

Unreliable Anecdotes

This is just as it sounds but there is more than a grain of truth in every one! In some cases actual identities are thinly disguised!

Breakfast at Harry's



Harry Hayes – 'HRH'.

Harry was legendary! He enjoyed the good life but only because he invested in it what he hoped to receive with interest in return. He made adequate preparation by working 25 hours per day then take some time to celebrate the effort. Racing and breeding were his enduring passions after his primary interests of cattle raising, grazing and the meat industry. He was rightfully honoured by the State for his highly significant contribution to community and sporting affairs.



‘Legend’ Harry Hayes (2nd from left) in his favourite environment at White Park. Hilton Cope witnesses Ernie Cone receiving life membership of Scone Race Club presented by the author, April 12 1982. Photograph courtesy of Harley Walden.

Gelding a few colts was arranged for the cool of an early summer morning for 6am at Lufton Park. Murray had pre-arranged with great mate Jim from Woodlands to assist with handling the fine young thoroughbreds. First Harry had to shout breakfast. Two large bottles of Resch’s DA plus rum chasers accompanied the 1kg best-marbled Hunter Valley beef steak! Suitably fortified the castrations were a breeze!

Not many years later I survived a not-so-well orchestrated gelding operation at Harry’s. Wal was diligent but not the world’s best horseman. The unbroken colt was at the top yards with a stiff breeze blowing. Wal and I made preparation for a standing castration. Remarkably everything was proceeding according to plan despite the less-than-perfect situation. Shortly after I made the incision and crunched off the right spermatic cord I became vaguely aware of a subdued “clunk” behind me. To quote cricket commentator Jim Maxwell Wal was “base over apex” and out like a light! The semi-colt just stood there with twitch still applied and I furtively and hurriedly completed the process. Not a method of restraint I recommend! Both Wal and the ex-colt recovered uneventfully with Wal perhaps the worst for wear!

On another occasion I was gelding a colt standing and doing my level best to show off to the beautiful young ingénue veterinary student assistant later to achieve scientific and social prominence. My performance was not helped by the fact it was Scone Thoroughbred Week and celebrations were excessive. I had just completed half the operation when a green head ant attempted the same procedure on one’s self! Modesty was not an issue! It was immediate strides down and a search and destroy mission! Luckily I swiftly identified the culprit. Ultimately I was more successful than my insect competitor because I completed the operation. I don’t think my companion was too impressed with what she saw however!

It was a privilege to travel with Harry to Newcastle to the meetings of the Hunter and Central Coast Racing Association. Harry had cultivated many mates through his long patronage and as Committeeman of the Newcastle Jockey Club. It was an education to observe racing politics in process through the aegis of Roy, Stiffy, Harry *et al.* Harry, John and Lionel set off one day for Broadmeadow with the former two full of expectation for their respective charges. There was much discussion about certainty of victory and the dimension of the bets to be placed rather than the improbability of success! Lionel stayed mute. The return journey was a long subdued one with Harry and John commiserating on misfortune and missed opportunity. Lionel had won the last race! “Why didn’t you tell us about your horse Lionel?” chimed H and J. “You didn’t ask me” said Lionel! On another occasion Harry and I emerged at 6pm following lunch at Danilo’s in Hamilton. “I’ll toss you for the keys” said Harry! I lost! We made it back to Scone in Harry’s 6.8 litre Mercedes with time to spare! Thank goodness for the deterrent of RBT today! Harry’s other preferred mode of travel was a ‘Roller’ but I never enjoyed the exhilaration!

“Free Services” & Entrepreneurial Spirit

When you live and work intimately with the fraternity that is the thoroughbred breeding industry in the Upper Hunter Valley you very soon begin to realise the entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well! This is never more apparent than in the clandestine acquisition of a “free service” to desirable but expensive and closely guarded male thoroughbred genetic material! There were at least three such instances I was made aware but did not witness in my early days at Scone. All involved daring and carefully executed plans for success skillfully and intuitively hatched by their protagonists, the extremely resourceful bush equivalent of the euphemistic urban colourful racing identities.

My great friend from Denman, the ‘Ayatollah Kerrabee’ alerted me to the first and perhaps most imaginative ingenious scheme. ‘Digger’ Edmonds was temporary night watchman at a property at the “never never” end of the famed Widden Valley. Digger had a long, varied and illustrious career as a stockman, horseman, trainer and indomitable rodeo rider. His many mates included RMW, Lance Skuthorpe and Basil Gollan. He possessed a finely honed acumen and perspicacious acuity for accumulation of grazing cattle with a cavalier attitude towards their true ownership. “Cattle borrowing” was an extension sport designed to test the acquisition and distribution skills of its proponents extant in the Valley since Starlight days. Similarly Digger was quite nonchalant about the precise identity of his racing thoroughbreds on any particular day although one suspects he knew exactly himself and merely enjoyed testing the steward’s resolve and teasing bookmaker’s resources? He once told me the best maiden he ever had won no less than eight races! It was rumoured he enjoyed involuntary holidays at her majesty’s pleasure consequent to exposure of serial recidivism by authority and disagreement in principle over some of these escapades.

Digger had a mare in season but did not fancy any of the resident stallions on his home stud. Like many others he was a great admirer of the iconic Star Kingdom just down the

valley. He had a problem. Nominations to Star Kingdom were like proverbial hen's teeth and far too expensive to boot! Also the ruling Stud Master was a sworn and bitter enemy of Digger's and the sentiment was mutual and reciprocal! The solution was a simple one as far as Digger was concerned. He mounted up and rode his mare on the other side of Widden Creek along a path possibly negotiated earlier by erstwhile Terrible Hollow resident Harry Readford (Captain Starlight). Star Kingdom must have been as surprised as he was bemused and excited to "accommodate" a matron at the unusual hour of 2am! All this took place well within a bull's roar of the homestead and resident stud groom. The ruse was not detected! Patrons of the Sandy Hollow and Denman hostelrys reveled in the tale for many a long day and night!

Everyone in the thoroughbred breeding industry was surprised when Ronald Frederick Marshall decided to import a stallion. His boutique private stud near Muswellbrook had enjoyed enormous commercial success in retaining a highly selective band of brood mares with the eclectic blood of the very best stallions coursing through their veins. Ron was a master of selection with exquisite attention to every detail. A horseman from the old school he was born and bred on the land into a family steeped in the rich traditions of the country. This made him a superb judge of stock and stockmen. He brought with him the loyal and trusted 'old Jack' from the North West of the State. His newly acquired much younger stallion groom Brian was most enthusiastic and quite thrilled at the prestige of leading some of the most highly priced yearlings through the Inglis's sale ring at Newmarket. As a relative newcomer he was also trying ultra hard to establish his credentials in Muswellbrook society and the local race club in particular. He made friends with Bob Miller who in addition to many other pursuits ran a delivery service to rural properties allowing scope for reconnoitering possible lucrative ventures, tainted or otherwise. Bob was a highly resourceful local identity with a passion for racing and a reputation for inventiveness with personal fund raising activities including dismantling and selling the spare parts of an aeroplane! Brian and Bob were buddies on the race club and formed a partnership to expand the book of the new stallion (perhaps without owner Ron's consent or 'old Jack's' knowledge). Bob also harboured aspirations of ascent in the surreal world of thoroughbred racing and breeding. He acquired a few mares. Brian managed a stallion's activities. In the Muswellbrook Bowling Club 'old Jack' recounted arcane stories of intrepid moonlight visits by a certain horse float from Muswellbrook at ungodly hours throughout the season! Interesting concept?

Henry Cullen was another peripatetic horseman of the preceding generation whose perambulations had taken him throughout every state and territory. His defensive inclination was to keep moving to avoid confrontation on fiscal and romantic matters whenever the heat was turned up! Henry was employed by a local Scone stud master with a surname suggesting other than alignment with the Christian faith. Henry also had a mare but very few other resources. A very fine imported coal black Irish thoroughbred stallion occupied a yard and box not 20 metres from Henry's abode! Henry was leading his mare about at midnight on one occasion when accosted by the ever vigilant stud master who tried to claim the \$3000.00 service fee! Henry's instant response was he would have chosen the cheaper grey horse with the French name in any event! Henry moved on of course! Purely by chance several years later my taxi driver in Sydney turned

out to be Henry Cullen! Much to my disappointment and probably more so to his he informed me his mare failed to produce the next year! Ah well, nice try Henry! Better luck next time!

With equal chagrin well down the track I was disillusioned to discover Digger's mare had not produced either! I rather suspect however Bob and Brian were more successful relying less on chance and more on increased opportunity to succeed. It must have been disenchanting for them nonetheless when Ron's new stallion turned out to be a dud! By time of discovery Brian had left literally with the neighbour's wife only to be hospitalised as a result of a serious car crash in beating a hasty retreat on the dirt Wolombi track! The best laid plans of mice and men are come to naught!

Hazardous Journeys

Life could be arduous at times in Scone and even short journeys could be hazardous depending on the time of day – or night – and the load aboard in the bad old days!

There used to be a well established Iron Bark tree on the centre strip at the corner of Guernsey and Kingdon Streets. This was a short walk from White Park and not far from the RSL Club. Unfortunately – for the tree – it was also in the path of (name deleted) attempting to negotiate a route from the Polo Club Party at the Golf Club to the 'Hole in the Wall'. It was 3:30 am on a very cold July night and an aeroplane could not have flown there was so much ice on the windscreen. Alas and perhaps inevitably the car and tree collided! Much to the consternation of the neighborhood that was only the beginning! The car was "parked" half way up the tree with the horn blaring at full pitch! Lights started to come on around town rather like in the old advertisement for the Flintstones series. This required quick thinking and quicker action! Climbing up a slippery bonnet and dismantling an errant and faulty car horn is not easy especially just as a police car is turning into Guernsey Street from Liverpool Street! It's not far along the railway track to the sanctity of the 'Hole in the Wall' however. A quick telephone call to Geoff Cooper of Superior Panel Beaters at 7:00 am cleaned up the mess. It's a very unconventional and extremely expensive method of ring barking a tree and definitely not recommended!

The railway crossing on Liverpool Street could also pose some problems especially for the unsuspecting late at night! Mrs. Crump used to live in the stone cottage by the crossing and it was her job to open and close the gates manually whenever a train was expected. After a very hard days' night in Merriwa following a Rugby match one was almost home only to find the gates shut at 3 am ending the arrival of the NW Mail. Luckily Lester Rose used to go to work at his Supermarket very early in those days. It's a very strange feeling to awaken in a car with engine running at 4:30 am in the middle of Liverpool Street with the railway gates open and no train in sight! After all it wasn't Mrs. Crumps' job to move the cars! Again this is not a recommended method or place of abode even for a short stay!

Tragically there was another tale of a “second coming” when a “car borrower” was not so lucky! Bill and Stan were putting away a few late ones following the weekly Tuesday boozers celebration at the Belmore. Stan was not on police duty that night which was fortuitous. Bill decided to leave “early” at about 10 pm. There was mild consternation initially as he was unable to locate his car behind the pub. This was not unusual as confusion and hazy memories often reigned supreme at this time. Not being in the habit of locking one’s car it was not unknown for “friends” to borrow a vehicle and park it somewhere else! After a little bit of lateral thinking it was concluded Bill’s car really had been purloined! Bill made his way quickly to the police station where Sergeant Graham Noble was in charge. He looked mildly shocked when Bill walked in. “I’ve just had a report you’ve been killed in a road accident” intoned the indefatigable Sergeant Noble. It was at this very moment ashen faced solicitor Graham Hooke raced into the station. He looked like he’d seen a ghost and thought he had! He’d also heard the grim news! Luckily Bill was mildly “tranquillized” at this stage and the reality had yet to bite!

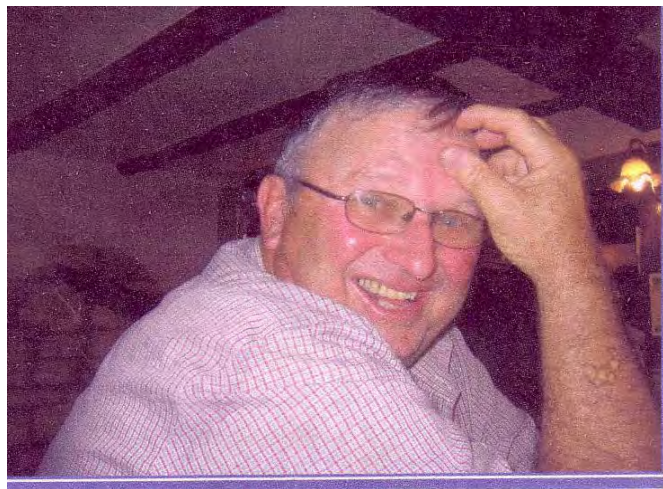
The mystery then began to unfold. Sadly there was a fatal road accident near Willowtree and Bill’s distinctive two-tone Holden was involved. A wiseacre truck driver from Muswellbrook had witnessed the tragedy and assuredly identified the deceased as definitely “the young pommy vet from Scone”. He delivered his (uncontested) opinion to a meeting in Murrurundi attended by Bill Perkins among others. With startling rapidity and within one hour the news had spread throughout the valley. Graham Noble had evidence to the contrary and Graham Hooke was able to confirm the truth. It is to the credit of the police they never accept *ad hoc* evidence and pursue a well defined course of investigation. Even more remarkable was the fact the late recidivist was a young man of indigenous extraction from the Breeza Plains – hardly to be confused with a florid faced Anglo-Celt.

My car was retrieved from the debacle and repaired by the insurance company. I never did feel at ease in it after that and always locked it up whenever left unattended. Some lessons come the hard way!

One other hazardous journey was made by Warren (*aka* Vulgorilla) and Bill following the tuberculosis testing of a large herd of cattle on the Barrington Tops. It was necessary to stop first at the Victoria Arms in Moonan Flat and then to Jack Kellett’s famed Linga Longa Inn at Gundy. Warren was well primed by this time and was asked to pass an opinion on the bar cat. The only consulting space available was the bar itself and the diagnosis made was “definitely male”! The following sequence was almost inevitable in the prevailing circumstances! An operation was performed on the unsuspecting cat with the enthralled bar audience in close proximity. Jack Kellett used to contribute a unique Gundy column each week to the *Scone Advocate*. Guess what his leader was on this occasion? It really was dangerous to travel with Warren in such a mood!

Horse Away!

It had been a hard day's night for Tom from Merriwa and his trusty steed Ginger! The annual Scone Rodeo traditionally on the "hot" last weekend in October was a challenging event not to be missed. It had to be celebrated in true bucolic style by as much competitive and social interactivity as was humanly possible and then some! Tom and Ginger were tenacious combatants of the old school and had successfully completed another furious round of camp drafting and pick up. It was very thirsty work of course and it was essential to immediately replenish depleted fluid reserves with gusto! Ginger liked pure water and had his fill. Tom preferred a less pure brew but being a Sunday in the bad old days his poison was much harder to procure. There is always a solution for the assiduously perspicacious bon vivant!



Tom.

Norm and Becky kept a very congenial household at 13 Oxford Road. Having no immediate family of their own they were generous to a fault in adopting and caring for a few surrogate bachelor sons. Today was another of their special social Sunday soirees and the party was in full swing. No stranger to the odd scotch on his own account Norm had just completed a long innings at the Rodeo himself! Being in the agency game and holding the distribution rights for Scottish Cream™ demand was never seriously challenged and supply rarely threatened! Bill R., Bill H. and Tom with Ginger in tow made up the party just as the sun was setting over a long, hot and dusty early summer week end. It may have been the cold water but Ginger started showing warning signs of early gripes. No problem! Bill H. was there and being a veterinarian must have had the solution to the problem. Initial consultation and treatment appeared to effect some relief and the early success of therapy was celebrated with another cold KB or three. When Ginger began to relapse and take a turn for the worse it was decided to instigate more drastic therapy. It may have been the gathering twilight or accelerating perspiration but at this stage Ginger appeared to be changing colour from strong chestnut to KB bay? One could have been mistaken of course!

Bill H. required further supplies from the veterinary pharmacy at the Grazcos establishment in Kelly Street and elected to drive the approximate 500 metres. It was not a wise decision! There was a small access lane way alongside the building further impeded by the addition of an outside toilet added as an additional afterthought to the main construction. It was difficult to negotiate the alley at the best of times. This was not the best of times! Bill H. managed to clip the near corner of the dunny on his landing approach in the trusty 186 Holden. Max Brogan had been working back late that night anticipating a busy week for Grazcos. Attending to ablutions in the loo just at this moment it was a tremulous and deathly ashen faced Max who emerged visibly shaken from the most cathartic experience of his life and the most definitive cure for constipation ever conceived!

Deciding Max would survive, fuelled and fortified by now with auxiliary supplies of the “right” medicine, Bill hurried back to Oxford Road to resume his miracles. On opening the gate into the garden Ginger saw the opportunity and made his break. As they say in the song “never let a chance go by”! Ginger didn’t! Deciding he’d endured enough torment for one day he took off out the gate “lickety split, helter skelter” up Oxford Road! “Horse away” was the frantic and frenetic call!

