

Anecdotal Reflections

In these anecdotal reflections it is hoped to capture the essential authentic argot of the time without vitiating the quality of the discourse. Much of it may be repetitive but editing will be limited in order to maintain the smooth flow of each contribution and not interfere with the tremulous cadence slow of the dialogue.

It is interesting to contemplate on the reflections received and reviewed. There is quite a degree of repetition as predicted possibly reflecting the extent to which the high jinks of the veterinarians were public knowledge and both the source and impetus of much Valley gossip. The 'bush telegraph' travels faster than even the most rampant raging bush fire. There was a time I well remember when 'vet knocking' was *de rigueur* at all the 'right' dinner parties in the Upper Hunter! A local 'respectable' identity widely touted as the 'Hunter Valley News' was foremost in disseminating the pejorative rhetoric whilst all the time maintaining a face-to-face superficial veneer of affability. He had plenty duplicitous mates! On one occasion no less than three close friends approached me to warn me of the undercurrent of ill will following such a vet knocking dinner party. This was reinforced in spades when a respected professional colleague from Victoria approached me at a national veterinary conference and said he enjoyed his rendezvous in Scone hosted by a cabal of local stud master clients with a view to his placement and contract! (He later committed suicide). All this was news of course but devastating to morale, ego and pride as well as security, continuity and service. However no one is immune from objective critical scrutiny!

Having referred briefly to subliminal resentment I am reminded that prior to 1950 there were virtually no veterinary fees pertaining to thoroughbred stud work. Fees then escalated subsequently and were viewed by some as an extra imposition of 'taxation'. We all know the Australian attitude to increased taxes! The result was there were many owner operators who preferred where possible to minimise the extra 'taxes' by doing their own veterinary work. Some were very proficient such as David Israel (Segenhoe), Ross Flynn (Oakleigh) and Jim Bowcock (Alabama). Others were less so. Quite a number of stud grooms and managers who were natural horsemen were also skilled at many procedures. The tyranny of distance also encouraged the concept of 'self help' and this is not unreasonable. In fact follow-up veterinary care often relied on this expertise. The lay practitioners were effective opposition in the early days and one had to prove one self better on a cost effective basis to dispel the argument. It wasn't always easy!

Ron Jeffries
Manager of Woodlands & Bellerive Studs



Ron Jeffries relaxing and reflecting in the garden at Geraldton
'An old dog for a hard road. Puppies for pavements'!
(Ron made this remark about an ingénue Newmarket veterinarian whom Murray had just corrected!)

Pen Picture

If Cliff Ellis is the Victor Trumper of stud grooms/managers then Ron Jeffries is a combination of Stan McCabe and Doug Walters! Ron was Manager at Woodlands during the halcyon days of the late 1950's, through the 1960's and into the early 1970's. This was a time when Woodlands was one of the world's most prolific thoroughbred nurseries in one year producing over 180 winners of about 360 races. They also presented one quarter (109 yearlings) of the total draft at the one of the annual Inglis Easter Yearling Sales in the 1960's. Ron is a great raconteur with a natural dry wit and laconic dispenser of percipient one-liners! "Dry as a lime burners boot" is one such example. "If you tap their hooves with a hammer they ring like a bell" was his graphic description of the hard quality of the yearling colt's hooves at Woodlands. Another gem is "He thought 'hygiene' was a tall girl".

Ron and Murray were great friends and I think there was mutual trust and respect emanating from their subliminal recognition of each others superlative qualities. There is probably no better person than Ron Jeffries to critically and objectively evaluate the veterinary fraternity passing through the Upper Hunter and Scone in particular from 1950 to 2000 and beyond! Ron has also spent a few pleasant years of his twilight era working with John Flaherty at Clovelly Stables.

One year in the 1960's Ron had the champion yearling filly by Newtown Wonder in the Thoroughbred section at the Royal Easter Show. She was a full sister to Apple Jack (Newtown Wonder ex Silver Words) and competed against him for the championship. Sir Alan Potter was Chairman of the AJC and presented the championship ribbon. The Newtown Wonders were superlative strikers and Sir Alan placed the sash around Ron instead! The crowd was greatly amused!

Reflections

There were no vets about in the early days. In 1947 we had our first foaling case and John Goodsir from Singleton came out. Of course by the time he'd done the caesarean we'd lost the lot. Norman Larkin used to travel from Sydney. Fancy having a panel van locked up at the railway station with all your gear in it! Frank Williams [FW] arrived in 1949 and we nicknamed him Joe Stalin because of the big mo he had. Murray came in 1950. Frank didn't make it through the gully in the Widden Valley a few times either!

In November 1946 I went to Woodlands from a pre-training establishment in Cessnock. [Ron had acted as ball boy when Woodlands boss George Ryder was a playing tennis!]. The yearling barns were on the Hunter River flats. A man named Lincoln went down to inspect the water and the river came up and cut him off. He ended up on the roof of the shed then felt the shed moving so jumped into the river. The thing that saved him was not panicking. They sat waiting for him for half an hour at what is now Coolmore. He got on an old log and just floated down. They eventually saw him walking around the corner! There were 20 yearlings in that shed there and we lost all but one. We found the one surviving colt on a flat at Arrowfield. When the river broke the bank Jim Gibson and I were out riding and were cut off by the water bank on other side. There were 20 mares and foals there. There was nowhere to ride or hide. A mare called Cabinet came to the water and went in to get her foal and they all followed her. The mares were in the water chest high with the foals swimming at their sides. We didn't lose any of them - all for the one mare Cabinet.

We once took 100 mares from Widden to Piercefield near Denman. We drove them by road and walked them all the way over. We wintered them there. They didn't do much good there as it wasn't horse country. Across the road where Bowman owned the paddock we had 50 mares and foals there one year. Saddlers Creek was that brackish they wouldn't drink the water.

There was a lot of convivial activity in Denman those days and we had trouble with motorcars coming back over Ogilvie's Hill! Georgie Bowman was the stallion man, general farrier and factotum. He could do most things and had a unique way with words as well as many special sayings. We were repairing a trailer with hexagonal bolts. "Don't forget them bolts with the hoxxygen heads" said George! We knew what he meant!



George Bowman,
Stallion Man at Woodlands and Kia Ora.

'Cheeky Charlie' Feehan used to get Murray all wound up. He put the gelding trick on Murray one day when he was follicle testing. The boys were all standing around. I went off and pulled the saddle off my old horse. Murray didn't notice. He was always talking and blathering away, so he lathered up the anus, looked down and noticed another part of the anatomy was missing. He pulled his arm out of the horse's arse that quick and it "sounded like a cork coming out of a champagne bottle" said Charlie who could really embellish a story.

He [Murray] was always wrapped in our birds and animals. He'd say, "I can't understand you fellas, you're frightened of snakes but you've been born and reared with them!" So Jim [Gibson] found a dead snake, coiled it around and left it on the front seat. When Murray came in he saw this bloody snake, we found out he was a bit afraid of them! "There's no doubt in this world", said Murray, "that you bastards would be descended from convicts"!

Sue Rhodes of "Now you'll think I'm awful" fame had written about Aussie men friends she'd had who weren't up to scratch in her opinion. She was apparently in a very good position to have an opinion! She eventually married an American actor called Rory Colhoun. Murray gets the Sunday paper out with the headline 'Aussie man make lousy lovers'. They're bloody awful. "She hadn't met me" said Murray! He couldn't wait to show the article to me and Jim! I read it and said; "Yeah Doc, doesn't say what sort of servers we are though"! [Murray was always called 'Doc'].

We always had trouble with the housekeepers at Woodlands. They were usually kind and used to feed the vets sometimes with good grace and sometimes not with good grace. Gardeners and cooks were the worst two people ever employed on studs and caused more trouble than anybody else. Freddie Walden of Kia Ora said there were 13 families living on Kia Ora then [1950] not counting single blokes. We had ten families living on Woodlands plus some single blokes.

There were only blokes on the place then and no women working there. All the single blokes were rabbit catchers and cleaned up the rabbits at Arrowfield for Lawson. He was a politician or something and he wouldn't pay them. They had to walk away because they had no money to take him to court or anything.

Murray always maintained the best job he ever did at Woodlands was to fight with Bill Fletcher and beat him! He was "undefeated heavy weight champion of Hunter Valley" and Mace was mortified at her professional husband brawling. I [Ron Jeffries] took over from Bill Fletcher when he was dismissed. Murray went shopping in Scone later the same day and George Moore said; "Don't hit me, don't hit me. I'm only a little bloke"! The same thing happened at Oakleigh in the Widden Valley next day. Murray went into a barn to see a yearling and they'd set up a boxing ring with buckets and towels and everything! There is nothing faster or more reliable than the 'bush telegraph'!

We worked very hard and played as hard. We were up at 3.30am, got going by 4am and were still going till 9pm at night. We took it in turns to relieve the night watchman. We had nine mares foal one night when George Asimus was there. His wife died so he sent his son Brian to school with my kids. He never remarried. He was a long time at Widden. George Ryder and Tom Street together with Dave Crystal owned Woodlands then.

In early 1970's Lord Derby [England] and Bob Kleburg, King Ranch, Texas USA purchased Woodlands. I had to put up with a bit of flack! I was also known as 'Lord Ron' by 'Cheekie Charlie' Feehan. Lord Derby used to come out with his valet and bought out a book he had signed himself. Before dinner one night the boss of King Ranch Texas [Santa Gertrudis] was into the Scotch and Murray was late. They couldn't keep him sober long enough to actually get to dinner!

They must have had a low opinion of the Australian industry because of the mares they sent out here. One good horse produced was Marscay. Lord Derby's mares were rubbish. Heart of Market sent out by King Ranch wasn't a bad mare. John Derby was a hell of a nice fella and dry as a lime-burner's boot.



Marscay (Biscay ex Heart of market).



