

Ryder, George Edward (1905–1989)

By Wayne Peake

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Foreword (by the author WPH)

Tommy Smith stated categorically that George Ryder was the best man for racing in his time. Who am I to argue? He was a great friend of Scone and the Scone Race Club although 'controversial' at times! He was the most stimulating company and a brilliant raconteur. I'm proud to have known him. The following biography by Wayne Peake captures the man superbly. There are some 'not for publication stories' which could richly enhance the encomium! It's my opinion that George Ryder competes with Stanley Wootton for the title of most influential thoroughbred racing entrepreneur in NSW during the second half of the 20th century.



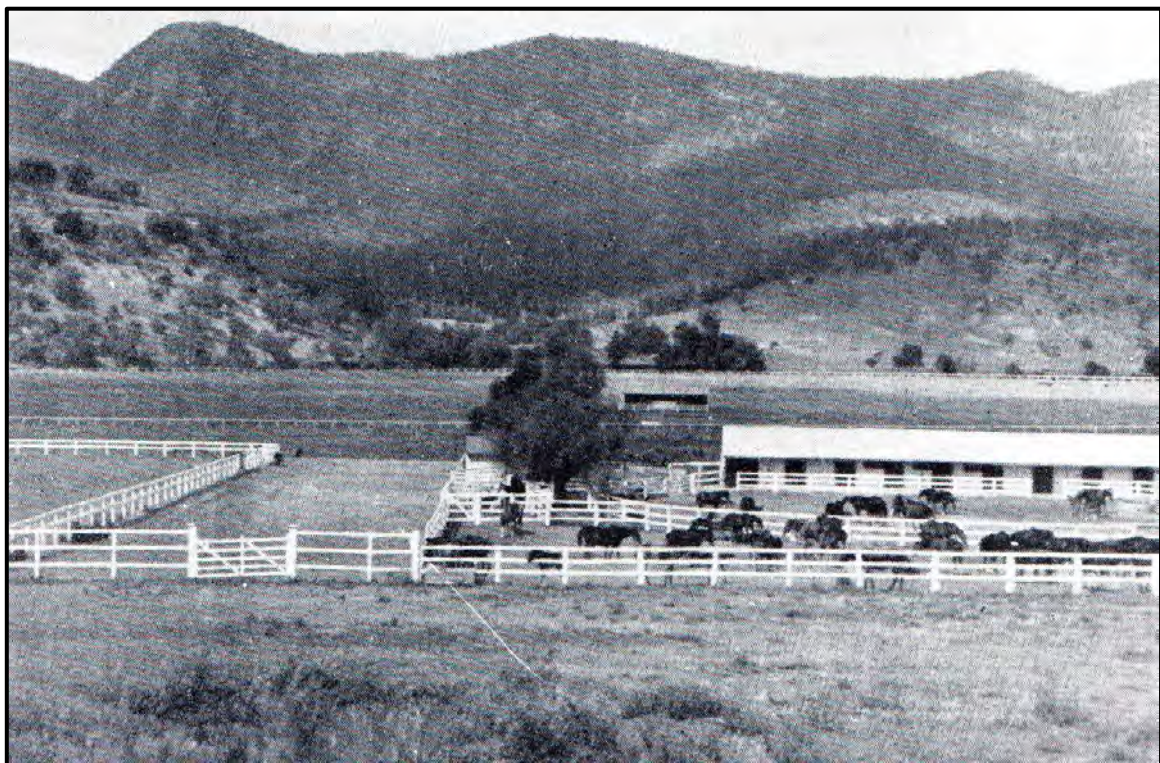
Bob Hawke, Neville Voigt, T J Smith & George Ryder @ Rosehill

Biography

George Edward Ryder (1905-1989), racing administrator, stud master and businessman, was born on 29 June 1905 at Tingha, near Inverell, New South Wales, fourth child of George Henry Ryder, tin-miner, and his wife Inez Evelyn, née Arentz, both born locally. Brought up in a slab hut with a pressed-earth floor, George was educated at Nullamanna Public School, leaving at age 13. He had a job transporting a dentist on his rounds on a motorcycle with sidecar. In about 1928 he moved to Cessnock. After driving a bus for a year he purchased one on time payment. During the 1930s he bought out most Hunter Valley rivals and his business grew into Rover Motors Pty Ltd, with forty-five buses in a modern fleet. He sold it in 1946 and invested in hotels, including Craigieburn Guest House, Bowral.