Luckily he turned right! With Bill and Tom in very laboured, distant and hot pursuit Ginger assumed he’d secured safe sanctuary within the close confines of the Catholic Convent at the end of Oxford Road! He could not have found a better place! It was a much relieved Tom who somewhat surreptitiously retrieved his faithful steed from the sacred precinct of the sanitarium. We’ll never know if it was the medicine, the threat, the flight or divine intervention but Ginger fully recovered, rejoined the party at Norm and Becky’s and a good time was had by all! It was very long time before Max Brogan deigned to enter the old loo at Grazcos especially if he suspected Bill was imminently returning slightly hazy from a long stint in the Widden Valley!

Jenny Taylor and the Semen Extender

Administration staff were wonderful but we sometimes failed to apprise them of the real meaning or scientific pronunciation of delicate subjects. This was compounded by the fact all receptionists were female and many of them country style and delightfully *ingénue*. One senior gentleman grazier of the old school would only use the word “alter” to request castration of a colt and certainly nothing so banal as geld or castrate!

It was not improbable therefore when occasional errors were made in interpretation of instructions or implementation of directions! Jamie had been in a hurry as usual and there was an urgent request for an insurance examination and certificate for a very valuable stallion in the Widden Valley. The specific instruction was for the examination to pay particular attention to the reproductive anatomy (genitalia) and this fact must be accurately stated on the certificate. Although always extremely thorough in his work Jamie shared a common fault with many others in failing to complete paper work with due diligence and appropriate exactitude. He was therefore very happy to pass the draft

certificate to Jackie who would fill the detail and facsimile the final document to Logan Livestock Insurance with “specific attention to genitalia”. Jackie was sure she understood.

It was a very bemused Bob Logan who telephoned back some time later gratefully accepting the certificate but seeking to point out that no one with the name “Jenny Taylor” actually worked there.....!

Sandie had just joined the eclectic team at 106 Liverpool Street and came to us from the beautiful but somewhat secluded Stewarts Brook. A stud hand from Segenhoe called in to collect some “semen extender” for use on the stud. Sandie also thought she understood and was certainly unwilling to divulge any residual naiveté having recently earned emancipation from the sequestered confines of the very Upper Hunter! Sandie had quietly and unobtrusively witnessed the massively impressive Cambridge Model Equine artificial vagina (AV) stored in the back shed. With admirable logic and commendable lateral thinking she deduced this must be the object of ‘desire’. Fortunately Sandie was rescued from acute embarrassment just in time by Jeannie who was able to explain “semen extender” was an adjunct to natural service of mares and prepared in the laboratory by Shona in discrete 200ml amounts! I would love to have been present if Sandie had managed to wrestle the AV to the front bench to present to the unsuspecting stud hand! Imagine the look on his face!

Tony Parker left an indelible mark on the practice many years earlier when he (correctly) labeled the semen extender container bottle: “Not to be taken”!

Lay Diagnosis Therapy and Ultimate Carcass Disposal

Never ever underestimate the ingenuity and perspicacity of the layman! One of my closest friends in life has turned out to be a trainer of bog Irish extraction a native born resident of the Upper Hunter. ‘Cocky’ inherited the sobriquet from his late father. His sire was patriarch of a large family in the best catholic tradition and reputedly ingenious in providing for his large brood through difficult times. He was a confident man capable of reinventing ruses in order to make a profit and also dabbled in as many trades and schemes. Clearly his youngest son inherited the finely tuned entrepreneurial acumen as well as bush logic, eye for a deal and subtle dry wit.

With characteristic irreverence redolent of his genotype it was Cocky who introduced me to “Hub Capping” as well as many other extramural pursuits. “Hub Capping” or Social Upward Mobility (SUM) is defined colloquially as a person or hub cap with a proclivity for hanging around the big wheels! A stud master in the vicinity of Muswellbrook had earned Cocky’s disdain for such activity. ‘Hub Cap Jack’ harboured AJC Committee aspirations and joined the ranks of the local professionals’ residents on ‘Snob Knob’ and ‘Pill Hill’ in Cocky-speak vernacular. ‘Tow Bar Harry’ and ‘Mud Flap Mick’ were epithets to flow on naturally from the concept. There were lots of big barbecues around Muswellbrook but very few ‘Hyacinth’ candle-light suppers! Amazingly I have just heard

of another hubcap who was a major big time polo player and unwittingly overheard by a journalist at a swish Paddington restaurant expatiating at length on his social proximity to a major media magnate with a similar passion for polo!



Leith Walk wins at Muswellbrook attended by trainer Pat Farrell and a very young Wayne ('Hairy') Harris. John ('Jerky') Wade is the jockey. The owner/author is in the fore-ground - one of very many great shared moments!

Cocky tutored me early in the most sure fire bush cure for abortion in mares I have heard of before or since. Confection was a mare by the icon Star Kingdom acquired by his father and subsequently inherited by Cocky and elder siblings from their demised father's sundry estate. She resided on a property down Muscle Creek close to Fairways Stud. Her problem was not achieving pregnancy but maintaining it! Habitual abortion was her stock in trade. Cocky asked my advice and I delivered my ill prepared prolix on progesterone et al. I do not think he was swayed! He informed me with great éclat a few weeks after my diatribe he had discovered and implemented the perfect cure for such serial misadventure. Intrigued, I inquired into the circumstances and evidence of so proud a boast. He said she'd never do it again! "How and why?" was my all too naïve ingenuous retort. On discovering yet another lost foal at age 18 years he decided enough was enough and to hurl injury after insult on the unsuspecting Confection. He simply walked her up the gully and shot her! Problem solved! He was right! She'd never do it again! It was a very similar situation a few years later at Skellatar Park when the stable was not enjoying one of its better days! Cocky was just returning from his stables past the home turn only see one of his starters had pulled up in Race V 'with one leg "swinging in the breeze". There was a .22 in the back seat. Quick fire diagnosis and instant "therapy"! Chief Steward Michael was not amused at the precipitous disposal especially as he had not yet had time to issue instructions to course veterinarian Gavin!

I never discovered a “legitimate” 100 per cent solution to the affliction myself possibly earning for me a place in posterity and lucrative returns. It may sound as if Cocky was dispassionate and uncaring or callous? He was not. He was pragmatic, sensitive and caring. He simply deplored unnecessary waste. The local stud master who peremptorily instructed me to perform euthanasia on two aged thoroughbred mares who had fulfilled their destiny was of similar practical hue. Despite the offer of \$500.00 cash in hand for each by ‘Old Jacks’ mate from Mungindi their fate was sealed. Better they meet with a dignified demise rather than languish in a so called euphemistic retirement drought paddock with untended feet, teeth and feed or suffer the insult of salvage value termination at the ‘doggers’ behest! Perhaps that is why the stud master was able to maintain the most eclectic band of young commercial thoroughbred mares in the country? Well selected Sir!

Other Hunter Valley horse industry notaries were equally adept at formulating quick fire proactive response and reactive solutions to sticky situations! ‘Curly’ and ‘Bluey’ were legendary around the traps and racetracks of the locality! Aberdeen Jockey Club operated at Jefferson Park adjacent to the Hunter River. It was finally washed out in 1971 and relegated to the realms of history. A meeting in 1968 was in full swing until tarnished by a major track accident resulting in a very severely injured horse. Most country racehorses then were by “Box 5 (Station Sire) ex Box 6 (Station Mare)”, uninsured and worth ‘dogger’ price. Compound comminuted fracture of a forelimb was distinctly not pretty, terminal and not for salvage. Easy decision!

The major problem lay in carcass disposal. With Jefferson Park also host to golf, cricket, tennis and football as well as youth sport dead horses were not welcome! Race Clubs with very limited resources were also singularly unimpressed with worthless animals and possible incidental extra expenses. Local Council liked them less! No one backs a dead horse! Curly and Bluey were both residents of Aberdeen and well apprised of the local morale demography and topography. The back straight at Jefferson Park ran into a dip along the bank of the Hunter River then heavily in spate. This was just out of range and sight of the viewing public. I’m not admitting it happened but it is tempting isn’t it? I mean the pragmatic option as proposed by the inimitable Curly so that the carcass might very soon become Newcastle’s problem!

Which reminds me of Stan’s cure for twins! Lady C. had produced two foals at a stud in the Denman district. For the uninitiated twins are highly undesirable in thoroughbred breeding and often an unmitigated disaster! I empathised with my mate over the double misfortune. By time of yearling sales a designated twin is virtually valueless whereas a singleton will always retain residual worth and bring something. Stan was a dry dour droll Scot of very few words but much accrued wisdom. Like most of his ethnicity he thought of the future and kept a careful eye out for fiscal opportunity. Only he and I knew of the debacle. Imagine my surprise on routinely visiting the stud a day later in the presence of the owner of Lady C. There she was proudly disporting a very fine *single* colt by her side. On very careful surreptitious inquiry of Stan I naively asked him where the other foal was. “[Expletive deleted] at Newcastle by now” was his explicit succinct and curt retort! It transpired, as often happens, one twin does not make it! One didn’t!

Destruction of available incriminating evidence became urgent and paramount with the boss about. The local creek was a tributary of the Hunter River and heavily in flood due to recent big rain in the catchment area. You guessed right! The dead foal ostensibly had a watery burial - or so I was told. Perhaps my ever reliable memory is fading?

Now You'll Think I'm Awful

The other Hunter Valley legend at this time was Trevors. Betty was the first licensed female thoroughbred trainer in the country. She and hubby Archie enjoyed enormous success with the finely tuned Scone galloper. The Chelmsford Stakes at Randwick was the first Group Race to be secured by an out-of-town trained performer. Trevors and entourage set off for Melbourne with great expectations in the spring of 1966. He did not disappoint and finished a most credible fourth in an outstanding field for the Caulfield Cup headed by the great Galilee. As usual preparations had been minute and immaculate. There was a lot of publicity and media interest! Sue Rhodes of *Now You'll Think I'm Awful* fame was a high profile TV journalist and early feminist. Her depredation of Australian males as lovers in her seminal publication caused a national furor and Sue soon moved to Hollywood to marry iconic western actor Rory Colhoun.

Sue had been assigned by nascent Channel Nine to cover the story of Betty and Trevors. It can be uncomfortable when the media and TV cameras move too close. Trevors had duly completed his final "hit out" at Aberdeen with Betty as pilot resplendent in a tightly fitting figure hugging polo necked sweater. Trevors coughed softly! Archie froze! He recognised the early warning signs of cranial epistaxis (bleeder). It had happened before but mum's the word! With frantic haste Trevors was loaded on the float with Betty on the head to return directly to Scone. Just as the tail of the float was hoisted Trevors blew his nostril to spray Betty's immaculate yellow jumper polka dot scarlet! Sue Rhodes wanted one more parting shot! Not on your life! Minder 'Wiffo', Archie, Betty and Trevors were off like bullet! No more questions asked!

'Stipe' Bob had taken a particular interest in Trevors' preparation. He marveled at how he delivered every time the price was right! It's very simple of course as "you pick the best company for yourself and the worst for your horses" and present a super fit horse on the day. Just to make sure on any single occasion preparation included a minute snippet of Jimmy's "tonic brew" as a reminder. Conditioned reflex really, just like Vicks up the nose and electrode jelly on the neck. No need to carry unwarranted gear! Frank Sinatra had just popularised "There's An Awful Lot Of Coffee in Brazil". There was an unfounded rumour pharmacist Jimmy had also very successfully refined the active ingredient of coffee! Suffice it to say Trevors' performance at Cessnock attracted Bob's attention and he commanded a swab be taken. Where the hell was the swabbing steward? He could not be found! Many years later a 'cockatoo' told me he was very happily locked in the dunny with \$100.00 (50 pounds) in his kick and a bottle of Archie's favourite overproof rum at his behest!

Sue Rhodes' book made national headlines! "Aussie Men Make Lousy Lovers" screamed the front page of the *Sunday Mirror* as Murray and I headed out to Woodlands in November 1967. "She must have met some crummy men" intoned Murray as he sped with undue haste and mounting excitement to accost Ron and Jim with the earth shattering news! Ron was quite diffident as he scanned the pages. "Doesn't say what sort of servers we are though Doc" was his sage rejoinder while successfully deflating Murray's inflated balloon!

Rum and milk was standard fare at Trevors Stud. Early winter mornings were social occasions *par excellence*. I used to do the racing preview on a Saturday for Radio Station 2NM in Muswellbrook. Great racing journo Bert Lillye always attended the Scone Cup in May each year. He and I were scheduled to be at 2NM at 8:30am. I was to pick up Bert at Trevors. I arrived in good time but was persuaded against my better judgement to enjoy a 'heart starter' with the assembled ménage. We tuned to 2NM hosted by Mike. Bert drank five and I drank four with Mike announcing Bert Lillye and Bill Howey will be here soon to talk about the Scone Cup. The 20 minutes journey to Muswellbrook took quarter of an hour. Mike was distraught. He was out of sporting content and out of advertisements! No worries! At 8:50 Bert and I let rip! The 9:30am news was postponed to 9:45 with no interruptions before we could be gagged! It's a great tongue loosener Archie's special brew at Trevors! Must be the milk content?

Racing Is Fun

"I freely admit that the best of my fun I owe it to country racing"
(Not quite Whyte Melville – *Horse and Hound*)

I had a ball as much as I can remember!

Since 1947 the Scone Race Club (SRC) has had direct or indirect veterinary involvement. It was with a feeling of immense pride that I agreed to replace Lionel Israel on the SRC Committee. I joined my boss Murray as well as ten other Upper Hunter notaries. It began an association lasting until today. Some of the happiest and busiest years of my life were the six of my Presidency 1978 – 1984. I am proud to be the only non-grazier or stud master to hold the position. At various times I have been a member of the following race clubs: Scone Race Club, Australian Jockey Club, Sydney Turf Club, Newcastle Jockey Club, Tamworth Race Club, Quirindi Race Club, Aberdeen Jockey Club, Denman Race Club, Merriwa Race Club, Upper Hunter Race Club (Muswellbrook), Upper Hunter Amateur Race Club, Gunnedah Jockey Club, Muswellbrook Harness Racing Club, Wallabadah Race Club and perhaps more! Mad? Obsessive compulsive?

Murray had grand ideas, none more so than when he was able to marry his Scottish heritage to the Australian culture he so loved. Scone was an ideal place to be! Scone Scots was formed to commemorate St. Andrews Day in early November. Hogmanay was always celebrated in grand style at Tinagroo with Murray addressing the haggis Burns style resplendent in tartan kilt! Bob Mackay and Murray were respective patrons of two

Newcastle based pipe bands who rotated the honour of coming to Scone at Anzac Day. With Murray's energy, inspiration and drive the St. Andrews Day Race Meeting was born! For at least a decade it became an institution but sadly Murray did not survive in good enough health to actually witness the first one held in 1973. The death knell of the concept was heralded some ten years later. Murray's old pipe band had been invited at Mace's behest to provide the highland flavour. It was very hot! The band was thirsty. Traditional 'Athol Brose' did nothing to satiate the arid thirst. The Pipe Major demanded and was supplied with abundant Dr. Toohey's. Alas the potent brew stirred the demons in the Drum Major. He took an instant dislike to anyone not dressed as he was who comprised most of the crowd at the bar! Being a massive "don't argue" steel-worker type he elected to attack! Inevitably by sheer weight of numbers he was upended. Much to the shame and chagrin (or should that be bemusement?) of the female contingent he was ruthlessly exposed as an adherent to the true Scot's tradition of rendering underwear redundant when wearing the kilt! Mace was mortified! End of the St. Andrews Day concept! The band has not been back!

Murray was also known for his negotiation-by-confrontation style and vituperative was in his armory if ever he felt the need! When a Scone Shire Councilor he was famously quoted in large headlines in *The Advocate*; "Councilor Bain calls Councilor Armitage a Rat"! He had in fact invited the benign dear old Bertie Armitage to "crawl back into the rat hole out of which he came" when they disagreed in debate on some matter of principal!

He was incensed at what he considered some very poor marketing by the Scone Race Club. He wrote to the Sporting Editor in the Scone Advocate on April 30 1963:

Sir,

The Scone Cup Meeting could almost be described as the raison d'être of the Scone Race Club. In recent years from being the best country cup meeting it has gradually deteriorated.