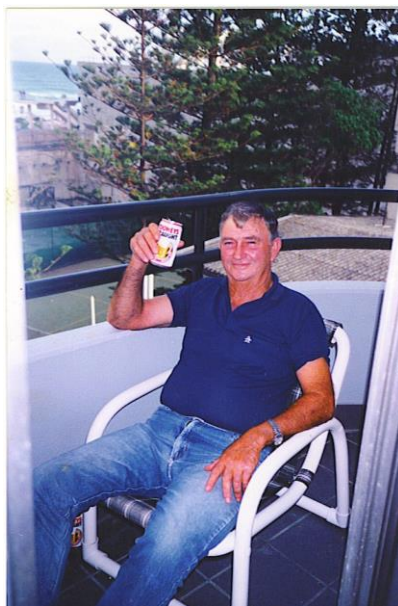
Marscay triumphant in the Golden Slipper, 1982.

'Cheeky Charlie' described an overweight lady friend of someone's in graphic terms and what might transpire – but it cannot be repeated here! Barry Blessington [Blesso] brought his old man to spend a week once. Charlie said; "I bet when you saw that bastard [Blesso] at birth I you turned up sex from then on in"! "We're the best of mates," said Blesso! Blesso's wife Ida was Scottish and he worked for a Council in Sydney. He'd come to the yearling sales at 4am to help out. "How are you going with your retirement Blesso?" He said; "I've worked in the Council for 20 years, I've had plenty of practice"! We were all part of the 'mad mile' in Stable No. 3 at Inglis' Easter Sales. We started at 3am and had all the boxes done and yearlings exercised, fed and watered by 6am with the rugs over the doors. We then opened 2 dozen cans and Archie produced his rum and milk! John Inglis used to join us some mornings and Archie asked him to get a milking cow – the 'milko' arrived too late in the morning with fresh milk! John would have rum or beer with us sometimes and said he would "look into it". John [Inglis] was a champion bloke but he liked to see the lane clean and all the boxes done early. He didn't mind if we had a few then! Blesso would be telling so many jokes no-one wanted to go for breakfast!



Legends 'Ossie' Roberts and John Inglis White Park Sales Scone.

Cattle used to come across the river onto Woodlands but they never used to go back though. There was a bloke there then who used to 'borrow' a few cattle. He used to do some horrible things and poor old George [Ryder] didn't know what was going on. Old George had an association with Jack Kramer the tennis player. Newtown Wonder was the 'gun' stallion. I was to take this group of yearlings to LA to go on the first boat that took live sheep across. My wife got in trouble with this pregnancy so Jim Gibson went instead. They raced well in America. They all had tennis names.



Jim 'Hollywood' Gibson.

Jim took the mares to America for Jack Kramer – and caroused with the stars in Hollywood!



Jack Kramer.

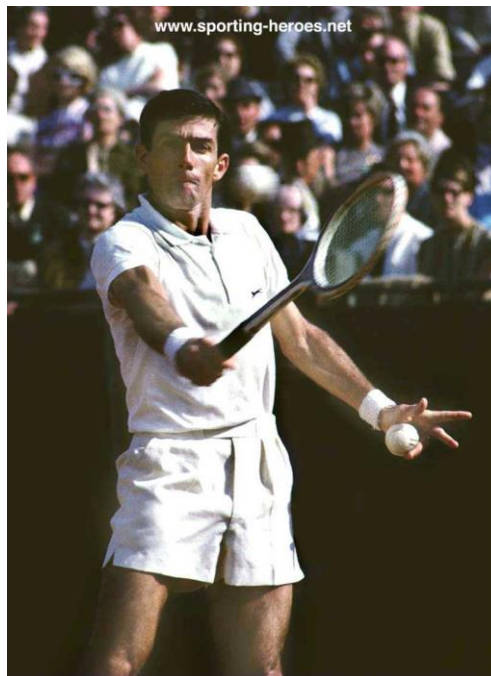
The 'Old Fellow' [George Ryder] also tried Lew Hoad and Ken Rosewall. He would try anyone he thought had any money! George Ryder had Winifred Atwell playing the piano at Woodlands. Lew Hoad had a gutful! He went to sleep on the marble slab in the kitchen but next morning he ran four miles around the river flats with three thick woollen jumpers on! He was a legendary tennis player. [Note: Lew Hoad and Ken Rosewall played an exhibition match at Denman RSL – arranged by George Ryder!]. Bob Askin, Jack Green and Bobby Limb were there. I had to drive them down to airstrip opposite Coolmore. We all talked about how black Winifred was and especially Bob Askin! No political correctness then!



Winifred Atwell.



Lew Hoad.



Ken Rosewall.

George Ryder once asked Bill Howey to an STC Lunch when he was chairman. Bob Askin and Bill were sitting up there at the top table. John Kelso could tell a story. He and Norman Larkin of the NSW TBA were worried about impact of SP bookmaking on the TAB. They arranged an interview with PM Sir Robert Askin. He was standing at fireplace and said; "Okay, what the hell do you two bastards want"? "Come off it", he said, "my best mates are SP bookmakers" when they tried to explain!



Bob Hawke, Neville Voigt, T. J. Smith and G. E. Ryder

T.J. always said “George Ryder was the best man for racing in NSW in my time”. Hundreds of winners were raced in their interests in the halcyon days of the 40’s – 70’s

The sergeant in Denman said; “No way you’ll have grog there [at Woodlands] on Sunday”. Someone got onto Askin who got onto the cop and said to get out of the way. They invited him as a guest. He didn’t like being pushed out of the way.

Bill Dovey, the Chief Justice, came from Newcastle once a month on Friday to do the divorce court. He’d finish then it was “Righto boy where’s the first pub”? He’d be half drunk the whole weekend. He took two bottles up to Woodlands after I picked him up at Muswellbrook station.

All the things that Cheeky Charlie used to say to Murray Bain are unprintable. Murray was a proud bloke, so they would try and bring him down. It got worse and worse and worse. Shona Murphy said females were monogamous where males weren’t. Murray was one of those ones who wasn’t! Cheeky Charlie once sold a shed full of hay but ‘forgot’ to pass on the proceeds to who actually owned it.

Murray was passionate about record keeping and a perfectionist in the way he kept professional standards. I don’t remember anyone who’s matched him. He had immaculate white overalls. Going out to Baramul when Noel Hennessy was there they tricked him. They waited for Murray coming, and there was an old dry water tank. He got everything out, everything beautifully done. These blokes were sitting watching him through a hole in the tank. He gets out of the car, reads the paper; packed everything back up again, everything back neatly again. They popped up just as he was leaving and said; “G’day Doc”. He had a stainless steel silver tray with an Italian fella’s name on it. They used to have a go at Murray. They reckon he shot that fella in the war.

Richard Greenwood was a very English Englishman. Sue, his wife, was a very pretty woman. At the sales she came and sat on my knee. Poor old Richard – always late and

always forgot something. But a top bloke – he swore so nicely. Instead of saying “Farrckkk” he’d say “O Fuck”. Murray didn’t swear much but when he did it was a horrible sound [Scottish man]. What you see with Bill is what you get. He never changes. He was a bit nervous to start with but soon fitted in with the fellas. He did really look up to Murray. He was his hero more or less.

We would sometimes get into trouble! I remember ‘Dossor’s Keg’ at Denman. They had a keg up there in the icebox at the old Lucerne factory. We went up there and help them drink it, didn’t we? Ruby often brings that up. “I was waiting for you to finish, I had all the kids down the street”. I say; “Listen dear, don’t live in the past”.

During the foaling season there were cases in the night; fortunately they used to save more than we used to lose. They used to be on call from Scone to Woodlands; when it was discovered that semi-anaesthetised mares during foaling was the answer. Murray had two rules – two people go to a foaling, and you anaesthetise the mare. I was telling Jeremy Francis the other day about an English Mare with tetanus and pregnant. Old Jack [Francis] pumped her full of antibiotics; anaesthetised her to finish her off and did a caesarean at the same time. A black colt jumped out of her straight to his feet. Two weeks later he had tetanus contracted from her and we lost the lot.

One year we had a Salmonella outbreak. Shona Murphy had just come to work in 1965. A foal had an abscess and Murray lanced it in the yards and took a culture. The next morning we had half a dozen foals scouring and by the time the Doc arrived there were 20 or more. The culture turned out to be Salmonella and we treated all the foals and lost none. That was the time Murray showed adding liquid paraffin to the scour drench enabled the foals to recover quicker.

Pipe of Peace was a great stallion. We served 95 mares one year with him then backed him up to serve those mares belonging to Jack Kramer. That burnt him out. He was a top sire. Old George buggered that horse up with his attitude at the sales. He used to put exorbitant prices on them. Pipe of Peace, King of Babylon and Sostenuto were the same. Owners were a problem a lot of the time. One owner was over the moon when her mare had twins. “Oh good, two for the price of one”! Little did she know! Then there was the owner who wanted us to serve her mare again “just to make sure” when told her mare was in foal! Another asked if we had served his mare yet? I told him we usually waited until a mare foaled before we served them again!

Old George [Ryder] could be creative when he syndicated stallions. He was the first in Australia to do this after the Americans started it with Nashua. When Lord Derby and King Ranch bought Woodlands there was a meeting of the Sostenuto and King of Babylon syndicates. If there were 40 share holders about 57 actually turned up! Old George just invented and sold another share so as “not to disappoint his mates”! Bill Ritchie got him off the hook on that one! Old George was the most successful syndicator of stallions and everyone wanted to be in on it. He did a great job with Gunsynd and Baguette at Kia Ora.

Old George said they [stallions] used to shrink on the ship out! The BBA would say they were 16.2 HH when they left France or England and when they got here that were 15 nothing. He reckoned that Charleval and Damnos were little better than two geldings and had definitely shrunk by the time they got here! He once bought some sheep in Dubbo at the yards. George didn't know they all had no teeth and lost a heap of money on them. He did some things well but he made a mess of a lot of things. At one stage he lived in the old Governor General's house at Rose Bay. Mick Dunn and I went there once. We had two horses spelling there. We drove out there to take some sheep and the ute breaks down in the middle of the tram line. We had a stream of trams backed up there a mile behind to Rushcutters Bay with "trammies" helping us push it off onto the road. Hughie Ryder had all the pubs up there. George used to call his wife Dot "Grief and Strife" – but didn't call her that to her face!