Gaining a pilot's licence, Ryder expanded into aviation. While operating from Mascot airport he befriended Sir Charles Kingsford Smith. In 1939 he established the first passenger run between Sydney and Newcastle. Later he sold his aviation assets to Australian National Airways Pty Ltd. A talented amateur sportsman, he was an excellent tennis player and golfer, and also enjoyed billiards, shooting, polo and speedboat driving. He was president of Cessnock tennis and rugby league clubs.

On 7 September 1932 at St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Cessnock, Ryder had married Dorothy Abbott Scott, a clerk. He entered horse racing in 1937 when he purchased a colt that he named Jan, after their daughter. Jan won at Newcastle and a smitten Ryder purchased more racehorses, which Bayly Payten trained at Randwick. A later horse, his best, was also named Jan. Trained by T. J. Smith, she dominated weight-for-age races at the 1953 Randwick Easter carnival. Apple Bay, winner of the 1955 Doomben Ten Thousand in Brisbane, was another notable horse to carry Ryder's colours of pale blue, red diamond and sleeves, and yellow cap.



Featured Image: Woodlands Stud in the halcyon Ryder days of the 1950s and 1960s

In 1946 with several partners Ryder acquired Woodlands Stud Farm Pty Ltd at Denman. By the 1960s, under Ryder's management, it reputedly produced annually more individual winners than any stud in the world. Newton Wonder, a very successful sire, was followed by the imports Pipe of Peace, Sostenuto and King of Babylon, and the Australian-born Sky High. In 1970 Ryder sold Woodlands but almost immediately bought Kia Ora Stud Farm Pty Ltd at Scone. He championed the use of Australian-bred thoroughbred sires there until 1977.



Sky High was a relative failure at the stud in Australia but sired the top horse Autobiography when exported to the U.S.A. (where he was re-classified as Sky High II).

Ryder had been an honorary representative of the Ministry of Munitions in the Hunter Valley during World War II. In 1943 the premier of New South Wales, (Sir) William McKell, wanted a representative from the area on the board of the new Sydney Turf Club. The jockey Maurice McCarten suggested Ryder, who then began his thirty-seven-year tenure—an Australian record. He served as treasurer (1943-47, 1963-72), vice-chairman (1972-77) and chairman (1977-80).

In the early 1950s Ryder advocated a rich race for two-year-olds to be run over six furlongs (1200 m) at Rosehill. The Golden Slipper Stakes was first run in 1957; its novel title came from the answer that Ryder's wife gave when asked the perfect present for a baby. For the Slipper he insisted that fillies receive a seven pounds (7lb = 3 kg) handicap from colts, a kilogram more than customary in set-weights races. Other new provisions included first acceptances paid in the year of mating, followed by second and third acceptance payments, and the option to pay an exorbitant late entry fee. The Golden Slipper quickly became the STC's signature race and is the only non-Melbourne contest among Australia's 'big four' races. Ryder did much to provide more feature-race opportunities for fillies and mares.



'Todman' ridden by Neville Sellwood won the inaugural Golden Slipper in 1957



The resting place of Todman and his sire Star Kingdom at Baramul Stud



‘Imagele’ (by Sostenuto ex Celie’s Image) was bred @ Woodlands and stood @ Kia Ora

Imagele unfortunately fell in the 1973 Golden Slipper while starting a short priced favourite. However six months later he won a stirring titanic three-horse tussle in the AJC Derby beating Leica Lover and Grand Cidium. This was considered by many good judges to be one of the best of all time?

During Ryder’s time the STC introduced numerous innovations to Australian racing including, in 1946, transportable barrier stalls. The photo-finish camera and saddlecloth numbers on jockey’s armbands soon followed. The STC recommenced, after twelve years, metropolitan midweek racing in 1954 and also trialled bookmaker-free race meetings. In 1970 Ryder established the successful Australian Racing and Breeding Stables Ltd, a not-for-profit syndication—Australia’s first—that made ownership possible for the non-wealthy. In 1983 it became a public company; he resigned as chairman the following year.