- 1. In lack of quality where such races as the Scone Guineas are no longer in existence and there has been a reduction in prize money in the other semi-classic events. This of course is due to the influence of local racing interests who would like to see the meeting run for bush horses only.*
- 2. It has also been characterized by some of the worst exercises in public relations. They have run out of race books on several occasions and there has been the debacle of restricted fields in the Cup and the general lack of adequate facilities to deal with inclement weather.*

However with their latest effort they have surpassed themselves. I refer of course to the Scone Cup poster which invites people to visit the various studs but have omitted to mention Mr. V. C. Bath's Bhima Stud, Mr. S. G. White's Carrington Stud, Mr. M. V. Point's Sledmere Stud and Mr. George Moore's Yarraman Park Stud. Some of the owners have been considerable benefactors to the race club and Mr. G. Moore, one of the world's great jockeys, is gracing the meeting with his presence, which would be a draw card in any part of the world. It is not only bad public relations but it is also bad manners.

I mentioned this matter to two committeemen and neither of them had seen the poster. One would have imagined that something as important as this would have been the subject of careful scrutiny before publication. It would have been in any other organization. For all I know the dates might also be wrong! It wouldn't surprise me.

A. Murray Bain
30/4/1963

No shrinking violet there! I suppose Murray was not on the Committee at this time? He clearly had one or two individuals in his sites and did not miss the mark! He was certainly never afraid to ruffle feathers if he thought there had been evidence of apathy, incompetence or negligence! He did not suffer fools gladly as Bert Lillye testified!



David Macintyre and the author
marching at St. Andrews Day Race Meeting 1973



Averil Sykes (daughter of Percy) with Murray and Mace Bain
Scone Cup Races, 1964.

I learned a harsh lesson soon after marriage! Don't we all? I was a punter. As a single man I considered \$200.00 on the nose a fair risk! In 1975 I was betrothed. Sarah and I managed on \$20.00 per week with my spouse's careful and frugal management! Blossom Lady was a sure thing in the maiden at Denman! The half sister to Tod Maid, Obelia and Little Gum Nut by Kaoru Star had been with 'TJ' and now Betty was working her miracles as she had with her own Titaria. Money for jam! Backed to favouritism, you guessed right she finished an inglorious sixth! Sarah was palpably not amused! She reminded me forcibly, as if I needed it, that \$200.00 amounted to two months house keeping! Fortunately ever-generous George Bowman had supplied me with two pumpkins from his prolific garden. Sarah made magnificent pumpkin soup!

The lesson I learned? Well, a diet of pure pumpkin soup every meal for several days' cures punting! I haven't had a bet since! A slight exaggeration of the truth perhaps but I think you get the drift. Blossom Lady won her next start at Muswellbrook by six lengths with her ears pricked unencumbered by my investment! Ah well, the glorious uncertainty as they say!



Gunsynd made his final race track farewell at Scone Cup Meeting.
Kevin Langby is the 'hoop' with Gentleman Jim Gibson in attendance!
This was all part of George Ryder's incredible publicity machine!

The meeting at the old Denman race track was memorably the last! There was a near riot after the final event! The judge was an eminent Sydney QC who enjoyed relaxing at his country stud out near Baerami. His favoured tipple was of pure malt extraction. The

problem was when not on legal duty he always started early and finished late! Dusk was beginning to settle when four horses flashed across the line but the margins seemed clear at least to most patrons. Alas at this late hour the judge was tired and emotional, mildly pixilated, slightly blutterbanged and the merest trifle puggled! In the gathering murk the camera had not worked. Feeling expediency to be a virtue he made a hasty decision not in keeping with the views of the majority of avid punters! He had eyes only for the two horses near the inside running rail and failed to see the three others at least two clear lengths in advance just under his nose on the outside of the track! Weight's right! There were serious threats of incineration of the old wooden judge's tower complete with incumbent contents! In the end sanity prevailed! A team from Muswellbrook headed by a 'D' had collected and wanted to retreat with no redress! They were able to calm the heated throng and escort his eminence to safety. How do I know this? Another 'cockatoo' whispered in my ear twenty years later he was in the know. Bookmakers had plenty after Blossom Lady's failure. I have often wondered about her form that day! They wouldn't have missed the judge's tower. It's where a drought-ravaged cow crawled to die before being discovered on reopening the next year!

Back at Scone the May Cup meeting was going a blinder. 'Curley' and 'Meggsy' were assiduous barrier attendants as usual. They reckoned Skeldon was a sure thing in the Improvers Cup. Not only that but they also bet he would break the track record. I remained very smug! Shyly was going around for me with my friends and was hot to trot with Jerky up. The race was interesting. I was stationed near the home turn. Skeldon was bolting in front and Shyly entered the short home straight with no hope towards the rear. Jerky was sitting up quite like the leisurely gentleman squire! Skeldon walked in and broke the record! I had to provide my losing betting ticket to soothe the stipes' angst. I understood Skeldon's win OK. He went on to open company. The mystery was in a restricted class galloper breaking a course record so easily. Many years later when long gone from the chair I cajoled 'Meggsy' at a habitual and customary weak moment late at the Aberdeen Bowling Club. The scheduled 1000m race had in fact been 960m. The cagey guys had placed the barriers 40m up the back straight! Nice work if you can get it! Shyly eventually won eleven races too!



Scone Cup Presentation 1980 .

Winner 'Hoedown' Trained by Pat Farrell (second from left) Ridden by Wayne Harris Committeemen Bill Rose (far left) David Bath (far right) and the author (fourth from right) were to have a major impact on the evolution of the club over the next 15 to 20 years. Master of Ceremonies Peter Meehan (Radio 2NM) is third from right.



Cup Sponsor Ray Moir with Wayne Harris and his mother, owner of the winner.



Wayne Harris.

Wayne earned national celebrity status as the rider of Century Miss (Golden Slipper) as an apprentice and Jeune (Melbourne Cup) as a senior.

Pluvial insurance was easy to buy but difficult to collect in association with the Cup Meeting. Two eminent Race Club Committee men found a solution. It had rained on the parade overnight but strict guidelines applied before the Club could collect. The President whose surname predicated Christmas was not a cultural celebration was up and about early as always. He was preceded only by a loyal colleague whose name suggested his

original ancestors may have cared for ovine flocks. The rain gauge at the post office was a few points light and would be officially read at 6am by the Post Master. Quick collaboration and the dilemma solved. They do say there are some very large male dogs around Kelly Street early in the morning in May!

Clerk of the Course is a very important appointment on any race track and ever more so in the country. There was no shortage of skilled horsemen to fill the positions at Scone. The job was regarded as a big day out to be enjoyed by most participants. Occasionally conflict arose when social aspects spilled over and interfered with professional duties of the situation. Larry was feeling no pain returning the reverse (anti-clockwise) way of going after successfully starting the third! Just as he entered the home straight the field was thundering down to meet him head on at about the winning post! Luckily warning shouts were heeded and massive mayhem avoided. Unfortunately Larry's steering gear was not working well as he veered to the outside rail. 'Scots Syd' was leaning over the top rail in vociferous support of his selection. Larry's right stirrup struck him a heavy blow on the head!

Syd was a great mate of mine but as a 'Sassenach' I suddenly felt very vulnerable if I didn't do something about it as he threatened to put my lights out! Larry was happy to dismount and resume at the bar. It wasn't difficult to locate his replacement. Steve was right there and in great form! The lesser of two evils it had to be Steve if only to mollify Syd! Decisions! Decisions! The trials and tribulations of high office!



'Bim' Thompson Memorial Lightning Handicap Scone Cup 1981.
Cliff Ellis, Roy Hinton, Bill Rose, David Bath, Antony Thompson, Bill Howey, Alfred Owen Ellison, Peter Meehan (2NM) and Bert Lillye.



‘Bim’ Thompson Memorial Lightning Handicap Scone Cup 1981.
David Bath, Bill Howey, Robert Thompson, Alfred Owen Ellison, Antony Thompson,
Peter Meehan (2NM) and Bert Lillye.

I discovered early how to breed a Stakes Winner! Alf and I were at the commiseration stage at the RSL Club one night. Alf was a horseman of the old school and rightly boasted rodeo experience with Tex Morton, Gill Brothers and Lance Skuthorpe. By time of his arrival in Scone Alf had seen better days. A large angular thin bony caricature of the gentle quintessential Aussie horseman he had absorbed lots of hard knocks. His habitual long term joust with the bottle had also taken its toll but had neither diminished his spirit nor dimmed his humour.

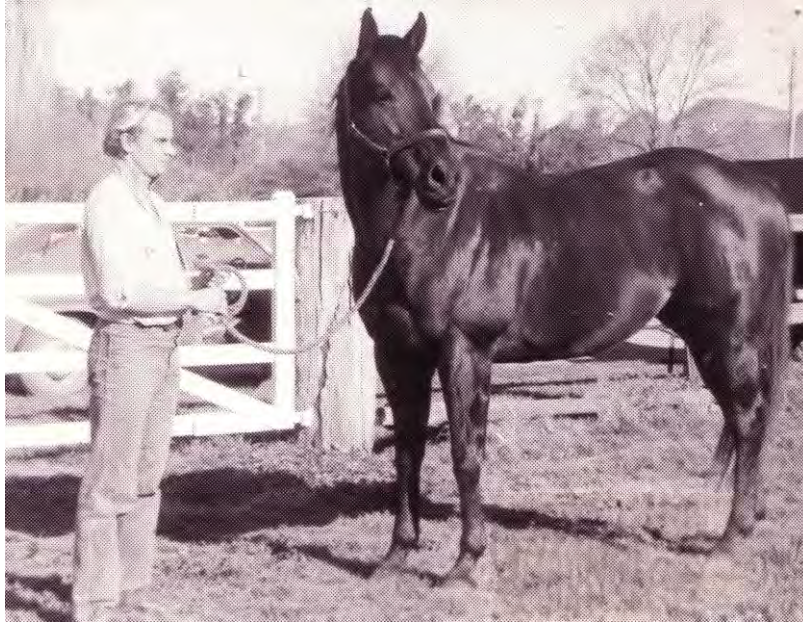
Alf had a decent mare Breadline. By Honeyline (Imp) out of Bertha she carried the famous brand of Ban Buffier from Wingarra in the Bylong Valley. Dan bred two Golden Slipper winners. Alf occasionally neglected to feed Breadline if on a bad stretch but she still won one race, dead heated in another and ran Ochre to within a whisker in a Flying at Scone. Well past the commiseration stage Alf talked me into his accepting my offer (yet to be made) of \$1000.00 for the fine foundation mare (his words) Breadline. The deal was struck, hands shaken and cheque written! No turning back now! I needed a stallion share to complete the package. I had corresponded with the great Stanley Wootton at Treadwell House, Surrey, England. He wrote me he had a very fine young horse in training in Melbourne with Angus Armanasco he thought would make a very good sire one day. A son of the flying Biscay he won four out of five and his only start in Sydney. He was coming to Widden. The price was right! The only impediment was I was recently married and very short of chips! I had to borrow \$3000.00. The next hurdle was the bank manager. Somehow I succeeded in persuading the non-smoking, non-gambling, non-drinking Methodist lay preacher with a name like a trotter to lend me money to invest in a thoroughbred stallion! The result of the subsequent union was Bakerman who won a Group III at Doomben and fifteen other races! Beginners luck! It never happened again!



The Bletchingly ex Breadline weanling colt at Trevors.
Chestnut with silver mane and tail, he raced as Nioka Prince.
He was a Sydney winner and full brother to Bakerman.



Nioka Prince in action at Trevors just prior to sale
He later stood as a stallion at Tyrone Stud (Jack Johnston).



Blethingly at Widden with Henry Plumptre.

Then of course you can do it like Murray with impeccable long term planning and assiduous attention to detail. Ragged Blossom produced Tod Maid, Obelia and Little Gum Nut. The *coup de grace* came with Dark Eclipse's success in the Golden Slipper of 1976. Murray had purchased Marjoram as a yearling and later put her to Baguette. The rest as they say is history!



The author's first individual winner at Scone!
 3 year old Filly Leith Walk (Lower Road (Imp) ex. Dusky Lady).
 Trainer Pat Farrell, jockey Arthur Lister, Clerk of the Course Stan Bowd (aka Steve)



White Park Wake Committee, October 1994 -
Warwick Norman, Harley Walden, Bill Howey, Atholl Rose, Jack Johnston, Stan Wicks.



The “grand trifecta” - The author with close friends Hilton Cope and Tom Payne at White Park.

The occasion was the White Park Wake – the final race meeting conducted at the picturesque and popular race course in October 1994.



White Park Wake, 1994
The symbolic *finale*: lowering of the flag.

Scone Race Club Veterinarians

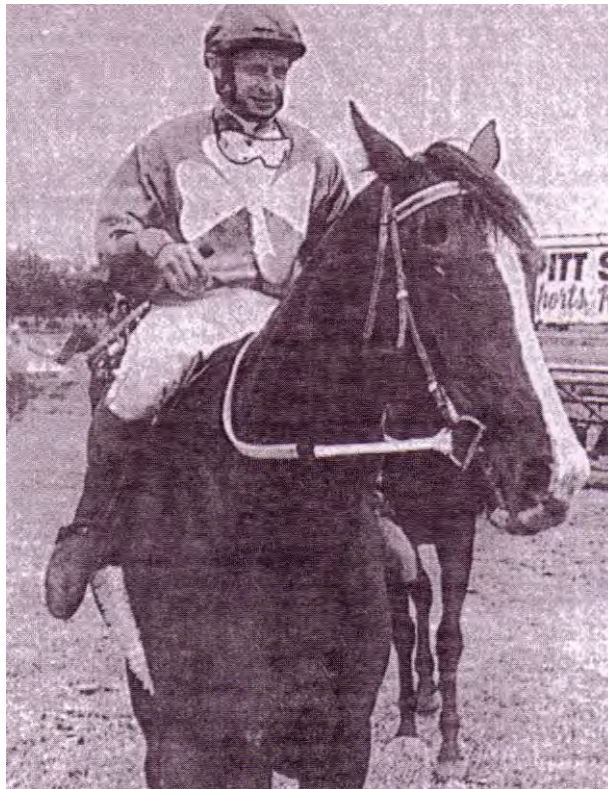
1947 – 1948	R. D. Hartwell
1949	J. A. Berriman [Later QTC veterinarian in Brisbane]
1950	F. L. Williams
1951 – 1956	F. L. Williams, A. M. Bain
1957 – 1963	F. L. Williams, A. M. Bain & J. Francis
1964 – 1967	F. L. Williams, A. M. Bain, J. A. Francis & J. Bryden
1968 – 1972	A. M. Bain, F. L. Williams
1973 – 1975	F. Williams & Partners, Morgan Howey & Fraser
1976 – 1977	F. Williams, G. Adams, J. Morgan, W. Howey & N. Fraser
1979 – 1981	G. Adams, J. Morgan, W. Howey & N. Fraser
1982 – 1993	Morgan, Howey & Fraser
1994 – present	Scone Veterinary Hospital

This list was kindly compiled and supplied by Harley Waldron – the author of *The Spirit Within* – a history of the Scone Race Club

Seven Fox Power Cunning' & 'Insomnia

Alf was a legend but with a few flaws! His early education included fragile terms of endearment with nationally iconic showmen and horsemen such as Tex Morton, Lance Skuthorpe and the Gill Brothers. Reputedly one of Alf's "Big Top" acts was to bite the back fetlocks of unbroken bucking Brumbies! He told me the survival strategy was to very very quickly "pull your head in" extremely low to the ground while the aggrieved horse fiercely lashed out millimetres above! Well, I believed him anyway! Alf was the quintessential Aussie horseman and like many of his breed had endured hard times with much of the drudgery serendipitous and self inflicted! By the time he reached Scone to take up thoroughbred training Alf was beginning to loose his long internecine battle with "Dr.Grog".

Although a patient and gifted trainer his nemesis was his track work rider and race jockey Herbert! Mistrust bordering on paranoia cemented their relationship although each depended on one another to some degree with a measure of unacknowledged grudging respect thrown in. Herbert was also at the nether end of a distinguished career in the saddle and determined to make every last one count! His abstinence provided him with a cutting edge advantage over his more Bacchanalian trainer patron. He was also a very sharp riser ever ready to catch the early worm. His sobriquet was in fact "Mr. Eveready" although the more cynically inclined attributed this epithet to a well-known make of electric battery with possible sinister applications in horse training and race preparation!



Herbert on Bo Yanko after winning the Aberdeen Cup in 1989.

Alf was suspicious of Herbert's extreme shrewdness and accused him of causing mutual insomnia! "He's seven fox power cunning and we can't sleep at night", proclaimed Alf in his unique gravelly voiced cultural cadence. "He lies awake all night thinking how he's 'gonna outsmart me and I lie awake all night thinking how he thinks he's 'gonna outsmart me"! "We can't sleep at night", groaned Alf laconically! "I've got the insomniac"!

