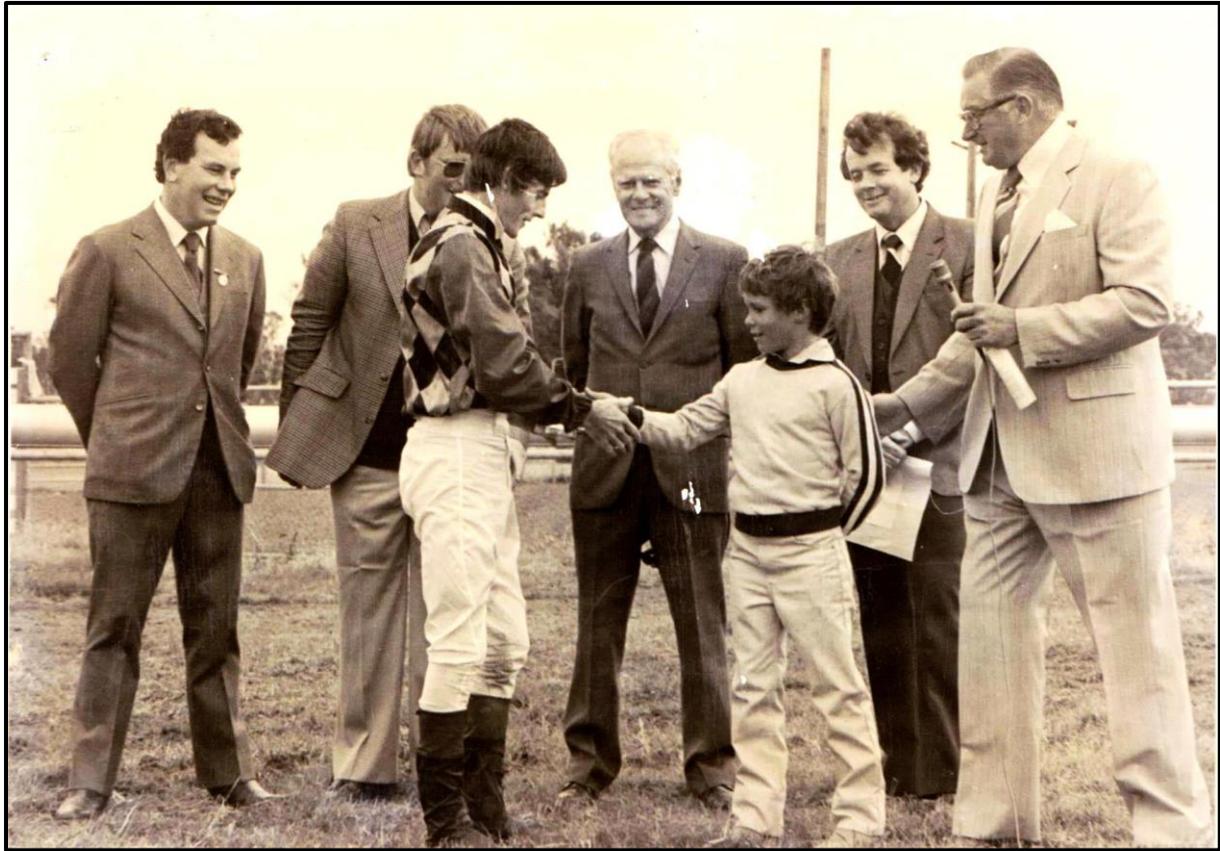


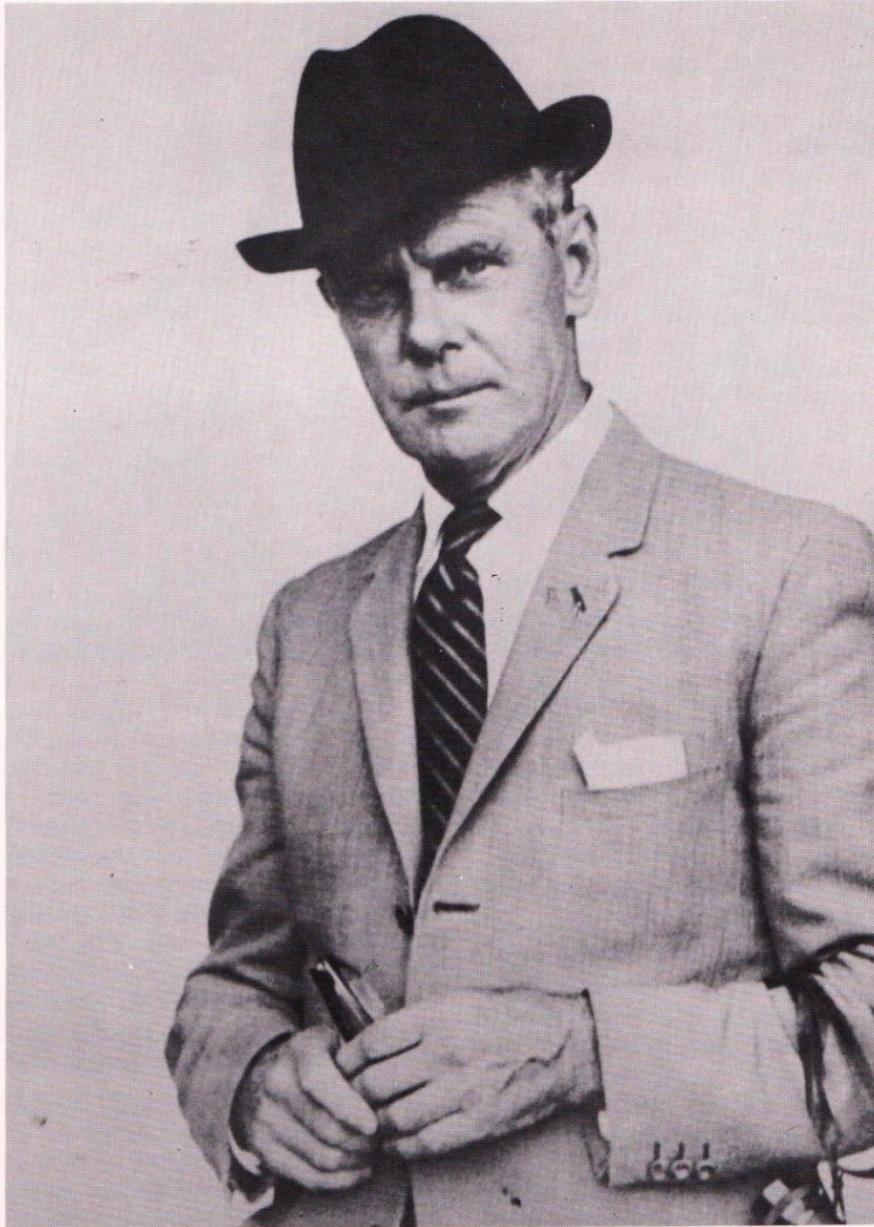
Alfred Owen Ellison



The featured image shows the assemblage for the presentation of the Bim Thompson Lightning Handicap at White Park Race Course Scone in May 1981. Those present from left to right are: David Bath; Bill Howey; Robert Thompson (winning jockey); AO Ellison; Antony Thompson; Peter Meehan (Radio Station 2NM); Bert Lilley (Sydney Morning Herald). This cadre probably captures AOE's closest allies in his nether years?

Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alf_Ellison

Peter Pring in his excellent 'The Star Kingdom Story' paints an esoteric and sensitive word portrait of AOE. He knew him well. There are some superb images of a very dapper '*tres soignee*' AOE at Flemington and Randwick. He depicts the relationship with ST Wootton based on mutual respect settling points of difference amicably. AOE was also a businessman with multiple interests including horticulture, gardening, farming and grazing. He once said to me: '*I may not be a very good stockman Bill (he wasn't) but I am a very good gardener. Farming is gardening on a large scale*'. He was right. He could also be artful. Murray Bain was much amused when AOE set about ring barking all the Ironbark Trees on the escarpments. It left good looking Box Eucalypts deemed to flourish on better country. Murray thought this was a meretricious means of 'improving the country' to the untutored or unwary voyeur?



Alf Ellison, Star Kingdom's managing part-owner in Australia, photographed at the races at Flemington.

Photo courtesy of Peter Pring and 'The Thoroughbred Press'

Alfred Owen Ellison (1 January 1903 – 12 June 1987), often referred to in print as **A.O. Ellison** and known colloquially as **Alf** or **A.O.**, was an Australian solicitor, company director, racehorse owner and breeder. However his closest friends called him 'Allwyn' which he much preferred. One of these was Murray Bain. AOE greatly admired Murray Bain and modestly gave much of the credit of Baramul's success to his veterinary advice. Theirs was a top class professional relationship based on mutual respect. He especially loathed being addressed as 'Alf' by racing journalists. For over forty years he was the owner of Baramul Stud. Ellison served as chairman of the Australian operations of Mutual Acceptance Ltd (now Standard Chartered) and Lister Blackstone. He was President of the Bloodhorse Breeders' Association of N.S.W. As a solicitor he implemented the inaugural charter and Rules and Bylaws.

Birth and education

Ellison was born in Queensland, to Fanny (née) Bytheway and the Rev. Tom Ellison, a Methodist minister. He was one of six children: four boys and two girls. Ellison commenced at Newington College in 1918 during the headmastership of the Rev Dr Charles Prescott. In 1920, his last year at school, he was Senior Prefect and was awarded the Old Boys Prize. Ellison was awarded an exhibition in the Leaving Certificate. He went up to the University of Sydney in 1921 and graduated as a Bachelor of Arts in 1924 and as a Bachelor of Laws in 1927. He was in residence at Wesley College, University of Sydney.

Legal career

After serving as an articled clerk with Robson & Cowlshaw during his university studies, Ellison founded the legal firm AO Ellison & Co in Sydney. It was active in advising New South Wales manufacturers on to their rights and liabilities, especially in relation to industrial relations and occupational health and safety legislation. The firm moved into insurance work and after a series of mergers is now known as Rankin Ellison and has offices in Sydney and Newcastle.

Horses

In 1940, Ellison founded Baramul Stud in the Hunter Valley. The name of Baramul originally had two Rs. It was developed on land known as Joe's Paddock that had previously produced some good early horses. Ellison had previously had his mares at the Widden Stud nearby. Soon after its foundation Ellison bred Alister at Baramul. Alister went on to win the AJC and VRC Derbys and the W S Cox Plate. His horses were branded with an image of a barbed tail taken from a Wyvern, the heraldic symbol of his old school, Newington College.

The disappointing Kerry Piper was the first stallion Ellison and Wootton stood in partnership. However the affiliation flourished. Wootton acknowledged Baramul with its overall lushness and fertility as the 'ideal' nursery for raising Thoroughbreds. When I first saw it I was stunned. It was my very favourite aesthetic property in the Upper Hunter Valley. STW said of AOE: ***"Ellison is a perfectionist. He does nothing by half measures. If a problem comes up he goes on and on until he gets to the bottom of it. Baramul was, and is, run by him in an exemplary manner"***. From 1951, Star Kingdom, a sire owned by a partnership of Ellison, Stanley Wootton and Reg Moses brought great acclaim to Baramul.

In 1984 the stud was purchased by Sir Tristan Antico and is now owned by Gerry Harvey.

Camellias

Ellison was an enthusiastic grower of camellias and he produced prize-winning stock at Baramul. With Prof. E.G. Waterhouse he arranged displays of camellias at the Macquarie Galleries and David Jones. The camellia japonica A.O. Ellison is named in his honour.

Later life and death

In 1981, before the sale of Baramul, Ellison bought the cattle and horse stud Kilwinning at Scone, New South Wales. He had married Nancy Shearston in 1928 and she predeceased him in 1982. Ellison died at Kilwinning on 12 June 1987. His personal secretary at A O Ellison & Company was Miss Norah Elliott. His housekeeper at both Baramul and Kilwinning was Mrs Connie Phillips who survives him and is a resident at Strathearn Village Aged Care in Scone.

Bill & Julie Rose are the current owners of Kilwinning having purchased it from the Estate of A O Ellison. F W Rose was an executor of the estate.



Photo courtesy of Peter Pring and 'The Thoroughbred Press'

"I have been extremely fortunate to have had the support of Miss Norah Elliott, my personal secretary for the last 40 years. She is marvelously efficient and has looked after my affairs – and Woottons - with meticulous care. You can't even begin to place a value on something like that."