Gunsynd, possibly Australia's most popular racehorse in post-war years, has been in the headlines again in recent times as the sire of the dam of the top filly Emancipation.

Photo courtesy of Peter Pring and 'The Star Kingdom Story' (Thoroughbred Press)



'Baguette' with George Moore up won the Golden Slipper Stakes in 1970 and stood @ Kia Ora

A gregarious man, Ryder was of average height with fair skin and blue eyes. His character was uncomplicated, down-to-earth, loyal, obstinate and humorous. He was fond of using figurative language. With little regard for 'big noters', he led the cause of 'battlers' in racing. He helped to gain entry to official grandstands for non-member owners. Although a member of the Anglican Church he was not a regular churchgoer. Survived by his wife and their daughter, Ryder died on 18 May 1989 at Elizabeth Bay, Sydney, and was cremated. The Group 1 race, the George Ryder Stakes, run at Rosehill, commemorated his services to racing. His portrait (1978) by Judy Cassab is held by the STC.

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Golden Slipper Princess 1969

A seminal event occurred in 1969 which I believe represented the apotheosis of overarching convivial and congenial community commendation in my fifty years in Scone. It occurred in 1969. I recall local totemic accountant Don Scott remarking this was the high point in his period of stewardship which embraced all creeds and castes. The genuine RSL club was an exclusively male bastion still populated by a majority of veterans over auxiliaries. Men like George McLaughlin and Ernie Cone were treated with reverence and respect. Governor of NSW Sir Roden Cutler VC was a special guest during the year. 'Everyone' was there. The Scone Race Club Committee was populated by racing men, stud masters, farmers and graziers, businessmen, tradesmen and covering every ilk. Jock Robertson, David Macintyre and Arthur Bragg doubled on the Sone Polo Club Committee.

I refer to the competition for the inaugural Golden Slipper Princess promulgated and promoted by the Sydney Turf Club (STC) and supreme entrepreneurial Director George Ryder in particular. George was the inspirational stud master of 'Woodlands' near Denman. Harley Walden has written most enthusiastically of the event in his appositely named treatise: ***'The Spirit Within'***.

Race Club Finds New Way to Attract and Entertain Patrons

The word gimmick is commonly used today as companies, sporting bodies or people in business endeavour to attract the attention of the public.