It wasn't Herbert's fault when I received a telephone call late one night from a very distraught Alf in the Golden Fleece Hotel where he was then unwisely staying. "Herbert they're after me" he intoned with great anxiety! "Weasels with faces thirty feet long and a weird bloke in the corner! I think I've got hepatitis"! I tried to explain to no avail I was not Herbert but Alf would have none of it! He repeated his bleak assertions to me over and over again! Eventually I managed to placate him enough to obtain his telephone number and promised to return his call. Unsure of myself I immediately 'phoned my doctor friend Dave. "The horrors" was his immediate diagnosis! "Do you have any Largactil?" I wasn't sure so Dave arranged for me to pick up a dose at the Hospital. By this time it was midnight. I took the medicine to a very agitated and distressed Alf, who was soaked in sweat, and he still called me Herbert. He took the pills without fuss and I managed to persuade him to get to bed!

About two hours later I received another panic call! It was Alf again! "The weasels are still after me Herbert"! That was enough! I called at our surgery across the road and armed with some knowledge of the "human dose" I added a bit to the loading bolus of Largactil and watched to make sure while a hysterical Alf swallowed it all with plenty of water! I was able to repay Dave for a much earlier "medical" intervention in a case of milk fever at a Parkville dairy farm!

Two days later Alf stopped me in the street, called me by my proper name, and thanked me profusely for the best night's sleep he ever had! "Slept like a baby for 24 hours" he said! It turned out Gill Brothers' Circus had been in town and Alf had been on a five-day bender with his old mate Jack Gill! Talk about "weird weasels" and a sure fire cure for insomnia!

Not long before his ultimate demise and still suffering from insidious insomnia Alf managed to procure a job as night watchman on a local stud. At about three o'clock on a very cold freezing August morning Cliff and I had just settled back pleased but exhausted and a little smug after a most arduous foaling. Termagant virago Dainty Clare (Imp) had declared war on any human intervention ever since arriving from the UK! She might have been bred by Maggie Thatcher! Even when almost comatose with the exertions of a massive dystocia she fought us all the way before a very large foal was extricated! While silently congratulating ourselves a loudly croaking frog suddenly materialised out of nowhere! "You wouldn't believe that", said Alf with very droll and serious mien. "Fancy a frog inside her causing all that trouble for so long"! I rest my case!

The Voyage - “Shipping Fever”, Treatment and The Ultimate Carcase Disposal

In July 1970 I was extremely fortunate to accompany the last major shipment of horses to traverse the wild Pacific to west coast USA as attendant veterinarian. The MS Parrakoola was a modern Swedish-registered container vessel circumnavigating the vast ocean in pursuit of trade. This was my first and only exposure to life on the ocean waves and the vicissitudes of a merchant seaman! What an experience in life skills and people as well as animal management training! My co-strappers were Malcolm Ayoub who has recently achieved national notoriety as the guru for Jim Cassidy. Malcolm was a colourful racing identity encompassing in spades all the skills and attributes the sobriquet implies! Jack Flood, my boss, was a magnificent horseman of the old school and a firm and loyal friend of his equally impeccable employer and gentleman John Inglis. Like John he became my much respected mentor, advocate and confidant until his ultimate demise some years ago. With three of us to care for 84 horses for a month the job was ahead! Malcolm was occasionally AWOL with some psychological baggage.

The crew was a most intriguing conglomerate of Scandinavian and West Europeans with a few global itinerants completing the cast! The captain was a very fine Swede and many were equally impressive Finns. The Chief Engineer was ex-Baron August von Reinfelds of old Prussia who had commanded a U-boat during the war! Then resident of Mosman he told me stories of his four-horse drawn carriages on the expansive family estates in Bavaria. He certainly knew his horses. All his subordinates were Austro-German and ‘Sieg Heil’ ruled, OK! Only one courageous Englishman, Ted from Manchester and resident of California challenged the domain with his Churchillian rhetoric, “fight them on the beaches”, cigar and correctly applied V sign! Willy Richter from Adelaide had previously accompanied bloodstock agent Reg Angel shipping the champion racehorse and stallion Tobin Bronze to America.

The 84 horses on board were comprised mostly of thoroughbreds from the dispersal of the famous Baramul Stud in the Widden Valley. My personal favourite aesthetic Hunter Valley stud property, this was the home of the immortal Star Kingdom. Many of the mares and weanlings on board carried his genes directly or through the aegis of his sons Todman and Biscay. The latter’s first crop were seven to nine month foetuses carried in some of the in-foal mares. The exquisitely beautiful chestnut Todman mare Eternal Youth was the then extant love of my life! She later featured as a star on the front page of the *Fijian Times*. Pio Pio by Summertime and dam of King Apollo was a close second! All had been purchased by a disparate triumvirate of successful USA business men following the brilliant success in North America of Todman’s brother Noholme II and his son Eskimo Prince. Rex C. Ellsworth was a big time Mormon cattle rancher from Utah who had enjoyed enormous success with Hyperion’s grandson Swaps by Khaled. His son Kumen was veterinarian at Chino CA. Dr. Franklin achieved global prominence firstly by pneumatically enlarging and enhancing the mammary tissue of the post-ingénue female residents of Hollywood and secondly by purchasing overnight thoroughbred stallion success Vaguely Noble from the UK. My colleague John Morgan vetted the latter in Newmarket prior to his sale to the US.



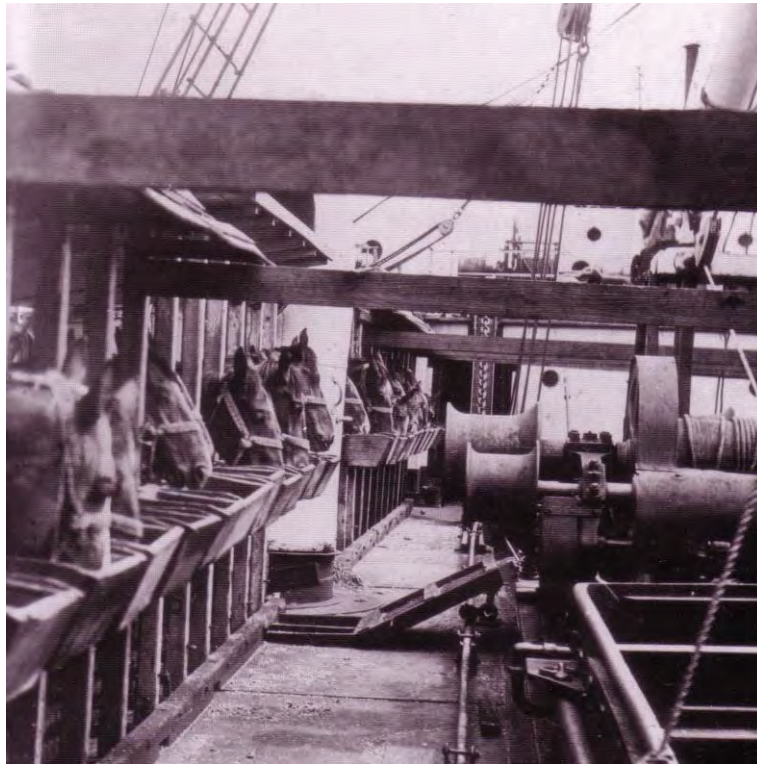
Legendary Star Kingdom at Baramul.
Photograph courtesy of *The Thoroughbred Press*.



Star Kingdom and Todman.
Photograph courtesy of *The Thoroughbred Press*.

Dr. Arnie Pesson was a larger than life Texan-born and Lexington/Kentucky based veterinarian who was my gracious and generous host later that year. I still retain clear memory of his supervision of the construction of a new Fasig-Tipton sales complex in Lexington with mate John Finney. He directed the bulldozers on site from horse back complete with spurs, whip, cigar and topped off by an immaculate white ten-gallon Stetson! Arnie Pesson was particularly ungracious about the original owner of the mare shipment, barrister Mr. A. O. Ellison of Baramul. However, his descriptive American vernacular then fresh to my ingenue ears in alleging various banal proclivities does not bear repetition here!

The mares were held in individual inwardly facing stalls on deck and stood for the entire 28 days journey on wooden slats. The stalls were constructed of Australian hardwood (iron bark). We removed partitions between the weanlings so they could move about their corral. This was ultimately highly significant! Feed bins and fresh water buckets were placed in front of each mare. Ordure was washed overboard daily by power seawater hosing. Feeding comprised Lucerne hay and chaff, oaten and wheaten chaff, Victorian meadow hay, molasses as an appetiser and some salt. My veterinary pharmacy included penicillin (Crystapen™ and Triplopen™), syringes and needles, stomach tube, alkaline salts, Epsom salts, stethoscope and thermometer. The journey took us via Fiji (Suva 6 and Lautoka 2 days) to Hawaii (2 days) and finally San Diego. The mares and other horses rested beautifully at night gliding peacefully over the smooth ocean. It was serenely sanguine to observe the tranquil scene with flying fishes glinting and sparkling in the crystal clear moonlight before retiring at nightfall!



Horses at Sea -

This was almost exactly the arrangement on the Parrakoola.
Photo courtesy of John Gilder.

The first hiccup was that Widden Valley domiciled mares did not find Victorian meadow hay palatable and to their liking at all! The alarm bells sounded with loud clear clarion fortissimo very early on day three! An old brown mare was clearly severely distressed from before daylight! She had consumed her usual feed and water overnight. I will never forget her anguished expression, terrified mien, flared dilated nostrils, dark purple plum coloured mucous membranes, dyspnoea, high febrile temperature (41.2°C), sanguineous blood tinged watery nasal discharge, distress, terminal struggling and death all within two hours! Treatment proved useless! I had witnessed first hand the onset, egress, progress and inevitable ultimate demise of a case of peracute “shipping fever”. Old Jack was shocked and I was in trepidation! Jack, a veteran of many long sea voyages with horses, had never seen anything like it!

The next series of events have also stayed with me over the years! At sea in the merchant navy, the captain of the ship is supreme omnipotent commander as judge, jury, advocate and executioner! No arguments! Not surprisingly I was not allowed to perform a post mortem. Within moments of her death the mare was winched up by a gantry crane with a rope around a hind leg and swung overboard. A seaman with a knife cut the rope and Duchess Delville and her unborn foal plummeted to the depths of the wide blue pacific mid way between Sydney and Suva! Not two weeks before she had languished in the lush Lucerne paddocks at Baramul! I stood transfixed and stunned at the speed and efficiency of the whole operation which seemed to take only a few seconds although it must have been longer. To this day I have never seen a more impressive or proficient means of disposal of a large cadaver.

Alarmed and fore-warned Jack and I took exquisite care and paid minute attention to detail from here on! At the slightest sign of abnormality we checked them out. With any rise in temperature I gave them 5 mega units (3g) of crystalline penicillin intra-venously and 10 to 15 mega units (6-9g) procaine/benethamine penicillin intra-muscularly. This was repeated one or two times. I became adept at picking the early cases by astute observation. At first light each morning one could look along the line of horse's heads over the front rails. The clearly defined glazed eyes and alarmed anxious expression with flared nostrils became pathognomic for the condition. Temperature rise confirmed the diagnosis. Treatment instituted immediately proved to be effective. The affected mares were removed from their stalls and placed on straw on deck with restraining ropes attached to the containers. Here they could lie down and rest, quite critical for recovery. We lost no more.

Torrina was the biggest guts and best conditioned mare on board but she succumbed on the Lautoka to Hawaii leg. She lost an estimated 200kg and slipped her hairless colt foal on deck. Disposal presented no problem!

Even though the weather was generally warm and balmy, 17 or 18 mares showed acute signs of travel or shipping fever necessitating treatment. I was not prepared to take the risk! A few others exhibited milder chronic clinical signs and were treated prophylactically. The weanlings having more space to move and mix travelled well. The six night stay in Suva was extremely damaging to the horse's well being and psyche. Container vessels are intense hives of activity around the clock while in port. On the leeward side of Viti Livu it seemed to rain every afternoon at four o'clock and frequently at other times! This meant extremely noisy opening and shutting of hatches at the slightest sign of inclemency. The hubbub of lights, metal, clanking and incessant human activity was constant for 24 hours non stop. Consequently there was no tranquil rest for the horses as at

sea. They were constantly jittery and on edge all the time in port with no opportunity for relaxation. The process was repeated to a lesser extent in Lautoka (2 nights) and Hawaii (2 nights). We successfully employed local labour to assist with feeding, watering and hosing down in port. The Fijian media were intensely interested in our unique cargo. We featured on the front page of the *Fijian Times* as well as radio and TV. The female journalist with the *Times* was particularly charming. Sydney trained local veterinarian Dr. Goldsmith was also most hospitable.

Life experience with merchant seamen ashore and exposure to local culture is not something one forgets easily! Minutes after docking in Suva and laying down the gang plank the deck was swarming with local female talent. This seemed to be *de rigueur* behaviour and mostly re-acquaintance with further (literal!) bonding from previous visits. There were some truly memorable parties! The morning after a “special” at the idyllic Hotel Isa Lei the ship’s captain made an amusing breakfast time announcement. He read a message in broken English from the manager of the hotel: “Would gentleman from your ship kindly return to retrieve his glasses and his underpants from the swimming pool!” I made an appointment with an optometrist in Suva for a new pair for myself being half blind, very reliant and as I had no spares!

Waikiki was also exceptional! Hans Selgren, ship’s bursar, entrepreneur, urbane avid punter, motel owner and resident of Brisbane put on the greatest show on earth in a bar on the strip. His sobbing rendition of the pain of loneliness at sea so impressed the gullible but sympathetic barmaid we had our own private party within an hour of arrival! ‘Hassa’ is one of the most socially adroit, experienced and genuinely gregarious people I have ever met! I don’t think he’s ever been lonely! His thespian talents exceeded his consummate social skill and punting proclivity! He later wrote to tell me he’d successfully backed Divide and Rule for the proverbial squillion in the Stradbroke Handicap and Doomben Cup of that year. I rather doubt he still retains the proceeds!

While I was administering prophylactic penicillin to the horses the whole crew seemed to be lining up in sympathy for the same treatment by ship’s medical officers after leaving port! On strong medical advice they had all been compulsorily vaccinated against tetanus before embarkation because of exposure to horses and the perceived increased danger of contracting the disease!

The Hawaiian visit was rudely interrupted by the need to blood sample all horse on board for quarantine purposes beginning at 2am! Some party pooper! Dave Mackay was the courteous and hospitable local state veterinarian. His expertise with horses wasn’t initially great but he adjusted very quickly and we finished the task long before breakfast. Before arrival in Los Angeles (LA) we were met by boarding party including a senior California state veterinarian. He came to check the “strange virus”. After detailed and thorough interrogation and the results of the blood tests were known we were cleared to land on mainland USA.



Chief Joseph -
I didn't meet him!

Disembarkation in LA was classic! The horses were lifted individually in crates by large gantry cranes from deck to port. The crates were geriatric wooden devices probably not used for decades. Chief Engineer von Reinfelds had not disguised his disdain or disgust for Americans and their culture all voyage. His vituperative about the caricature Yankee with the “loud shirt, big hat and bigger cigar” was strongly impressed on anyone who cared to listen. In fully gold braided Chief Engineer’s uniform complete with cap, gloves and white cane he paraded conspicuously in upright splendour back and forward along the sidewalk poking the LA wharfies with his cane loudly proclaiming time and again: “So Fred Flintstone have built zese crates, ugh?, So Fred Flintstone have built zese crates, ugh?”

I thought World War III was about to erupt! August Von R. was even more delighted when the challenge of dismantling the iron bark wooden stall infrastructure proved too much for the “soft” chainsaws operated by the indigenous wharfies. All were firmly seized up within 20 minutes and the job only just begun! Interestingly ‘Hassa’ Selgrun and ‘Baron August’ visited me in Scone the following year. After a very good night out in the Wounded Buffalo and the Golden Fleece, August became somewhat disoriented and was discovered wandering in the grounds of the house in which I now reside! Then incumbent Janet Barton, mother of Cessnock veterinarian David was singularly not amused on discovering the strange man late at night in the bushes muttering in deep gutteral German/English: “So Bill Howey have done zees! So Bill Howey have done zees!” Strike one Winston C. and Ted from Manchester!

Pessin, Ellsworth and Franklin were present to greet their precious but somewhat dishevelled cargo in LA. The journey was complete. Dr Pessin kindly invited me to spend time with him in Kentucky. I was delighted to accept! I was unable to extract any response at all from either Franklin or Ellsworth!



Destination Bluegrass, Kentucky.

In Lexington I was accommodated in the Polo Club at Winchester Farm on Winchester Pike. I had never seen such luxury! I met a few mates I had seen in Oz (Brian Palmer) and was also lavishly entertained by Patrick Madden of Meadowcrest Farm. The gate posts at the entrance drive had flames leaping from their apex throughout the night! Easier to find your way home? It was facile to be side tracked by Patrick and his colourful entourage! This was southern exposure at its very finest. Modesty and coyness prevent full disclosure of the extent of hospitality provided! Suffice to say anything goes! I also made time to visit old friend John Hughes of Dublin then completing his research at the University of Kentucky. Jim Smith and Walter Zent of Hagyard/Davidson/McGee were great and we began a lifelong communication. Among many other highlights were visits to Darby Dan Farm (Ribot), Gainesway, Claiborne, Spendthrift, Castleton and the like. I also ran into Aussies, Sky High and Tobin Bronze *en passant*. Remarkably on the last leg of my return journey to Sydney I sat next to Dr. Goldsmith's parents from Suva! Small world! Some life!