The featured image shows the assemblage for the presentation of the Bim Thompson Lightning Handicap at White Park Race Course Scone in May 1981. Those present from left to right are: Cliff Ellis; Roy Hinton (Trainer); Bill Rose; David Bath; Antony Thompson; Bill Howey; AO Ellison; Peter Meehan (Radio Station 2NM); Bert Lilley (Sydney Morning Herald).

Personal Reflections

Most of us were a tad afraid of AOE. He could be intimidating if aroused or challenged with an acute perspicacious mind. He was a master of invective delivered in his severely clipped barrister's argot. Many of my generation looked up to him for counsel and advice. I was one of them. He enjoyed discussing sex! John Andrews was a young Queensland horseman at Baramul in 1967. He and I were the beneficiaries of AO's prurient observations and interpretation of our 'inexperienced' behaviours!

He proved to be an influential personal mentor on numerous occasions. He selected me to accompany the ship carrying his dispersed bloodstock to the USA in 1970. I have documented this seminal journey elsewhere. He proved to be a tower of strength on the occasion of Bim Thompson's tragic demise in July 1980. AOE was the very first person David Johnston very wisely contacted on discovering the catastrophe early that winter's morning. Mr. Ellison took over from there. He was actually Antony Thompson's Godfather.

On moving to Scone I routinely sought his sapient counsel. Sarah and I entertained both AOE and Mrs Connie Phillips at a 'welcome to Scone' soiree when we lived at Moobi. He told me *'the Widden Valley is a wombat hole and I'm glad to have crawled out of it'*. This surprised me. It was the only time I ever encountered him even remotely affected by alcohol as I poured him into his car. He wasn't driving I might add.

AOE and his faithful secretary at AO Ellison & Co Miss Norah Elliott ran the Bletchingly Syndicate for ST Wootton and others. We were both shareholders. It was a binary symbiotic arrangement. Not long before he died AOE presented me with a large framed photograph of champion stallion Bletchingly. He signed it on the back: ***'Bill: In gratitude for many generousities. Alfred Ellison 2nd December 1986'***. He died on 12th June 1987 aged 84. As I left the room he said to me in his very best clipped barrister's patois: ***'Bill. Let me tell you; you have to be a very wealthy man to go chasing thoroughbred horses'***. He was talking about someone else; but it was a lesson for me!

In 2017 AO Ellison was inducted into the Newcastle Jockey Club's racing Hall of Fame. Good friend Sam North was his main proponent. He is featured in both videos 'The Star Kingdom Dynasty' and 'The Veterinary Surgeon on the Stud Farm' on this website. I have in my possession a letter from Stanley Wootton to Murray Bain written from the Southern Cross Hotel in Melbourne dated 31st December 1972. It is a quite revealing letter. The STW and AOE enduring partnership may have begun to 'fracture'?

Ellison modestly passes much of the credit for Baramul's success to his close friend the late Murray Bain, who ran a veterinary practice from the nearby township of Scone. Ellison appointed Bain as the stud's chief veterinary advisor and he says that was one of the best decisions he ever made. "Murray Bain was not only a warm-hearted, enthusiastic man he was also a great innovator. He introduced stomach tubing, manual pregnancy testing and many other practices that are now adopted as standard procedure on the top studs around Australia."



Murray Bain and 'Birthday Card' @ St Aubins Stud, Scone

'Birthday Card' (Edmundo ex Magnificent Lady) won the Golden Slipper Stakes and MRC Sandown Guineas in 1962 jointly owned by N D B Smith & A M Bain. Murray Bain's family were successful again in the 1980 Golden Slipper with 'Dark Eclipse' (Baguette ex Marjoram)

Baramul Stud Dispersal 1958

Complete Dispersal Sale
OF
BARAMUL STUD
On Account of Mr. A. O. Ellison,
Kerrabee, N.S.W.

TO BE HELD AT
Newmarket Stables,
Barker Street,
Randwick,
ON
TUESDAY, 15th APRIL,
1958.
Commencing at 2 p.m.

William Inglis & Son
Pty. Limited
Bloodstock Salesmen
28 O'Connell Street, Sydney.

Star Kingdom (imp.)

Featured Image: Catalogue Front Cover of Baramul Stud 'Complete Dispersal 1958'

I've referred earlier to 'economic expediency' as the driver for COMPLETE Dispersal Sales. There are also elements of 'creative marketing strategies'. Should I define that? This must have been the 'dispersal sale when you're not having a dispersal sale'? Do I recall a soft drink company promoting a well branded non-alcoholic alternative which had something to do with 'something you're doing when you're not doing something'?

In 1970 I actually accompanied the *complete dispersal sale* of Baramul Stud bloodstock to the USA when they were sold to Messrs Ellsworth, Franklin and Pessin in 1969. This was eleven years later. I wrote about it in my autobiographical 'The Infinitive History of Veterinary Practice in Scone'. See: <http://sconevetdynasty.com.au/the-infinitive-history-of-veterinary-practice-in-scone/> Clearly Mr A O Ellison had had a change of heart? There were very good reasons for doing so. His resident sire Star Kingdom had just emerged as the cosmic superstar of thoroughbred breeding in the Southern Hemisphere. He was to become one of the all-time 'greats' and five times champion sire in Australia. His legacy was to endure for perhaps fifty years? Talismanic colt 'Todman' had won the inaugural running of the Golden Slipper Stakes in scintillating style in 1957. In fact the first five Golden Slipper Stakes contested were won by the progeny of the new super sire. Eat your heart out supreme entrepreneur and ultimate hustler George Ryder!

I'm speaking from a knowledge base of supreme ignorance; not for the first time! I don't even know if the sale actually took place? 42 well credentialed mares were offered for competition. It may well have been that Mr Ellison was disappointed with the performance of his foundation sires Kerry Piper (Imp.) and Osborne II (Imp.)? Mr Ellison was a distinguished barrister by profession.

He was used to success. He had an enduring passion for horticulture and ‘large scale gardening’; his words. He meant farming. I don’t think he was ever greatly enamoured with the thoroughbred industry and its concomitant ‘colourful racing identities’? He vehemently eschewed the vigorous attentions of investigative racing journalists. Most of all he hated being addressed by them as ‘Alf’! He was AO to many, Mr Ellison to some and ‘Allwyn’ to his closest friends. I think he was ultimately relieved when he finally retired to ‘Kilwinning Stud’ near Scone? In a well lubricated weak moment he told me ‘the Widden Valley was a Wombat Hole and he was glad to have climbed out of it’! His long time housekeeper and companion Mrs Connie Phillips is still with us (just) at 96. I would love to ask her a few questions; ‘but it is out of the question’. She is in another world at Strathearn House Aged Care facility in Scone. It’s out of my hands. (Mrs Phillips died in 2020 having only just made 100!).

Mr Ellison gave a cameo even virtuoso performance in the totemic video ‘The Star Kingdom Dynasty’. See: <http://sconevetdynasty.com.au/the-star-kingdom-dynasty/> . There are differing views of how Star Kingdom arrived at Baramul? The ‘Donald’ would describe them as alternative facts? We have Mr Ellison’s word on it. He was a lawyer after all?

Baramul Stud Dispersal 1970

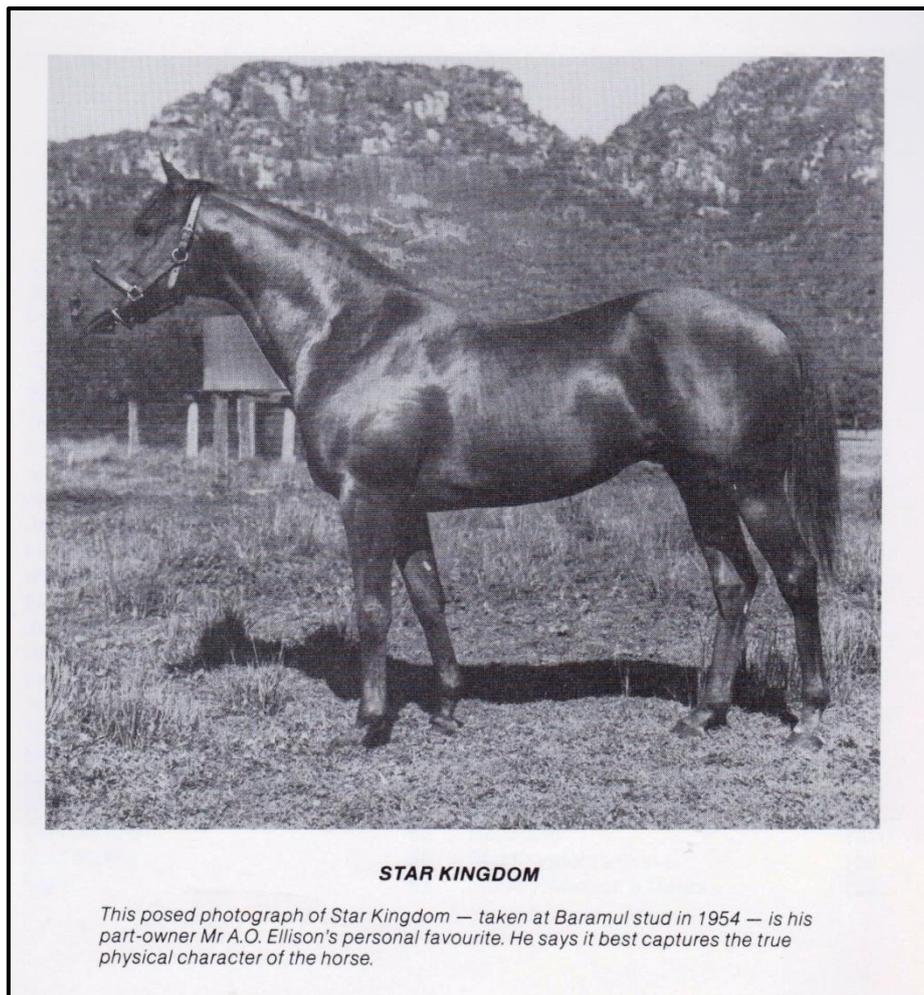


Photo courtesy of Peter Pring and ‘The Thoroughbred Press

In July 1970 I was extremely fortunate to accompany as attendant veterinarian the last major shipment of horses to traverse the wild Pacific to west coast USA. The MV '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/animal management training! My co-strappers were Malcolm Ayoub who has recently achieved national notoriety/fame 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 with some psychological baggage was occasionally AWOL.

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 4-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 HV 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 7 – 9 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 Morman 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-ingenue female residents of Hollywood and secondly by purchasing overnight TB stallion success 'Vaguely Noble' from the UK. My colleague John Morgan 'vetted' the latter in Newmarket prior to his sale to the US.

