A closer inspection may have revealed some moisture around the eyes also, but irrespective of this there was a definite quiver in Bill Howey's voice as he announced to the big crowd in attendance at Scone's White Park late on Saturday afternoon, 22 October [1994], that the club flag would no longer flutter on the flag pole of the racecourse.

In publicly presenting the flag to the veteran of Scone Race Club management Jack Johnston Bill was putting the final nail in the coffin in which was buried the Hunter Valley horse town's White Park racecourse, one which presented its first race meeting back in 1947.

Although the huge crowd which had gathered at White Park for its wake meeting on that Saturday was fare-welling an historic racecourse, it was by no means a farewell to Scone as a racing centre.

Since that final meeting, Scone has galloped into the 21st century with the opening of a new facility which has been developed at a cost of some \$5 million into a state of the art racing centre, the like of which Australian country racing has never before seen.

Although veterinary surgeon Dr. Bill Howey, a former president of the Scone Race Club and long-term committeeman, lamented the loss of White Park, the opening of the new racecourse was a proud day for him, and for so many others who worked so tirelessly to bring the multi-million dollar complex to fruition.

Many of these were people who had spent all their lives in the Scone region; but Bill was a 'blow-in' of 27 years standing, an Englishman-cum-Scot with a good dash of Irish, who foraged in his youth in the north of England in the Northumberland County just across the border from Scotland.

Despite this, there were very few on the racecourse that day who did not know and respect Bill Howey, such is the impact he has made since arriving from England to join Murray Bain's veterinary practice, serving the Hunter Valley from its base in Scone.

Prior to writing this profile of Bill Howey, I sat with him in the courtyard of the historic home in which he now resides with wife Sarah, a member of the Mackay clan – one of the great Hunter horse breeding families – at Scone and within a stone's throw of the mare and foal sculpture which adorns Elizabeth Park and which symbolizes the town's role as the horse capital of the Valley.

He was as usual very busy – organizing the Scone Race Course Wake, with the help of a vigorous committee; contributing to the arrangements for the opening of the new course, and at the same time attending to his new career path, a unique involvement in animal breeding and rearing, with emphasis on the horse.

Little did he contemplate 27 years ago when he read an advertisement in a veterinary journal for an assistant for a practice at a place called Scone in Australia on the other

side of the world, that it was to lead to a significant niche in Australian horse breeding and racing.

Although he is only middle aged, this descendant of a farming family who had dwelt in the small Northumberland village of Hepple for generations, is revered as an elder statesman of equine veterinary practice.

Bill Howey had an association with horses from childhood with the family being involved in breeding and also providing spelling facilities; as well, his grandfather had a Clydesdale stud.

“We were members of what was called the Hunter Improvement and Light Horse Breeding Society,” he told me, pointing out at the same time an interesting service provided in the fifties by the Duke of Northumberland. His stallion would be taken around the district in a horse float and serve customer’s mares on their properties.

“I was always fascinated with horses, handling them in a small way as a lad and accompanying the family to National Hunt and Point-to-Point meetings. One meeting was the Rothbury Cup and Dad was the local chairman of the committee.

“I remember Phillip Payne-Galwey running horses, and riding them, at this meeting,” he said.

Bill later came to know Sir Phillip well – he became titled – as one of the great personalities of English racing and breeding as a representative of the British Bloodstock Agency.

Growing up, Bill could see that farming was in for a difficult time and decided he would have to look elsewhere to develop a career – and veterinary science was his first option. In consequence he studied at one of the best known veterinary colleges – the Royal Veterinary School at Edinburgh.

Whether it was the fact his mother was Irish or that it gave him the chance to rough it with the cattle, goats, pigs and sheep, Bill spent his formative years as a veterinarian in the north-west of Ireland.

“I wanted to be involved with large animals. I didn’t consider myself a small animal person,” Bill told me. “I always nurtured a desire to be involved with horses, and responded to the advertisement for an assistant in the Scone practice”.

The advertisement had been placed by Murray Bain, a legend in Hunter Valley equine practice. Bill said Murray was amazed to receive his response within a week of the advertisement being placed, and this may have helped him get the appointment. Of course Murray being a graduate of the same Royal Veterinary College may have been of help.