John Flaherty and Ron Jeffries when at Clovelly.

There is no doubt old George [Ryder] was one of the most colourful of colourful racing identities. He had a great life. He went to the races two days a week, played golf two days a week, played tennis two days a week – and served on Thursdays! He was a hustler and better than Bobby Riggs! He once had a 500 pound side bet with Norman Von Nida. He would give 'the Von' 15-love start in each game of three sets of tennis at White City. Von Nida would give George a one shot-per-hole start over 18 holes at The Australian Club. George cleaned up at tennis. He played regularly at White City with Davis Cup greats Adrian Quist, John Bromwich and Ken McGregor. They had to call off the golf after 'old George' was beating Von Nida 'off the stick'! "Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus playing better ball couldn't give me a stroke a hole at The Australian," said George. He played off a handicap of plus four anyway! He even won the power boat race on Sydney Harbour when they opened the Harbour Bridge.

George Ryder had a private pilot's license very early in the peace. He and Dave Chrystal took off from Bankstown one day. When they were over the ocean and out of site of land Dave became a bit anxious! "Where are we now George?" he asked with some trepidation. "No worries," said George. "There's a big block of land on the horizon. It's not New Zealand so it has to be Australia". After perusing the coast George found a city. It wasn't Sydney so it had to be Newcastle - or Wollongong! There was consternation at Bankstown later on when George was trying to land with the wind instead of into it! The airport security and ambulance services had a good work out that day! George once spat out of the open window when flying "and the spittle came back and dam near chopped my ear off"!



The good old days?

Cliff Ellis

Pen Picture

He may not be the Bradman of stud managers and stud grooms but the Victor Trumper has an authentic ring to it! I do like cricketing analogies and Cliff was a cricketer and I believe a more than competent wicket keeper and batsman. Cliff Ellis lived up the Widden Valley for much of his working life since starting in thoroughbred industry. He attended his first yearling sale in 1951. He has also managed Yarraman Park and Wakefield Studs in the Scone area and been the owner/operator of his breeding operation at Kingdon Farm, Parkville, Scone. In addition Cliff has taught a generation of young and raw recruits to pass through the Scone TAFE College.



Cliff Ellis at No. 2 Stable Block, William Inglis & Sons, Newmarket January 1999.

Reflections

The first job I had on a thoroughbred stud was on Holbrook in the Widden Valley. Holbrook was run at that time by the late William 'Bill' Harris (father of John and Alan), who could probably be best described as the last of the old time Stud Masters. It might be interesting here to reflect briefly on the methods employed in running a thoroughbred stud pre the advent of Murray Bain.

Providing the mare had been served, stallion fees were payable at the end of the breeding season. If she failed to produce a live foal, she was entitled to be served the following season at no charge. No mare agistment was charged during the breeding season, but would incur a cost from January on, if the mare remained as a permanent boarder.

In those days mares were not pregnancy tested on Holbrook. After the Sydney Easter Yearling Sale, William Harris would go through his mares and sort out the pregnant mares from the non-pregnant. During the four years I spent at Holbrook I never knew him to make a mistake. Once drafted out, all the foals on the pregnant mares were weaned, and the foals on the non-pregnant mares were left on their mothers until August. It is significant that these foals always wintered better than those that had been weaned. In late August he weaned this second batch of foals. They took a bit of handling, too! I have never forgotten his advice at this time, which was: "Now, these foals will be a bit fiery, but remember, they only strike and kick out of fear, and if we go about things quietly and get their confidence, we are half way there." I wasn't convinced at the time, but I've often thought since how wise these words were.

To my amazement the mothers of these late-weaned foals were all in season within a week or ten days. I learned afterwards that the sudden cessation of lactation, coupled with the sheer physical relief of not having to feed these big foals, resulted in early oestrus. As a direct result of this practice Holbrook produced more early foals than any stud I have worked on until the modern practice of putting mares under lights evolved.

In those times we had to recognise all horses on the stud by sight. On some studs the visiting mares were hoof branded, but in wet and muddy conditions these were difficult to read, so the only real solution was to know each horse by sight. On present day studs, with huge numbers of horses, and staff that is partly seasonal, this is impossible, so neck straps and name tags are necessary.

In the 1950s the only yearling sale in NSW was held by William Inglis & Sons at their Newmarket stables each Easter. The sale was conducted over four days, the first three being reserved for the main studs, and the fourth day consisting of yearlings produced by small vendors, usually with four horses, or less. The first yearling sale I attended was in 1951, when on the first three days there were 42 vendors of 542 yearlings. On the fourth day there were 118 vendors of 206 yearlings. Over time, these small breeders have all but disappeared.

In the 1950s, some of the major studs conducted their yearling preparation at William Inglis & Sons Newmarket stables in Sydney because the economics of building and maintaining a yearling complex of 30 to 50 boxes for just one yearling sale per year had to be weighed against using the Newmarket complex which was empty. In these cases the colts were usually in Sydney before Christmas and the fillies by the end of January. In those days, yearlings were sold in guineas (21 shillings). The vendor received a pound, and the auctioneer's commission was the shilling (approx 5 per cent).



Cliff Ellis and Ross Flynn (Oakleigh Stud), Old No. 1 Stable Block, Newmarket, Easter 1962. Yearling Colt by Pirate King ex Canvas Back.



Cliff Ellis, Old Sale Ring Newmarket 1962
Yearling Colt by Pirate King ex Debonaire owned and bred by Cliff.
Sold to Bart Cummings for 3,000 guineas.

Regular veterinary services in the Scone – Widden area were started by the Sydney veterinarian, Norman Larkin. He made several trips to Scone, Widden and Bylong during the breeding season, staying a few days in each place. He did any urgent veterinary work that was required, and advised generally on stud veterinary practices. In Scone around 1949 he installed a young veterinary surgeon named Frank Williams, who was then able to provide a permanent service to studs in the area. Frank was a very capable veterinarian who introduced some modern practices, such as the treatment of infertile mares with antibiotics, and was the first veterinarian I saw perform a Caslick's operation. This procedure involves suturing the vulval lips in order to prevent the intake of air, particularly during oestrus. Healthy mares have an innate ability to rid themselves of the usual infections introduced during foaling, or when being served. They cannot cope, however, with the regular intake of bacteria-laden air which occurs when the mare is in season and the vulva relaxed. This is usually a condition found in older mares, but sometimes in young mares as well. This Caslick's operation was the most important thing we did at that time to combat infection in mares, and it probably still is. Fame is a fickle thing. Dr. Caslick was an eminent veterinarian and all he is remembered for is sewing up horses' "fannies"!

In about 1950 – 1951, Murray Bain arrived in Scone and formed a partnership with Frank Williams. However, the partnership was short-lived, as their clients soon recognised Murray's superior experience and competence, and so he found himself doing 80 per cent of the work for just 50 per cent of the profit. Needless to say, this circumstance did not sit well with the canny Scot, and after a short time he set up his own practice in opposition to Frank Williams. Frank generally got less and less work and Murray's practice eventually bought him out, but as Frank was a well-liked and capable veterinarian, he was retained by the practice as a consultant.

The first time I met Murray Bain was while I was working at Holbrook. One of the stallions, Melhero, developed colic, so the Scone Vet Practice was called. Murray duly arrived, but as the Blackwater Creek was in flood, it had to be crossed on horseback. I saddled our biggest and quietest horse and led him across the creek to meet Murray. Murray could ride quite well, but he had feet as big as paddles, and they wouldn't fit in the stirrups, and so he had to ride over with his knees up under his chin as the water was up to the saddle flaps. Between us we carried his gear across and he duly treated the horse, who recovered. Murray took it all in his stride, but he must have thought it a fairly rough country that he'd got him self into! The mountains in the Widden Valley are sandstone, and the creeks have sandy bottoms which can be boggy when in flood.

Murray Bain had the best veterinary brain of anyone I've ever worked with. He was not only a brilliant academic, he was a practical man as well. He had worked as a veterinarian at Claiborne Farm in Kentucky, and later was appointed manager of Alton Lodge Stud in New Zealand. He studied the layout of these studs together with other studs he visited, and was a rich source of information and ideas for Stud Masters in the vast area in which he practiced – an area embracing Scone, Jerrys Plains, Denman, Widden

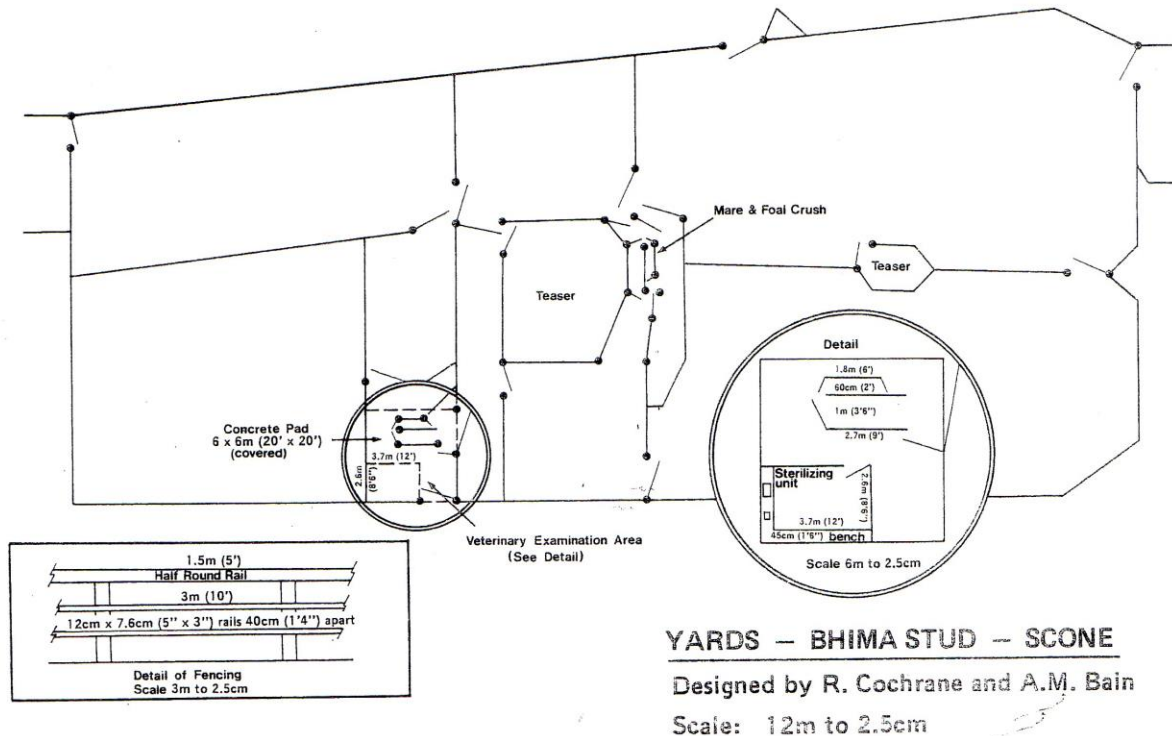
and Bylong Valleys. Many local studs were re-modelled, and rebuilt along the lines he suggested.