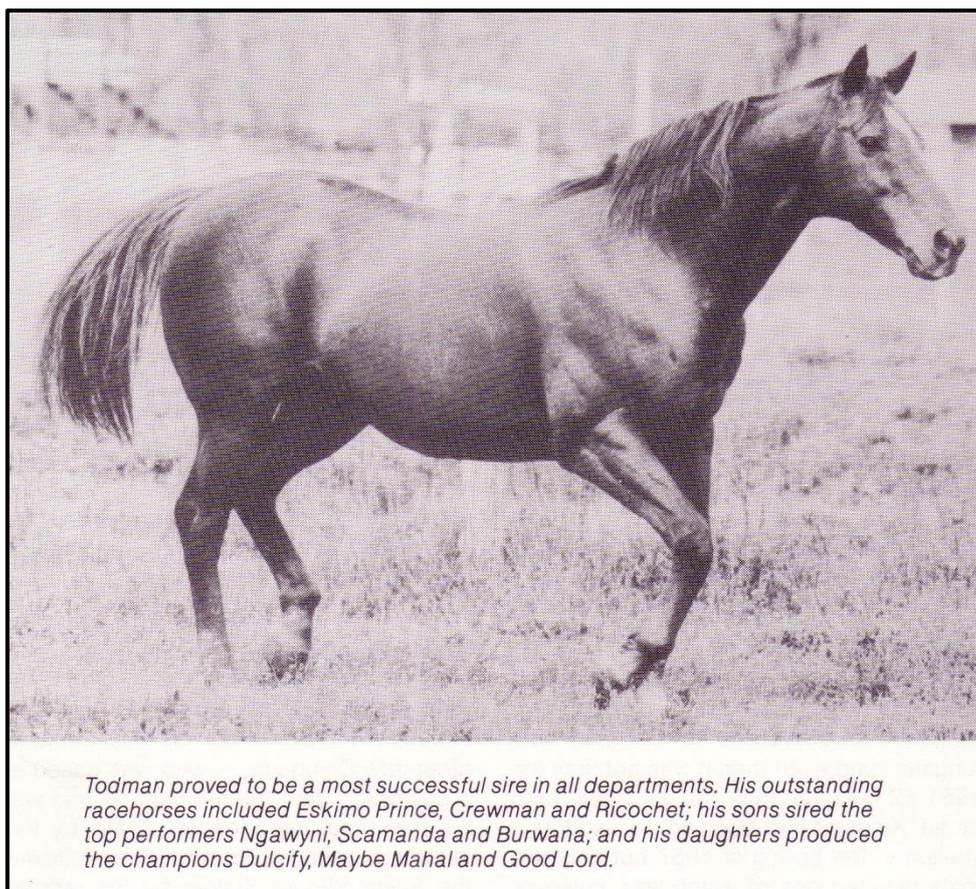
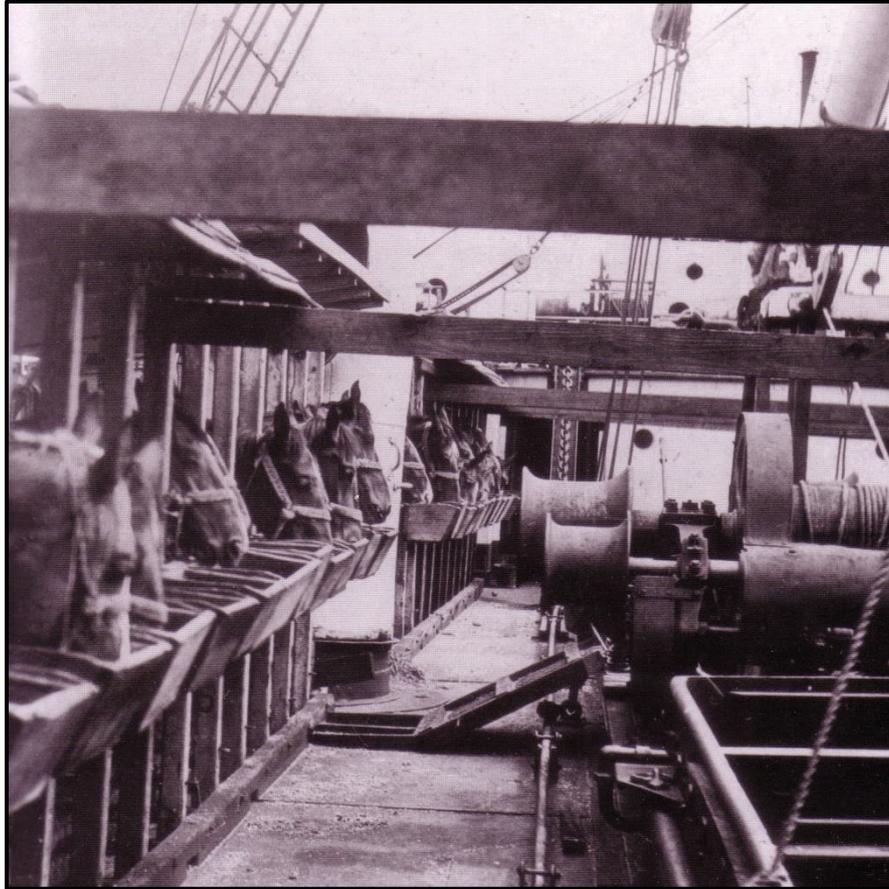


Photo courtesy of Peter Pring and 'The Thoroughbred Press'

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 ingenuer 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 and Dr Judy White

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 3! 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 Celsius), sanguineous blood tinged watery nasal discharge, distress, terminal struggling and death all within 2 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 PM. 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' + foetus 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. I am forced to confess the circumstances were unique, however!

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 of 'Crystapen' (Glaxo) = 3g crystalline penicillin intra-venously and 10 – 15 mega units 'Triopopen' (Glaxo) = 6g – 9g procaine/benethamine penicillin intra muscularly**. This was repeated one or two times. I/we 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 mare(s) were removed from their stall(s) 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/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 4 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 spare(s)!

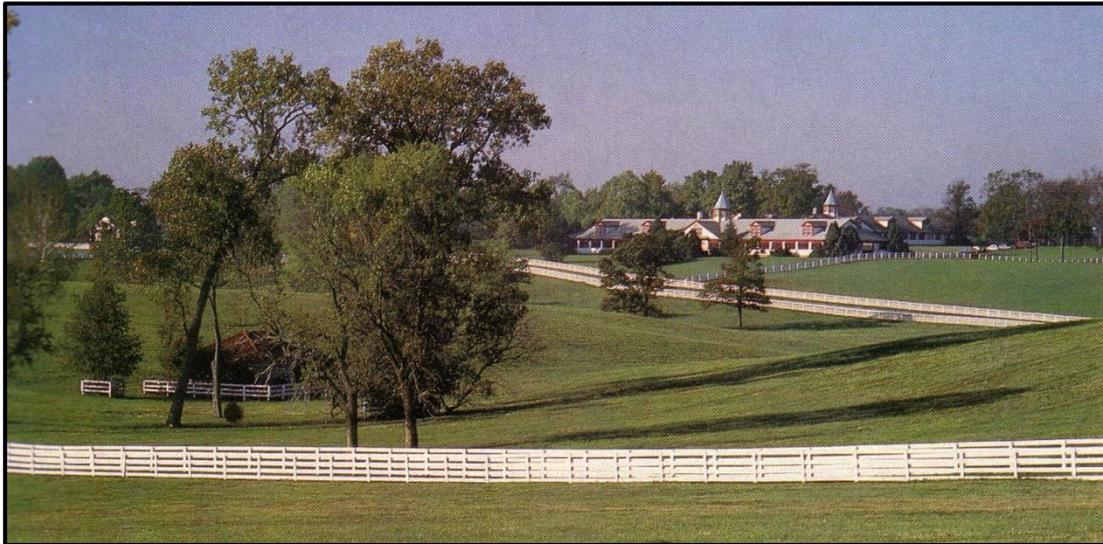
Waikiki was also exceptional! Hans Selgren, ship's bursar, entrepreneur, urbane avid punter, motel owner and resident of Brisbane put on the greatest show on earth in a bar on the strip. His sobbing rendition of the pain of loneliness at sea so impressed the gullible but sympathetic barmaid we had our 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 LA we were met by boarding party including a senior CA 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.

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 1 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 Lace'

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!

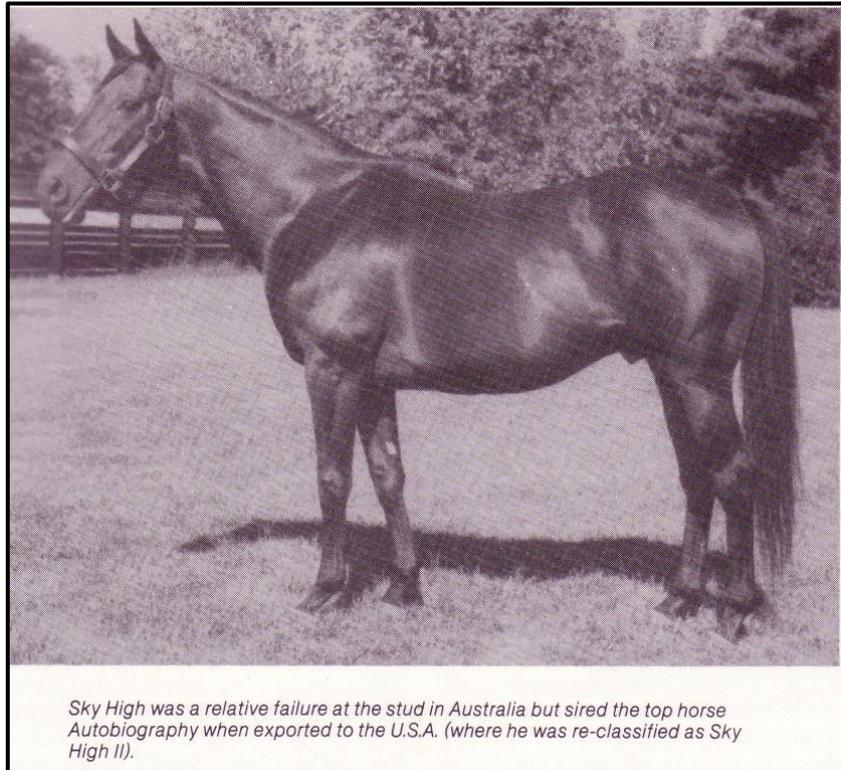


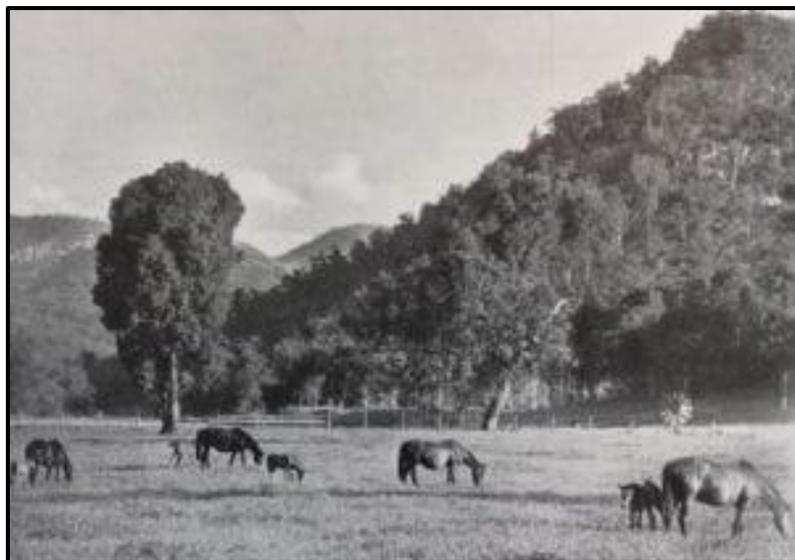
Photo courtesy of Peter Pring and 'The Thoroughbred Press'

Alfred Owen Ellison

See also and acknowledge: <https://kingsoftheturf.com/1950-alister-runs-a-true-course/>