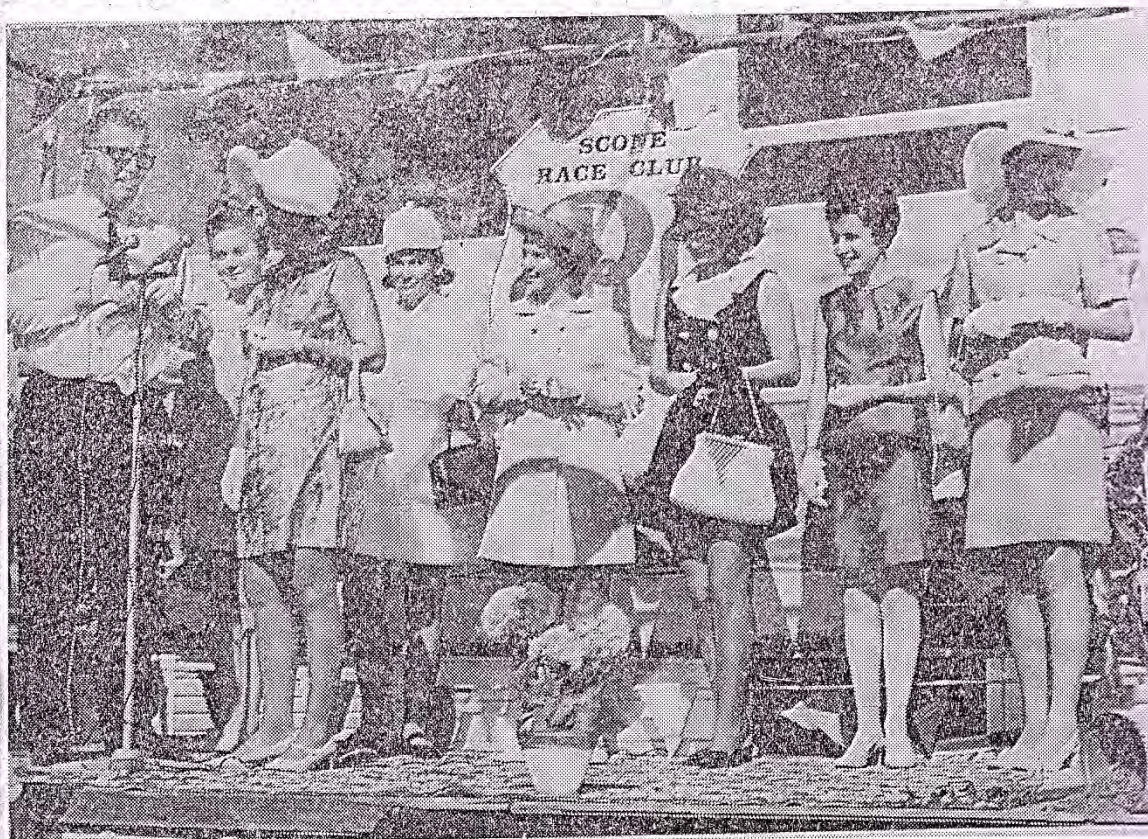
On Saturday March 8 1969 the committee of the Scone Race Club did not have this word in mind. But they certainly attracted a large crowd at White Park to witness, not only a good day of racing, but to see Scone Pre-school teacher Miss Jean McPherson chosen to represent the racing area in the final of the Golden Slipper Princess Quest set down for judging at Rosehill Racecourse on Saturday March 22.

According to all reports the versatility of interests and the charm of the seven entrants were impressive. There was pride shown in from those in attendance that these girls were products of the Upper Hunter.

This concept had captured the imagination of the large crowd on hand as the girls, from the dais of the members' enclosure at the Scone Race Course answered questions as to their interest and their thoughts on the contest.

The crowd found it illuminating to discover that among the seven girls was one who had been the Singleton Show Girl twice. Another had been a Scone Floral Festival Princess; another was a local tennis star with considerable successes chalked up to her career; another was a (National) swimming champion who modestly never mentioned the fact; while several others were old hands in the racing game, with family backgrounds that made them worthy contestants.

Seven entrants.



- ABOVE: Girl's taking part in the Golden Slipper Princess quest (Hunter Valley area) parade on the dais at Scone races on Saturday. The eventual winner, Miss Jean Macpherson, is being interviewed by the compere, Mr. Ed. Webster, manager of Radio Station 2NML. The other contestants, pictured left to right, are: Dorothy Shepherd, Sue Wicks, Denise Holman, Sue Bowditch, Kathryn Rose and Beryl Towse. — Photo: B. J. Budden.

Grazing potential of Hybrid Forage Sorghums

Hybrid forage sorghums are popular fodder crops for summer and autumn grazing in north-western New South Wales.

The feeling of the crowd was one of warm, sympathy and admiration for the young contestants and voiced their approval and congratulations to the winner Miss Jean McPherson from Scone, who on Saturday March 22 was to be adjudged the Golden Slipper Princess and the honour of being the representative of Australian Racing at Hollywood Park in Los Angeles and at Woodbine in Toronto, Canada.

When Miss Jean McPherson returned to Scone the Scone Club seized the opportunity to promote its next meeting on Saturday April 12. During the afternoon she was welcomed to the gateway to the members' enclosure by Scone Race Club President Mr H. R. 'Harry' Hayes.

It was in this enclosure only a few short weeks before that Miss McPherson was adjudged Miss Hunter Valley racing Princess. This was in front of a crowd of Saturday's same proportion who had gathered to welcome home their local Golden Girl.



The Golden Slipper Princess, Miss Jean MacPherson, of Scone, rides in state down the course proper at Scone races on Saturday. (B. J. Budden photo.)