Bill had heard Murray present a paper on the role of infection in infertility in mares in Australia, at a British Veterinary Association Congress held in Edinburgh – and was very impressed.

Before going to Australia the late Murray Bain – he died in 1974 – had served in the Royal Army Veterinary Corps in the Middle East during World War II, and then spent brief periods gaining experience in thoroughbred breeding in Kentucky, USA, and New Zealand before settling in Scone in 1950.

He built up a large group practice, based primarily on work with thoroughbreds and cattle. His particular interests were infertility in mares, diseases of newborn foals and the many managerial problems of thoroughbred breeding.

Murray Bain was a foundation member of the Post-Graduate Committee of Veterinary Science of the University of Sydney, and was awarded the Seddon Prize by the Australian Veterinary Association for major contributions to clinical veterinary medicine.

Bill Howey said that Bain introduced new techniques and different thinking to the rearing of horses in Australia. Some practices had changed very little in a 100 years and there was room for innovation. Murray brought this to the Hunter Valley.

“He was a fantastic person to be involved with – a very dogmatic person. There was no grey.....only black or white.....then he could usually back it up,” Bill Howey said in tribute to Murray Bain who was not only his mentor but also that of John Morgan and Jim Rodger – two other veterinarians who came from the other side of the world to join the Scone practice. [Note: Jim Rodger actually arrived in 1977].

Bill Howey looks back with great satisfaction and pleasure on his association with horse breeding and racing in the Hunter Valley. One regret is that Star Kingdom, owned by a partnership of Stanley Wootton [STW], Alfred Ellison [AOE] and Reginald Moses [RFM], died just before he came to this country.



Star Kingdom at Baramul.
Photograph courtesy of *The Thoroughbred Press*.

"However, I feel very privileged to have known the three owners of Star Kingdom, in their own way very astute men indeed, very knowledgeable in different ways.



AOE at Flemington
Photograph courtesy of *The Thoroughbred Press*.

"For instance Mr. Ellison said he might not have been a very good stockman but he was a very good gardener, and farming was gardening on a larger scale.

"R. F. Moses may have had only one eye, but he saw a hell of a lot out of that one good eye, while Stanly Wootton was a legend. In fact they all were in different ways.

"I picked up a lot of wisdom from R. F. Moses, also Lionel Israel, Frank Bragg, V. C. Bath, 'Bim' Thompson, Bill Harris, Alec Terry, Alan Morrisby and George Ryder – the best racing administrator of his time, to quote Tommy Smith – and so many others.



R.F. Moses with Harry Plant
Photograph courtesy of *The Thoroughbred Press*.



S.T. Wootton and 'Todman'
Photograph courtesy of *The Thoroughbred Press*.



S. T. Wootton at Baramul - He could identify individuals he had only seen as foals several years before.

Photograph courtesy of *The Thoroughbred Press*.



Lionel Israel at Segenhoe.

Lionel could be brusque! One day Murray told him rather proudly a bushranger had once been shot outside his house Chivers. “That’s nothing – one lives there now” was his immediate retort! “Rude bastard” replied Murray!

When AOE’s proclivity for extracurricular companionship became fairly common knowledge LBI reputedly responded: “Hey Alf – they tell me you’re doing three of them these days”!

AOE was somewhat more restrained! He said: “Lionel is a dear, dear friend of mine but Lionel can be a little coarse”!

“Murray Bain told me you will pick up pearls of wisdom all the time if you listen closely enough. Murray said if I would listen and pay attention, he would give me a short cut to 10 years in knowledge,” Bill said.

One piece of wisdom which paid big dividends came in a letter from Stanley Wootton saying a galloper by the name of ‘Bletchingly’ and who he had in work with Angus Armanasco, was a nice little horse and would make a very good sire one day.

When Bletchingly retired to Widden Stud the Howes’ bought a share in the son of Biscay for a modest \$3000. They later sold the share for more than \$100,000, but not before

breeding several smart horses by him including Bletchingly's second stakes winner, Bakerman, a colt with a flaxen mane and tail out of a \$1000 mare by the name of Breadline.



Halcyon days at Hepple Farm - Bill and Sarah Howey with the Bletchingly ex Breadline Chestnut Colt.

Sarah was also carrying a filly foal!

