



# THE BEEF SHORTHORN

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE BEEF SHORTHORN SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA HOME OF THE AUSTRALIAN SHORTHORN

[www.beefshorthorn.org.au](http://www.beefshorthorn.org.au)

OCTOBER 2020



BIG SPRINGS HOMESTEAD

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# PRESIDENTS REPORT



Dear All,

As we put this newsletter to print the world is experiencing very uncertain and unprecedented times; the Coronavirus has fundamentally changed our way of living - this affects everyone. Our vocabulary has expanded to use new phrases such as “social distancing”, “self isolating”, “pandemic”, “quarantine”, “lockdown” to name a few. We have all had to make adjustments to our lives and we look forward to a brighter future when we return to some form of normality. I hope that you all continue to enjoy good health and exercise the recommended precautions to transition through this virus to better times.

There are many things in the breeding of beef that we cannot control as we are so reliant on the weather and markets. However, what we can control is the quality of the cattle we produce. There is a renewed sense of optimism in the cattle market and improved seasonal conditions.

An extract from the MLA Cattle Projection reports states *“The Australian cattle market, like so many other commodities markets, finds itself in uncharted territory, with many diverging factors impacting the industry. On the back of an excellent autumn break for many southern cattle producing*

*regions and the desire to rebuild, renewed optimism swept the domestic cattle market. However, the domestic market increasingly faces the drag of demand uncertainty as COVID-19 outbreaks continue to disrupt the local and global marketplace. Opportunities for producers to restock paddocks have emerged, with many of the southern states seeing significant improvements in soil moisture and water availability since February. This has been reflected in the number of cattle heading south. While central and south-east Queensland received a break, it came at the end of the northern wet season. Some good winter rainfall will be required to support deficiencies in the region and the latest three-month outlook does provide some confidence”.*

With very little news to report this edition of the Society’s newsletter takes the shape of a historical flashback which I hope you enjoy. A very interesting and informative article is also included researched and written by David Ashley.

If you have not already done so, **membership subscriptions are now due.** Please give this your prompt attention.

As was advised via email JBS has made a commercial decision not to publish or broadcast their slaughter and feeder rates, however quotes and inspections can be arranged simply by contacting any one of their buyers direct. A listing of buyers can be found on the Society’s website.

Australia’s national beef expo is one of the world’s great beef cattle events and is held once every three years in Rockhampton, Queensland. Beef Australia 2021 will be held from May 2 to 8 as a celebration of all facets of the Australian beef industry. Beef Australia’s organisers say they’re confident the national cattle industry expo will go ahead in May 2021, despite not knowing when the ban on mass gatherings will be lifted. If possible an event not to be missed if you have not already experienced “Beef”.

The Society’s website is available to all members

who wish to advertise or make an editorial contribution or simply use as a reference tool for upcoming events and the like. With many industry events currently utilising 'virtual' or 'digital' media, the website is a great resource to access to keep up to date.

Finally, I wish you all continued good health under these trying circumstances and look forward to when we can meet and speak face to face.

Regards

Marion Spencer, President

## OUR HISTORY "LONG AND MERITORIOUS"

### List of Champions at Melbourne Royal Shows 1880 -1935

#### **Champion Bulls** **1880 Duke of Alvie 5th - Robertson Bros**

#### **Champion Cows** **Geneva's Matilda - J Horwood**

This is an entry in The Australian Beef Shorthorn Breeders' Guide 1935. It sets out the first Melbourne Champions known to that publication. But were they the first Champions? Who were 'Robertson Bros'? Who was 'J Horwood'? These questions were prompted by news that in future Beef Shorthorns will be shown together with Poll and Australian Shorthorns at the Melbourne Royal. So will end more than 150 years of Beef Shorthorns being exhibited as a distinct breed at Melbourne. It follows recent similar changes at the Sydney Easter Show and the Royal Adelaide Show. It does not mean, of course, that Beef Shorthorns will not be the Champions of the overall Shorthorn exhibition. But there can be no denying that it will be different.