Sky High was classified Sky High II in America.
Photograph courtesy of *The Thoroughbred Press*.

Stud Managers & Stud Manager Management!

It had to happen!

Murray 'The Doc' was a great champion of the stud managers and stud grooms. He made it very clear to me from day one that given the choice between a good stud groom and a good stud veterinarian you take the former every time! Back in your place boy! Also when 'we' were going to do something you did it and no questions asked! My very first weekend in Scone (seven days after leaving Northern Ireland) 'we' were planting trees at Segenhoe cross roads. Murray was passionate about many things including all things natural such as trees, bees, birds and yes that as well! He told me very early he could give me 10 years "short cut" to equine veterinary knowledge if I listened carefully to what he said and practiced with even greater care the things he showed me. I am forever in his debt and eternally grateful for my great mentor and tutor in professional life!

It was such an "innovation in education" trip to Woodlands I first learned of the great stoush! Ron, Jim and George were great personal friends of Murray and featured prominently in his epoch-making film *The Veterinary Surgeon on the Stud Farm*. Ron

had been long time understudy to a heavy ex-miner and ‘pug’ from Cessnock we’ll call ‘Big Bill’. Big Bill was not a popular man and used stand over tactics to elicit obedience. Surreptitious rumour suggested cattle grazing serenely on the river flats were a joint venture between Bill and a local agent rather than “straying from the neighbours paddock across the river” as regularly reported to George the boss!

One day Murray was late for his appointment at Woodlands. Every day Murray was late for his appointment at Woodlands! This particular day Murray was later than usual. Bill was distinctly not amused and vented his spleen. After a long hot day of trial and tribulation Murray’s spleen was in great state for venting also! The challenge was issued and the bout proclaimed! No contest! ‘The Doc’ won by a TKO in the first round with a solid right to the forehead opening up a gaping wound! Like all bullies ‘Big Bill’ wilted at the sight of blood especially his own. Move over Bill! Take over Ron! The best job I ever did for Woodlands said Murray! Mace (spouse) was mortified! Murray gained a lot of grudging respect! George wanted to know why Ron and Jim had not stepped in to stop the contest? “Not while the ‘Doc’ was winning, Boss!”

Supervet!

“Why Suffer Diminutives When Superlatives Suffice?”

Every practice has one and we had ours – in spades! Al had been an undergraduate student with us and I definitely had my eye on him as a replacement. Eventually he arrived via Mildura much to the chagrin of my co-senior partner John who was expecting someone else! Jamie was much more enthusiastic! “This will work very well. He’ll want to do everything and you’ll let him!” I’m reputed to have said.

Suffice it to say Al turned out to be even better than expected successfully rotating John and delighting Jamie and I with his dynamism and commitment! Always wildly enthusiastic, Al was assigned duty at Kia Ora. Jim Gibson had seen hundreds of us come and go! Al was different! He arrived before time, jumped out of the car, ripped off his shirt and put his overalls on, all in just about one single movement. This was in stark contrast to Keith (Imp) who wrecked more than one gate with the iconic brown Torana in his late haste to make up time! The very droll Jim remarked one day in the Commercial (‘Comical’) Hotel in Aberdeen that Al would soon arrive “flying out of the car with a big ‘S’ on his chest and a flowing cape behind!” “Supervet!” - it stuck! As expected Al has proceeded on track to the pinnacle of his profession! Recently in conversation with Mark and I he glibly told us he castrated 54 colts in two and a half hours! Was this a record? I took another sip without replying!



Al.



“Can you believe that”? - Mark Wylie in dubious mood.

Then there were the Vietnam Vets – literally! The lady who was to become my mother-in-law was then outstanding imperious matriarch at the magnificent Mackay homestead Tinagroo near Scone. With three young daughters rapidly approaching matrimonial stage, like any caring mother hen Ponty always planned meticulously! The American R & R servicemen on leave from Vietnam seemed a great opportunity to display the virtue of her young ingenue Australian brood! To their enduring and everlasting credit, home stay was offered by country families for those servicemen who passed over the frivolous delights of the Cross (Kings Cross, Sydney).

There was no better place than Tinagroo to entertain war ravaged soldiers. It just so happened a number of them were veterinarians. It was a great honour to have ride with you senior military US personnel and share stories. I have kept brief in contact with Tommy Thomas ever since. Ponty's subtle ruse did not work and Mackays' eventually landed a Ten-Pound-Pom as second best son-in-law!

Anthelmintic cake sound appetising? It can kill you! Murray was well known for his voracious appetite at smoko. He worked very hard and needed to maintain energy levels! Thiabendazole (TBZ) was the wonder anthelmintic drug of the era. 'Lu' at Segenhoe decided independently a number of the horsemen looked wormy. She baked her traditionally luscious Anzac biscuits incorporating the white TBZ powder in place of flour! No one remarked at morning tea on any subtle taste discrepancy but by night-fall three guys were decidedly crook! The joke (if there was one) was that if Murray had been there he would have died! All was well in the end but no more worming of staff at Segenhoe!

There were never any grey areas where Murray was concerned! He was famously quoted as saying:

“Let's not hide our light under a bushel” (He didn't!)

“Let's not be stupidly immodest” (He wasn't!)

“A standing cock has no conscience” (No comment!)

A very pushy, new and pristine smart travelling salesman arrived. He insisted on seeing a reluctant Murray to expound the virtues of the incipient Mare Immunological Pregnancy (MIP) test for mares. “It is 98.5 per cent accurate at 42 days,” he proudly proclaimed. Murray pulled himself to his full height towering above the diminutive delegate and loudly pronounced, “I am 100 per cent”! The poor young fellow reddened, packed up and sheepishly left utterly defeated!

Later Murray was routinely pregnancy testing a large herd at Willowtree. Mike tentatively suggested a cow tested not pregnant the year before had actually produced a calf. “Impossible” was the unequivocal response!

Terrible Hollow (aka Widden Valley)

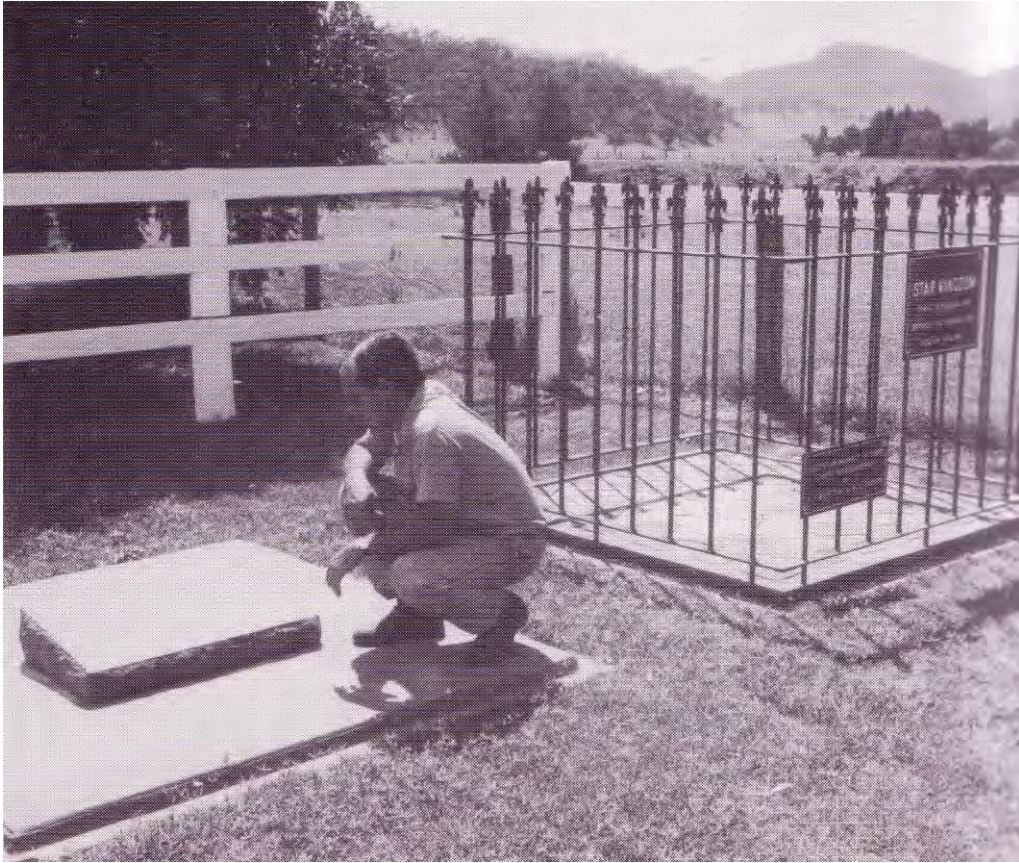


The Real 'Terrible Hollow' at the head of Emu Creek.
This was the legendary home of "bushrangers" – real or fictional.
Photograph courtesy of Cliff Ellis and Syd Cope.

This sheltered basin at the top end of Emu Creek is believed to have been the inspiration for the "Terrible Hollow" of Rolfe Boldrewood's *Robbery Under Arms*. This basin is also where the small-time cattle and horse thief Mrs. Jessie Hickman lived, though not in this hut. Her hut was burnt down in a grass fire not long after she had been incarcerated for her indiscretions. Accessible from the west via a tortuous and dangerous mountain track, leading from Nullo Mountain into the basin, it was more easily accessed from the east, although it was difficult to find owing to a kilometre of thick scrub. It was indeed the perfect hideout.

I mentioned earlier observation and lay diagnosis. I witnessed one of the more spectacular examples of this working with Bim one very hot day at Widden. His sharp eyes had spotted two eagle hawks (Wedge Tail Eagles) circling high and landing at a spot far away at the top of Myrtle Grove paddock. So, I thought, 'Wedgies' must be a common sight in the Widden Valley. Bim surmised on available evidence a mare had slipped her foal and the magnificent large birds of prey were feeding on carrion! He investigated and returned with an aborted foetus in a plastic bag he had the foresight to take with him. On at least two other occasions he noted when mares had swapped foals. This can prove very embarrassing when a foal with no ostensible grey parent actually changes colour on moulting!

Jim McFadyen ,then Keeper of the Australian Stud Book and the very first veterinarian employed full time by a major Race Club (AJC), was most impressed! It can explain a lot Jim!



‘Bim’Thompson surveys Todman’s headstone at Baramul.
Todman spent the last four years of his life at Widden and died in 1976.
Photograph courtesy of *The Thoroughbred Press*.

Colleague Mark reminded me recently of the longest ever single call completed in our practice! Resident veterinarian Jamie had called for assistance to deal with an outbreak of foal scours. Mark was assigned duty and drove through the gathering storm to reach the final concrete creek crossing closely adjacent to Widden homestead at dusk. He noticed the ominous heavy black clouds further up the valley and the water in Widden Creek beginning to turn murky brown, angrily swirling and rising fast. Eight days later the creek had subsided just enough to permit safe negotiation in a conventional vehicle! “I had a ball,” said Mark!

It was always expedient and wise to cover your tracks in the Widden Valley! The price of liberty is eternal vigilance! Small seemingly unimportant signs swell to extravagant proportions when taken out of context. On one occasion a new housekeeper had arrived to take care of domestic arrangements at a particular homestead. It was generally

considered gentlemanly practice to jealously guard the virtue of any vulnerable female ingenue in any such remote location. It raised the hackles and aroused suspicions of the resident stud master when a foot-print was discovered in the garden surrounding the private accommodation of the newcomer. Being an especially meticulous man he carefully measured the dimensions of the imprinted evidence. It was his considered opinion the size of foot-print could only have come from the boot of a large scale veterinarian of his intimate acquaintance! Also having a legal background this was circumstantial proof enough for him!

The 'opposition' was somewhat surprised to find out early the next day his veterinary services were required immediately to replace the prime suspect who had been the incumbent! The pendulum swings as they say and occasionally for the most arcane reason!

Perhaps the following episode is evidence of poetic justice. 'Party lines' provided 'party games' in those halcyon days of very close interpersonal communication. Everyone became familiar with the number of rings for a particular number along the line. This was rather like morse code in a telephone format. A particular stud had apparently suffered the embarrassment of an acute outbreak of strangles or possibly ill advised injection abscesses. An adjacent stud master was anxious to establish the truth or otherwise of this assumption. He considered it well within his rights and also very sound practice to seek advice from the veterinarian in Scone. Naturally he called up one night to make his inquiry. Having put the salient question and before the veterinarian could frame an answer there was a loud interjection across the line! Precise, concise and explicit threats of legal action were proclaimed if one word were uttered to comment on or substantiate any part of the whispered rumours! Like I said it pays to tread warily, drink cautiously, speak softly, eat sparingly, sleep soundly, drive casually and look carefully behind you to check the evidence. Anecdote relates the veterinary service on the accused stud also changed at this time!

Alan was a rather louche raffish rue, *enfant terrible* and the black sheep of an established family. Like most of his kith and kin he was fabulous company, a great entertainer, gregarious, urbane, charming, eloquent, witty and funny to a fault. He had a serial problem with work allergy, celibacy, bacchanalia, adultery and fidelity. This made life difficult for a married man consigned to the country by his despairing kin to mend his ways or at least hide from them! His colourful 'party line' telephone conversations with his long-suffering but resilient wife provided the sort of unexpurgated and uncensored entertainment in the bush that modern media moguls barely dare present. The doughty ladies at the local social Tennis Club were quite affronted to relate one morning how rude Alan had been on the telephone the night before! "Did you hear that Mrs S. and Mrs. C.!" They considered his decorum to them in seeking their opinion in his support had been more confronting and insulting than his lurid dialogue with his spouse! Bush telegraph means a lot of different things to different people! Excellent uncensored communication!

As a young veterinarian Tony spent quite some time in the Valley and loved the bucolic ambience and sparse but special rural companionship. He was very proud of his

impressive physique, careful in his habits, trained hard, excelled at outdoor sports, entertained young ladies and justifiably earned the sobriquet 'The Sheik'. It came as a great shock to him to perform his first autopsy on a stallion. This was an old thoroughbred having completed many seasons and servicing a pantheon of mares in his lifetime! It was the very beginning of the new season. The 'old gentleman' as he was affectionately known was led to his first mare exactly as he had done hundreds of times before. However it had been eight long months since the last excitement. The geriatric equine patriarch was feeling his advancing age and the weight of his pendulous expanded abdomen. Being an accomplished expert he nonetheless completed the allotted task in good time. Twenty minutes later he was dead! Tony was able to make an exact diagnosis of the cause of death – rupture of the great aorta as a consequence of sexual exertion while unfit! I'm reliably informed on very good authority Tony's training regime was stepped up immeasurably and his life Spartan and celibate for at least six months! It's always dangerous to anthropomorphise but Tony was taking no chances! If ever you've seen one of these horrendous cases you'll understand why!



Champions row headstones at Widden.

Does the Utopian Terrible Hollow *aka* Widden Valley have a down side? Sadly I have to agree with old Billy Baxter of Baerami! Drinking the water has deleterious effects! There is an insidious "black dog" in the Valley. He can infiltrate even the most stoic and settled of minds. We used to joke about the level and extent of human drama afflicting the transient and permanent members of the small but tightly knit community. When life's theatre transcends from comic to tragic then it is no longer humorous! I have to say from certain knowledge Churchill's black dog affliction altered the lives of too many of my

colleagues, friends and acquaintances to be ignored! Mr. A. O. Ellison gave me two pieces of unsolicited cherished advice as well as a signed picture of Bletchingly before he died. The first pearl was that “you have to be a very wealthy man to go chasing thoroughbred horses!” The second was revealed when I was assisting him back to his car after entertaining him at a party in his honour at my home on welcoming him to Scone: “The Widden Valley is a Wombat hole and I’m glad to have crawled out of it!” I took action on both counts! This was the same Mr. Ellison whom Murray and I had gently chided 25 years before. AOE and AMB forever sustained a philosophical and psychological contest based on mutual professional respect! AOE (‘Allwyn’ to Murray) was describing his rehabilitation after a very serious car accident breaking his pelvis and both front legs. Hydrotherapy involved treading water at ever decreasing levels. Almost synonymously we chimed in with “but we thought you could walk on the water AO!” “Murray and Bill will keep” was his reputed retort! We did! I’m the only one left so you can’t dispute it!

‘Jubilee Clap’ and Shuttle Vet Diplomacy

Veterinarians started it all! It’s even arguable Murray Bain was Scone’s very first shuttle veterinarian in 1950! It escalated to become something akin to an avalanche of human resources in the mid-sixties and thereafter. This is very good for science of course! Exchange of ideas and genotypic heterozygosity with prolific DNA interchange are the cornerstones of a vigorous society. Modern day Australia bears testimony to this premise! Quite a number of individuals in the immigrant human veterinary tide took this one stage further and availed themselves of esoteric local Hunter Valley bred ‘fillies’ to become their life’s partner!