Bill said he remembers having a look at the first Bletchingly foals, including three colts gathered in one paddock at Widden. They were the youngsters who were to become Bakerman, Pilgrim's Way and Kingston Town.

He recalls Kingston Town's dam as a big plainish mare, more like a German warmblood than a thoroughbred. The horse she went to, Bletchingly, was not all that impressive physically either: "When I first saw Bletchingly, I thought him very plain, rather ugly, dumpish and small. He appeared short reined, big headed, big jowled and looked heavy topped," said Bill.



Bletchingly.



Yearling colt by Bletchingly ex Beyond All.

\$105,000.00 was a lot money in the early 1980's!
This colt was purchased by T. J. Smith and raced as Norseman, winning at Rosehill.



Bletchingly ex Breadline Chestnut Weanling Colt raced as Nioka Prince.

Referring to Bletchingly's sire Biscay, he said his near fore was turned in quite dramatically and he understood that when Biscay was a foal he had a slight touch of joint ill. However, his mother, the Makarpura mare Magic Symbol, had one of the biggest backsides you would ever see on a mare.

Biscay had the distinction of standing at three different studs in each of his first three seasons, starting off under Mr. Ellison at Baramul, moving to Segenhoe for one season and then transferring to Bhima at Scone.



Pilgrim's Way (Bletchingly ex Angelic) at Yarraman Park bred by 'Tig' Moses
Syndicate Secretary Sarah Howey and Major James Mitchell.
The 'galloping major' was a connoisseur of the Tuesday Boozers Club.

Mr. Ellison had sold all his mares to Americans Rex Ellsworth, and Dr. Franklin – the man who uplifted many Hollywood stars, through breast implants – after Biscay's first season at Baramul. Bill Howey accompanied them on their boat trip to USA.

Ellsworth and his team, by the way, were sneeringly referred to as cowboys when they traveled east from California with a horse by the name of Swaps in the mid fifties. Out of a mare by a sire, Beau Pere, who stood for a time at Scone, Swaps got the last laugh!

Bill Howey has seen a great deal of change in the veterinary field and the way things are done in the industry, since he arrived in Scone in 1967. He referred to ultrasound scanning as being on the list of valuable developments, and also the availability of new and more efficient drugs.

"When I first came here, Star Kingdom and Todman rarely had more than 45 mares each a year. It was common practice to serve every second day during standing heat, or twice during a heat period.

"That of course is no longer standard practice, so the most popular commercial stallions can have double the number of mares than they had before. Also the management can be much more selective as to when those mares will be covered, and the new technology is helpful towards this," Bill said.

He pointed out that when you study fertility figures, despite developments, they show that live foal results have not risen significantly overall. However, it is becoming evident that with the more popular commercial stallions, particularly the shuttle horses, who are getting say a 100 mares, conception rates in the nineties are not uncommon.

“Certainly at the major commercial operations which have better facilities and bigger professional staff, the fertility has improved – especially with the advent of scanning. With this in use you can diagnose pregnancy as early as 11 or 12 days, but customarily 14-15 days. It is a great help to be able to show the mare in foal two weeks after she has been covered,” he said.

The value of scanning was underlined in September when Wakefield Stud’s Golden Sword was shown to have failed to get his first mares in foal. Prior to the arrival of ultrasound scanning, it could have taken two months before management was aware of the problem.

Bill Howey said he had been very privileged over the years in veterinary practice in the Hunter Valley, to have been associated with horses such as Todman, Pipe of Peace, King of Babylon, Sostenuto, Biscay, Kaoru Star, Gunsynd, Baguette, Vain, Bletchingly and Marscay.

He has the dubious claim of being the actual ‘executioner’ of four very famous horses – Pie of Peace, King of Babylon, Gunsynd and Biscay. He had to put them down because of ill health.

Bill gained a lot of satisfaction from a professional point of view as a veterinarian in that in 1977 he and his colleagues encountered the challenge of contagious equine abortion. “At the time, it happened simultaneously, with the first abortion storm due to equine herpes virus.

“I think we met the challenge very well. By doing so we were able to say for example, that in the Hunter Valley – and collectively throughout the industry – we could manage these problems. It made us think we had a very safe and healthy place in which to rear horses,” he said.