On Oakleigh Stud, where I worked for 17 years, all the horse facilities were built or rebuilt using his ideas. They were not elaborate or unduly expensive facilities, but they worked.

WORKING YARDS

- (1) for stud work
- (2) for handling and sorting groups

- (1) See plans of Bhima Stud, Scone working yards attached. These are ideal vet yards designed by the late Murray Bain - simple, safe and effective.



The yards designed by Murray (and Reub Cochrane) for Bhima Stud were the prototype for most of the studs in the Hunter Valley and indeed throughout Australia. The dimensions of the mare and foal crush are especially pertinent.

He organised the studs AND the people who worked on them. His nature was truly egalitarian, as he was comfortable in the society of kings and commoners alike. He always thought that the ordinary stud workers received little recognition for what they

did. He would organise a party at the end of the season, put on a few drinks and a nice meal and invite all the stud workers along.

Various things grew from that. He didn't start the Hunter Valley Blood Horse Breeders' Association, but he laid the foundation for this important society. The germ of the Service to Industry Awards undoubtedly started with Murray Bain.

Murray set up his own laboratory at his Scone surgery, installing a brilliant young New Zealand technician, named Shona Murphy, to run it. This enabled him to have his swabs processed quickly and his treatment of infected mares speeded up enormously. As these mares can only be treated effectively while in season (a period of about five days) this was a tremendous advantage – just another example of his forward thinking.

To give an example of Shona Murphy's capability, when an outbreak of CEM (Contagious Equine Metritis) occurred in Australia for the first time, she was the first person to grow the bacterium. This had to be cultured on specially prepared agar plates, which she had to produce herself. She has probably never been adequately recognised for this work.

Murray was also involved in a veterinary exchange program between Newmarket, in England, and Scone, in which young vets from each area exchanged practices for a season.

Parasite control in horse has improved dramatically. Murray Bain was the first to stress the need for this, I think. The methods he used were rather old fashioned by modern standards, but they worked. The green powder, stick in the tin and stirred for two hours – very time consuming but very effective. He actually made people realise that parasite control was so important. The incidence of rattles diminished. We haven't solved the problem yet but we have been able to control it a bit. After I started using his control measures, such as regular drenching and dust control, I hardly ever had a foal with rattles.

He also stressed the need for the early pregnancy testing of mares, which he did at about 28 days. This was of course done by manual palpation (in the days before scans were available). The reason, he insisted, was not to find the pregnant mares, but to find the ones that weren't, so something could be done about it. In the early 1950s there was a concern among some stud masters that the palpation of mares in early pregnancy would increase the incidence of early foetal loss. It was sometimes difficult for the veterinarian to allay these fears and to convince them to adopt more modern practices. He was also the first person to realise that much of the Widden Valley was deficient in limestone. He formulated a lime, salt and bone flour lick to combat the problem.

As a person he was a fun-loving man. He enjoyed a party and he loved to socialise. He also had very definite ideas about things, and didn't suffer fools lightly, but if you knew what you were on about, or what you wanted to know, he was easy to get on with, and always helpful. If he didn't like you, you didn't have to ask around to find out. At the

RSL Club a couple of fellows he didn't much like said: "G'day Murray" and he responded: "Humph", then turned to me and said: "Well, why should I pretend to like the bastards when I don't?".

Murray was a big, tall, angular Scot but he was surprisingly light on his feet, and could 'jitterbug' with the best of them. He had an altercation with a local stud master and finished up "decking" the bloke. On being invited to "try that again", Murray did, with the same result.

When Bill Howey was new in the practice he went up with the great Murray Bain to Baramul Stud. All he could see were horses in yards and not a soul in sight. Murray pulled up, took the paper out and started to read it. An uncouth stud groom, with a three day growth, wandered up to the car, pulled out a paper, started to read it, and said: "You're late, you bloody old Scotch bastard!" This was the great Murray Bain on the first occasion Bill Howey went to Baramul. The groom in question was Noel Hennessy. When Richard Greenwood went out to Woodlands with Murray Bain, Ron Jeffries, the stud manager, said to Murray at the end of the day: "We're finished now, so you can piss off, you old Scotch bastard." Poor Richard didn't know which way to turn! Neither Ron nor Noel would have said it to a person they liked less.

Bim Thompson grew up on the family stud, Widden, the oldest Australian horse stud. When Bill Howey stayed with Bim, Bill was impressed that although Bim might have been up half the night with a sick foal, by 7 am the next morning he'd checked on all 700 horses on the place. Bim looked up the valley and saw eagle hawks, and he said: "By Christ, a mare must have slipped a foal."

Twice foals got stuck in wombat holes, so Bill Stewart was going to write it up in the New Zealand Veterinary Journal: "Wombat strike in the foal". Wombat strike in the foal! It happened twice, not once. One foal damaged an olecranon process and was no good afterwards. It was owned by Alan Harris. It is always important to count your mares and foals. George Asimus decided he was one foal short. He thought: "There's only one place it could be – down the well". And it pretty well was!

When I was manager of Yarraman Park (for 8-9 years), Bill's father-in-law sent a mare to one of the stallions. She wouldn't cycle. I presented her to Bill: "She won't come into season." Bill said: "Well, before we do anything technical we'd better pregnancy test her." She was three months in foal! She'd been turned out with an old sire of Polo ponies (Panzer) who was 26, so they'd (mistakenly) considered that he was too old. Murray Bain always said that the most common cause of anoestrous was pregnancy, which many teenage girls have found to their cost! (This statement was a mite prescient and a little bit polemic.) Immaculate conception has occurred once in history, but never in horses!

Yes things have changed, with technology and increased provision of veterinary services. Ian Gunn, working at Monash on IVF, was talking about the "electric spark factor" and why it is that some (stallions) are better than others. F.K. "Darby" Mackay also said the

same thing. Also old Stanley Wooten and Murray Bain said: “Don’t go too often to the well.” They had studied genetics and also talked about the “electric spark factor/vital spark factor.”

Then there were dilution factors and vitality. “Some just have it and some don’t”. I personally believe that the single most important characteristic in a stallion is vitality.

There’s not the wastage in brood mares that there used to be due to an improvement in drugs and technology. We’ve got more and better drugs than ever before, and the use of scans has been a tremendous leap forward. In the days before this technology, if the mares missed for two to three years, they were sold. You probably finished up with a better strain of horse – survival of the fittest. Through persevering with those problem mares we’ve probably decreased their fecundity and potentiated weakness.

Everything is subjugated to speed. It doesn’t matter what temperament they have, if they can go fast you forgive them everything else. You can finish up with a slightly weaker horse. George Ryder was the best bloke for racing in NSW in his lifetime. He might have milked a cow dry, too! If you breed “speed to speed” and “pray they stay” you’ll get fast horses, but a lot of them aren’t going to go very far. You have to get a little bit of strength into their pedigree. George Ryder not only did a tremendous amount for racing, he probably bought more good stallions in my time than any other stud master.

The first time I met Bill Howey was when he arrived at Emu Vale with Murray, to look at a horse with a punctured hoof. Bill appeared a bit in awe of Murray, which seemed somewhat strange to me. I didn’t then realise the esteem with which Murray was held world-wide. To me, Murray was just a pleasant natured big bloke who was good at his job. I learned to appreciate his worth over the years. [Footnote: the horse didn’t survive!].

Bill Howey struck me as a quiet young fellow who thought before he spoke, and didn’t project himself very much. He was highly intelligent which only became apparent when you sought his opinion. He was only feeling his way, because when he became Australianised he came right out of his shell. He has a very orderly mind – his work vehicle was always tidy with everything in its rightful place. He could have gone to it in the dark and put his hand on anything he needed. He had a tremendous work ethic and a great sense of humour. Vet days with Bill were always good fun.

In later years I taught for eight years at TAFE. I had a limited formal education, but read all the available textbooks (and picked up some mistakes in them). Of course, I learned a lot from them as well.

We had some very talented students studying the stud groom course at TAFE, many of whom are still in the industry in positions of responsibility. I still hear from quite a few of them. The students who gave me the most satisfaction, however, were the less talented who tried hard. I helped them as much as I could. If they got 48 per cent working their

tail off, I marked them 53 per cent. Some of the latter group has never been out of a job since. Maybe I gave them a bit of a chance – I like to think so.

Before Norman Larkin, the stud grooms did most of the veterinary work, and didn't know a lot about what they were doing. Most of them had old wives' remedies for the majority of problems, which seemed to work as the horses got better. The stud grooms were very good at caring for them. Norman Larkin said to me once: "When I was a young fella' I went to work for Roy Stewart straight out of University. He said: 'Listen, son, most of these horses that come to us with problems are going to get better anyway if we don't kill them with our treatment!'" Many of their treatments were ineffectual but the nursing was first class.