The Beef Shorthorn breed and the Beef Shorthorn Society have much of which to be very proud. Cattle breeds come and go. Few survive the initial enthusiasm (and money) of a small number of breeders. Not so with Beef Shorthorns. Our breed's involvement in the Melbourne Royal is part of its grand history; and now is a good time to say something about it – looking to the early days and to

the most recent exhibition.

Except that Melbourne Shows may not always have been 'Royal', the answer to the question whether the 1880 Champions were the first Beef Shorthorn Champions at a Melbourne Show is 'no'. Within four years of Melbourne's foundation in 1836, the Pastoral & Agricultural Society of Australia Felix was established. It held a Show in March 1842. Although ploughing matches were the main attraction, 'a few horned cattle' were exhibited. The chances of them not being Beef Shorthorns are remote. As early as 1840, the Sydney Herald, in a report from Port Phillip, stated that –

*"Mr Williamson, of Bunnoryong (sic), has lately made a splendid addition to his stock by the purchase of the Earl of Derby, an excellent imported bull, and two very fine bulls from Van Dieman's Land, all of the pure short-horned Durham breed."*

The Port Phillip Farmers' Society came into existence in 1848, replacing the earlier Society. In the first year of its existence it established the Victorian Shorthorn Herd Book, and it began to hold an annual show. The Argus newspaper reported in October 1854 that

*"The dairy stock, the short-horned bulls particularly, were much admired."*

Still, however, no Champion had been identified by name.

Beef Shorthorns were thriving commercially. Victorian newspapers from the 1840s onwards were full of advertisements and reports about the cattle. In January 1848, for instance, the Port Phillip Gazette & Settlers' Journal advertised

*"350 Mixed herd of short-horned cattle"* whilst in October 1854 the Argus advertised the sale of a station out of Geelong, saying that it

*"will be sold with about 3000 head of cattle, 2000 of which have been bred with great care, and there are purebred Durhams amongst the lot."*

In the same year and month, The Argus advertised the sale of

*"90 pure Durham bulls, from the herd of Thomas Manifold Esq."*

The sale was to take place 'the day after the Exhibition'.

The Age of 24 October 1856 reported the first definite Beef Shorthorn Champions at a Melbourne Show. Robert M'Dougalls' Lord Nelson, a 'roan Durham', was the Champion bull and Rose of May was the Champion cow. The reporter was very critical of the judge's work, stating that an English imported bull,



# OUR HISTORY

## "LONG AND MERITORIOUS"

Lord Raglan<sup>1</sup>, should have won, likewise Aurora, a cow which finished only third in her class. Then, as now, judges rarely seem to get it right!

In 1856, also, the Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer reported the importation of Beef Shorthorns, stating that

*"We had the pleasure yesterday of inspecting two bulls and two heifers imported by Mr Younghusband MLC. The animals appeared generally to be of a very fine description. They are of the Durham Shorthorn breed."*

<sup>1</sup> Coates's Herd Book 13241. See Shorthorn Herd Book of Australia (SHBA), Vol 1 p167.

The article set out the breeding of the cattle, all of which had Coates's Herd Book pedigrees.

More Beef Shorthorn Champions can be identified from those early years. The Age of 13 November 1863 reported that the best bull of the Port Phillip Farmers' Society Show was the imported Royal Hope; and that the Champion cow was April Flowers. The pedigree of Royal Hope, a bull calved in England in 1858, can be found in Volume 1 of the Shorthorn Herd Book of Australia<sup>2</sup>. So is the antiquity and continuity of the breed demonstrated.