He added that he believed Australia is one of the best climates in the world for the rearing of horses. “We have our share of disease problems, but we are fortunate we are free of equine influenza, which can be devastating in some northern hemisphere countries.”

Bill Howey sees the development of the practice of horses being used in the Northern Hemisphere season and then flown to Australia for our season, as very beneficial.

“The shuttle has made a huge difference,” he said. “I think someone in England or Ireland said it was going to be a disaster. In actual fact it has got to be a great benefit Australia, for what we have lacked in the past has been superior genetic material.

“Now we are getting access to some of the best genetic material available – at least from the UK and Ireland. It can only upgrade the mares, the racehorses and the Stud Book in general.”



Huntingdale ex Marmara Yearling Filly at Newmarket 1994.

In the late eighties Bill Howey decided he wanted to take action on his career path before he was forced by age to reduce veterinary practice. “I saw a window of opportunity with the developments taking place in the Hunter Valley including education, and joined the TAFE organization.

After intensive training in Sydney and some teaching in the horse section at the Scone branch of TAFE, he was elevated to the position of curriculum development officer with the NSW TAFE Rural and Mining Industry Training and Fisheries Division.

“We are charged with the responsibility of developing courses involving animal care, including of course, horses,” he said.

The major base for Bill Howey’s operations in the future is to be a multi-million dollar new TAFE campus adjacent to the new Scone racecourse. He described the new college, due to open at the beginning of 1996, as a centre of excellence in rural and equine studies.

It will be the major centre of its kind, and is expected to cater for between 700 and 800 students each year, including trainees from Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Japan.

Bill Howey sees Asia playing a major role in a big leap forward in Australian racing and breeding industries – greater interest stimulated by the beaming of our racing overseas by telecast.



Scone Cup Presentation 1981 - Bill Doodie (Owner of winner Bridgeman), Ray Moir and Bill Howey.



Scone Shire Citizen of the Year Award 1996.

Thank you Brian from the bottom of my heart! I could never have written this myself! I feel extremely humble having just read it fully for the very first time! I knew its content because 'Tiggy' Moses rang me after publication to thank me for the kind words I said about his father!



Mr. A. O. Ellison at Randwick races in the 1950's with his personal secretary of over 40 years, Miss Nora Elliott.

Not long before he passed away Mr. Ellison gave me some of the most cogent advice of my life. In his very clipped best Barrister's tone he said: "Bill, let me tell you, you have to be a very wealthy man to go chasing thoroughbred horses"! Not long after I withdrew from the 'big poker game' while still in front! Miss Elliott presented me the cheque for the sale of my share in Bletchingly!

Photograph courtesy of *The Thoroughbred Press*.



‘Nurture or nature’

Bill Howey with a young Syeeda Bint at Hepple Farm, Moobi, Scone.



April 26 1975 at Tinagroo when Bill Howey married Sarah Mackay.
Bridesmaid Fiona Bain with best man Bill Rose.



April 26 1975 at Tinagroo when Bill Howey married Sarah Mackay
The groom with groomsman Bim Thompson
David Bath is trying to enter the picture on the right!



‘Eclectic Academic Selection’ - Bill Howey, visiting Glasgow University epidemiologist Dr. Pickersgill, Professor David Hodgson and Professor Reuben Rose at Geraldton.



Academic Trifecta - The author with Professor Reuben Rose and Professor Gavin Brown
 Presentation of the T.G. Hungerford Award to Dr. Richard Malik 2002.
 Professor Gavin Brown is Vice Chancellor of the University of Sydney
 Dr. Richard Malik was an undergraduate in Scone in the late 1970's.



Younger days!



50 not out! November 25, 1992 - Cliff Ellis, Syd Anderson behind Hilton Cope, Angus Campbell, Kevin Fitzgerald and Paul Hennessy.



50 not out! November 25, 1992 -
Ron Jeffries, Reub Cochrane, Jim Gibson, Angus Campbell, Archie Shepherd and Cliff
Ellis.

Richard Nairn Fraser, BVSC



HVTBA President's Award 2005
Photograph courtesy of Eight Monkey Marketing.

I had the honour of delivering the address when Nairn Fraser was presented with the Hunter Valley Thoroughbred Breeders President's Award in 2005. The following is a synopsis of my speech. It is notable for its brevity! Nairn prefers it that way!