These two Saturday meetings proved memorable for all concerned as it was not every day that racegoers had the opportunity of a double attraction.

THE SPIRIT WITHIN

The Nineteen Sixties



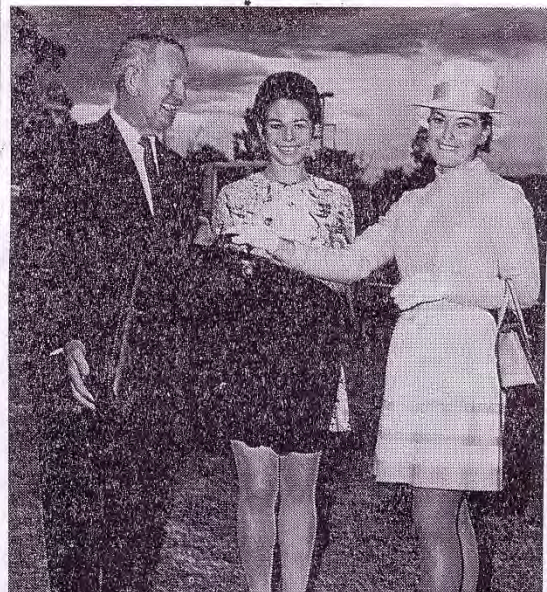
Miss Jean MacPherson

Golden Slipper Princess



The Golden Slipper Princess, Miss Jean MacPherson, of Scone, rides in state down the course proper at Scone Races on Saturday March 8, 1969. (B. J. Budden Photo) Carriage driver: Ron Dennewald. Clerks of the Course: Laurie Harris (left), Stan Bowd (right).

Presentation . . .



Mr. H. R. Hayes, Miss Carol Browne (centre) at the presentation of a travelling case to the Golden Slipper Princess, Miss Jean MacPherson (right) at Scone races on Saturday. (B. J. Budden photo.)



Jean McPherson sashed winner at Scone



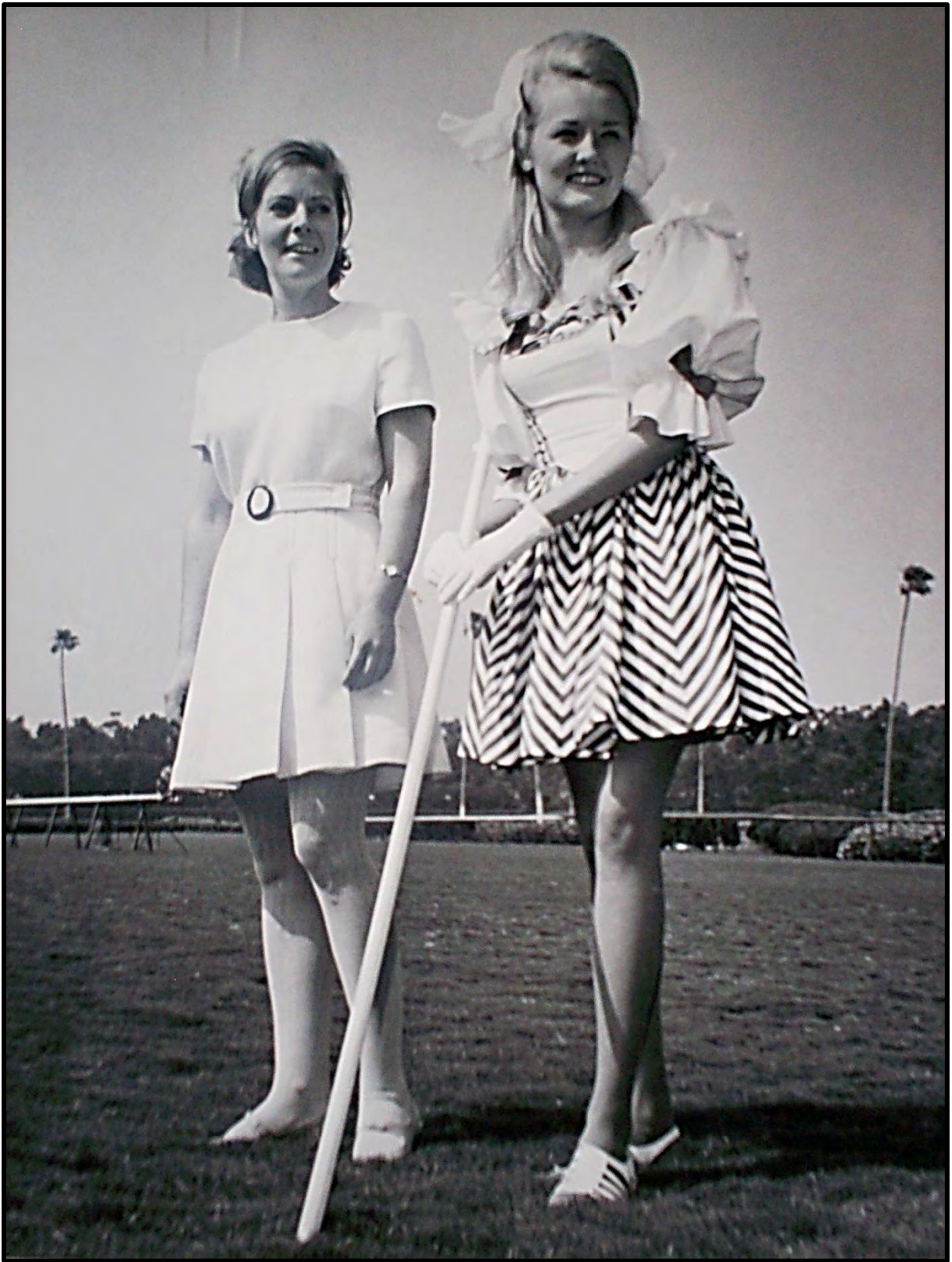
Jean sashed at Rosehill by STC Committeeman Keith Harris