Norman Larkin was the first person to organise short courses of two to three days' duration for stud grooms who were keen to advance their knowledge. These courses usually involved a couple of university lectures and visits to veterinary hospitals. This practice was followed up by Murray Bain.

"Common things commonly occur and once you remove the common disease there's not very much left" was a quote from Murray Bain. Murray was a champion of recognising great skill: "Given the choice between a very good stud groom and a good stud vet, you'd take the good stud groom every time."

I have been asked by Bill Howey to reminisce about the period when the veterinary practice was evolving in Scone. I have mainly talked about Murray Bain because he laid the foundation of, and the guidelines for, what is now the Scone Veterinary Practice. I have also mentioned Bill Howey as he has undertaken the Herculean task of recording these times. I haven't mentioned the many capable and dedicated veterinarians who have served in this and other local practices over the years, as I have been concerned mainly with the beginnings.

In conclusion, I would like to say that I have lived through a most interesting and stimulating period in the thoroughbred industry, meeting people from all walks of life. As a wise man once said, we are all equal on the turf and under it.



Cliff quietly reflective in the garden at Geraldton.

Harley Walden - Raconteur, Horseman and Journalist

Pen Picture

Harley Walden was born in Scone in 1937 and more or less grew up with horses. His legendary father Darcy went to work at Sledmere Stud and lived there from 1939 taking over the role of stud groom from Roy Collison. Roy Collison was a good horseman and in the early days of White Park acted as assistant starter. Darcy Walden joined the army in 1941 and served on the Kokoda Trail in PNG. He was repatriated in 1944 and returned home to Sledmere to take over as horse stud manager. Darcy was an iconic figure at the annual Easter Yearling Sales in Sydney and was an accomplished although unqualified early 'veterinary practitioner'.

A reliable staff in the early days was paramount and regarded on the highest level. Not only were they responsible for the everyday and sometimes night time running of the stud, they had to be flexible in every aspect of animal husbandry. With veterinary surgeons next to nil in many parts of the country around that time it was up to the staff on these studs to use their common sense and put into practice a legacy that had been handed down in some cases from generation to generation.



Darcy Walden in 1988.

Darcy was the inaugural recipient of the Murray Bain Service to Industry Award. The award was presented by HVTBA President Brian Agnew to an emotional standing ovation by members in the Scone Bowling Club in 1985.

Harley attended school in Scone. Sledmere Stud was at that time owned by Sir Hugh Denison who won the Melbourne Cup with Poseidon. Harley followed in his father's footsteps at Sledmere after leaving school at 15 and until 1980. He had four years in Tamworth at Stratheden and then returned to the Upper Hunter at Goodwood Park, Murrurundi and Alabama. Harley then pursued a career in writing and journalism and is a regular racing contributor to local newspapers. He is also the author of *The Spirit Within' – A History of White Park Race Course*. Harley's Uncle Jake Walden managed Kia Ora for very many years.

Reflections

Sir Hugh's son Cecil Denison took over the Sledmere until 1948 when it was purchased by my old boss Maurice ['Morrie'] V. Point who was the managing director of the Ford Motor Company in Australia. Morrie Point had a big office in William Street and liked to travel overseas from where he purchased and imported many overseas mares. He was a visionary who wanted to build up Sledmere for the sake of Australian breeding. Today his equivalent might be John Messara at Arrowfield.

Morrie Point thought Australia breeding should go ahead in leaps and bounds while the others "liked to sit back". He was a great man behind the Scone Race Club which kicked off at White Park in 1947. He put a lot of money into the Scone Race Club and was the instigator of the Scone Guineas for three year olds. Upon the death of Morrie Point in 1975 Miss Anne Raymond returned from Victoria and purchased Sledmere. Her father Guy and Sir Hugh Denison had established the stud in the 1920's. Anne Raymond is a quiet retiring lady whose love of horses is unsurpassed.

Kia Ora was then the leading thoroughbred stud in Southern Hemisphere and sold over 100 yearlings every year together with the Widden draft. In the mid 1930's there were no resident vets in Scone. The only vet to visit was Viv Davis from Sydney. He spent three to four days here every month and did the veterinary work for any stud with a priority. Stud grooms had to be vets too. What they couldn't do Viv would do such as pregnancy testing. He visited the bulk of the studs that were around this area including Kia Ora, Alabama, Sledmere, Segenhoe and Redbank. Viv Davis covered the territory into the 40s. Roy Stewart and Norman Larkin also traveled to the district. Alf Thompson at Widden Stud first employed Norman Larkin after graduation in 1934.

Norman Larkin was an odd character. He had a stud at Wilberforce known as one of the roughest studs in NSW. He dabbled in yearlings and did a bit of vet work. He was the AJC vet for many years. Old Roy Stewart worked out of vet practice at Randwick. He used to wear Bombay shorts like they wore in India. Some of the regulars around Randwick reckoned he wore his father's clothes! The AJC ended up barring him because they wouldn't let him in with the gear he was wearing. Roy would pick up empty coke bottles, put them in his kit and take them home with him if he thought he'd get a penny. One day when casting a horse someone asked if he would help with the rope and he sent a bill for a guinea!

It was an era when you had to do what you could do yourself. You gave all your own tetanus shots and strangles needles. Stomach tubing was not heard of so you 'physicked' horses with a plastic capsule, two inches long, filled with carbon disulphide for bots. Then you'd fill another capsule with Thibenzole™ for worms. You had to be able to physic or "bot" the horse. You'd use a gag. Dad could do it without a gag. He'd get their tongue, pull it out of the side of their mouth and fire the physic ball from between two fingers. A lot of feisty mares would hide it in their mouth and it would burst producing a putrid smell and horrid sensation for a horse!

We had five stallions on Sledmere serving 40-70 mares each. We had to have a teaser and your stud groom had to be spot on. You used your own judgment to work out who would ovulate first. You'd serve her first and hope to God you got it right in your own mind!

You had to be able to stitch your wounds up with needle and thread. In those days there were some great old remedies. If you found a horse with a gash in its leg, you brought it home, washed the wound in cold water, then salt and water, and then whip stock oil and tar on it. Goodwood Park was a mare with a lot of proud flesh owned by Vivian Bath. You'd rasp it back with a hoof rasp. That was only way you'd get it to grow back over. Conde's Crystals™ was used a lot as a disinfectant. Salt and water was the greatest thing in the world for cleansing cuts, abrasions and wounds. Now we take the horses down to the beach and swim them. Epsom salts was also good and Dad was a great believer in bandages for heat and swelling especially yearlings with blown up legs.

We only had the odd vet up here until Frank Williams arrived in 1949. He lived up here from 1950 and was one of the first vets in the area. Frank was very quiet – they called him 'Whisper Williams'. He was a tradesman, knew his business and was a horseman. He'd gain an animal's confidence straight away. I saw him in 1950s when we had a yearling colt at Sledmere, a full brother to filly called On Wave. He was worth a lot of money. He was a terrible horse to rear if led into a box. He hit his head on the beam and split his head straight across the forehead just before the yearling sales. Frank put 27 stitches across the wound. You wouldn't have seen the scar on the horse's head – it was a beautiful job! He was a fine vet, Frank. I also saw Frank and Geoff Adams (another vet) remove splints from the front leg of a colt with a hammer and chisel after knocking 'em out!

Morrie Point employed one of the first resident vets on any stud in Australia. He was a Hungarian Dr Frank Zeibert. His wife was named Joan aka 'Missy'. He never spoke much English and had his own lab. He used to experiment with lots of things in bottles. We also had cattle on the property to graze the pastures and so reduce worms. There were a lot of bull calves you castrated in yards with a sharpened pocket-knife. One afternoon Dad happened to mention we'd get up early the next day to mark the calves before it gets too hot. Frank Zeibeert said 'Missy' and I will help you too. It was a hot and dusty day and we had 30 or 40 calves to do. Frank Zeibert's ute pulls up and out they stepped resplendent in white coats, stainless steel trays, scalpels, disinfectant and all these instruments! We'd have been there for a week if we'd done it his way!

One day Frank Zeibert went riding on an old chestnut and no one told him about stinging nettles. He rode through a patch and the first thing the chestnut did was make for the river and lie down with him still on. We had a rubber-tied spring cart and an old horse pulled the cart. Kevin Smith loosened one of the wheels on the cart. An hour later 'FZ' comes walking back. He had been trotting down the hill and the wheel went flying past him!

The next chap out there was Reg Killick; a quiet sort of man, very astute vet and a very 'in depth' sort of bloke. He did everything in triplicate. He came from Newcastle and then had a practice in Sydney. Then we had a chap named Jack Francis. He was a raw recruit and just out of university. He later moved into the practice with Frank Williams and Murray Bain.

Murray Bain was the man who revolutionised veterinary practice in the Hunter Valley. When Bain arrived in Scone veterinary work just took off. He introduced new techniques and was such a great man. He was a man that people really looked up to. Anyone that thought they knew more than Murray Bain did was a fool to himself. If anyone wanted to know anything it was MB they asked. The towering Scotsman was very community minded, always coming up with new ideas. MB got St Andrew's race day going, one of the most popular days of racing at the old White Park track. He never only went to the thoroughbred studs, he went to racing stables in Sydney as well.

When I was night watching at Kia Ora I foaled over 100 mares in one season and called the vet once. Reg Sperrink was stud groom when I was at Major Mitchell's stud Yarraman Park. Old Norman Larkin would come up once a week to look at the mares; he would not spend one penny. I went out to look after three stallions – I didn't do anything else. You'd walk them, groom them and feed them. One morning we spotted an old mare with a growth on her neck; Norman was in a hurry. He shouted; "Just grab her by the ear and hold her". Then he just cut it straight off her neck – everyone nearly passed out! Reg and his English staff were aghast!