Nairn Fraser is a quiet but most effective achiever straddling a period of almost four decades.

Succinct. Germane. Apposite. Relevant. Remote. Impassive. Inconspicuous. Circumspect. Taciturn. Unassuming. Unobtrusive. Understated. Modest. Discreet. Diplomatic. Dexterous. Dedicated. Devoted. Tactful. Prudent. Pertinent. Practiced. Professional. Proficient.

*Matching my proclivity for etymology and completing the third leg of a unique 'trifecta' of sorts and after 35 devoted years' service to the thoroughbred industry in the Hunter Valley the most worthy recipient of the HVTBA Presidents' Award for 2005 is **Richard Nairn Fraser**.*



Kate and Nairn Fraser with the HVTBA President's Award in 2005.
Mrs. Fraser is the daughter of Sir Alistair McMullin who expedited the assisted migrant passage of the author. The author and Kate McMullin infamously christened the new pool at its baptism at St Aubins in November 1967 by going for a swim – fully clothed! Sir Alistair and lady McMullin were indubitably not amused! “Go home and get changed young man”!

Photograph courtesy of Eight Monkey Marketing.



‘Reflective Fraser’ 1996.

Shona Murphy



Shona celebrating after being presented with the Murray Bain Service to Industry Award by the Hunter Valley Thoroughbred Breeders Association in 1997.

Shona Murphy is a New Zealand born microbiologist who came to work for Murray Bain in Scone in 1965 and has remained there ever since. To that extent she represents the 'original' with a long link to the practice. Shona's expertise was largely instrumental in saving the Hunter Valley Thoroughbred Industry from the ravages of 'Jubilee Clap' in 1977. She is yet another practice recipient of the Murray Bain Service to Industry Award made annually by the Hunter Valley Thoroughbred Breeders Association.

I am a microbiologist. I graduated in 1954 and achieved accreditation as a part-time class. The opportunity arose and I was always interested in science and chemistry at school. I was working in New Zealand at a research station and I had some friends

who'd come to Australia and I came over to visit. They were working at the Veterinary school at Camden and I stayed with them and secured a job there. About two years after I started at Camden I heard about this job in Scone with Murray Bain. Another girl who was a Veterinarian had been approached to take it on but couldn't do so.

Murray wanted to set up a laboratory for the practice and I came up and looked at the position. It was one of the very first laboratories in a private practice but Percy Sykes had one too. I thought it was something that really suited me and a bit of a challenge. At this stage the practice was small, with two or three vets. Bill Howey came later and then Richard Greenwood. It was a close knit little group. We got on very well and stayed really good friends. I set the laboratory going with mainly bacteriological work. There were lots of cultures from mares. They used to swab mares for infections during the breeding season to make sure they'd go into foal and also take samples from foals.

I probably was the only woman around and I enjoyed it! They were all very good to me. There was no discrimination or anything sexist. Sometimes when I went out onto the studs they were surprised! I was present when they examined mares and took samples of semen from stallions. Once they were used to the situation I accepted it and they accepted me.

I liked Murray Bain. He was a very impressive man and a Scot. My mother was a Scot. I related to him well. He had a great personality and made people feel very welcome. He was a very popular man but did have his detractors. He was very good to his staff and made you feel as though you were a very important person. He liked to have convivial chats. When we finished work at night we'd go for a drink and have a talk about things that were happening in the practice. One day Murray was talking about one stud owner and said; "The trouble is he thinks he's God"! I replied: "He doesn't recognize we have God here already"! He had lots of funny stories to tell. He'd stop for morning tea and relate some story about people he knew. He could charm his way out of anything! He always stuck to the truth – more or less.

We went to parties in 'the hole in the wall'. There were about three flats on top of shops in the main street which was actually Kelly Street. They were quite nice and owned by Harry Hayes. I was one of the incumbents. We'd have a combined party. It was called the 'hole in the wall' because between two of the shops on the main street there was a narrow gap you could go down to get to the back of the flats. Mine opened directly into Kelly Street.

I was 31 when I came to work in Scone. John Bryden and Treve Williams were here when I arrived together with Murray. Frank wasn't working with them then as there had been a 'partition' in the practice. Peter Beiers came briefly as an assistant.