The thoroughbred industry observed the phenomenon of interchange and followed suit with its own equine and human dual hemisphere seasonal peripatetic breeding perambulations during the mid-1970s. From this time thoroughbred horses became international currency to be traded as gold on a grand scale. The smartest major players recognised this facet early and reasoned very expensive DNA commodities resident and redundant for over half the year in the Northern hemisphere could very well earn extra keep downunder accommodating the extra local harem and maintaining cash flow on a daily basis while doing so! Sound delightfully lucrative and superficially simple? It is! There is always a catch of course. Nothing is that easy! The anachronistic scions of the Northern hemisphere Stud Books in their infinite wisdom refused to even contemplate it could be much cheaper, simpler, rational and logical to transfer refined male DNA alone rather than the whole living reproduction factories themselves thus committing to far greater risk while doing so! Venereal disease is a case in point.

There was massive escalation at this time of thoroughbred racing and breeding in Australia underpinned by the introduction of State Government-run TAB agencies. With the gradual official demise of traditional and popular illegal starting price bookmaker (SP), this fuelled the extraordinary exponential (even logarithmic) increase in legally taxed betting turnover especially in the major states of NSW and Victoria. With kick-backs to racing and consequent far higher prize money Australia became the preferred Southern hemisphere destination for the best portable thoroughbred DNA with an industry capable of supporting the higher valued overseas stallions. The number of thoroughbred mares in the Australian Stud Book had been more or less static at

about 10,000 for over 40 years. This number jumped up by fourfold to over 40,000 in the short time to the mid-1980s.

With the inflationary spiral of thoroughbred numbers and their individual values came a concomitant commitment and absolute obligation to provide duty of care for the animals wherever, whenever and however domiciled. This means people or human resources. Probably since inception, thoroughbred breeding in Australia had relied on a few hard core and old school horseman with an exquisite range of all round hand-me-down practical skills. Literacy was not highly prized as a desirable asset! They were all great observers, and much of this was based on good solid old fashioned horse husbandry common sense. Other tenets were of very dubious merit and little better than satanic witchcraft. With advances in science, communication, technology and pressure of numbers the elder generation were gradually phased out. They were replaced by a sensitive new age breed drawn largely from the ranks of the 'Yuppies Puppies' brigade attracted to the increasingly fashionable recently upmarket thoroughbred breeding industry. Many had attended one of the various tertiary institutions beginning in Western Australia and mushrooming throughout the Continent to provide much needed formal education in the horse industry.

Veterinarians were part of the flow and indeed pre-empted the escalation in the need for a greater degree of expert care for the increasingly lucrative and numerically strong thoroughbred band across the country. James Crouch joined Murray Bain in September 1967 on Horse Race Betting Levy Board Scholarship from the UK. The author (WPH) followed at the beginning of October and Richard Greenwood came a short while later. This formed the nexus of what was to become a regular two way UK/USA - Australia veterinary interchange over the ensuing 35 years

Real stallions began to 'shuttle' from about the mid-seventies. Mt. Hebron was a case in point. He travelled from Ireland in 1975 and stood for one season in southern NSW before returning to leprechaun land. He was considered hot stuff and arrangements were made to bring him back to the Widden Valley as 'gay lothario' for the 1977 eclectic harem. As luck would have it this was also the 25th year of Queen Elizabeth II's ascension to the Commonwealth throne. Coincidentally an outbreak of a "new" equine venereal disease was first identified at the National Stud, Newmarket, UK. Putting the two elements together, a polemic wit with a fine sense of irony dubbed this 'Jubilee Clap' or more correctly and officially Contagious Equine Metritis (CEM).

The proverbial hit the fan in massive dollops in the incestuous world of thoroughbred breeding. Ireland claimed to be unafflicted by the 'English' disease.

To be forewarned is to be forearmed however! JRGM had just returned from the UK and was intimately familiar with the goings on at Newmarket and the National Stud. Jimmy Rodger still had his erstwhile cohorts keeping a close watch on developments! Confusing the issue still further was the very first ever occurrence in July 1977 of an equine viral abortion storm in Australia and the Hunter Valley! We had some serious discussions and seminal public meetings. The Scone Bowling Club hosted over 400 anxious veterinarians, breeders and other interested parties at one of the Australian horse breeding industry's most important ever historic scientific gatherings.

Our "inner sanctum" at Scone decided the first few mares covered that season by any imported stallion should be swabbed three to four days post service to establish freedom from venereally

transmitted diseases, including CEM. This was despite a series of stringent pre-importation quarantine swabbings of the genitalia of the bemused would be *equine galantes*. This is very good science of course. The biological test is always paramount and underpins the important principles of Koch's Postulates. Alas Mt. Hebron failed the test! The "little people" must have been at work! They are responsible for many otherwise unexplained misdemeanours in Ireland! Talk about wild fire and bush telegraph! The fans whirring the proverbial were in overdrive – a flock of 10 thousand pelicans with cathartic gastritis and profuse watery diarrhoea could not have produced a greater impact! The speedy exodus of mares from the afflicted stud was bigger than biblical proportions.

Mt Hebron, poor old fellow, was consigned in disgrace to quarantine, surrounded by ubiquitous but unattainable equine talent in the idyllic Widden Valley with nothing to do and all day every day to do it in! This was not the end of the matter however! He had to be transported home for the term of his natural life! He suffered the indignity of a massive barrage of antibiotic treatment and locally applied genital douches. Further swabbing and washing ultimately gave him a clean bill of health. There was still one more step to be taken. He needed to be mated with pristine equine maidens and cleared by an imported Irish veterinarian of eminent stature dispatched by first class air especially for the purpose by the Irish Government and commercial interests. Fine by us!

The host stud purchased four "maiden" pony mares at the regular Scone horse sales. Naturally one of them turned out to be in foal already – a not altogether surprising occurrence in the post-sixties liberated Hunter Valley as one caustic sage sardonically commented! The other three clean "virgins" were prepared and proved to be accommodating, willing and eager. In the meantime the "tall timber" veterinarian had arrived from Ireland. An old acquaintance, he soon made himself at home proving to be as adept at diplomacy as he was fluent in blarney. His brand of special Gaelic charm particularly impressed a recently extant young lady veterinarian. She seemed eager to test the veracity of Lonnie Donnegan's abstruse claim in his popular song *Nobody Loves Like an Irishman!*

In life as in love as in work vital timing is everything! The young "clean" mares were covered and the special day for swabbing for clearance for Mt. Hebron to be allowed to return to Ireland had arrived. It was a hot Saturday in November. We had a great party the night before and I was to meet 'Lean Tall Sean' but not 'Long Tall Sally' promptly at 6:00am at the practice for the long drive to the Widden Valley. At 6:30am he had not arrived so I determined to pick him up at Airlie House. I recognised one of our cars outside Room 22. I thought it a little strange but knocked on the door anyway. Poor old Sean! Wan, dishevelled and bedraggled he was in no fit state to travel! He had already traversed half the globe for the test mating clearance of the imported stallion. It might have been delayed jet lag or even residual travel sickness but he couldn't take the last few steps! Perhaps the importunate demands made on his person by his newly discovered nubile companion had irretrievably sapped and exhausted his available energy supply? Did he advance the concept of Koch's Postulates too far too soon? I made the journey to the Widden Valley alone! Anyway its results that count and Shona gave the all clear three to four days later. Mt. Hebron was able to make it back to Ireland. He was possibly in better shape than Sean for whom I cannot speak.

Test mating? It's very sound practice providing you survive! In defence of Sean it could be he was unfamiliar with handling copious quantities of Reschs or Rocky Waters really had disoriented him after three hours of listening to 'unintelligible crack' in the Bowling Club on Friday night. Maybe Lonnie Donnegan should compose another song about the capacity of test mating Aussie ingenues to dispel mythology about legendary Irish lothario capability.

'The Castle', 'The Hole in the Wall' Gang & 'The Wounded Buffalo'

If only rooms had ears and walls could talk!

Kelly Street Scone had a red light district if only you knew where to find it! A veritable warren of bachelor and spinster pads was situated directly above Will & Jan Serhan's store and Harry Hayes' butchers shop. From around 1965 to 1975 these provided a home for the many unattached and single veterinarians, technicians and scientists aligned with A. M. Bain and Associates operating from the Grazcos building over the road. Shona was there first and then John M., Des F., Bill H., Warren McL., Nairn F., Tony P., David P-O, Ray G., Bill S., Jamie B. et al all followed.

Rumour has it the beautiful blond English wife of a Ten Pound Pom veterinarian was seen shinning down the white cedar tree at 3 am in Kelly Street accompanied by an unidentified party-goer one night!

Shona hosted some great soirees! Geoff Hayne tried to make an 'arrest' one night of a would-be carouser serenading on a guitar from the balcony overlooking Kelly Street to anyone who would listen. There were few onlookers or takers at 4 am on Sunday morning however!



Scone's 'Red Light' Area - The 'hole-in-the-wall' is now blocked just next to Serhan's Menswear.

The hospitable flats are above the shops.

Further rumour identified handsome Warwick as making a very suspicious looking and highly dangerous wall scaling entrée between the balconies of the flats late one night. The fact two beautiful young local hostesses currently occupied one of the warrens fuelled the gossip machine. The truth was much more mundane! He had simply forgotten his key and did not want to wake anyone at such an ungodly hour!

Ross nearly met his maker one night when he slipped while making a hasty descent from the roof of Lester Rose's Supermarket. The fact he was stark bollocky naked and still carrying his entertainment guitar did not help the situation. This was compounded by the extremely slippery state of the ripple iron roof due to the whites of the freshly broken eggs with which he had just been pounded! Fortuitously, he was able to grab the guttering which held!

Bill almost blew up the whole complex on more than one occasion when his culinary skills were sorely tested after Rugby! If you do not open a can of baked beans before heating it will explode Bill! It makes a nice mess of the kitchen too not to mention the electric range!

The red light warren was oft regarded as home away from home for the many jackeroos and station hands from Glenrock and elsewhere who played Rugby on Saturdays in winter. It was seriously unwise and frequently impossible for the young vagabonds to even attempt the return journey especially after a Merriwa match! It became common place to awaken and find six to eight jackeroos, spreadeagled on the floor or anywhere there was space!

Jack came home to Bill's one night and crashed through the balcony door. What he did not know – or had possibly forgotten - was Bill was overseas (1970 - Baramul Mares to USA) at the time and Ray and Lorraine had taken up residence together in the double bed! Further compounding the shock was Lorraine was 8.99 months "in foal"! Such was the surprise all round Melissa was born a few days later and all was well! Jack was ever the gentleman. He was able to extricate himself with honour and profuse apologies from the delicate situation. He never did fully recover from the shock!

Very often redress to the 'hole in the wall' followed a very convivial - and late - meal at Leighton's Coffee Club Inn (*aka* 'Wounded Buffalo') next door to the vets and Grazcos just across and up the road. Leighton's greatest difficulty was very often how to get rid of his Bacchanalian mob and close his restaurant. There was a dispute one night ending up with Leighton in the wheelie bin and an impromptu game of golf down Kelly Street at 2:30 am by the would be Greg Norman protagonists. The Golden Fleece Hotel never ever did account for the broken windows and golf balls in bedrooms raining on them that night! The participants all later became stalwart figures in Upper Hunter Society! (No names! No pack drill!) I always greatly enjoyed Leighton's company and he often cooked

me a great rump steak at 11:00 pm if I had returned late from a long, long day in the Bylong Valley. The standard fare (to me) was \$2.00 and we always opened a few tinnies! It didn't help my golf swing much however! I always believed the sobriquet 'Wounded Buffalo' although humorous to be a mite unjust. Alf Marks really started something there!

62 Kingdon Street in Scone is legendary was the erstwhile home of successive waves and generations of veterinarians. It became known universally as 'Kingdon Castle' or just simply 'The Castle'. Richard and Sue Greenwood were first to live there in 1968 and make it into a home. Warren and Robyn McLaren followed soon after until there was a parting of the ways. Bill Howey and Tony Parker moved in when Warren left.



Kingdon Castle - Now the sedate home of Camilla and Mark Wylie!

Murray Bain greatly enjoyed the camaraderie the young residents of the 'Castle' provided. He used to arrive early on Sunday mornings (6 am!) for a cup of coffee and gossip prior to going out to the farm at Yarrandi. He rolled in very bright and breezy one day during the Bill and Tony era. "Alright you blokes – dismount now" was his characteristic initial prurient laced retort. Smiling very sweetly back at him as he crossed the hearth was a very lovely young lady, a recent acquaintance of Tony. I rarely if ever saw Murray Bain stuck for words but there was a lot of stuttering and stammering on that occasion! Sadly about six months later Murray arrived as usual about 6 am one Sunday.

No respecter of hangovers he ordered me into the car to drive to the farm with him. He had just returned from Victoria. "I have something I want to tell you" were his exact words as I piled into the front seat of the white Merc. Suspecting a large bowel obstruction himself Murray had performed a very basic examination. His findings and suspicions were confirmed by personal physician and close friend Dave. Within 48 hours

a major bowel operation had been completed. “Just before surgery I never ever felt better in my life,” said Murray. “It must all be just a very bad dream”. On visiting a few days later he told me: “They got most of it but there is a spot on the liver and a small bit in the groin”. It was impossible to say anything in reply! He never relinquished hope and vowed to fight it all the way and win! Only at the very end did he tell me to make plans without him for the coming season. They were the last words I ever heard him speak.

The ‘Castle’ subsequently housed a continual succession of permanent, temporary and itinerant veterinarians. After nearly burning the place down when a steak caught fire on the grill Bill moved to a safer and less combustible abode. Tony moved on. ‘Falstaff’ Stewart and ‘Three Legs’ Barnes moved in. Both stayed and left.

Bill Stewart earned the unique distinction of a life ban from the Scone Bowling Club. It had been a long and torrid front row stoush against the visiting Canadian Rugby touring side. Skipper Bill needed a good deal of soothing anaesthetic at the post match revelry. After 25 emollient schooners (in bulk purchase to save money) Bill was convinced the yellow strip lighting in the Club caused cancer! He took action and aimed the 26th beer directly at the offending overhead lights! He was a sure shot and the ensuing explosion caused an electrical black out all over Scone! Bill was not invited back from NZ for the celebrations of the new club refurbishment years later!

Even today the ‘Castle’ is permanent home to Mark and Camilla and their four delightful children. The veterinary dynasty endures!

The Foaling

It had not been a particularly auspicious beginning for me! My migrant plane was late – very late! After 10 hours touring London while “technical problems” were sorted by Qantas we took off via New York, San Francisco, Hawaii, Fiji, Auckland and ostensibly Sydney. Alas on the Monday of the October long weekend in 1967 the Gods were angry. A mighty dust storm blew over Randwick Racetrack dispersing the Metropolitan Day crowd. It also closed nearby Mascot just as we were about to land. So Brisbane it was!

Immigration formalities were completed and I boarded an Ansett ANA flight to Sydney. At midnight I arrived at the Australia Hotel in Castlereagh Street very thoughtfully arranged by Mace, who was to meet me in the morning. Murray had returned to Scone to join James Crouch in the practice. Mace needed to do some shopping and would greet me later. I described myself as accurately as I could. Mace arrived in the foyer marginally before me and approached a gentleman matching my description. He was not amused at being “approached” and reported the incident to the Manager! Mace was mortified! I appeared and the explanation became clear! To this day I’m not sure either the manager or the affronted gentleman was totally convinced by Mace’s impassioned pleas!

It was good to bump into ‘Tiggy’ down from the country for the spring meeting at Randwick. This was my first exposure to NSW rural culture and its protagonists.

Reinforcement came later in the day during the journey to Scone via the Wolombi Track and the Convict Drinking Trough on the old Great North Road!

Murray and Mace were extraordinarily hospitable and entertained a large circle of friends. Gourmet dinner parties were a regular feature of the social scene in the Upper Hunter. During my very first week I was graciously invited to tag along and join the throng at Vivian and Rosemary's magnificent Bhima homestead. I will never ever forget being greeted by Rosemary at the front door.

Cupping my face in her hands she proclaimed with exquisite delectation: "Oh what a darling boy! [I was young and fresh!] Do you mind if we become awfully familiar?" I didn't know whether to run, laugh or cry. Being totally transfixed I did nothing! It was fabulous evening and Rosemary later became a much loved surrogate mother to me, her family my life long friends!



David Rhodes Bath.

I learned very early Murray was a party animal! Still an itinerant resident *chez* Chivers, my second week was interrupted one evening by a call from Parraweena. View had colic. View was Johnny's highly prized Todman gelding. Murray and I traversed the Liverpool Range and headed west. The late Saturday call just happened to coincide with Bryans's birthday party celebrations! Bryan won an Olympic bronze medal in equestrian team sport at Tokyo.