Emperor [Imp.] was a great sire. He'd been re-shod with a new set of shoes two days before he died at about age 22. He was a terrible horse and he'd run the fence. When he dropped dead from a heart attack Norman took the shoes off and kept them to recycle. He would not waste a penny!

Murray Bain and Norman Larkin had fallen out. Frank Williams without Norman Larkin did everything for himself but not for anyone else. Murray Bain did not suffer fools gladly. Murray Bain and Virginia Osborne [Sydney University] disagreed on testing mares: Virginia Osmond said that pregnancy testing mares caused abortion. That got around the industry and cut MB in the pocket. "The bloody crusading virgin," he said. "There should be no such damned thing"! She was a lecturer in anatomy, and during a paper she gave, MB got stuck into her. NL stood up and said called for an apology, but MB jumped straight to his feet and said "I repeat exactly what I said, she is not a scientist. There is no apology".

Bill Howey once caught Murray Bain out on knowledge. Somebody brought in a worm and Bill remarked; "That looks like an immature ascarid". Murray replied; "If that's an immature ascarid, I'm the Archbishop of Canterbury". Bill got the lab results back and said; "Have a look at this, your grace". Murray yelled "cheeky bastard" and stormed out. Carly Simon could've written the song about Murray. Murray Bain had a lot in common with Warren Beatty.

John Morgan was a very quiet sort of bloke – he could get a bit unsettled if everything didn't go his way. Nairn Fraser is a top chap. Geoff Adams was a big man. He'd buy himself a new set of overalls but they were always about two feet. too long for Geoff, so he'd just get the scissors and cut off the bottom. He could pregnancy test a mare and tell you right to the centimetre the size that it was. Bev still lives around here and is President of Horse Week. She has medals from everywhere for running. There is not much you can say about Bill Howey. He is the ultimate man for the district and for anything that goes on about the place. You just don't get blokes like him. He will stand behind what he believes in such as when there was talk of amalgamation between Scone and Muswellbrook race tracks. With the closing of Scone Race Course in 1994 when they shifted to Satur we formed a committee – the Scone Race Club White Park Wake Committee with Bill as the chairman. We all went out and got stuck into it. It came twelve o'clock and no one had turned up but by two o'clock the roll up was astronomical. Everyone rallied to support it and it was part of Scone's history.

Betty Shepherd - Horse Trainer



Betty Shepherd and friends.

Pen Picture

Betty was the first female horse trainer in Australia obtaining her license in 1952 at 21 years of age. She always maintained “I don’t want to be a stable hand - I want a trainer’s license” and successfully lodged her application. Betty was born in Tamworth but was brought up and lived in Scone. She used to ride to school and had been riding as long as she could remember. Betty became interested in racehorses when going out with future husband Archie whose father trained thoroughbreds. Each horse was worked on differently “as they don’t all do the same things”. The emphasis was on TLC – tender loving care - including individual attention and a lot of roadwork.

Reflections

I met Murray Bain when he first came to Scone [1950]. He and Frank Williams came to do something with a horse and we established very good rapport straight away. If something was said and I didn't agree with it I'd tell him straight out! He loved bringing students because if an explanation was given both our opinions were expressed so introducing two different perspectives. Occasionally Murray used to be quite dictatorial, obdurate and patrician. Not many people told Murray Bain what to do!

One day Murray came to give the horses an oil drench but he didn't have a bucket of his own. I had 14 buckets each with a different colour so 14 individual feeds were mixed for each horse. Asking if he could borrow one I very politely but firmly told him: "No – they are special". He went in and counted them and when he got to 100 he said: "You have one hundred buckets and I can't even borrow one"! Murray loved practical jokes – almost as much as he loved his rum and milk very early each morning. He'd come home at night and Morag went out to meet him on the step – he got into trouble for being late home from the RSL Club: "Daddy I think you'd better tell Mummy you were up the Widden Valley"!

It was always great when Murray came out to a call. When Trevors was extremely ill Murray arrived just before he died. He absolutely grilled the young vet [Peter Beiers] who was there: "What have you done? Have you done this? Have you done that?" He said: "We can't do anymore". It was dreadful – we went up the house and had quite a few drinks. Murray wasn't here when he died. I came down and it looked as if he was going to go any minute. I put a head collar on and held him so he wouldn't bash himself to pieces when he died. Murray talked me into having an autopsy in case it was zoonotic to ourselves, our daughter or our friends. He received a bigger obituary in the local paper than did any person. Trevors died Sunday 30th April 1967. We buried him behind the vine in the garden with Raz the dog that accompanied him to Melbourne.

Murray never behaved as if he knew more than anybody else but he knew much more. He went everywhere. He was a wonderful person; very open, not petty, he loved horses and he loved his racing. Dogs and horses were far and away his favourites. He always said greyhounds were probably the nicest house-dogs you can have. Vets parties? We went to those. They weren't put on. They just happened! It would just sort of work into a party. We had enough parties without officially organising them.

I remember Bill Howey very well! Shah Mauree became sick one week after he arrived. Bill came and treated her and she kicked him after we'd had a few drinks. He blamed that for getting kicked! He was here quite a long time with her. He had a plaque on the wall at the Belmore Hotel: "Memorial – Bill Howey once drank here". It was put there to commemorate his buck's party. When Bill's car pulled up from a long trip you could almost see it sigh with relief! It creaked! He used to drive and drive and drive and drive.

We used vets for any sickness – colic; stomach tube-worm drenching (no tube pastes then, so everything was drenched regularly). We didn't have a lot of troubles with our foals. We had strangles occasionally and lost one with strangles but I don't think there were vets here at the time.

We looked after Obelia when Murray Bain brought her out of work from Sydney with an "incorrect blood reading". Murray said "I want you to get her all the green she'll eat". We gave her a mass of green for a couple of days and then he said: "Yes, there it is - its right. The blood's right up top again". We encouraged the ambition to win the Golden Slipper. Mace won it with one of the one's they'd bred [Dark Eclipse – 1980]. We also looked after the Biscay/Obelia filly after Murray died. [See 'She Bears the Mark of Fate'].

Jack Francis is dead now. We used to do terrible things to Jack! One night he'd gelded a horse in the top stable. We had a few drinks after and Jack backed his car into the fence and no one would push it off for him. We made him stay there! Someone took one of his shoes. He had to get up first thing in the morning and drive to Merriwa with one shoe! Everybody picked on him. Jack was a person who had been on the stage in New Zealand. He was used to acting and knocking all the scenery all over the stage. He was rather like that when he was doing the horses always trying to do something extremely quickly!

My daughter [Georgie] was fascinated by Murray's feet! He had HUGE feet and also wore moleskins which hugged his thin legs so exacerbating the big feet. I used to lecture Georgie and say: "Don't look at Mr. Bain's feet"! She'd look down and say: "Hello Mr. Bain" to his feet! When Murray became sick he seemed to suffer a long time. We went to see him in hospital in Sydney. He went on a diet because he thought he was getting too fat. His stomach was swelling and he was becoming thin everywhere else. That's what woke him up that he had cancer".

Paul and Ross Williams; Dr. Dave Warden

Pen Pictures

Ross and Paul are the sons of Frank and Beth Williams. Both were raised in Scone although neither was born there. Ross did five years of vet and failed third year twice. "They said I should go away and think about it and I never went back". Paul has a PhD and works in an endocrinology lab at Sydney University.

Dr. Dave Warden was an iconic medical practitioner in Scone for almost 30 years and a partner in the surgery during its heyday. He was personal physician and close friend of almost all the early veterinary fraternity when Scone was a much closer community than it is today.

Reflections



The author, Paul Williams, Ross Williams and Dr. Dave Warden
The Roundhouse, Faculty of Veterinary Science, University of Sydney.

In the very early days it was Larkin, Bain and Williams. Norman Larkin used to commute from Bondi Junction. He had a farrier working up there with a van as well and it also became the veterinary service. That was the first green van that Dad had. The practice was at 240 Liverpool Street and that was our place. Dad was the first resident vet at Scone.

I have a picture of Norman visiting, but the stock inspectors provided a service certainly at the flock and herd level to the area before that. 'Warby' Warberton was still around in those days. His base was at Merriwa but the district vet was from Scone. There was an honorary veterinary position with the Quirindi Polo Club.

Lots of old timers used to use bailing twine and all that type of stuff. There were blistering agents such as 'Butter of Antimony'. It burnt the bloody skin...I mean Christ! Reggie Watts was a legendary "colt gelder" but Andy Pendavgos lost a \$10,000 insurance claim when a colt bled to death. Suddenly we got a lot more colts to geld.

At our house in Liverpool Street we had a dispensary out the back in the laundry. Murray Bain used to use that as well. MB was delayed in NZ for the season and he ended up doing the horse breeding season there in 1949. Norman Larkin had already booked up Murray to come to Scone. Dad had served with NL during the war in the vet unit where Dad was a Captain. He was offered a partnership in Scone.

It must've taken MB some time to find, acquire and restore Chivers. Scone 118 was the original phone number and 322 was the office number when it moved down to Chivers. The girls would find you wherever you were. It was the manual exchange. They could tell you where anyone else was. Dave Warden said we'd give them a list of names of blood donors and they'd ring around and find someone. They listened in to conversations especially overseas ones. 'Bung' Cone could recite verbatim in the RSL Club a conversation that had taken place the night before. His wife was on the exchange!

Norman Judge was Dad's driver during the war. That was largely why he went and did vet when 'demobbed'. They were up around Broome WA and all that area. There are pictures of Prince Regent River. He said you just can't believe these canyons and cliffs with the river going straight down the middle.

Murray Bain demobilised from British Army 1946. He had been acting Lieutenant Colonel. He had a reputation for "removing the neigh" from donkeys in Palestine. He ovariectomised them to shut them up and did it with an old sharpener. Subordinates used to bet on how many would survive! He paid his own way went to Claiborne Farm in Kentucky with famous Colonel Sager and was there nine months. He'd established a job with Sir James Fletcher where he was stud manager, not stud vet. He was there for three years and then he came to visit the Hunter Valley. There were lots of horses and he thought there was an opportunity. He came back in 1950 and stayed at Eaton's Hotel in Muswellbrook. Sir James Fletcher had said "Bain, I've got just the girl for you". It was his private secretary Mace.