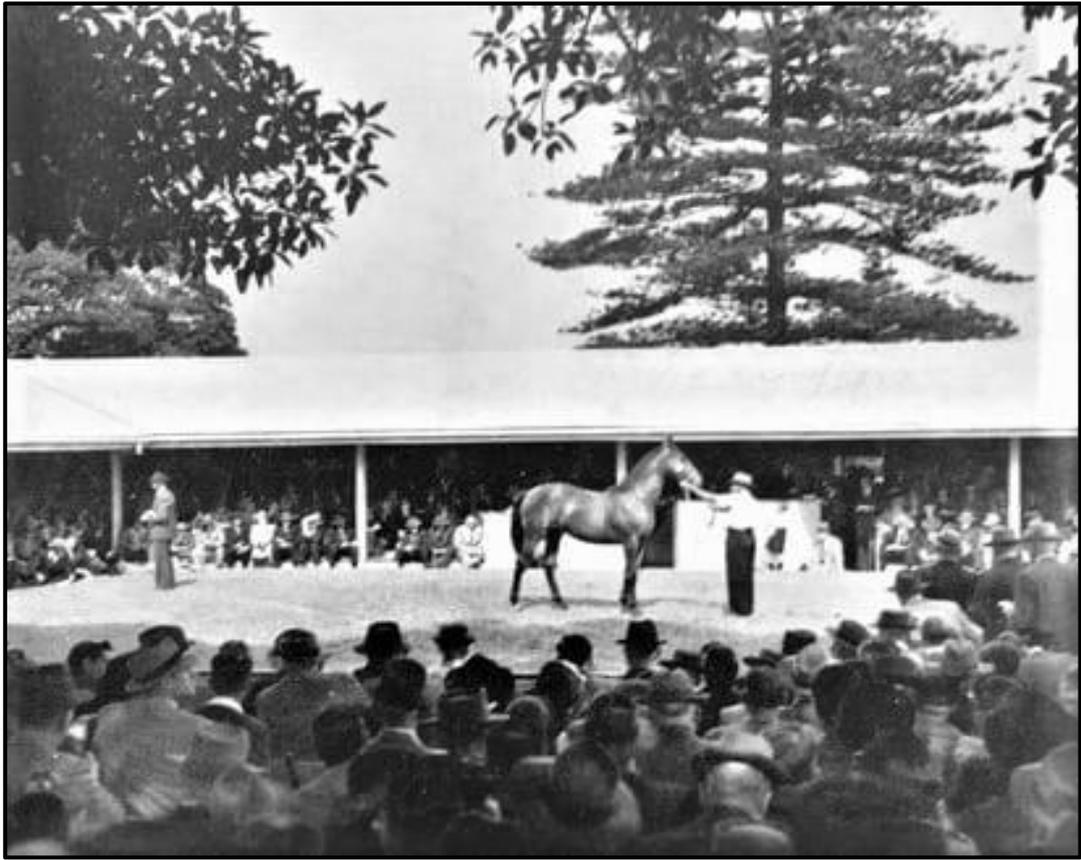
For debonair breeder Alfred Owen Ellison, Alister marked an impressive beginning for his newly established *Baramul Stud* in the Widden Valley. Born in Queensland on January 1st 1903, Ellison was the middle boy of a fairly evenly spaced family of six children born of a Methodist minister and a cultivated and scholarly mother. Educated at Newington College, Sydney, in his last year at the school in 1919 he was Senior Prefect and awarded the Old Boys' Prize. Ellison subsequently won an exhibition to Sydney University where, in residence at Wesley College, he established a strong academic record graduating as a B.A. in 1924 and a Law degree with Honours in 1927. After serving as an articled clerk with Robson and Cowlshaw during his university studies, almost immediately upon graduation 'A. O.', as he was commonly known in legal circles, began his city practice 'A. O. Ellison & CO.' in a one-room office, sparsely furnished with a desk, a telephone and a typewriter. From its foundation, the firm assisted N.S.W. manufacturers in relation to their rights and liabilities, including those under industrial relations and occupational health and safety legislation. It quickly expanded into insurance litigation in 1933 and relocated to one of the city's wealthiest streets.

Ever since his childhood in Queensland, Ellison had enjoyed an affinity with both horticulture and horses. As his legal practice expanded and he began serving on a range of company boards, Ellison had the money to indulge his hobbies. Initially, he started breeding horses on a seven-acre property at Wahroonga and later as his interest expanded and prior to his purchase of Baramul, he kept mares at the Widden Stud. Indeed, it was through his relationship with Widden that Ellison became aware of the land formerly known as Joe's Paddock, and then Barramul, coming on to the market. The property had been used for breeding some good bloodstock in the past but was a 900-acre dairy farm when he purchased it in 1947.



Baramul Stud, Kerrabee 1949 (Australian Thoroughbreds)

Ellison dropped one 'r' from the name Barramul for it to become Baramul, and then spent the better part of four years developing the best type of pasture with ryegrass and lucerne being lavishly spread on the ground. In time, Ellison would expand the property to encompass some 5000 acres with two-fifths of the property under lucerne. The Baramul brand, which was an image of a barbed tail taken from a wyvern, derived from the heraldic symbol of his old school, Newington College. Baramul under Ellison wasn't just famous for thoroughbreds. 'A.O.' was an enthusiastic grower of camellias and soon realised that the soil there was capable of producing prize-winning plants. Indeed, together with Professor E. G. Waterhouse, Ellison arranged displays of camellias at the Macquarie Galleries and David Jones. In due course, he even had a variety of camellia japonica named after himself. Alf Ellison was an early committeeman of a revitalised N.S.W. division of the Bloodhorse Breeders' Association and in 1950 he was elected unopposed to its presidency.



Inglis Yearling Sales 1950 courtesy of Ian Ibbett 'Kings of the Turf'



Inglis Yearling Sales 1950 courtesy of Ian Ibbett 'Kings of the Turf'

Saturday, September 30th, 1950

A Sweepstakes of £50 each, £5 forfeit or £1 only if declared before 3 o'clock pm on Monday, September 18th 1950; with £10,000 added. Second horse £2,000 and third horse £1,000 from the prize. For three-year-old colts and fillies at time of starting: colts: 8 st. 10lb; fillies 8 st. 5lb. The second forfeit to be declared and paid to the Secretary of the AJC only before 12 o'clock noon on Thursday, September 28th 1950, or the nominator will be liable for the whole stake.

1st: £8,165; 2nd £2,000; 3rd £1,000.

Day Fine; Track Good

1st	Mr W. Balloch's	ch. c.	ALISTER	Whirlaway - New Flower	8-10	R. Heather
2nd	Mr R. Symonds's	b. c.	RUMYLE	Whirlaway - Magi	8-10	T. Mullane
3rd	Mr A. R. Creswick's	br. f.	TRUE COURSE	Midstream - Urumalong	8-5	W. Williamson
4th	Messrs M. K. & F. J. Robertson's	br. c.	Auld Acquaintance	Double Remove - Wee Did	8-10	R. Selkrig
5th	Mr V. E. H. Davis's	b. c.	Aristocrat	Le Grand Duc - Kirrang	8-10	D. Munro
6th	Mr C. H. Schmidt's	b. c.	Boatman	Midstream - Passage	8-10	G. Moore
7th	Messrs J. K. MacKay's & C. G. Skene's	ch. c.	Panama	Brueghel - Paneerai	8-10	B. Smith
8th	Mr H. Longworth's	b. c.	Careless	Midstream - Grumeti	8-10	T. Hill
9th	Sir S. Snow's & Mr A. C. Lewis's	b. c.	Poitiers	Agincourt - Platonic	8-10	W. Fellows
10th	Mr H. C. Ford's	b. c.	Karang	High Caste - Gay Romance	8-10	A. Ward
11th	Mr F. J. Lussick's & Mrs F. M. Bingham's	b or br. c.	Grand Union	Fresco - Figurine	8-10	V. Lawrence
12th	Mr A. Bassar's	br. c.	French Cavalier	Genetout - Night of Love	8-10	N. Sellwood
13th	Mr W. Degnan's	b. or br. c.	Canning Downs	Rivoli - Elevation	8-10	W. Briscoe
14th	Messrs J. H. & A. Davis's	br. c.	Waterfront	Tuhitarata - Vapour Trail	8-10	W. Cook
15th	Mr G. Barton's	ch. c.	Brutus	Ruthless - Ozel	8-10	C. McDonald
16th	Mr F. Packer's	ch. c.	Le Dauphin	Genetout - Jeune Fille	8-10	N. McGrowdie
17th	Messrs E. Hurcum's, T. Irwin's & K. P. Lynch's	blk. c.	My Lord	Lord Spear - Rocky Kate	8-10	W. Hogg
Last	Messrs D. A., K. B., & A. A. MacDonald's	b. c.	Gallant Roger	Jolly Roger - Tronada	8-10	G. Podmore

Betting: 3/1 True Course; 4/1 Aristocrat; 9/2 Careless; 7/1 Alister; 10/1 Karang; 12/1 Boatman; 16/1 French Cavalier; 25/1 Rumyle; 33/1 Panama, Waterfront, Poitiers; 40/1 Brutus; 50/1 Dauphin; 66/1 Auld Acquaintance; Canning Downs; 80/1 Grand Union; 200/1 My Lord, Gallant Roger

Margins: 2 lengths, 1/2 length. Time: 2 minutes and 32 3/4 seconds.

Breeder of Winner: Mr A. O. Ellison, NSW. Trainer of Winner: Mr H. F. Wolters, Victoria.

Winning Colours: Black and white stripes, red sash, sleeves, and cap.

1950 AJC Derby Field and Conditions courtesy of Ian Ibbett 'Kings of the Turf'



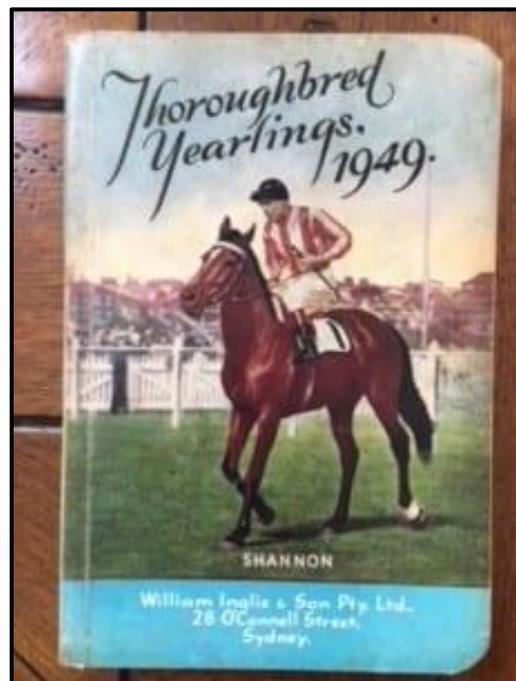
1950 AJC Derby Finish (Graham Caves Collection). Courtesy of Ian Ibbett 'Kings of the Turf'

1st. Alister 2nd Rumyle 3rd True Course



Alister (Graham Caves Collection) Courtesy of Ian Ibbett 'Kings of the Turf'

Alister was just one of three horses offered by him at the 1949 Sydney Yearling Sales, in the first yearling draft from the property. A solicitor in his professional life, Ellison had built up a large practice in Sydney and served on a wide range of company boards. Initially, he started breeding horses on a seven-acre property at Wahroonga, and one of his early purchases came in 1943 with the unraced three-year-old filly, New Flower. Purchased for a trifling sum of sixty guineas, she was a daughter of our 1938 Derby hero, Nuffield, and a three-quarter sister to the unlucky Silver Standard. Her first foal to Veilmond was Set Purpose, winner of the A.J.C. Squatters Handicap among other races and runner-up in the Breeders' Plate. Alister came along as her fourth foal after New Flower was sent to the imported *Widden* stallion, Whirlaway, and brought 1500 guineas at the same sales that had seen True Course change hands. It was actually in 1947, the year of Alister's foaling that Ellison bought *Baramul*, a former 900-acre dairy farm. While the farm was transformed, Lionel Israel reared Alister at *Segenhoe Stud*. Ellison's success as a studmaster, however, eventually resulted in *Baramul* expanding to more than 5000 acres, and as we shall see, for a time become one of the most influential studs in the Widden and Hunter Valleys.



1949 Inglis Yearling Catalogue

Whirlaway, although only lightly raced because of the War, was a successful performer in England and was twice placed at Ascot over one-and-a-half miles. A son of His Highness The Aga Khan's unbeaten Bahram, the winner of £43,086 in stakes that included the English Derby and St Leger, Whirlaway was the first of that stallion's progeny to arrive in Australia. Whirlaway's dam was a half-sister to Scottish Union, yet another winner of the English St Leger.

Imported to Australia by Frank Thompson of *Widden Stud* to stand alongside Brueghel, Whirlaway began his stud career here with a succession of smart juveniles in his first season, with the likes of the A.J.C. Gimcrack Stakes winner, Rhumba, as well as Curiosity and Lady Pirouette. Alister came along in the stallion's second crop and was an early October foal.

Whirlaway became the first stallion since Multiform in 1905 to sire both the first and second place-getters in the A.J.C. Derby although Rumyle like Alister was bred from an outside mare visiting the stud. After Alf Ellison purchased *Baramul Stud*, he and Frank Thompson became neighbours. Moreover, the two men had much to do with each other as they were vice-chairman and chairman respectively of the Bloodhorse Breeders' Association of Australia. As the two Whirlaway colts, Alister and Rumyle slowly developed Derby form there was some good-natured banter between the two men as to which would be the better. There was much mutual satisfaction when the two horses finished first and second. And to cap a wonderful day for Frank Thompson and *Widden*, Achilles, the Epsom Handicap winner had also been bred there being by their former stallion Ajax.

Alfred Owen Ellison: Lillye on Legends

Lillye on Legends: AJC Racing Calendar, March 1991

Perfectionist and a Man for all Seasons

I had my doubts for 59 years on the racing intelligence of anyone who bore the family name Mercier; but not any longer.