View was not well and we commenced treatment. The tall imposing figure of the neighbouring 10 goal international polo player filled the door of the box. "Another [expletive deleted] pommy bastard" was Sinclair's one retort on introduction! The lines of cultural divide were very firmly drawn in the sand! Even Tiggy had been polite on meeting me in the foyer of the iconic Australia Hotel on my first morning in Australia! View improved but there was no way Murray was leaving when Jill, Denise, Karen and Vallee were available on the dance floor!

I sat in a corner like a recalcitrant child, bewildered and bemused! After tripping the light fantastic until 5am on Sunday we commenced the return journey and Murray was tired! I drove! My very first experience with a Mercedes Benz was like floating on air. We survived! I was not invited to steer again!

It was unfortunate to say the least whenever a Chivers special was in full swing and rudely interrupted by an emergency. A difficult foaling was generally considered the direst of crises demanding immediate reaction. Vivian and Rosemary were special friends of the Bain's and were enjoying the lavish fare at Chivers in suitable style and comfort on a pristine spring evening. They were justifiably proud owners of a boutique local stud on the outskirts of Scone. Just as everything seemed perfect, the telephone rings on cue and Murray answers. It's a foaling all right and Murray decides he must go. It had always been practice policy that two veterinarians should attend whenever possible. Vivian, used to giving orders in dictatorial colonial manner, was singularly unimpressed with Murray's perceived lack of delegated authority. "Send the boys," he thundered in inimitable and unmistakable style! "Well that's fine", responded Murray, "but the emergency is at a little tin pot stud down the road called Bhima!"

Vivian was out there first in double quick time! Spouse Rosemary arrived moments later with Murray. Vivian, a military survivor of Changi and fully fuelled by Dr. Dewar for any crisis was in imperious form! Strident orders and elaborate directives followed one another with alarming alacrity and sharp rapidity! Even Rosemary fell into line in full flowing evening dress and was delegated to fetch buckets of hot water. On returning heavy laden she suddenly recognised the futility of her immediate and current situation. A highly educated English born lady with impeccable manners, sublime diction, erudite knowledge and classy etiquette she decided immediately to make her unscheduled exit. "Vivian, get [expletive deleted]!" was her parting shot while depositing the buckets! No one had ever heard vernacular expressed in such transcendent terms with cultured cadence so befitting!

The story had a happy ending and a very fine Star Kingdom colt hit the ground later to attain success in the sale ring, even greater achievement on the race track as Finders Keepers and glory to the stud as a sire. The party resumed to conclude with port and cigars. Professional honour was preserved with a very happy clientele. It only goes to show you must take careful stock of priorities before making too hasty decisions!

I had operated on a mare of VC's who had a granulosa thecal cell tumour. Incredibly she survived! VC was also just recuperating following a surgical procedure performed by the immaculate Dr. Walter Pye. VC was expatiating at great length (and could be heard in Aberdeen) about the discrepancy in the two bills. "Ah, but the mare is worth more than you Mr.B"! There were some very pronounced expostulations, stutterings and mutterings!



‘VC’, in characteristic pose, perusing the sale catalogue at White Park.

The Opposition – in life, work and play!

Like government every veterinary practice needs an effective opposition to keep the bastards honest! We had our fair share and maintained scrupulous integrity at all times! You never grow to like them but you can learn to respect them! Opposition comes from within and without of course.

Muswellbrook had traditionally provided stiff competition for anything extant in Scone. This historic antipathy was firmly entrenched in the rival genre of both cadre populations for generations past. Peter Dawkins, like Murray an expatriate from the ‘old dart’, set up in Muswellbrook shortly after Bain and Williams began trading professionally in Scone. It was an uneasy truce eased somewhat by Peter’s election to concentrate on dairy cattle rather than horses which he disdained. Having simmered along contentedly for over a decade it was in the late sixties when inter-practice rivalry hotted up and reached its zenith to that time.



St Andrews Day 1979.

5 year old Cameron and Gavin Gidley-Baird.

Gavin was devastated not to win the prize for the best legs! Little wonder?

Bill and Richard had joined Murray in Scone in 1967 in a presciently pre-emptive exercise foreshadowing what was later to develop into a regular seasonal two-way trans-global migration. Their Rugby talents could best be described a modest or even moderate. Nonetheless they added to the playing numbers if not the strength of the recently nascent Scone Rugby Club. Scone enjoyed great initial success with victories in 1967 and 1968 the first two years of competition. Peter Dawkins employed Gavin and Frank directly from the University of Queensland (UQ) Veterinary Faculty in 1968. Both were eminent First Graders in Brisbane and Frank represented Queensland to boot - literally! Gavin had formed part of a redoubtable scrum for UQ many of whom were contemporary Wallabies including Ross Teitzel and Keith Bell. This shifted the balance of power considerably and raised the stakes in the opposition contest!

Within two years Muswellbrook won the competition with Frank at the helm as Captain and Coach. Never ever underestimate the impact this sort of extra-mural activity can generate. This was further compounded by the success on the race track of Dark

Diamond owned in partnership by Muswellbrook veterinarians Dave Scharp and John Law. They had picked out the Dark Defiance gelding from a paddock owned by Les Swords in Denman and he had developed into an open company Cup horse!

The worst part about it was Frank and Gavin were both great blokes. Fortunately (for us) Frank did not stay around too long because he didn't see eye-to-eye with some of his contemporaries. Gavin paid me the most back-handed compliment ever on the Rugby paddock. Slugging it out one day against Scone, the Muswellbrook pack was under duress and underperforming according to pack leader Gavin. His motivational diatribe was short and succinct: "Come on you Muswellbrook pigs! Howey's their best forward and we all know how [expletive deleted] piss weak and useless he is"! I take the point Gavin! On my one day as captain of Scone we were beaten by a record margin at Murrurrundi, two were sent off and two walked off! The recruitment campaign of a few League players from the front bar of the Golden Fleece Hotel that morning had back-fired badly! Eleven schooners is not the ideal pre-match preparation! Two received life. Tragically the referee later committed suicide! I like to believe it was unconnected to this event.

The contribution made by the veterinary profession to Scone Rugby in the early days is possibly unmatched by any other single organisation. Bill Howey and Richard Greenwood set the ball rolling (only just!). From there the quality and quantity markedly improved with the following also representing on the field and/or administration: Tony Parker, Warren McLaren, Angus Campbell, Bill Stewart, Jamie Barnes, Alan Simson, Nigel Scott, Gary Parker, Mark Wylie, Paul Ferguson and Euan Haith. Don Crosby also starred for Scone although based in Muswellbrook. Quite a few itinerant students were also required to turn out as part of the seeing practice experience! Mark Wylie had answered in good faith the advertisement placed in the *Australian Veterinary Journal* for a "Rugby-playing assistant"! Politically inexpedient if not incorrect in these enlightened days!

Satur Veterinary Clinic

Just when we thought we had buried the veterinary partition gremlins for good Satur Veterinary Clinic rose like a phoenix! Sandy Racklyeft was an experienced veterinary surgeon who was employed at Morgan Howey Fraser and Partners to bolster the clinical pathology and companion animal sectors at the behest of Jenny Jenkins. Jenny was incumbent in the small animal domain and had worked with Sandy in the after hours emergency animal hospital in London UK. Sandy became disillusioned with the work environment and when he sealed a lifetime partnership by marrying equine specialist Debbie Edwards they set up at Satur.

The new building at Satur was completed on June 29, 1990. It took only four weeks to the lock-up stage and another seven weeks to fit out. The practice was officially opened by close friend of Debbie and Sandy the legendary medical practitioner Dr. Walter Pye on September 15 that year.

Philip Thomas was a specialist theriogenologist associate at the time.



Dr. Walter Pye.



Dr. Walter Pye with Sandy and Debbie Racklyeft on official opening day.

Dr. Pye commented favourably on the development of veterinary services he had witnessed in his 50 years in Scone. He emphasized the importance of the availability of choice in the community. This did not apply to medical practice!

This has been a very successful personal and professional arrangement and provides effective opposition and choice for clients. Many outstanding and competent veterinarians have passed through Satur Veterinary Clinic and no doubt this will continue. Many such as Peter Gorman have served very well at both Scone and Satur. Peripatetic Irish Veterinarian Kevin Doyle has also done time at Satur. Many accomplished veterinarians, veterinary nurses and administrators have passed through including Colleen Love, Allison Learmonth, Molly Woodford, Karen Peel, Maria Cameron, Bev Dick, Kate Mailer and Karen Hayes. In more recent times Simone Russell, Linda Mobbs, Virginia Henderson and Lisa Goodchild have assisted.



Kevin Doyle with Debbie and Sandy Racklyeft at work.

Phil Redman

Phil Redman controlled the destinies of Turangga Stud at Scone for many years and was a great humorist. Bert Lillye also wrote effusively about Phil's exploits as a horseman and veterinarian.

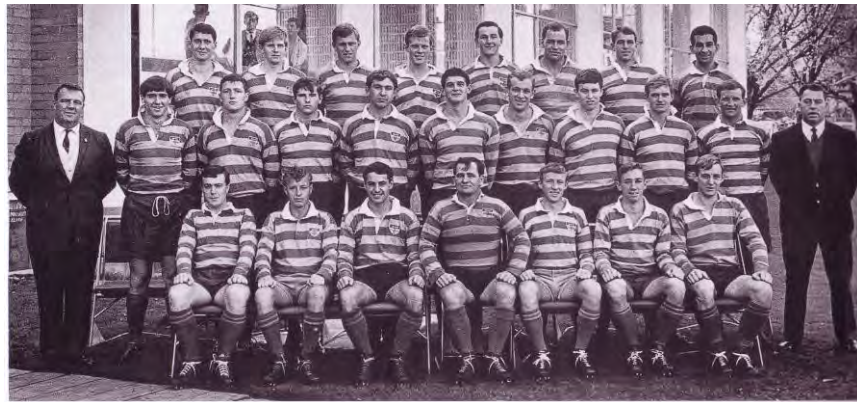
Bert wrote that "at times his eyes carry the sparkle of the Devil"! No argument there! He would surprise visitors to Turangga by bleeding mares from the jugular vein. For the unwary and uninitiated this can be a daunting experience! It seems like a lot of blood! Phil informed his inquisitive audience "you wait until you see their eyes spinning" before you close the incision! Fainting was not uncommon!

Phil spent four years in Indonesia on an ill fated attempt to set up a racing and breeding operation there. He escorted 550 racehorses and local conditions and feeding regimes

with rice bran ‘gubba’ were unusual. Colic and other complications were the norm and many horses died *in extremis*.

It was not without its lighter moments however! On one occasion in desperation Phil resorted to a trochar and cannula to relieve bloat in a distressed horse Rio Shah. Miraculously he survived and even thrived to win three subsequent races in quick fire succession. The natives were enormously impressed and soon turned up in droves demanding treatment with “this marvelous new form of acupuncture which turned slow racehorses into consummate winners”!

Phil also had great fun at the expense of the local equivalent of the ‘little people’. He was performing a caesarean section on a cow and the children were goggle-eyed at this “whitefella magic”! On successfully removing a live calf Phil was just beginning to suture the uterus and flank when he noticed his totally enthralled wide eyed audience for the first time! The temptation was too much! He couldn’t resist! On passing his arm through the wound he was able to wave to the little urchins pressing around him with his free hand through the cow’s back vulva! That was enough! With howls of terror in unison the assembled throng bolted *poste haste* into the surrounding bush! They had almost as much trouble coming to terms with Tom Campbell’s false teeth which he removed and placed ‘grinning’ at them as he went about his tasks!



Sydney University Rugby Club versus Melbourne University, 1964.
‘Rugger Bugger’ Phil Redman is third from the left in the middle row.

Ray Biffin

Ray was also the veterinary equivalent of a colorful racing identity albeit a very gifted proponent of the “art and science”! He was very innovative when he set up his facility at Murrurundi and was the first to establish a flotation tank to aid in the healing of limb fractures of horses. The fact that it did not work very satisfactorily was no impediment to Ray! He was similarly prescient in being among the first to successfully attach an artificial limb to a horse with an amputation. This was ground breaking stuff and certainly pioneering territory. Ray could have used the flotation tank himself when he suffered the indignity of a fractured pelvis while attempting to assist a horse recover from

anaesthesia! He was made of stern stuff and the injury did not impact his workload! Carbon fibre implants were once the “new age rage” for the treatment of tendon injuries in performance horses. Guess who was first cab off the rank?

Rural Lands Pastures Protection Board Veterinarians

Although strictly not opposition or competition, the late Murray Bain was somewhat scathing in his assessment of the “free veterinary service for graziers”! There have been a number of prominent veterinarians to hold the position in Scone. Joe Berryman was an early veterinary stock inspector and was followed in the 1960’s by Colin Cargill who later forged an eminent career in the pig and pork industry. Graham Brown was the young incumbent in the late 1960’s and his veterinarian son Chris has begun to attract a lot of comment as a TV vet. Trevor Doust followed Graham and in turn was succeeded by John Entwistle who filled the post with long distinction until his tragically early demise in the late 1990’s.

The Weirdest Call & A Boy Named Sue

Sue was the very first full time female veterinary assistant employed in the Scone veterinary practice. A true Queenslander with strong PNG associations Sue had been an outstanding undergraduate and endeared herself to the boss to the extent she was the very last person offered career prospects by AMB. It was not easy for a new graduate to assimilate into the by now very well established team. Sue made it with honours!

Just as we have all experienced Sue had her perplexing moments in her early days! Much of this centered around the unique social culture of the Moonan/Woolooma/Stewarts Brook district in the hills to the east of Scone. One day there was an important call to Max and Lex – or was it Lex and Max? The call description was unclear to the receptionist and the directions almost as vague. Sue agreed to investigate.

Eventually she managed to decipher the convoluted map to Stewarts Brook where unfortunately she encountered a big rock and a puncture! Luckily old ‘Dodge’ was riding past and being natures’ gentleman offered assistance. Sue was in unflattering overalls and wore her hair very short long before it became fashionable. To his dying day ‘Dodge’ maintained he helped a young vet Sam to change his tyre! “A boy named Sue” became a standard joke in the Victoria Arms at Moonan Flat! Johnny Cash would have approved!

Never having left ‘Dodge’ knew the locality very well and was able to direct Sue to identical bachelor twins Max and Lex’s abode at a weather worn cottage near the Moonan Brook turn off. It had been a hard day’s night and an argument had developed! There were a few empty Brown Muscat flagons strewn about! Sue was eventually able to establish the reason for the call! The twins had a major disagreement whether or not all twin calves were infertile. Not trusting subjective local knowledge they elected the vet as being able to mediate objectively in the dispute. This was the only agreement they had reached in 48 hours of heated debate! Sue delivered her diatribe on freemartinism, unsure

if her message was clearly received. The conflict was resolved and honour satisfied. Sue was greatly bemused by the circumstances of her first exposure to local culture!

At about this time we invested in new communication technology! We purchased a 'Divertacall' system. This revolutionary device played a recorded voice message on the main line as to what number to dial to contact the duty vet after hours. I received a desperate call from Harold of Moonan Brook at my home late one night. He told me he dialed the practice number several times "but that other bloke wouldn't talk to me!" It can be confusing the first time for the residents of the very Upper Hunter!

We have all dealt with horror calls! I think mine must have been at Warland's Creek at 2 am one winter's night when it had rained for two days solid! The appellant simply replied "Yuh, Yuh" to any request for accurate directions. Warland's Creek nestles among the hills above Murrurundi in the high rain catchment area. A small heifer had hip lock. On arrival at 3:30 am the heifer was prostrate in 12 centimetres of water in a back shed with no permanent lighting. My car had slid down a greasy embankment. After the most difficult elective caesar of my life I was dragged out by tractor at 7 am, still in cold Donegal style driving rain just in time to go back to work!

It was a Sunday on duty when I drove 780 kilometres attending fifteen calls with five in the high country above Timor that I began to consider my longevity in large animal rural practice! The last call was at 10 pm to Upper Rouchel to a cow with mangled twins the owner had just discovered on returning from a long weekend away. It had been a horrendous day with the greatest disappointment coming from eventually reckoning what I had achieved. Regrettably the late spring season was a good one and the unborn calves had generally grown too big for the immature winter drought heifers. Tractors and 4WD's attached to hip lock heifers doesn't do much for their obturator nerves or vet's sanity!

Tuesday Boozers Club

The Tuesday Boozers Club (TBC) at the Belmore Hotel was an iconic totem of a bygone era celebrated by a unique cadre of bucolic individuals!



The Belmore Hotel Scone - Spiritual home of the TBC!