Jean & Phyllis Diller @ Rosehill Races



Jean with 1969 all-time great Golden Slipper Winner 'Vain' at Rosehill



STC Golden Slipper Princess and Hollywood Park Golden Goose Girl



Jean at Hollywood Park LA with Major Norman Larkin and Hollywood Park Golden Goose Girl

Major Norman Larkin was then President of the Australian (and NSW) Thoroughbred Breeders Association. According to cynical some this was a sinecure. He had been the first equine veterinarian to visit the Scone and Upper Hunter District. He did this from his base at Bondi.

He was also President of AEVA a short time later in the mid-1970s.



Golden Slipper Princess and Golden Goose Girl



'Dagmar's Boy' winner of \$15,000:00 Sydney Golden Slipper Purse LA 1972



Weight's right for Ismael Valenzuela

ARABS CUP



The Featured image shows the presentation of the ARABS Improvers Cup held at Scone Race Club's White Park Racetrack in April 1980. L to R: Bill Howey (Scone Race Club President), Mr George Ryder (Chairman of the Sydney Turf Club), Mrs Jan Higson (NOT Gibson; George Ryders' daughter and ARABS 'secretary'), Kelly Almond (part-owner and trainer of Hunter's Royal, who won the Improvers Cup), Mr Norman Lane (Chairman of the ARABS Committee), Mr Neville Cox (part-owner of Hunter's Royal) and Mr David Almond (part-owner of Hunter's Royal).

This might not be what you expect? It used to be the 'biggest thing' at Scone Race Club after the May Cup meeting. The latter was always the biggest single sporting event in the valley.

Super sleuth George Ryder conjured up yet another brilliant idea from a very fertile and inventive brain. He's just introduced syndication of stallions to Australia enabling greater consumer participation and ostensibly also 'affordability' of superior bloodstock from both local and overseas supply markets. The USA had already forged the way in this as in many other entrepreneurial and commercial endeavours throughout the 20th century. Australia was playing 'catch up' with G E Ryder at the helm; a common theme in racing and breeding.