The seed of my suspicion, you see, was planted in my then impressionable mind by that famous and droll funny man, Emile Mercier, one of a rare breed of cartoonists.

We were then both working at "Smith's Weekly", in company with another unique humourist, Lenny Lower. What times! What memories!

How lucky could a young man be?

In those days the trams came up from Circular Quay, along Phillip Street, rattling around the short, sharp bend of Hunter Street into Elizabeth Street and beyond.

It was long this route the famed "Bondi Tram" ran which, if you know Sydney, is stepping back a bit in time.

On the corner of Phillip and Hunter was the CIB cop shop, immediately opposite "Smith's Weekly" whose Bohemian workers slaked their thirsts at the three watering holes close by – the Assembly, Tudor and Durban Club.

All are gone today, but what memories and sore heads they spawned.

Emile Mercier, who excelled in even Jo (Radish) Johnson at drawing weird and wonderful horses, that year (1941) decided to organise a five bob sweep on what he called "the big horse race".

Five shillings in those days was a respectable amount of money, the basic wage being much less than a "spin", a "fiver" in other words, a £5 note. As I said, a respectable amount of money; but Emile got me, and easily.

Everyone was running their sweep on the Melbourne Cup, but Emile assured me that his was on the Victoria Derby; which was reasonable, seeing Mercier did things differently to most.

I was pleased when I drew Skipton (out of Emile's waste paper bin – where else?); ecstatic when his jockey Norm Creighton saluted the judge in the Derby.

Monday morning could not come quickly enough for me to collect. I was first to arrive, even before the doors opened to his office, the saloon bar of the Assembly pub which adjoined the "Smiths' Weekly" building.

Finally in walked Emile. I held out my hand. Emile sadly shook his head, then ordered a reviver before he told me, "Sorry, mate, the sweep's on the Melbourne Cup. I got bamboozled ... you know I don't know one race form another".

I was shattered, then had to agonise another day and a half before Skipton and Bill Cook won the Cup and I collected my “hard earned”.

As Skipton was the last three-year-old to win the Cup, back in 1941, hindsight tells me I was fortunate on two counts ... that Skipton did win; more so that Emile, Lennie, Ken Slesor and the rest of “Smith’s” bohemians did not drink out the sweep money the day before the Cup.

Such long-ago thoughts of frustration and joy usually soften with the passing of time but I was wary of any Mercier until recently when I noticed a desk pad truism attributed to me, Charles Alfred Mercier, who, with much wisdom wrote, “what we learn with pleasure we never forget”.

And that my friends is why I have broken the trainer-jockey mould to include Alfred Owen Ellison in the pleasures I derived this series on Racing’s “Legends”.

I will never forget the pleasures I derived from my visits to Alf Ellison on his lovely “Baramul” stud at Kerrabee in the Widden Valley where he stood the great Star Kingdom and his son Todman.

Whenever I was privileged to hear Alf’s reminiscences, opinions, even his minor censures, I clung to his every word.

Alfred Owen Ellison was his own man, a perfectionist, intensely proud and possessed of a sharp mind; an even sharper tongue if aroused.

But he was quick to forgive and forget as I and others found out.

Noel Hennessy, the stud groom at “Baramul” for 13 years, summed up his old “boss” as a man who liked and usually got his own way.

“He could be very cantankerous, but he mellowed with age”, Noel told me. “Once you got to really know him, you were all right; but you never told him a lie or tried to hide a mistake”.

“If you did and he found out, all Hell broke loose. It was best, if you did make a mistake, to own up straight away before ‘A.O’ found out”.

If I had five words to summarise Alfred Ellison they would be ... “Grand character, with great character”.

I found Alf a remarkable man, gifted in so many ways, but our friendship did not come easy.

He sent at least five stern letters threatening to sue me and “The Herald” for enormous amounts when I wrote stories that inflamed his anger.

But then we all boil at different temperatures. It’s the aftermath that matters.

I recall one story in which I pointed out that yearling buyers were given no opportunity to buy the winners of the first five Golden Slipper Stakes.

All were sired by Star Kingdom, Alf’s pride and joy, and each was retained by its breeder.

This rankled “A.O” no end at first reading and into the office came the letter, demanding apology and the threat of legal action.



Photo courtesy of Peter Pring and 'The Thoroughbred Press'

It was typical, a few days later when Alf walked up to me at Randwick with a twinkle in his eye, put out his hand and said, "Bert, we've been good friends too long to argue and fight over such matters, mind you"

I knew that it was complete forgiveness but Alf had added the “mind you” to indicate he still considered I was in the wrong.

Recently I was discussing Alf Ellison with his good friend Bill Howey, the popular veterinary expert at Scone on whom Ellison and all other Hunter Valley breeders rely so heavily.

Bill, too, had felt the lash of Alf’s tongue. He recalled a little idiosyncrasy that I had forgotten.

“Whenever “A.O” walked towards you with his head cocked a little to one side, you knew a blast was coming”, Bill remembered.

There was the occasion that Alf came at me with his head practically at right angles to his neck. He was fairly snorting smoke from his nostrils until he recognised me.

As usual my first port of call into the Widden Valley had been “Baramul”. It was my first visit after transferring from the “Sydney Morning Herald” to the “Daily Mirror”.

I was met at the door by Alf’s housekeeper, Mrs Phillips, to whom I explained the purpose of our visit.

She called to Alf who was somewhere in the back of the house, “The Mirror’s here to see you”.

From the inner sanctum came this furious bellow ... “Get off my property at once, and never come back. I’ll have nothing to do with “The Mirror”.

“Cripes”, I thought, “What have I done now?”

I was staggered by the ferocity of the blast but, knowing I had not written anything of late to displease Alf, I tried to learn from Mrs Phillips the reason for her boss’s anger.

She was as puzzled as I and we continued to talk. Alf, hearing that we were still on the doorstep, again bellowed his demand that we leave the property forthwith.

“Otherwise I’ll put you off myself”, he thundered, then burst through the curtains breathing fire and brimstone.

He came out of the shadows and, momentarily blinked as he looked into the bright sunlight, he took a moment to recognise me.

When he did he gave a big grin and said, in a tone as sweet and smooth as honey, “Oh, it’s you Bert. I thought it was that other bastard who wrote such dreadful things about us the last time “The Mirror” was here”.

“Come inside ... Mrs Phillips, we’ll have tea and scones, thank you”.

Alf and I then sat in the cool of the comfort-filled lounge room and talked long about the early days of “Baramul”, Star Kingdom and Alf Ellison.

During the conversation Alf asked me if I would be interested in writing the story of “Baramul”. I replied I would be delighted when the time came to put the Ellison recollections on paper.

We left it at that. Some years later, when we were together at Wayne Harris 21st birthday party at Muswellbrook, Alf broached the subject again. Again it was left in abeyance.



Star Kingdom & Todman & 'Baramul'

Photo courtesy of Peter Pring and 'The Thoroughbred Press'

Today I'm sorry that we never got around to recording the history and thoughts of Alf Ellison on his beloved "Baramul". That story in Alf's own words would have made wonderful reading.

There was much that had never been told because it was a sad day for all when Alfred Ellison died on June 12, 1987, just 14 months after his great friend Stanley Wootton passed on.

There was an aftermath to that delightful tea and scones incident. Only a few hours after our stormy arrival, Alf's hackles were again raised and we were once more in peril of being tossed off "Baramul".

And this time Alf had good reason for his anger, even though the cause was accidental.

It was about 120 degrees in the waterbag when we left the homestead to inspect the young foals in the magnificent front paddock that adjoins the homestead.

During the inspection Alf told me of Stanley Wootton's uncanny eye for a young thoroughbred.

“Stanley comes up here practically every season to inspect the young foals. He stands among them at close hand but rarely touches them. He looks them straight in the eye and seems to sense their likely ability”, Alf explained.

“Each year he invariably picks the best of the crop. It’s uncanny how he does it ... he’s a genius ... he has taught me so much about horses”, Alf enthused.

The pasture was deep, almost up to the windows of our car and it was stifling hot. We were looking forward to a cool drink before we went on our way.

The foals were sleeping or resting in the tall pasture. It was all so peaceful and mind-numbing.

It was time to go. My driver turned the car., reversing through the tall growth before heading towards the front gate.

The next second Alf let out an almighty bellow ... “stop ... stop the car now ... IMMEDIATELY”.

Luckily the driver was a man of quick reflex. He slammed on the brakes. The car stopped short, but only a split second before this sleepy, gangling colt scrambled to its feet, from almost underneath the rear bumper bar.

We all breathed sighs of relief. It was such a narrow squeak that Alf lifted his head to the heavens, forgetting for once to tilt it in anger.

Me? I was shaking and in too much of a hurry to get away, rather than contemplate witing around for a cool drink.

I would have been in an even far greater rush to leave “Baramul” if I had known then what I learned some two years later.

Alf, during the tour of inspection, had pointed to the Star Kingdom colt and explained that he was Stanley Wootton’s pick of the 1965 crop.

It wasn’t until two years later that I was looking at my notes and discovered that the colt we had almost run over was the brilliant Biscay!

Alf Ellison was man of rare determination: a fighter of great courage when courage was needed.

Nora Elliott, his long-serving secretary, told me that her “boss” was able to achieve so much because of his “great heart”.

“He was a man of great heart ... a heart as big as Star Kingdom’s”, she told me.

Bill Howey recalled an instance of “A.O.’s” (he was always “A.O.” to the veterinarians at Scone) determination and strength of purpose.

“A.O. had just taken delivery of a new, red Mercedes Benz”, Bill explained “when he was involved in a bad accident. Both legs were crushed ... the doctors said he might never walk again.

“But it was typical of ‘A.O.’ that he decided to defy medical opinion. He was being wheeled into surgery when he lifted his head and demanded “halt this contraption. Show me the plates (x-ray).

“Then he asked the doctor alongside him, “What are my options?”.

“Traction or surgery”, was the reply.

“Then surgery is out, put me on traction”, Alf ordered.

After some time in complete traction, Alf was put on hydrotherapy; a long, painful process, but he was determined to walk again under his own power.

Bill recalled Alf’s delight the day he and Murray Bain visited him in hospital.

“A.O” was bursting with enthusiasm when he told his visitors that he had moved both legs about an inch under water earlier that morning.

Murray Bain, a grand Scot with an irrepressible humour if he liked you, was one of Alf’s best friends. Murray, too, loved “Baramul” which he always described as “paradise for man and beast”.

Consequently, Alf was shocked when Murray burst out laughing at the patient’s revelation that he had moved his legs under water for the first time.

“What in hell is so funny” demanded Alf angrily?

Murray, realising he had offended his good friend, was immediately apologetic, but he retained a grin.

“Sorry, old man”, Murray said, but on the way here Bill and I were discussing your unusual capabilities. We agreed that if anyone could emulate J.C. and walk over water, it was you”.

Alf, knowing he was with real friends, then laughed as heartily as his visitors.

Alf Ellison too had a quick turn of wit. There was the day he walked out of the vendor’s box at Newmarket.

John Kelso, another good friend, noticed that Alf’s trouser fly was undone. His quick whisper alerted Alf to the embarrassment, but he did not turn a hair.

“Thank you, John” he said, “but dead men do not fall out of open windows”.

It was easy to run off at every tangent when one recalls warm, wonderful personalities. I have done this with my story on Alfred Ellison, but make no apology.

He is truly a Legend of Australian Racing, also a man who left his mark on everything he attempted.

But there must be some chronological restraint, so let me begin at the beginning.

Alfred Owen Ellison was born on December 31, 1902, at Pittsworth, a small hamlet outside Toowoomba on the Darling Downs of Queensland where his father was pastor of the Methodist Church.

Almost 40 years later, leading Sydney solicitor, Mr Ellison developed a passion for thoroughbred breeding ... wise men say that life begins at 40.

Alf progressed from a backyard breeder to the ownership of “Baramul”, one of the most successful thoroughbred breeding properties that Australia has known.

It was at “Baramul” that the famed Star Kingdom line was born, a breeding line that brought international significance to Australia.

But there was no thought of thoroughbred dynasties when the Ellison family moved to suburban Arncliffe. Schooling then was foremost in teenager Alfred Owen’s mind; his desire for a good education being stimulated by his mother Fanny who had been a school teacher.

Alf graduated to the Cleveland (Sydney) Street High School from where he gained a scholarship to Newington College from 1918 to 1920.