In 1870, the National Agricultural Society of Australia was established, taking over from the Port Phillip Farmers' Society. The new Society conducted the Melbourne Show until 1890, when the Royal Agricultural Society of Victoria was established. Who were 'Robertson Bros', exhibitor of the 1880 Champion bull? Here is an extract from The Age of 23 October 1875:

*"The most notable event in the shorthorn breeding history of the Australian colonies has been the sale during the past week of Mr Richard Morton's famed Mount Derrimut herd of 37 animals for £27,000, the buyers being the Messrs Robertson Bros of Colac, who it will be remembered were the spirited purchasers at Mr Morton's last draft sale of the Earl of Geneva for 1650 guineas. Messrs Robertson's later purchase includes the grand imported Bates bull Oxford Cherry Duke at £2500, whose calves, when from 8 to 12 months old, at the last auction sale averaged £458.17.0, being the highest average ever obtained in any country for calves of the same age....Whilst Mr Morton's numerous friends will regret that the state of his health demands the loss to the colony of a gentleman who*

*has done so much in the direction of placing Victoria in her present premier stock-breeding position, all will hail with the greatest satisfaction the enterprise of the Messrs Robertson, in purchasing this famous herd unbroken."*

The pedigrees of both Earl of Geneva and Oxford Cherry Duke can also be found in Volume 1 of the Shorthorn Herd Book of Australia, again reinforcing the link with the past<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Coates's Herd Book 16868. SHBA vol 1 p213.

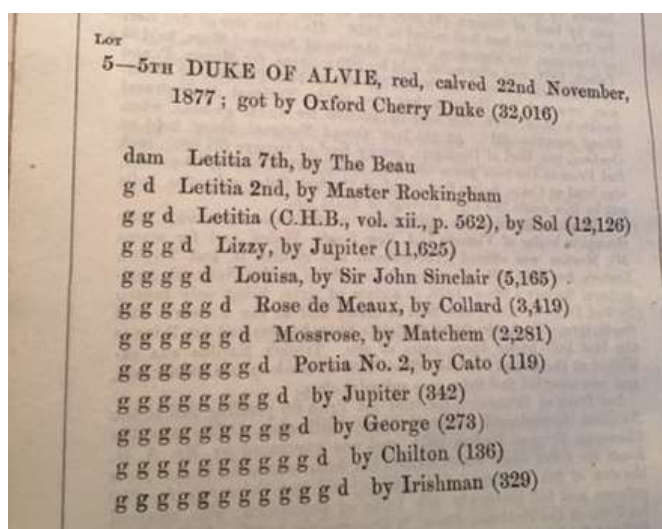
<sup>3</sup> Earl of Geneva, Coates's Herd Book 31068, SHBA vol 1 p118. Oxford Cherry Duke, Coates's Herd Book 32016, SHBA vol 1 p 189.

The average annual rate of inflation in England in the 145 years since 1875 means that what could be bought for £1 in 1875 would cost £116.50 today. So the amount paid for Oxford Cherry Duke in 1875 would be absolutely enormous in today's money – hundreds of thousands of pounds, let alone dollars. And so we come to the Spring Exhibition of 1877. The Age of 8 November 1877 reported that

*"Shorthorn cattle were numerous and well represented in all the sections. For the three year old bull, amongst a great number of competitors, Mr S Gardiner, of Ivanhoe, took first prize with Duke of Alvie, a fine rich roan by Duke of Brunswick."*

Volume 1 of the Shorthorn Herd Book of Australia shows that Duke of Alvie was in fact bred by Robertson Bros, then sold to Mr Gardiner<sup>4</sup>. Duke of Brunswick, the sire, had been imported by Richard Morton of Mount Derrimut<sup>5</sup>, but had come into the hands of Robertson Bros.

The Champion bull of the 1877 Show, however, was not Duke of Alvie, but rather Robertson Bros 2



years old 24th Duke of Derrimut. This bull was later sold to RJ Lomax of NSW for 2450 guineas 'the highest price ever paid in the Australian colonies for a Shorthorn'. In the Sydney Stock and Station Journal of 26 April 1918, correcting a report that some other bull had sold for the record price, Mr Lomax's son described the sale, set out the bull's show record, and finished up by saying 'weighed 2541 lbs<sup>6</sup> at three years old, in fair condition only'. The 1877 report also made mention of 'J Horwood', the exhibitor of the 1880 Champion cow:

*"The shorthorn cows and heifers were also a splendid exhibition, the average quality of the exhibits being good, and some especially fine models being among the competitors. The prize for the best cow was awarded to Mr J Horwood, of the Loddon, for Duchess of Bridgewater, a grand specimen of the shorthorn, the second prize falling to Messrs Robertson Bros' fine cow Letitia 7th and third to Mr J Horwood's 2nd Duchess of Bridgewater."*

<sup>4</sup> SHBA vol 1 p 84.