Dad [FW] went to PNG after the war finished. They were cleaning up diseases after that. He nearly got himself killed a few times. Once he was kicked by a donkey and another time falling into a river. He worked as veterinary officer for the Department of Agriculture and then went to Scone. He lived in the Golden Fleece before Mum and I went up there.

Dad drove around in a Baker's van in those days. Transport was not easy to come by then. He had an Austin then a Wolseley. It wasn't until Holdens came along that we ended up with reliable transport. Dad used to get a Holden if not every twelve months then every 18 months because of the mileage he used to do. He went as far as Goondiwindi for TB testing. 70,000 miles per year was about it on average.

John Bentley was at Singleton. Mum always credits him with establishing veterinary science in the Hunter Valley in almost a social sense. She always attributes the fact that vets were accepted into Hunter Valley society to John Bentley. He was at Singleton and Dad was at Scone.

There were 36 gates between Scone and Widden. Paul and I used to be hauled into this. If you needed a gate opener you'd haul your kids with you. Tinagroo had 19 gates when it operated as a stud in those days. St Aubins was also a major stud.

Murray Bain used hyperbole and was the best storyteller. He knew the whole of the Jungle Book by heart. Paul was a substitute son for MB in the early days. "I spent days with him". MB loved kids, going out with him with the car, he was essentially my Godfather and the split didn't happen until I was 15. I'd be in that end bedroom above the cellar. That was one of my major contentious issues when Dad and MB split. I said to Murray that "the worst thing about this is that it's very difficult for me to see you and I miss you a lot". Thank god they started to talk to each other after that. It took a while.

They picked one person to support each. Dad was more annoying because of his disorganisation and laissez faire approach. Unlike MB he rarely documented his treatment procedures; he was extremely lax about getting his paperwork and accounts done. Let's just say that there were quite a few animals around Scone that were fixed gratis. He just loved his work. It wasn't just veterinary science, it was being out and about with people.

The other side of vet practice and medical practice was the part the wives played, just as receptionists and backstops. The phone never stopped ringing – day, night, weekend and all the rest of it. Murray lauded and praised Mum [Beth Williams] for tearing strips off Ray Israel. Ray and Mum were good friends. For the first years at Scone we celebrated Christmas at Segenhoe. David used to put teeth marks in his drumstick so no one else would get it. It was a Jewish household.

Dad's first contact with Tom Payne was when I think he gelded a colt. Tom slipped him some money. Dad's professional response was; "no, I'll send you a bill". Tom was used to slipping money to the local horse doctors.

A scheme operated with dairy farmers where the milk factory subsidised the vet service. Dad had a lot to do to that. I'm not sure when penicillin became generally available in vet practice. I have memories of sulphur powder being cast about everywhere in the early days. Chloroform as anaesthetic and procedures with nose bags on horses were used a lot.

You put the hobbles on, then the nosebag with chloroform and drop the horse on the spot. (DW; "I used to use Chloroform").

Dad only went away once with Frank Thompson from Widden. They bought Santa Gertrudis cattle back. Paul got a postcard in the Davey Crockett days (I got a Davey Crockett hat). Dad wanted to look at stallions in the UK, Ireland and King Ranch. Mum has programs from things like My Fair Lady in London. It was the year that Little Richard brought out Long Tall Sally and Tutti Frutti. Dad brought them back and they were played continually.

Eddie Kennedy used to polish the tops of his army boots with no soles. He'd put them on especially to welcome the vet. Dad went up to horse that staked itself. We tramped for miles up the side of one of those hills and I don't know how far up the Rouchel it was. He had to put the horse out to get the stake out of its foot. The 'yep' boys were all single and used to hide the rum bottles from one another.

Jim McFadden was the first vet ever appointed to a race club and went to the AJC in 1947. He and Laurie came up a lot in those days.

Dave Warden: "Vicky always liked his [FW's] sense of humour and sparkling eyes with twitching moustache. His moustache was probably his main identifier. He was advised to grow it when he left veterinary science. He said 'no one will take you seriously, you look too young'. He was bald when he was 21. He went from here virtually straight in the army and graduated in his Captain's uniform".

The first (army) camp they went to was up at Hawks Nest because they were training the horses on the sand on the beaches to get them used to desert conditions. They had to swim the horses across from Tea Gardens. There is a bridge there now opened in 1974 but there was not even a ferry then. Mum maintains that he learned to drink as a 20 year old officer in an officer's mess.

Treve Williams married Trish Basche from Aluinn. Frank Packer used to run a horse stud there operated by a resident manager. Dad would have to unpack the car to get us in the back. As soon as station wagons were available we got one. You always knew you were in a vet's car. Once some carbon disulphide exploded in the car and it really stinks!

The first time I came across parasitology was why Dad had all these snails that he was sending down to laboratories. We used to forever have thousands of bottles of blood, waiting for serum to come off; shaking off the clots – that was testing for brucellosis. We had stacks and stacks of bottles of blood all over the house.

Brucellosis of course was a problem for Dad. He came back from PNG with malaria. Mum had to seek sustenance because he was hospitalised after he came back. It wasn't recognised that it was the brucellosis or malaria that knocked him around. A lot of the work they did was brucellosis testing and tuberculosis testing. Strangles vaccine was also common as was castor oil. Castor oil was another one of those miracle cures – it used to

go onto those warts. I went out to Bickham and they had all these bulls in pens. One had almost a necklace of warts. Castor Oil was placed upon these things and two to three weeks later the change was most dramatic.

Murray had all sorts of concoctions: – calf scour powder, foal scour powder...wart stuff. One of Ross's holiday tasks was to mix these miraculous cures out the back of Chivers. Murray blew up half his house with carbon disulphide. He had a snake under his house and found the hole. He put in carbon disulphide and blew a hole in his wall. I remember Murray proudly telling Lionel Israel about a bushranger being shot outside there. Lionel said; "that's nothing, one lives in it now!" Murray was an avid bird watcher. I don't think he kept any records of the other variety!

John Paradice and Dave Warden did a call for Jack Francis when he was out at Christmas Eve one year. They went to see a milk fever cow. They gave her calcium and she didn't get up, so Dave said; "You know what they do now? They jump on the tail". Dave said it was the most miraculous cure he'd ever had. It certainly sold vet science to dairy farmers in the area.

Murray's good works are well documented. His extra-professional activities were many; all his tree planting, watering down the main street, the concerts we used to have, the Scone Scots – all of those things he did too. Ray Farrell had a wound break down and it created a little sinus. Dave Warden said "You've got a bit of a hole in it Ray" and he replied; "Don't tell Murray he'll put a bloody tree in it".

Dad was a strong footy (Rugby) supporter but didn't coach at Scone. Dad played first grade before the war and coached reserve grade after the war. Before grand final in 1968 they were having a party at Di Fleming's. They phoned Dave Warden at 3am to seek the President's advice to ask if he recommended sex before a football game and whether or not once a night was enough! Isobel answered the phone and said; "I think the whole thing sounds utterly disgusting"! BH was involved in the phone call.

Peter Beiers had been Murray's assistant just before Bill Howey arrived and he'd just been sacked. He became a medico then ended up treating Dad in Newcastle. Murray told the story about Jack Francis driving down Main Street while steering with his knee and pouring blood. You rarely finished by 7 o'clock at night. The RSL Club was a meeting of all the guys in those days. It lasted until the early 70's. The camaraderie isn't there anymore. Now you get into trouble if you drink drive. Dad held an office at RSL. He was involved in the welfare process, visits at Christmas time, taking around food parcels and presents and things. Mrs. Everingham was the first secretary. I remember the glasses the and straight hair.



Memories! Memories!

Don Scott Anecdotal Reflections

Pen Picture

Don Scott has been a chartered accountant in Scone for over 50 years and was the effective business manager of the veterinary practice. He is an iconic figure in the town and district. If you had any questions Murray would simply say; “Go and see Don Scott”. To a certain extent he was the ‘godfather’ of the practice. Don was a close confidante and friend of almost all the early veterinarians as well as many other professionals and possesses a unique insight into the trammels of quotidian veterinary life.



Don ‘Corleone’ Scott.

Reflections

My father was as dour a Scotsman as you could ever find. He and Murray met one day at the post office corner with Norman [Smith], where they both carried on and got more Scottish. Apparently Dad said to Murray; “You’ve gotta’ admit son, we’re the salt of the earth”. Norman said to me; “You know, the two silly bastards believed it”! Dad also said; “A bad Scotsman’s better than a good anything else”.

Mace was the boss when we came here and we won’t say anything about Morag. There were a lot of problems in the latter years of Bain, Williams and Francis. Frank would never do his day sheets so we couldn’t do any financial accounts because, quite rightly Mrs. Everingham [secretary] said once you do that without getting Frank’s time sheets we’ll never get them from him!

When they split up Frank and Jack moved from behind Chivers up into 88 Main Street. Angus Cunningham would be sitting doing worm egg counts at midnight – because he was Angus. Norman Judge went to the Olympic Games in Mexico and was also Olympic vet in Tokyo. He brought Quarter Horses back here from America. Frank would carry a bottle of Scotch with him when he went to the Widden Valley. His health problems were compounded by the farmer's disease brucellosis and possibly also his exposure to malaria and other tropical diseases in New Guinea after WWII.

Murray was a lady killer. The women would melt! He was a big fella, not fat, just very big. He was a dark Scot. He had the great attribute of having such long arms to pregnancy test a mare. He was an egotistic bastard with a lot of testosterone. He was a very pleasant presentable guy. He never struck you as a vet. He had all this gear in the boot and when you opened the boot it all used to fall out on top of you.