Ellison, although of small stature, became a champion schoolboy athlete at Newington, specialising in half mile events.

He was out of athletics for a year when it was found that he was suffering from an enlarged heart, but he recovered and became the junior and senior champion at Newington.

Next he gained an Exhibition that gave him admittance to Sydney University where he obtained Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Law degrees.

He was a member of Wesley College’s shooting and rowing teams while at University, again achieving much distinction.

Ellison, in those days and later in his legal business, was always known as Owen. It was not until he became interested in Racing that he was called Alf and then only by his friends.

(Author’s note: He much preferred the sobriquet ‘Allwyn’ by his closest friends; like Murray Bain)

Ellison carried such an air of respectability that most Racing folk referred to him as “Mr Ellison”.

As Plutarch put it ... “character is simply a habit long continued”: with Alf Ellison it never waned.

Ellison’s first great passion, apart from his legal business, was gardening. He read everything about gardening that he could get his hands on and soon became an expert on roses and other shrubs, but he specialised in the study and propagation of Camellias.

Alf was regarded as Sydney’s leading authority on Camellias in the early 1930s; being instrumental in reviving many species that were in danger of becoming extinct.

Norah Elliott recalled Ellison searching old Sydney gardens for Camellia species that were dying out.

I knew that Alf maintained lovely gardens on “Baramul” but she surprised me when she revealed that there is the “A.O. Ellison Camellia” (a double red blossom); also “Winter Cheer”, one of his many propagations.

Ellison became a leading member of the Sydney Horticultural Society under the patronage of Sir Hugh Poate, the famous Macquarie Street surgeon.

Alf brought a great revival to Camellia growing when he imported many species from Japan before World War II, and he researched the subject often in discussion with his good friend Garvin, curator of Sydney's Botanical Gardens.

Ellison passed his knowledge of Camellias on to Professor E G Waterhouse when he became heavily involved with thoroughbred breeding.

It was a humble beginning that led to the greatness of "Baramul"; surely and inspiration to the 'Johnny Come Lately's' of the breeding industry.

Alf Ellison bought his first thoroughbred in January 1937, at Newcastle. Here he was guided by trainer Max Laidlaw in the purchase of the moderate performer Spearbine for 180 guineas.

Spearbine, five years old, had won once from 14 starts in the previous six months, in a Novice Handicap (1m) at Kensington when ridden by F (Billy) Hickey.

Laidlaw saw possibilities in Spearbine as a hurdler and three weeks after the purchase the gelding earned his new owner £50 by finishing second in the AJC Hurdle at Randwick.

There were only five starters, two fell but the new-chum owner was delighted at his quick return of money.

The racebook however gave no indication that Alfred Owen Ellison was an owner.

He appeared in the racebook as "Mr E Wyvern", the anonymity was taken from the Newington College emblem ... "a heraldic monster in the form of a dragon with two arms, two legs and a tapering body".

Alf Ellison adopted the anonymity of "Mr E Wyvern" because of his fear that the biggest client of his legal business, Manufacturers Mutual Insurance, might disapprove of his dabbling in racehorses.

He need not have worried. In later years the executives of MMI took great pride in their solicitor's triumphs as a thoroughbred breeder.

Spearbine's second start for Ellison was an unplaced effort in a Flying Welter at Rosebery, but 10 days later he earned another £380 by winning the AJC Hurdle on Sarcherie's Doncaster Handicap day.

Spearbine (J Harris) started 5-2 favourite and won nicely. Four days later, despite a rise to 10.2, he won again at Randwick, this time over 2m 3f, starting even-money favourite and scoring by three lengths.

Spearbine had only four more starts, without success, before his career came to an end; but well before that "Mr Wyvern" was well and truly hooked on the Sport of Kings.

Alf got so much enjoyment at watching Spearbine when on agistment that he purchased 10 wooded acres in Burns Road, Wahroonga, within walking distance of his home in Kintore Street.

Alf cleared the small piece of land and, with his expert farming knowledge, developed it into a prime, if tiny agistment property.

The block of land where Alf reared his early thoroughbred foals is still vacant today, although it is prime, valuable property in an area of Sydney's North Shore that is prized as a housing location.

Alf soon got the itch to breed a thoroughbred or two on his 'backyard' stud. One of the first broodmare purchases, in 1938, was the Moabite mare Black Streak who was owned by Sir James Murdoch.

Her first foal for Alf was the winner Ruffle King, in 1939. She was not bred again that year and her 9141 colt foal by Royal Sun died.

Black Streak's produce in 1942 was handsome black colt by Veilmond that sold as a yearling for 1000 guineas which Alf thought was an excellent return.

Allan Morrisby, then a successful trainer, made the purchase on behalf of Bill Kirwan and the colt, racing as Native Son, developed into one of the best sprinters of his day.

He won at Canterbury at two years, scored again the following season – Moorefield and Randwick; but he really blossomed with maturity. His wins included the 1946 Carrington Stakes and AJC Villiers Stakes, both at Randwick.

Other horses that Ellison on his 'backyard' plot were Wintop and Baccarat.

Alf, then plumbing the bargain basements, bought Top Jig, the dam of Wintop – in foal to Winooka for 32 guineas at the dispersal sale of the 'Waratan' Stud at Peak Hill in April 1943.

Three months alter Alf went to Newmarket saleyard where he bought the three-year-old filly New Flower for only 70 guineas.

He retired the filly to stud immediately, putting her to the dual St Leger winner Veilmond (Limond – Veil) who was beaten by a head by Tregilla in the AJC Derby.

New Flower's first foal was a smallish colt which Alf offered at the 1946 Sydney yearling sale. When bidding stopped at 650 guineas, Ellison passed in the colt; declaring that he would prove the buyers poor judges by racing the colt himself.

With that resolve in mind, he named the colt Set Purpose and placed it in Bert Bellingham's stables at Randwick, alongside at his first appearance in the AJC Breeders' Plate.

Seven days later, he was again runner-up, this time beaten three lengths by Deep Sea.

Three more seconds followed that season – to Valiant Crown (the eventual AJC Derby winner) in the AJC George Rowe Handicap, to slander at Warwick Farm and finally a long head defeat by Marine Victory in the mile Winter Juvenile ta Randwick.

Set Purpose had 11 starts in his first season for five seconds and three thirds. He did not win at two, but he did prove Ellison's point that he had been worth more than 650 guineas as a yearling.

Two more placings followed at three and it looked as though Set Purpose was well on the way to being a carbon copy of his illustrious relation – Silver Standard, one of our unluckiest good horses, whose second placings included the Melbourne Cup, Caulfield Cup and AJC Metropolitan (twice).

But the long lane eventually turned. Set Purpose broke through for his first win at Rosehill, the first of five successes which included the AJC Squatters' Handicap at Randwick.

Set Purpose's continued progress convinced the solicitor/hobby breeder to expand his thoroughbred interests.

Fate (and shrewd judgement) led him to the magical Widden Valley, long-time home of the successful stud farms "Widden" and "Holbrook".

Alf inspected the dairy property of the Simpson Brothers. He liked what he saw and bought the 1,100 acres property which was then called "Barramul".

Later Alf expanded his original purchase to 5,000 acres before selling a large tract, the bottom 3000 acre sector, to "Widden".

For some reason, not generally known, Ellison dropped an "r" from the aboriginal name which became famous not only throughout Australia but, New Zealand, Ireland, Great Britain and the USA.

It was Noel Hennessy who came up with an explanation for the name "Barramul", then the reason why Alf deleted an "r".

"Barramul" was the word the aborigines used to describe the small forest of yellow box trees that grew on the high ridge to the left of the homestead", Noel told me.

"I believe that the boss dropped an "r" because, like many arcing folk, he believed that the seven-letter name brought good luck".

It could be an old stablehand's legend, but superstition or not, seven-letter "Baramul" certainly held the touch of Midas as far as Alf Ellison was concerned.

It was Hennessy who reminded me that some choice 'nuggets' were thrown up on the "Baramul" pastures from two greats – Todman and Noholme.

"Citius", a bonny mare, was foaled on "Baramul" and a lot of people forget that Sky High was born and reared there ... his dam – Flight's Daughter, was a permanent boarder", Noel enthused.

Noel, an expert handler of stallions, quit "Baramul" in 1968, a loss that caused Alf much regret in later years. Noel worked for some time on other properties but today lives at Denman where he drives a tractor for a living.

A.O. Ellison's first draft of yearlings off "Baramul" was offered at the 1949 Newmarket sales. The draft comprised three lots: the Whirlaway – New Flower colt, the Dark Lover – Fluffy Ruffle colt and the Brueghel – Spearyllia filly.

Each bore the typical bloom and growth that buyers came to expect off "Baramul" offerings subsequent years, but it was the chestnut Whirlaway – New Flower's youngster that really started Alf Ellison on the path to breeding distinction.

The colt was bought by wealthy Melbourne owner W Balloch who placed it with trainer H 'Snowy' Wolters to race as Alister.

Alister managed a single placing from his six starts at two years, but it was hint of things to come; third in the testing VRC Gibson-Carmichael Stakes at Flemington.

Alister developed at three. He won the AJC Derby, ran second in the Caulfield Guineas before taking the W S Cox Plate – Victoria Derby double.

“Baramul” was on the map, well and truly.

Alister could only finish eighth as a three-year-old in the Melbourne Cup, but the following autumn he won twice and was placed in the VRC and AJC St Legers.

New Flower, Alf’s 70 guinea purchase as a maiden mare, continued to produce winner after Set Purpose and Alister. She foaled successfully for 14 consecutive seasons before Alf culled her to Jack Thurbon’s “Willow Glen” stud at 18. She produced three more foals for her new owner.

The “Baramul” draft had grown to seven yearlings by 1951 when Alf offered the initial crop of sired by his first stallion, Kerry Piper. Big things were expected of the high-class imported stayer whose wins included the famed Cesarewitch Stakes (2m).

The only previous Cesarewitch Stakes winner imported to Australia was Enfield who got such good stayers as the Melbourne Cup winners Rimfire and Sirius; also Red Fury (Caulfield Cup) and Great Britain (Victoria Derby).

Kerry Piper was in high demand the first year his yearlings were offered. The 18 lot averaged a record 8,789 guineas, making him the top first-season sire.

But the ‘bottom soon dropped from the bucket’. Two years later “Baramul’s” nine Kerry Piper yearlings averaged only 426 guineas.

His best progeny was the AJC Summer Cup winner Pipe On, but Kerry Piper was a prime flop, especially for an up-and-coming property, “Baramul”.

Ellison wisely cut his losses, and quickly. He sold Kerry Piper after only three seasons. Fortunately, he had previously sought the assistance and advice of Stanley Wootton, to secure a suitable stallion prospect for Australia.

In 1951, a small nuggetty chestnut walked onto “Baramul” to replace Kerry Piper. At first “nuggetty” was the term to describe the young stallions conformation.

Later, it could have referred to the gold he produced for Alf Ellison and his two syndicate partners – Stanley Wootton and Reg Moses.

Yes, the new arrival was Star Kingdom. A dynasty was about to begin.

Star Kingdom was not rushed with bookings preparatory to his first season on “Baramul”, in 1951.

Ellison found it necessary to drum up some business for the newcomer, so he offered around to his neighbours.

It did not help matters and certainly “genius did anything but breathe freely” when Alf approached Tom Flynn at nearby “Oakleigh Stud”.

Tom, always a blunt character, declined an offer to send a mare or two to Star Kingdom; but his explanation was anything but diplomatic.

“Turn it up, Alf”, he said, “I don’t want to breed ponies”.

For once , Alf Ellison did not have the heart to take umbrage.

Remember, Ellison prided himself on being a perfectionist. He knew that the small nuggetty Star Kingdom did not measure up to the then accepted guidelines of thoroughbred conformation.

In fact, quite a time went by before Alf permitted photographs to be taken os Star Kingdom.

But success bends very accepted principle. As they say, thoroughbreds race well in all shapes and sizes.

Star Kingdom introduced a new “speed” mould to Australian breeding; then expanded to produce wonderful winners at Classic distances.

Within three years everyone was knocking at Alf Ellison’s door for a service to Star Kingdom. “Book Full” became the set piece in “Baramul’s” Sires of the Season advertisements.

From that time on “genius did breathe freely on Baramul”; often with a little fire from the Ellison nostrils whenever Alf recalled early critics.