In 1971 George and his partners had sold Woodlands to an interesting International partnership between Lord Derby (UK) and Bob Kleberg of King Ranch, Texas (USA). The great days of domination of Sydney racing by the flagship D Chrsytal Snr, D Chrystal Jnr, Dr T Street and G E Ryder owners, trained by T J Smith at Randwick, ridden by G Moore ended forever. Woodlands became Derby-King Ranch for the time being. Perhaps the money tree had shed all its leaves? However the sale enabled George and a few remaining cohort to acquire the famous but jaded Kia Ora Stud in the Segenhoe Valley near both Scone and Aberdeen. Instantly George sprang into action with the syndication of both Gynsynd and Baguette for Kia Ora. The immediate and prescient future was assured.

George then excelled with his Australian Racing and Breeding Syndicate (ARABS). For only \$500:00 per share anyone could buy into the portfolio. It allowed thousands of small players with limited means to both participate in and enjoy the exquisite thrill of thoroughbred ownership. At least that was the theory. Even I was sucked in. GER could be VERY persuasive! It actually worked; with some corollary benefits for the Ryder family. There usually were. Armed with some more 'new money' (other people's) George acquired an impressive and select band of broodmares. He was good at this. He brought some of them with him from Woodlands. In racing and breeding George knew the score. His network and knowledge were unmatched. The ultimate 'hussler' Bobby Riggs would have been no match for G E Ryder on the tennis court, the golf course or the racetrack.

The ARABS syndicate was instantly successful. The distinctive colours of yellow-and-black diamonds showed up front and central in many races throughout NSW and even further afield. Pat Farrell from Muswellbrook was one of the principal trainers for the syndicate. George picked his team well. Star apprentice Wayne Harris' name was on everyone's lips. Winners began to flow regularly. Hungry appetites and slaked thirsts for new age success were assuaged; at least for the time being.



'Proud Knight' by Vain, ridden by Wayne Harris and trained by Pat Farrell was a favourite ARABS owned winner

The major showcase for the syndicate became the Open Day at Kia Ora Stud allied with the Scone Race Club's ARABS Cup Meeting at White Park Race Track in Scone. I can honestly claim title to the latter concept. At least 1000 ARABS patrons crowded into the Upper Hunter for the 'big weekend'. By 1980 George had on-sold Kia Ora Stud to John Clift from 'The Dip' Stud at Breeza on the black soil plains between Quirindi and Gunnedah. 'Gunsynd' had made both names famous throughout the country. The ARABS secretariat office at Double Bay staffed by Ryder family members was also expensive to maintain. Cash flow was imperative. Some lifestyles are fiscally consumptive.



I have just rediscovered the 'Gallop Around' report in the Scone Advocate by Brian Russell of the ARABS Cup meeting April 1980. Brian's ecstatic report featured the headline 'Robert Thompson King of the ARABS'. Should that have been Sheikh? Robert certainly had a great day riding half the program with three winners in the six race card. The main race was the \$2500:00 Mary Tange 2yo Sires Produce Stakes won by 'Miss Bayreme'. Mrs Ron Tange always attended the races dressed immaculately featuring exotic Ascot-style hats. She and husband Ron were great supporters; and sponsors. The latter matter was not lost on G E Ryder!

Years later John Messara sniffed out an opportunity. He launched a successful takeover bid for all the ARABS bloodstock by the simple expedient of acquiring a majority shareholding. George Ryder did not see him coming. It was a sad day for him and his 'family of ARABS'. The distinctive colours also went with the deal. They have been sported by some of Australia's greatest racehorses in recent times. Miss Finland is a prime example. These are raced under the banner of John Messara's Arrowfield Stud; now perhaps the most successful exponent in the nation? Many would argue convincingly that John is the present day 'Sheikh of Racing'?

Gunsynd never failed to attract a crowd. He was paraded at Scone Cup Races in May 1973 as his 'final racetrack appearance'.



Gunsynd made a cameo appearance at the Aberdeen Jockey Club 'Slipper' Meeting in 1980. Kia Ora Stud generously supported the project. Gary Sevil had his work cut out trying to restrain the old marvel!

THE GOONDIWINDI GREY

• To a background of the song they wroye about him and calls of some of his most celebrated victories, the mighty Gunsynd, or the "Goondiwindi Grey", becomes a star attraction again on the racecourse. He is pictured here cantering uo the Scone straight on Saturday with Gary Sevil aboard.



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