Mace had everything to do with the practice. Mace used to come and see me. She'd get to the door of my office and stand there without coming in because she obviously thought that the moment she sat down the 'taxi meter' started to tick. I was at the RSL having a drink with Murray and he said you'd better come and have a drink at home. I smelled a rat. He gave some land to the Race Club. Mace burst into tears. She was a Kiwi. Murray used to say ad infinitum; "I've solved the problem – I know where they landed. The eleven lost tribes of Israel landed in New Zealand". He started off in NZ, with Sir James Fletcher, and Mace was the private secretary of Sir James.

Murray didn't have much financial sense. He needed Mace to pull it together. She was extremely tough. Mrs. Everingham used to answer the telephone in the early days.

Jack [Francis] would've been the wildest driver I've ever seen. It wasn't so much he was fast on the road. He'd do same speed on the driveway as he would up the highway. Jack had Jeremy in the back one day and it was always flat strap. He said; "Anything behind Jeremy"? Jeremy said; "No Dad" - WHOOMP – "only that tree". Murray was not always right but he always thought he was. Julie Rose used to drive him around. Vic Cole bought Bevan Reed up here when Murray was dying. Murray was a brilliant vet and Bevan a brilliant doctor. He (Bevan Reed) was surgical registrar at Gosford Hospital.

Don's youngest daughter Anna was a great friend of Murray's eldest daughter Morag. They were the same age and almost next door neighbours. Anna was a constant at Chivers and very much spoiled by Murray and much loved as a surrogate family member! I discovered the following letter sent by Anna from her boarding school in Armidale. It is undated but was received by Murray when on his sick bed in the latter stages of his illness presumably 1973 or 1974. Letters reveal the innermost soul and I think this one is piquantly redolent of the powerful avuncular charisma Murray exerted over the younger generation especially nubile emerging females! Jane, Susan and Sarah Mackay from Tinagroo would vehemently attest to the veracity of this pronouncement! The letter is written in an unmistakably feminine large round hand on a plain lined piece of foolscap and there are a few alterations and crossing-out in the original.

*NEGS
Armidale*

Dear Mr. Bain,

Its' just a [~~'quite'~~ crossed out] quick note to send you all my love and many kisses on your birthday.

I'm sorry I haven't a card to send you but I couldn't buy one at school and only found out today that it was your birthday.

[~~'I'm'~~ crossed out] I am really liking it here, but still missing the familiar Scone faces (especially yours).

Love forever X

Anna Scott

All the best on your birthday.

John Bryden



I wish to acknowledge the following 'Anecdotal Reflection' is purloined from an article in *The Veterinarian* July 2002 written by colleague Dr. Rowan Blogg. The title was *Get by with a little help from friends* and is an eloquent synopsis of the professional life of John Bryden. Much of John's early and formative veterinary career was spent in Scone. John himself provides a fascinating objective insight into the evolution of the veterinary community in Scone.

A graduate of Sydney University John was guided in his career by distinguished veterinarians Murray Bain and Percy Sykes. He met Murray through his future wife Lesley Blackeby.

"Lesley had an uncle in the thoroughbred business in the Hunter Valley [Bill Harris, Holbrook Stud, Widden Valley], one of the original nurseries of the Australian thoroughbred and the base for some great stallions including Star Kingdom," John says. "Murray invited me as a student to come and do a practical stint with the Scone practice."

Murray was on his way to becoming a legend and was one of the veterinarians who, like Jack Francis and Frank Williams, would drive 70,000 miles each year on his calls. He would innovate and was known for passing a stomach tube in the 'impossible' horse before amazed locals outside the pub in Dungog. Murray introduced stomach tubing to the Hunter Valley. In the 1950's and 1960's veterinarians in Scone were earning more than doctors and were the pioneers of modern rural veterinary practice. Their willingness to teach helped create the Sydney University Post Graduate Foundation of which John's brother Doug later became Director.

John's first job after graduation was as District Veterinary Officer for the County of Cumberland area of Sydney centered on the suburb of Homebush now home to Sydney Olympic Park. His territory covered from Nowra to Wyong and inland to Penrith servicing all gaols, prison farms and psychiatric hospitals as well as more prosaic veterinary pursuits! There followed his inaugural stint in Scone before Murray encouraged him to 'spread his wings' and work at one of the premier universities in the UK. John was appointed house surgeon at the University of Glasgow in 1959.

"I met an old friend of Murray's who had worked with him in the Veterinary Corps during World War II," John says. "The Veterinary Corps was at its zenith. Bob Crowhurst and Murray had each been running veterinary hospitals as a vital part of the Italian Campaign. At the time of the historic Salerno Bay landing, mules pulled artillery through mud in the mountains. Dodging bullets, Bob gelded 75 donkeys one day in Egypt." Murray met many men during his military tour of duty who were to inspire his collective passion for a future career in equine practice. They included Bob Crowhurst as well as Fred Day, trainer Frank Cundell and others. They were to remain enduring lifelong friends.

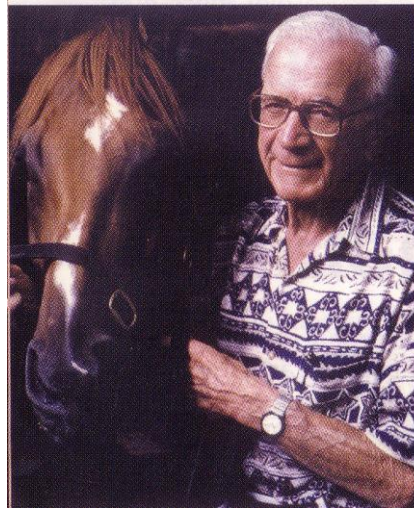
After a couple of years in Britain, a letter came from Murray Bain inviting him to come back to Australia and work with him in Scone. In 1961 John and Lesley hurried home. "It mattered little that Murray had not told his veterinary partners. However he was a great veterinarian, a patient teacher and an outstanding citizen in the Upper Hunter region," John says. "Scone still stands as a proud example of his love of nature, with many of the trees around the town being planted by him and volunteers he recruited." Murray's practice was mixed and served a very large area. Some of the beef cattle work was extraordinary.

"Going east into the hills early one morning, I vaccinated 600 heifers for brucellosis by lunchtime," John says. "We would go to Quirindi every week to a number of cattle and horse studs such as Sinclair Hill's polo ponies. "Sinclair rang me one Sunday morning and asked if I was coming up on Tuesday. He said he had 16 colts to geld. I asked the vital question: 'Are they handled'? He promised they would be by Tuesday!" They were however completely unhandled when they arrived. "We gelded them by putting them in the cattle race, giving IV anaesthetic, opening the gate and gelding them where they dropped – up to 70 metres from the crush," John says. "The field resembled a scene from Culloden"!

It was while he was working for Murray Bain that John met another of the colleagues who would prove an excellent mentor and teacher. Percy Sykes, a race track veterinarian from Sydney had come to look at an old problem – two-year-olds were not doing well under the stress of track training. Percy and John collected hundreds of blood samples which enabled them to diagnose adult rickets. They found many mares were chronically short of calcium and the discovery was a watershed in rearing horses in the Hunter Valley.

In 1967 John moved from Scone to Melbourne on the dissolution of the Sykes Bain partnership where he was to become increasingly focused on racetrack practice although he enjoyed a long and fruitful association with 'Showdown' and the Cox family at Stockwell Stud. His memories of his career are mainly positive.

"I have had a time in the profession that I would not swap. From the beginning with Star Kingdom and Murray Bain in the Hunter, to looking after 16 Melbourne Cup winners, dinner with horse lovers like Prince Charles, Ron and Nancy Reagan, the King of Nepal and the Aga Khan," John says.



Percy Sykes.



Treve Williams AJC Chairman was in Scone in the mid 1960's as part of the Sykes Bain partnership.

John's comments regarding the learning, teaching and mentoring aspects of life with Murray Bain *et al.* are further handsomely augmented by his brother Doug who succeeded Tom Hungerford as Director of the Post Graduate Foundation in Veterinary Science.



Dr. Doug Bryden had retired as Director of the PGFVS when he wrote the following letter in response to an enquiry from my assistant philosopher, journalist and veterinary student Anne Quain. Anne was responding to a request from me to write a posthumous 'legend' piece about Murray Bain for the PGFVS Director's Circular. Anne noted that her early research and reading indicated Murray had been "a formidable equine veterinarian". This was extraordinary percipience by Anne and the first reference to the epithet '*formidable*' in relation to Murray's *persona*!

*Dr. Douglas Bryden
"Canisby"
RMB 296F Browns Lane
Tamworth NSW 2340*

Thursday 18 October 2001

Dear Anne

It is lovely to hear from you again and with such a fascinating request. Yes my brother John knew Murray well. He will be the best to tell you his story [see above] which I think begins when he was still an undergraduate.

When I began my clinical veterinary studies in Sydney, John was then working with Murray and I spent quite a bit of time on a property close to Scone [St. Aubins Without] and then saw practice with Murray and John in my last couple of years.

Murray was a very colourful figure within the profession and was a legend in his own time in the Hunter Valley. I learnt an enormous amount from him, not only in veterinary medicine and surgery, but also how one should operate as a veterinarian and the importance of going about things in the right way to provide high quality service to your clients.

Murray was very dedicated to continued learning and he was one of the group of veterinarians who came together with the idea of providing a resource for continued learning especially those working in the country areas away from the Universities. It was this group who eventually began the Post Graduate Committee and Post Graduate Foundation which was set up under the Senate of the University of Sydney and which have provided such a remarkable resource for veterinarians in Australia and New Zealand and in many other countries of the world.

Murray was a man of vision and a man of action and with his charm and his broad Scottish brogue was usually the centre of attention in any company.

I wish you good hunting in your search for information.

Warmest regards

Doug

Almost without exception all Murray's 'acolytes' at any time mention his mentorship, teaching, learning and dedication to what we now refer to "Continual Professional Development" [CPD] and "Continuing Veterinary Education" [CVE]. It cannot be just coincidence that so many followed this pathway.