Especially when Star Kingdom sired the winners of the first five Golden Slipper Stakes ... Todman, Skyline, Fine and Dandy, Sky High and the filly Magic Night.

Three years later (1964) Todman came up with Eskimo Prince ... a Golden Slipper winner from his first crop!

Three years further on, Todman struck again; with Sweet Embrace in 1967.

Nora Elliott’s sire line prediction was up and away.

Star Kingdom’s successes are well documented. No thoroughbred has had a greater impact on the Australian Breeding Industry.

When Star Kingdom died from an enlarged bowel, on April 21, 1967, the then 21-year-old had been Premier Australian Sire on five occasions. The season following his death he achieved the double – champion two-year-old sire and Premier Broodmare Sire, (the first of three such titles).

Star Kingdom sired hundreds of brilliant winners of the “black type” category; among them Todman, Noholme, Sky High, Fine and Dandy, Skyline, Time and Tide, Biscay, Star of Heaven, Planet Kingdom ... the list goes on and on.

But Star Kingdom’s greatest fame lies in the extraordinary sire line that he propagated ... leading stallions such as Todman, Biscay, Planet Kingdom, Noholme (USA); also grandsons Bletchingly, Imposing and Luskin Star.

I experienced so many unforgettable visits to “Baramul” ... the sight of so many great thoroughbred names, the beauty of the Widden Valley; all embroidered by the explanations of studmaster Elliosn.

There was my visit about a year after Star Kingdom died. I was met at the front gate by Alf who said, “quick, get out of the car. I’ve got something to show you ... you’ll like this”.

He practically bundled me into the small run-about, crossed the creek and drove past the stallion yards, to a quiet spot that nestled beneath the cliffs.

Alf proudly pointed to the elaborate grave he had fashioned to mark the burial place of his beloved Star Kingdom.

The grave was topped by a 12-inch thick concrete square and surrounded by an ornamental iron fence with Prince of Wales feathers as its motif.

A star of glazed stones had been set into concrete.

“The stones were gathered from the paddocks where so many of his winning progeny roamed”, Alf explained.

Engraved panels detail Star Kingdom’s stud deeds and a special elm tree was planted to provide shade.

“We anticipate that this grave will become the Mecca for all thoroughbred lovers who visit the Widden Valley” Alf assured me.

He told me that each year hundreds of inquiries came from overseas seeking information about Star Kingdom and his progeny.

Alf always liked to have a surprise or two for me whenever I visited “Baramul”. There was the time that he pointed to an insignificant weanling filly, saying “I’ll bet you can’t pick her pedigree”.

It was a challenge I chose to ignore.

“She’s the sister to Todman and Noholme. I’m going to call her Greatness”, Alf enthused. Greatness was the last foal that old Oceana produced.

Greatness, in spite of her name and pedigree, did not improve in looks, but her foals on “Baramul” included the useful winners Hamden and Wandle.

Alf always had a soft spot for the “old pensioners” on “Baramul”.

They were cared for as much as the stars still on active duty.

I remember seeing old Oceana in retirement; and old, 26-year-old Sparkles, the half-sister to Doomben Cup winner Tossing; also the sad-faced Magic Symbol, dam of Biscay, in constant comfort when I saw her at twenty.

Noel Hennessy, stud groom at “Baramul” for 13 years, always described Star Kingdom as a “big, little horse ... just a shade over 15.1 hands, but built in powerhouse proportions, with very strong shoulders and tall in the hindquarters”.

Perfect proportions for the sprinter- miler.

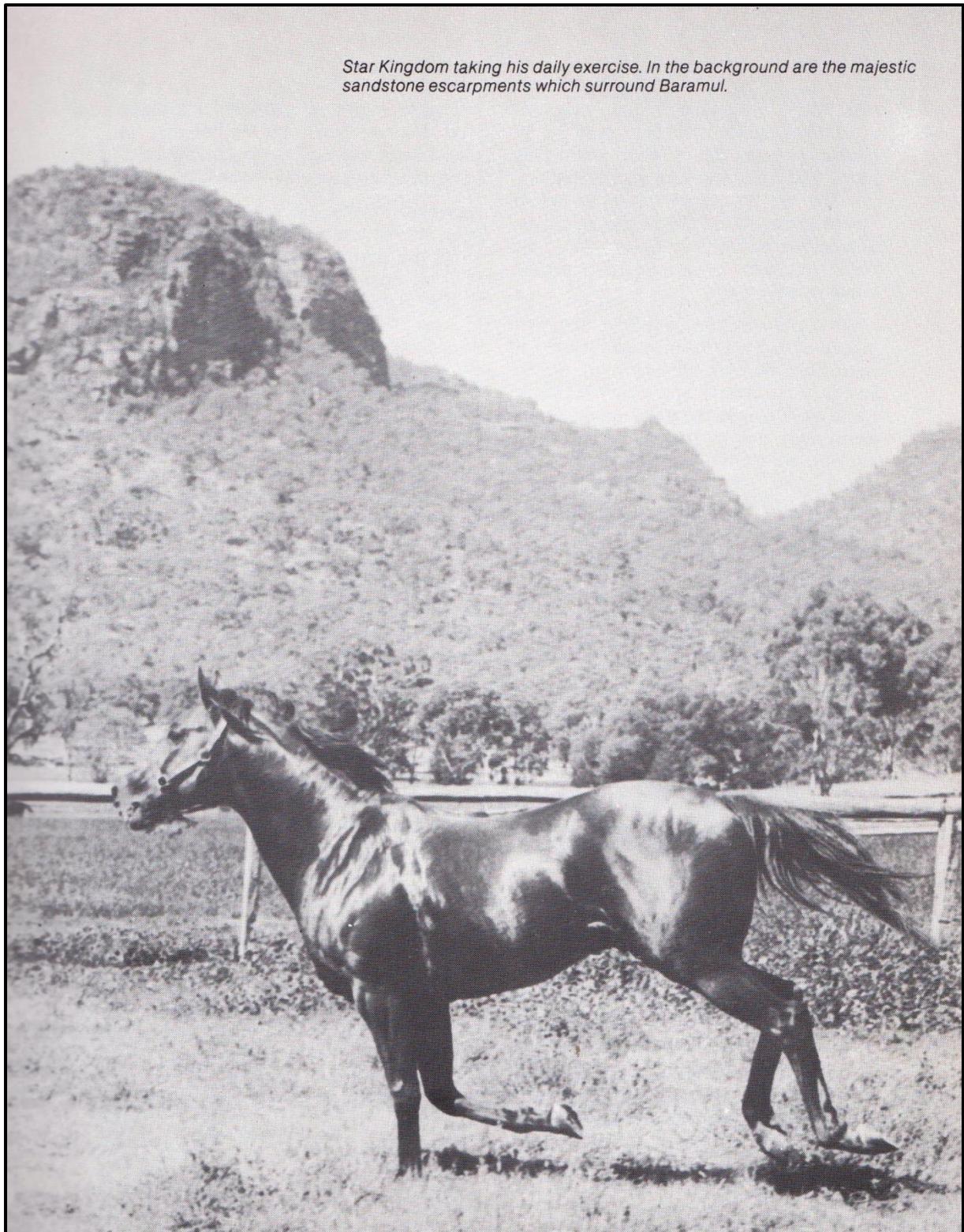


Photo courtesy of Peter Pring and 'The Thoroughbred Press'

Noel told me that Star Kingdom's spirit became restless the day they buried Todman nearby.

Star Kingdom may have been a sorry sight to Ellison when he first clapped eyes on the young stallion at Maurice McCarten's stables; but he certainly acquired great beauty in Alf's eyes while he reigned at "Baramul".

Jean Hayes, a perfectionist in her great ability to paint thoroughbred portraits, met her match in Alf Ellison when she visited "Baramul" to complete a portrait of Star Kingdom 12 years after his death.

Alf took her down to the Widden Creek where he had always stood Star Kingdom for photographers. It was part of the painstaking research that Jean carries out whenever she begins a portrait.

Alf and his good friend "Bim" Thompson of "Widden" provided Jean with every detail on Star Kingdom's temperament, conformation and general appearance.

Each had a fantastic eye and memory for every thoroughbred they encountered.

Jean's portrait, of which I have a copy, painstakingly illustrates the trace of white that appeared in Star Kingdom's eye whenever he was alert.

When the portrait was finished Jean showed it to Ellison for comment. I would not blame her for feeling nervous. Few men were as meticulous as Alf Ellison.

It was obvious that Alf was pleased at what he saw, but he hesitated, then said. *"Jean, your painting is almost perfect, but you are a sixteenth of an inch out in the dip below his rump"*.

Jean made the slight correction, Alf was content.

As I have said earlier, Alf Ellison could be a man of surprises; but none more so than his decision to sell up his stock on "Baramul", not once but three times!

His first dispersal was held at Newmarket on April 15, 1958, a week after Star Kingdom's fifth crop had averaged £5,088 for the sale of 19 lots ... very big money in those days.

Forty mares, most with foals at foot and many in foal to Star Kingdom, went under the hammer. Among those that Alf sold were Huarette (the dam of Concert Star), New Flower (Alister), Pompilia (Pago Pago) and Spring Frolic (Castanea and Even Better).

Another mare that changed owners at that dispersal was Canvas Back, the imported dam of Kingster. She was owned by Ellison's brother-in-law, Col Shearston; but had been a permanent border at "Baramul".

Many people were surprised at Ellison's decision to sell most of his mares. It often takes a lifetime to acquire such broodmare strength, but the astute solicitor knew what he was about.

He knew that best years were behind most of his discards and his supreme confidence told him that he could rebuild with younger, more valuable mares.

But most important, he knew that Widden Valley land, at that time, was more valuable than breeding stock. He used most of the \$93,586 gained from the dispersal, to buy land adjoining the original 1,100 acres of prime Widden country.

If the first “Baramul” dispersal sale was a surprise, then the second sale was incredible to his friends.

In 1970 Alf decided to sell all his breeding stock – lock, stock and barrel; not at auction, but in one huge package deal.

An American syndicate came to Australia keen to acquire Star Kingdom blood. Their first target was Reg Moses’ “Fairways Stud at Muswellbrook. Reg had a third share ownership in Star Kingdom and his property was well-stocked with mares and foals that carried the champion sire’s blood.

When they could not buy the “Fairways” stock, the Americans turned their attention to “Baramul”.

They could not have chosen a better time to negotiate. Ellison had recently lost the services of his expert stallion handler Noel Hennessy, and he was experiencing other staff problems.

“Running such a big operation has become too much for me” Alf told me when I telephoned to confirm that he was about to sell.

He was then 68 and too much of a perfectionist to have the added worry of inefficient staff.

As a result, Alf agreed to sell 62 broodmares and 21 foals to the Kentucky (USA) syndicate of Arnold Pessin, Rex Ellsworth and Dr Franklin.

John Inglis recall taking Arnold Pessin to “Baramul” to tie up the deal: “Mr Ellison appeared to take little interest in the horses after he made up his mind to sell. He seemed dispirited and stayed in the cottage most of the time we were inspecting the stock”.

“Arnold Pessin naturally was delighted with his coup but, as wed drove off the property, he expressed one regret”.

“There’s just one other thing I’d like to buy while I’m here ... I’d give anything to be taking home this goddam beautiful valley”.

And so say all of us.

It was not long after his second dispersal sale that Alf Ellison walked Todman across the paddocks to his new home on “Widden” where he lived and sired winners until his death on June 13, 1976.

Alf Ellison had great faith in his young friend “Bim” Thompson and not long after Todman had moved on to “Widden” he sold the bottom 3000 acres of “Baramul” to “Bim”.

With his typical kindness, Alf telephoned me at the “Herald” to give me the news.

“I have sold the bottom sector to “Bim”, Alf told me. “That will give “Widden” about 7,000 acres and make it one of the biggest studs in the southern hemisphere.

“I’ve kept my original holding and a good bit more. There’s still 2,000 acres here; but I wanted to sell in my lifetime, while I was still able to choose the buyer”.

“I could not stand the thought of some developer cutting up “Baramul” into small pockets of land”, explained my friend.

Four years later “Bim” Thompson died in tragic circumstances and I feel that it took away much of the zest for living that Alf Ellison previously enjoyed.