For eons of time the weekly Fat Stock Cattle Sale has been held at the various Scone Sale Yard locations every Tuesday of the year barring major public holiday clashes. This became the pilgrimage destination for many outlying farmers and graziers seeking business transactions allied to social interaction with their agents and associates. For some this included well lubricated sessions of discourse in the select bar of the Belmore Hotel with mine hosts Jim and Audrey Cotton at the helm. There were variable sessions of condolence, congratulation, consideration and commiseration. Wives, girlfriends and *de facto*'s were expected to visit and meet with relatives and friends or engage in other social, civic and sporting pursuits for the duration of the sale and aftermath. They could collect their bread winner at the appointed hour for the return journey.

Every Christmas a special dinner was held to cement the year's activities and seal friendships not excluding the long suffering spouses! This was funded in part by contributions to a swear box at 20 cents per expletive! The swear box was Audrey's valiant although not too serious attempt to improve the standard of conversation at the TBC. One day Johnny Del was so exasperated at his inability to adequately express his disgust over a matter of epic proportion he placed \$1 on the bar. "Mrs. Cotton [always a gentleman!]! Here is one dollar in advance: 'F—k, F—k, F—k, F—k, F—k,'"! At 5 x 20 cents Johnny's gremlins were suddenly exorcised in rapid quick fire succession! Coming from a background of Mediterranean ethnicity, Johnny occasionally had trouble with the local vernacular – but not on this occasion!



‘The Little White Bull’ on Norma, Sydney Royal 1938.
Photos courtesy of Chris Winter.

Reg Watt’s niece Rita used to do a wonderful job looking after her precious Uncle. She told me the post-TBC dinners she prepared for him were always special and every one unique! The actual time and timing was negotiable and the guest list uncertain! It could include fellow TBC members and great mates Fred R. from Ardglen or Ray B. from Aberdeen at very short – make that no notice! All were equally welcome and lavishly entertained! True gentleman Fred was always effusive in his apologies to his favourite sobriquet ‘Sis’ for turning up – yet again – unannounced! Those were indeed the days!

The TBC cabal was an eclectic selection of high mountain men from east of Moonan, the Timor cabal, the Rouchel contingent, the Kars Springs cadre and the Bunnan brigade. “Inside men” including local farmers, business men and most of the agents made up the total cache. Following a suitable “quarantine” incubation period a few “outsiders” were occasionally permitted to join the TBC ranks! The author was one in this category! There was Norm, Roy Mac and the ‘Little White Bull’. Tiger, Tom, Tim, Regis, Paul and Bill were there most days and old George from the sale yards. Tom and Paul *et al.* from Dalgety’s contributed a regular contingent being closely adjacent to the choice watering hole. Don’s garage was a convenient excuse for some to drop by and pretend to be otherwise engaged at Don’s party. The ‘Gallop Major’ (Imp.) added an exotic dimension in the TBC’s declining years. Discerning contemplation of the very self evident exquisite lactation potential of fellow countrywoman ‘hostess’ bar maid Sheila might have formed part of the attraction there! There was a subliminal aura of general convivial appreciation of the female pectoral area pervading the TBC! There were a few dairy farmers. They had a very good eye and knew their selection criteria! ‘Gentleman Jim’ was definitely not on his ‘Pat Malone’!



TBC 'Grandmaster' Reg Watts in action on Norm at Rouchel, 1947.
Reg Watts was a renowned lay gelder of colts in the pre-veterinary days of Scone.

No conversation subject was taboo for the group and erudite philosophical discussion expanded in exponential proportion to the lubricant consumed! Ken from Timor was perhaps the TBC's most articulate and eloquent exponent. One day after much tub thumping, breast beating and derisory diatribe about the then egregious state of the pork industry in Australia Ken from Timor made his perennially famous consummation pronouncement! "Gentlemen, there you have it, a carefully considered opinion from a genuine team of experts: Pigs is f---d!" 'PIF' became a catch cry for some TBC members for many years to come! Ken always played a straight bat and portrayed an even straighter face closely allied to a very dry droll laconic humour!

It would not be stretching the truth too far – although veracity had an elastic quality at the TBC – to claim the Australian Stock Horse Society had its genesis if not its nexus at the TBC. Many of the 'good ol' boys' like Wattsy, Tiger, Bert and even honorary blow in Joe Burr from Nundle were very mindful of the impact of the introduction of the American Quarter Horse. They were especially enamored if not threatened by the slickness of the publicity and marketing machine of the well oiled importation proponents. They knew they had an equal if not superior product and there was much erudite debate. The outcome was the 'acorn' of an idea to form a local horse society dedicated to the 'Waler'. The Australian Stock Horse Society became the 'great oak tree' and history dictates it emanated from meetings at the RAS Royal Easter Show and in Tamworth. I say it started at the TBC in the Belmore! You don't believe me? Just ask me – and also Tiger, Wattsy, Bert and Joe - if you can find them! I was there. How come I've been the honorary veterinarian since inception?

TBC members expatiated at length on much esoteric and some unique philosophy. The timing of departure was a matter of profound debate and each individual reached his own conclusion, usually allied to perceived meteorology and geography gremlins pertaining to the return journey. Pete from Bunnan adduced it was dangerous to drive into the setting western sun. It was therefore necessary to delay leaving until safe to do so! Naturally the time vacuum could not be adequately filled without further consumption of seven ounces and rum chasers. Time was a precious commodity at the TBC and not to be trifled with or wasted! Brock from Rouchel had a different problem but equal, opposite and apposite solution. He had to be home before the sun rose over the Barrington Tops to the east on Wednesday morning! It was all a matter of good timing and very sound logic at the TBC!

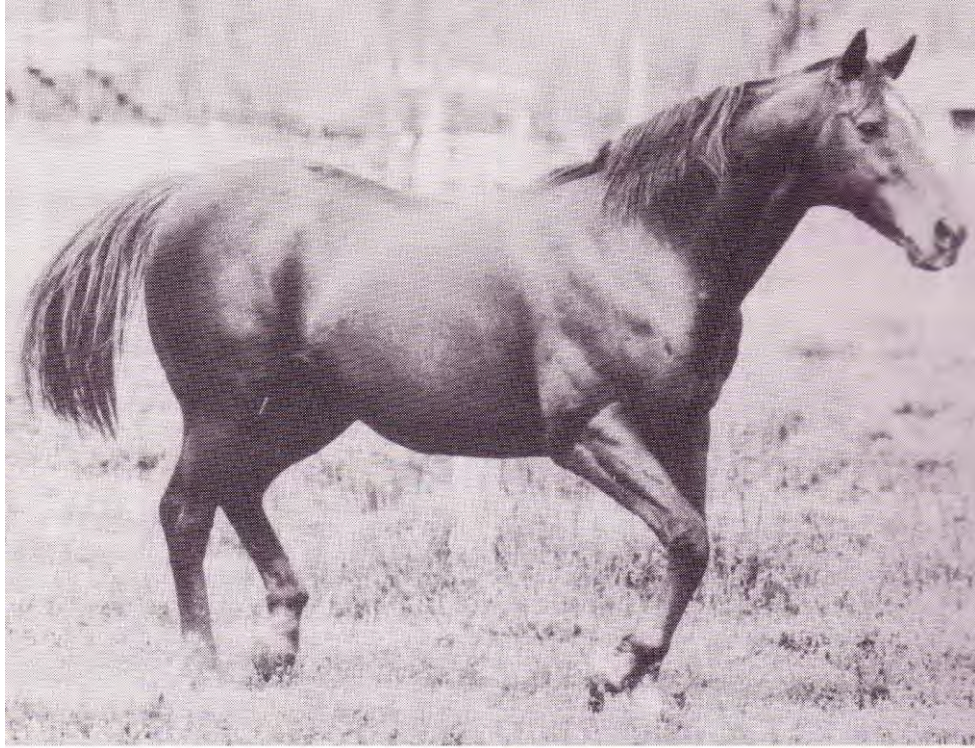
Vale Champions

It's always very sad when the time has come to say good bye! I've had my share of them!

For any normal natural 'hetero' male Pipe of Peace (Imp) was a sorry and distressing sight! The magnificent brown son of Supreme Court had given his all and then some! From being one of the best mare stoppers in the country he suddenly went off – right off as far as fertility was concerned! He still loved his job! Subsequent investigation resulted in paraphimosis where it all hangs out and won't go back until it shrinks! It was heart rending to watch this superb animal with undiminished libido but with his masculinity dangling limply totally unresponsive to testosterone priming!

King of Babylon (Imp) was a different case. He had always suffered from soft feet and flat soles. The very best farrier care had managed to progress him to late middle age but now the pain was constant and acute with chronic under running and abscessation. All sorts of palliative therapy had been tried and now found wanting. His time had come!

Todman did not suffer the indignity of the "green dream" needle. 'Bim' and I were at the bottom yards when 'Bim' noticed him stagger in the superb old sandstone stallion box the home of many a champion! My instinct was to rush over. "Leave him" said pragmatic Bim. By the time we walked over he was gone.



Outstanding racehorse and sire Todman.
Photo courtesy of *The Thoroughbred Press*.

Gunsynd had been the people's champion and despite commercial failure as a sire many still nurtured great affection for the "Goondoowindi Grey". Unfortunately he had suffered from nasal bleeding – was Bill Wehlow right? This developed to progressive ethmoid haematoma, which only the superb expertise of Dave Hutchins could reverse.

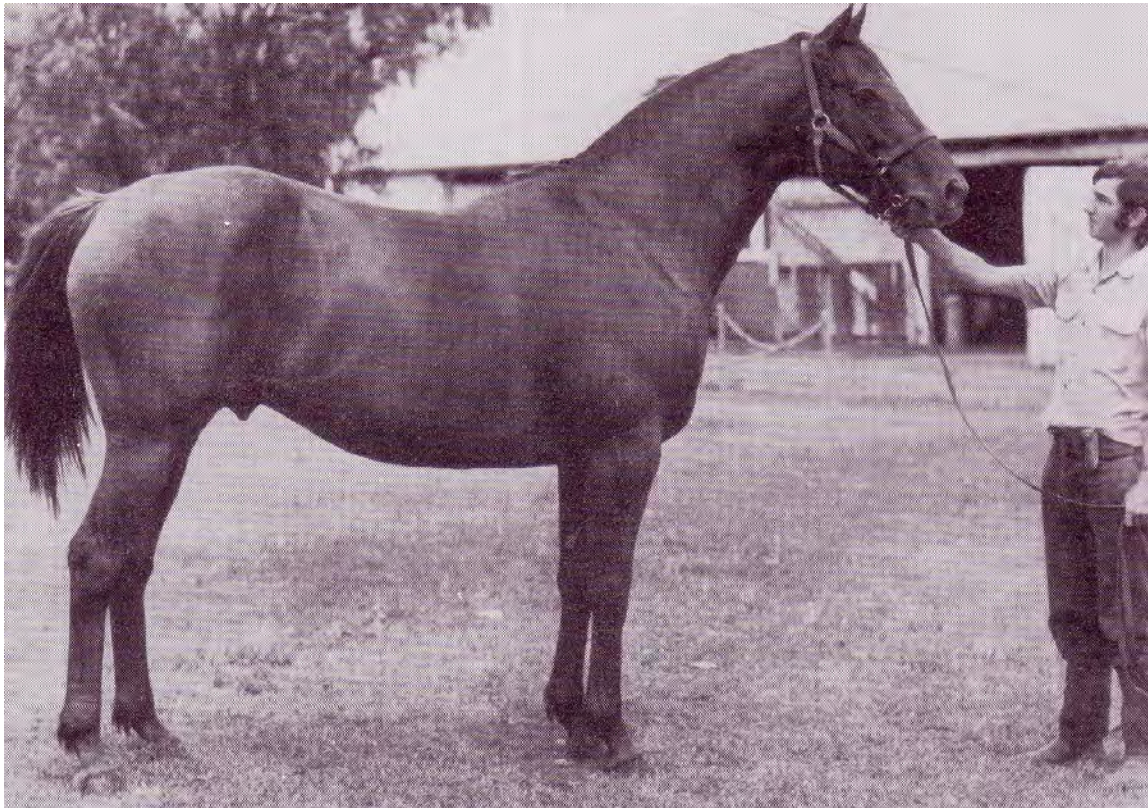
But the tumour returned five years later, at a time when insurance was difficult and real value diminished. He could not be left as he was! The hardest part was keeping the Channel Nine news team at bay!



Gunsynd – possibly Australia’s most popular racehorse in post-war years.
George Ryder even commissioned a song about the “Goondoowindi Grey”!
Photo courtesy of *The Thoroughbred Press*.

Anaphylactic shock can be terminal for horses - and people! Baguette was a son by Rego (Imp.) of the great Star Kingdom brood mare Dark Jewel owned by the Tait family. Full sister Heirloom had died suddenly of anaphylaxis in 1968. Anecdotal evidence suggested the ‘old lady’ had also succumbed. Baguette had developed a severe almost asphyxiating upper respiratory condition. The case passed on to me. Antibiotics had been administered. I saw the warning signs just in time!

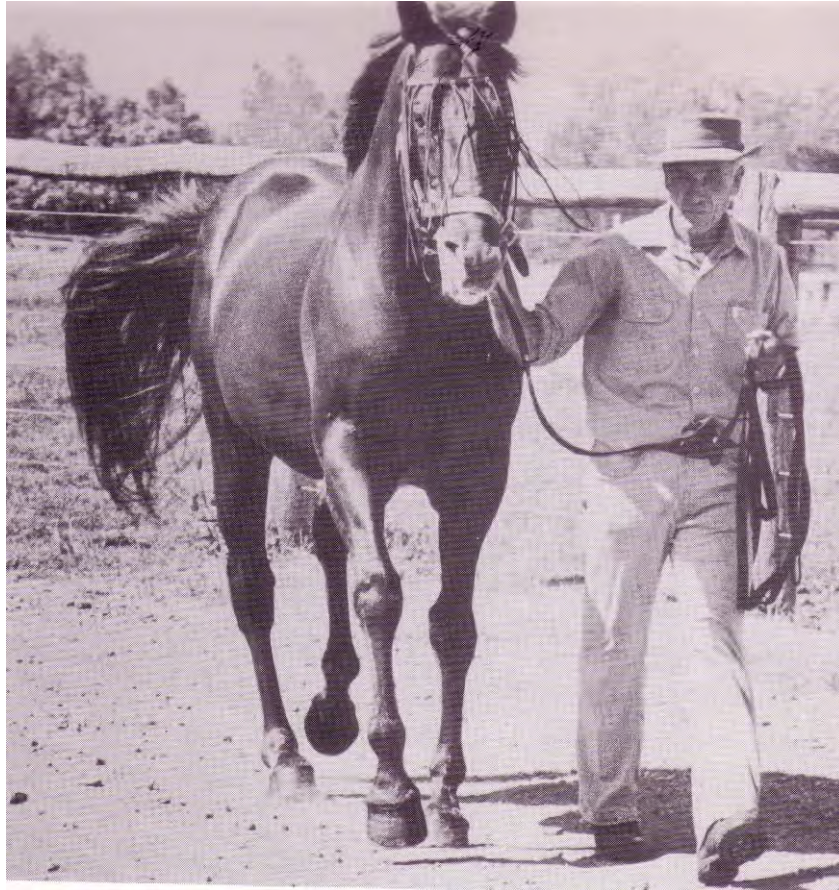
It was different with Kaoru Star - I was the cause and I nearly died! Old Kaoru had mild colic one evening and I had some pethidine' with me. I gave him some intravenously. Lionel Israel (owner) was standing just outside the box. Kaoru Star went on a 'trip' – literally! He walked and paced and walked and paced and paced and walked! “How are things going Bill?” “Fine Lionel!” Bullshit! I was terrified and would have died if I could! After a few minutes he settled down and was OK. Two hours later I stopped sweating. I don't think my heart rate has ever returned to normal. I never ever used pethidine again!



Kaoru Star, sire of the brilliant Luskin Star.
Photo courtesy of *The Thoroughbred Press*.

Biscay was always my favourite! A gentle giant with a superb disposition, he overcame the stigma of not being 'Imp' and also moving between three different studs for his first three seasons. Some of his unborn progeny I accompanied to the USA in 1970. Although only starting eight times in his life he very early developed severe navicular disease. At 22 after a prolonged battle Biscay was in severe and chronic pain and spent a lot of time lying down in his special sand roll. (His great sire son Bletchingly was to follow a similar path many years later). Mr A. O. Ellison was quite philosophical about all of this! He noted that Star Kingdom and Todman both died at 22. David was in charge at Bhima. He called me from my son's junior cricket game one Saturday in late October and said I must come! To his everlasting credit David had decided enough was enough and instructed me

to go into action! I knew it was right and did as instructed. I think there was a tear in both our eyes but of course we will never admit it. It's never easy!



Biscay with Peter Gleeson.
Note the inward deviation of the left fore fetlock.
Photo courtesy of *The Thoroughbred Press*.

Vain was my other icon in Biscay's realm but fortunately I 'escaped' before it was his – and my – turn again.