Murray started bringing vets in from overseas and Bill arrived not long after I did. Richard Greenwood was another who just happened to arrive that way. Many vets were emigrating at the time. They probably came for the experience of working with Murray. He had a very good connection with Newmarket in England and there was always a good

interchange between those two practices. John Morgan came next in about 1968. They were the forerunners of the regular 'shuttle' vets.

It was great fun. I worked long hours because I was the only one working in the laboratory. Often it would mean working late at night because the samples might not come in until the end of the day. I enjoyed it because it was such a good atmosphere to work in and meeting new people all of the time. I got to know a lot about the horse industry and the people involved!

Contagious Equine Metritis [CEM] is transmitted venereally by stallions and causes infertility in mares until it is treated and/or cured. The mares don't go into foal. It was a mutant of some other bacterium which became established in mares over in Ireland and the UK. It was brought out by visiting Stallions in about 1977 and perhaps before. It was a very big deal. The stallions had to come in through quarantine and were meant to have been checked to be free of any infection [CEM]. This particular stallion came up to Oakleigh Stud in Widden Valley. Mount Hagen was his name. He'd come from Ireland and was meant to be checked before he left and when he arrived in quarantine. We test mated him with three mares, swabbed the mares and brought the swabs back to Scone. I cultured them. I'd been in touch with a microbiologist in Newmarket who'd been looking at this and he told me what to look for. I read the cultures and said; "I think we've got this dread disease". They couldn't believe it. I sent it away to be confirmed by Keith Hughes at Camden. It was confirmed. They didn't use the stallion again as they were not sure how good the treatment would be. CEM had spread quite a bit through different studs. It was isolated from quite a few visiting mares. They wouldn't use them again that season.

There was a quite a bit of financial loss to the studs, mainly because we weren't sure how much it had spread. People were all very hush-hush about it; "It mustn't be known that we have that on our stud". There was a lot of work to be done because all of the mares had to be swabbed. The incubator was overflowing every night as it took 48 hours to actually grow the organism. It had to be grown in a micro-aerophilic inoculation and special chocolate infused media. After 48 hours checking all of these cultures it's quite exciting when you actually find one that's positive! It can be quite boring just going through lots of negative cultures all the time. Vets went to the studs and educated people about strict hygiene as a consequence.

I went to work in Ballykisteen Stud in Tipperary, Ireland as part of 'tax minimization scheme' orchestrated by some smart accountants and lawyers in Australia for a cache of investment doctors in West Australia. I set up a laboratory there. CEM was rife in Ireland but I didn't pick any up while I was working there.

Viral abortion had also occurred at about the same time as CEM and they were losing quite a lot of foals. Abortion happens at about three months premature. We had no facilities to actually diagnose the virus in Scone. We sent samples to Margaret Sabine at Sydney University and also to a vet called Mike Studdert at Melbourne University. We had to freeze the samples so that they wouldn't arrive too contaminated. He [Mike

Studdert] was the first one to actually isolate the virus. During the Herpes Virus outbreak the safest place to be was the Hunter Valley because everyone knew what was going on.

On one stud they had an abortion storm. It was possibly Bellerive Stud near Scone. In the same year I think we had all our problems at once. We were very alarmed about it. I think that's when they assembled people together to have meetings, invite the stud people and have some informed lectures. Margaret Sabine came up at some time to lecture on virus infections. People had suspected it before but we never saw the samples. They probably destroyed the aborted fetuses. Viral abortion occurred in July 1977 and we had a meeting here at Scone in the Bowling Club with 400 people attending. Then we diagnosed CEM from a dry mare called Opera at Bhima who had been to an imported stallion in Victoria in 1976. There were three trial mares to go to Mount Hagen at Oakleigh. Heart's Choice was one and Ballyhoo another. Bill brought the cultures back on a Saturday night. He was leaving early on Monday morning and I came out and told him there was a problem.

When Bill came he was new to equine practice. He'd worked as a vet in Ireland and I think that Murray could see the potential in Bill. He was very good about the way that he passed on his knowledge to him and made sure he got all the right experience. He probably developed Bill quite a lot in his personality and professional ability.