Photo courtesy of Peter Pring and 'The Thoroughbred Press'

The “Baramul” mares and foals were shipped from Sydney to the USA on the Swedish container SS “Parrakoola”, in May, 1970.

See: <http://sconevedynasty.com.au/baramul-stud-dispersal-shipping-transport-to-the-usa-1970/>

The consignment was in the care of veterinarian Bill Howey, Jack Flood, the popular yardman at Inglis' Newmarket stables and horse attendant Malcolm Ayoub.

The valuable consignment arrived in San Diego on June 20, after a six-day stopover in Fiji and a day and a half in Honolulu.

Only one thoroughbred was lost in transit, the old mare Dushess Delville who died of travel sickness three days out of Sydney.

Duchess Delville, winner of the AJC Princess Handicap and rising 16 at the time of her death, was a daughter of The Duchess, the sister to AJC St Leger winner Aristocrat.

Several other mares suffered travel sickness, but only one – Torrina, aborted on the deck.

The consignment was rested at Rex Ellsworth's "Chino Ranch" before moving on to other parts of the USA and South America.

Among the well-bred mares which left Australia were Dollar Dancer, Gold Finch, Golden Maize, Pio Pio, Willow Song, Sky Bells, Eternal Youth, Jewel Tree, Hunter Red, Rich and Rare, Concert Star and Devant.

A year later, Jim Shannon sent me a letter from New York explaining that 13 of the foals produced by the "Baramul" mares had been sold to race in Argentina.

The remainder of the "Baramul" stock were spread throughout America and beyond when they were sold at auction in Kentucky; most of the stock brought way below their value when compared with Australian standards.

Imagine being able to buy such Australian mares as Star of Spring (Star Kingdom – Delspring) for \$100; or Jacinta (\$600), Yes and No (\$600), Matiwana (\$500) and Medium, a sister to Knave, (\$300).

I was saddened to see the Australian Cup winner Miss High caste go for only \$200. Admittedly she was then 21 but there was the fear that she could have ended as pet food.

Concert Star, the dam of Academy Star, sold for \$3000; while the weight-for-age winner Eternal Youth changed ownership at \$23,500 and Rich and Rare (the dam of Citius), sold for \$6000.

The American syndicate sold every mare they had bought off "Baramul", also every thoroughbred they owned at "Winchester Farm".

The total dispersal realised \$1,086,500; a lot of money admittedly but sad when you take into account the love and value that the "Baramul" horses held when they roamed the tranquil pastures of the Widden Valley.

Alfred Ellison drastically reduced his thoroughbred operation after his clearance to the USA interests. His main interest was to watch and guide his friend "Bim" Thompson whenever he could.

But he had retained a few young race fillies and these he gradually moulded into a small but select band of broodmares.

One of them was Pomany (Vibrant – Final Bid). Final Bid was from the last crop sired by Star Kingdom; hence the name.

Alf Ellison sold Pomany's 1983 foal, a colt by Lunchtime at the 1985 Sydney yearling sales. He raced as Pre-Catalan, was owned by George Moore, and, at his first start won the AJC Breeder's Plate.

Pre-Catalan was later sold to New Zealand to stand at stud, and from his first crop came the New Zealand winner Neich's Lane who overcame a wide barrier to finish an impressive second in the 1910 AJC Breeder's Plate.

Can it be that Alfred Ellison had launched another winning sire line?

Ellison, then operating from the "Kilwinning" stud at Scone, sold another yearling at Newmarket in 1985 – it was the filly Pharoah's Daughter who has won races in West Australia.

Alf finally cut his ties with his beloved "Baramul" in 1984 when he sold the property to Sit Tristan Antico and shifted to the much smaller holding, "Kilwinning", at Scone.

Sir Tristan, who found Alf Ellison to be a staunch friend and sound advisor over the years, told me recently how he had acquired "Baramul".

"I first met Alf in 1968 when I was lunching at Tattersalls Club with Azzalin Romano. John Inglis came across to the table and introduced me to Mr Ellison.

Romano smiled at Alf and said, "I've just given Tristan my racing silks (orange jacket, purple sleeves and cap), made famous by Bernborough.

"He's about to come into Racing ... why don't you let him send a mare to Todman. Racing needs good men like Tristan".

"Lucky for me, Alf agreed. I sent the imported mare Beauty of Bath which I bought from George Moore, to Todman and the resultant foal, Beau Vento, gave me first success as an owner and breeder.

"Not long after that conversation I commissioned John Inglis to buy me three yearlings and all were winners".

"The best was Passetreul, which cost me \$7000. He won 13 races and \$130,605 including the AJC Metropolitan, STC Lord Mayor's Cup (twice), Craven Plate, Anzac Day Cup and P J O'Shea Stakes. The other two purchases were Beau Rouge, runner up in the Breeder's Plate and the VRC Newmarket; also Comanello who won the James Barnes Plate and was runner-up to Analie in the AJC Metropolitan", explained Sir Tristan.

He, like Alfred Ellison, enjoyed immediate success in his choice of racing for relaxation from the stress of big business.

Sir Tristan continued his tale of the acquisition of "Baramul": "I first got to know Alf Ellison really well when I stayed overnight on his property following a visit to "Widden" for their annual Ambulance Appeal Day".

"I found Alf a great conversationalist and the next morning, when I looked over the magnificent property, I fell in love with it. I felt that I just had to own it".

"For the next 15 years I kept going back to visit "Baramul" and with each visit my desire to own the property became stronger".

"Many times I pestered Alf to sell me the property, even offering him the opportunity to live out the remainder of his life in the lovely garden cottage".

"You can continue living here. I will just visit the place. You're getting on in years. I want to be certain that I will own the property after you're gone", I pleaded.

"Maybe you I will sell, one day", Alf replied. "Baramul" saved my life when I was under great stress from my business commitments: perhaps it will also save you".

"But you may die before I seal the purchase", I told Alf one night".

"He smiled, then said, 'don't worry. I have already written a codicil to my Will which gives you the first right of refusal when the time comes for "Baramul" to be sold'.

Then came the night I will never forget. We had just finished a wonderful meal, had settled back for a few relaxing drinks when I gain broached the subject".

"Put your price on "Baramul"", I said, expecting the customary evasion.

You could have knocked me over with a feather when Alf said, 'righto, what about \$_____?'. Believe me, the price he asked was far less than I anticipated".

"Alf did not barter. Hestet his price and he stood by it. There was no written agreement. We shook hands on the deal which was Alf's way with friends".

"The next morning I drove off "Baramul" with my head in the clouds and beautiful 'Baramul' in my pocket", recalled Sir Tristan.

It was no surprise to me that Alf sold "Baramul" to Sir Tristan. Many times in the previous years he had told me that Antico would make a success of breeding.

"He is a good man. He has a love for horses and is keen to take and accept good advice", explained Alf.

I know that he walked off the property content that the stud he had founded would remain in good hands.

I quit the newspaper business the year that Alf sold "Baramul", retiring from the "Herald" in 1984.

I kept in touch with my good friend when he shifted to "Kilwinning", but not as often as I would have liked, or should have; and old journalist gets lazy when he no longer has the need for news.

But it was mainly Alf Ellison That I turned to when I needed some thoroughbred information. He was the one man I could always rely on for accuracy.

A couple of years back I telephoned Alf, the first time for far too long (as I now know by hindsight), and, as usual, I wanted to know something.

I almost dropped the phone when Alf greeted me with the awful words, "Bert, I'm dying you know".

It was typical that he said it in such a matter-of-fact way. He was not looking for sympathy; just putting the record straight, as he would say.

As usual, Alf Ellison was correct. He passed away on June 12, 1987, six months short of his 85th birthday.

“A good innings” you might say. I beg to differ. Grand old men such as Alfred Owen Ellison should never get out. They have too much to give the world.

But that’s life ... at least Alf Ellison was a Legend of Racing. Legends are never forgotten.

The AJC Committee programmed the inaugural A. O. Ellison Handicap at Randwick during the 1990 Spring Carnival. It was a restricted-class event. The name is worthy of a Stakes Contest. Racing history is studded with thoroughbred champions that came off the pastures of Alf Ellison’s “Baramul” stud.

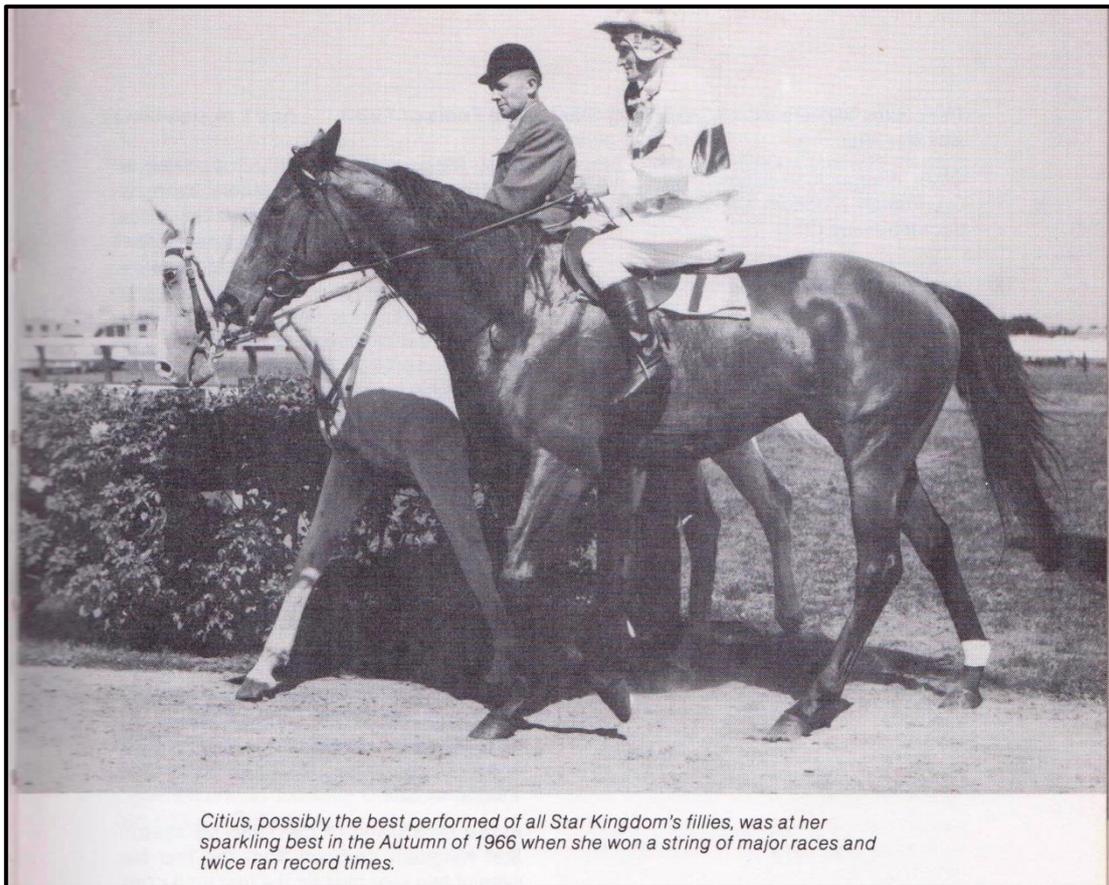


Photo courtesy of Peter Pring and 'The Thoroughbred Press'

Postscript (WPH)

This is an actual 'hagiographical' type tribute by Bert Lillye. Knowing both men quite well, if not very well, I'm mildly surprised? To my certain knowledge Mr Ellison (always 'Mr' to me) had a visceral hatred of being addressed as 'Alf'; especially racing journalist! He was "Allwyn" to his closest (male) associates such as Murray Bain. You be the judge.



Reg Moses, Star Kingdom's part-owner, and trainer Harry Plant photographed at the races at Randwick. Moses owned a number of stallions in partnership with Wootton before they hit the 'jackpot' with Star Kingdom. Plant trained two of Star Kingdom's most successful racehorses, Fine and Dandy and Time and Tide.

Photo courtesy of Peter Pring and 'The Thoroughbred Press'

Reg Moses was the other 1/3 owner of Star Kingdom

Postscript

Stanley Wootton said of AOE: *"Ellison is a perfectionist. He does nothing by half measures. If a problem comes up he goes on and on until he gets to the bottom of it. Baramul was, and is, run by him in an exemplary manner".*