The jokes they played on Murray! They used to like their practical jokes especially when Murray had broken ribs when he got into a fight. Apparently Murray went to his doctor and said; "A horse kicked me"! The doctor replied; "That's not right – you know you've been brawling again". Murray said the doctor was a lying bastard, with tongue in cheek! They played jokes on me too! One day I was down at Woodlands (enjoyed getting out of the laboratory) and we'd been drenching the mares and foals. I helped out and I idly remarked "I've never seen a large snake". I went to get into my side of the car and there was snake curled up on my seat in the car! I leapt about ten feet although it proved to be dead. The studs were smaller and privately owned then but now they're more impersonal.

In the 'red light district' (hole-in-the-wall) I was in one flat and Bill Howey, Bill Stewart, Nairn Fraser and Warren McLaren were the 'hole in the wall gang' as tenants in other flats. Jean McPherson shared with me and later married Warwick Judge, Norman's son. He used to stay at my house but it was all very proper in those days. I still see Jean. The hole-in-the-wall was known as the infamous 'red-light district' of Scone which was veterinary orchestrated and promulgated. I remarked "It makes me sound like the madam" to which Bill responded; "that would've been some people's interpretation"!



‘Madam’ Murphy under the ‘red light’ after dark.

Bill and I hosted the infamous champagne and chicken party at Kingdon Castle when Bill moved there with Tony Parker. We decimated the ‘intelligentsia and squatocracy’ of the upper Hunter! There were 120 bottles of champagne bought through Jane Mackay. [Shona, you should’ve bought 120 chickens]. I thought it was going to be a glass of champers and a chicken nibble. We had a tent with a centre pole and John Kelso just collapsed to the ground around it. Lionel Israel crashed into a fence while trying to get into his car. John Morgan got into his car and passed out. When Sally went to pick up the kids from the swimming pool they’d gone! Norman Smith had picked them up! Nick Locke just kept repeating “sorry darling” to wife Sue and couldn’t move away. It was all very close personal contact.

We have had ‘shuttle vets’ for over 35 years. The first was James Crouch in 1967. We pre-empted the shuttle service long before it happened on the studs. Bill Stewart came from New Zealand. His Dad Jack Stewart had been a famous Rugby Union player for the University of Sydney. Another veterinarian Jamie Barnes hung a notice: “In memoriam – Bill Howey once drank here” at Bill’s buck’s party in the Belmore Hotel. Jamie’s father is the longest serving Councilor of the RAS of NSW. His mother is a Russian Ballerina. They always said Jamie played football like a ballerina! His father is a grazier.

Vets were very involved in Scone Rugby Club and in the community. Murray was a Shire Councilor and very socially conscious. Bill was also included with Murray and his tree planting. We used to have great Christmas parties. Jenny Jenkins was a good organiser. She, Mark Wylie and Karen Hoffman were the ‘Blues Brothers’ one year.

Sue McCubbery was one of the first female vets in 1973. She came from New Guinea and went to the University of Queensland. I spent a lot of time with her later in Ireland when I was at Ballykisteen. She married an Irishman and had four children. Sadly she passed away at age 40. Sheila Laverty came from Ireland after working for Keiran Bredin who had been in Scone in 1971. Michele Cotton might’ve been the first female undergraduate vet to see practice. Murray forbade her to meet Percy Sykes. When she did, Percy remarked; “I can see why”!

It was 6am on a Sunday morning at Kingdom Castle in 1973. Murray picked up Bill and said "come with me I've got something to tell you". Then Dave Warden rang me and confirmed it. He had a suspected tumour and Murray asked Bill to look after things for a while. There was a spot in the groin and a spot on the liver which if you're a scientist you know is not good news. Murray was on Pethidine injections for pain relief and sometimes Bill Howey was giving them. [The only human I've ever injected]. Denise, the nurse, would not allow more when Murray asked for it because it had not been officially prescribed. Bill called Dr. Dave Warden who said "Bill, do what you [expletive] well like"! It was near the end. The course of the disease was 18 months and Murray tragically died in March 1974. Things were never quite the same again.



Dr. David Warden (007) - Dr. Warden was consultant physician to most of the practice – quite a task!

What do you think he had in mind here?

The occasion was 26/04/75 at Tinagroo when Bill Howey and Sarah Mackay were married. The groom changed at the Warden's home Gundoe.



CEM or not?
Karon Hoffmann and Shona Murphy.