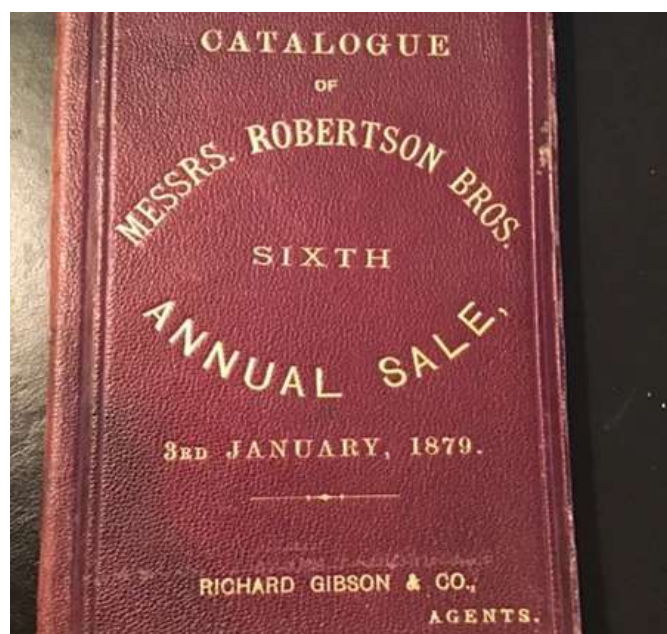
<sup>5</sup> SHBA vol 1 p 85.

<sup>6</sup> 1152 kgs.

The 1878 National Agricultural Show was held at Geelong. The Age of 3 October 1878 reported that the Champion bull was again Duke of Alvie; whilst the Champion cow was Robertson Bros' Duchess of Derrimut.

There was a sensation at the 1879 National Show. The Age of 6 November 1879 tells the story:

*"The show of cattle was excellent, the exhibits although not quite so numerous as on some former occasions, containing fewer inferior animals. Shorthorns were represented in most of the sections by a number of splendid cattle. In the class for three year old bulls, there were 15 competitors, and S. Gardiner's Duke of Alvie was in his usual place at the top of the list... Quite a sensation was caused among those interested in cattle when it became known that the judges had awarded the championship of the yard over the Duke of Alvie... to CB Fisher's yearling bull Agamemnon's 2nd*



*Prince, opinions being very much divided among skilled authorities. Agamemnon's 2nd Prince is a very fine, well-grown calf, showing excellent quality, but it is difficult to see why he should have been placed before the Duke. The Duke has arrived at maturity, and shows great perfection in form and quality; whereas his rival is not free from fault, such as, for instance, a tucking up around the girth; and it seems stretching matters to presume that he will do better than Alvie when he is five years old."*

The Age said this about the females:

*"It is seldom that such a splendid collection of cows is brought together. The Hon WJ Clarke headed the list with Oxford's Summerton by Oxford Cherry Duke."*

Now we come to the Melbourne Show of 1880, where this article began. The Age of 5 November 1880 reported:

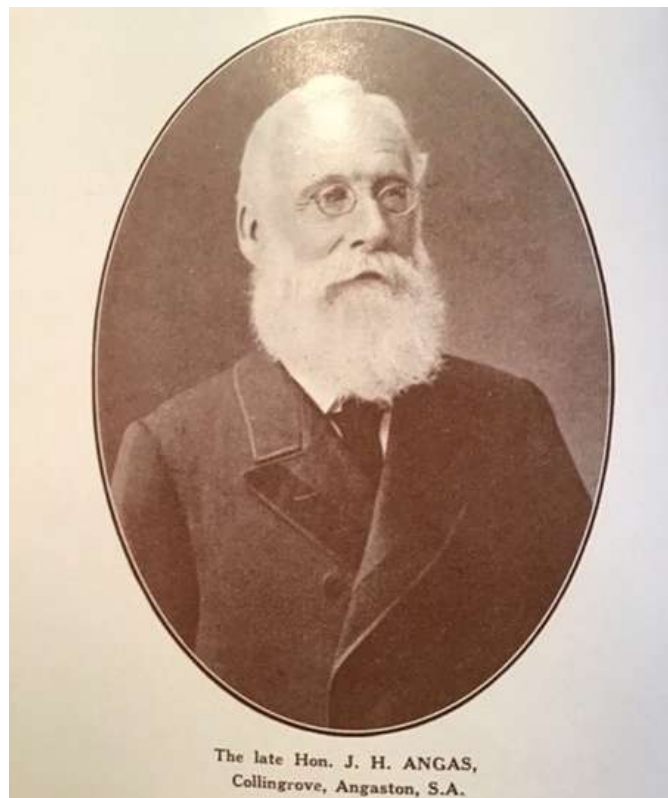
*"Messrs Robertson Bros, Colac, were first in the two-year-old bull class with 5th Duke of Alvie, a remarkably handsome animal, which also won the Exhibition silver medal for the second best shorthorn exhibited. The cows were an especially fine lot, and the judges had considerable difficulty in placing the first and second prize-takers in their proper positions, Mr Joel Horwood's Geneva's Matilda and Rugia Niblett, a cow recently imported from England by Mr JH Angus, of South Australia....Rugia Niblett is a remarkably handsome red and white, showing grand form and excellent quality; and Geneva's Matilda, by Earl of Geneva (imported), dam Matilda 2nd, is almost perfect in point of form.... Geneva's Matilda was finally placed first....The Exhibition gold medal for the best shorthorn exhibited was awarded to Mr Horwood's Geneva's Matilda, the silver medal for second best shorthorn to Messrs Robertson's 5th Duke of Alvie..."*

OXFORD CHERRY DUKE, 32016.			
Roan, calved October 14th, 1871.		Breeder, Lord Penrhyn, Penrhyn Castle, Bangor, N.W.	
Morton, Mt. Derrimut.		Imported by Mr. Richard	
		Sire Baron Oxford 4th, 25580	
Dam Cherry Duchess 13th		by Duke of Wharfedale 3rd, 21619	
2 d.	Cherry Duchess 9th	by Marnaduke, 14897	
3 d.	Cherry Duchess 6th	by Grand Duke 3rd, 16182	
4 d.	Cherry Duchess 3rd	by Grand Duke 2nd, 12961	
5 d.	Cherry Duchess 2nd	by Grand Duke, 10284	
6 d.	Brandy Cherry	by Sheldon, 8557	
7 d.	Gainford Cherry	by The Colonel, 5428	
8 d.	Cherry Brandy	by Thorp, 2757	
9 d.	Old Cherry	by Pirate, 2430	
10 d.	—	by Houghton, 318	
11 d.	—	by Marshal Blucher, 416	
12 d.	Colling	bred by Mr. Wm. Colling, from the stock of Messrs. Wright and Charge	



So, just as happened in 2019, when Beef Shorthorns were shown at Melbourne as a distinct breed for the last time, the Champion cow beat the Champion bull for Supreme Exhibit.

There was a link between Robertson Bros and the Champion cow of 1880. Her sire, Earl of Geneva, brought to Australia by Richard Morton of Mount Derrimut, had been purchased by Robertson Bros in about 1874.



There is a story to Rugia Niblett, the close-up second to the Champion cow. She was imported and owned by The Hon JH Angas, Collingrove, Angaston and Pt Sturt, South Australia. Mr Angas was a dominant figure in Beef Shorthorn breeding from the mid 1880s until his death in 1904. After that, his Estate carried on the stud until it was taken over by Mr CH Angas. The Hon JH Angas and later his Estate exhibited the Champion bull at the Sydney Royal Easter Show on 10 occasions between 1892 and 1904, and the Champion cow on 17 occasions between 1892 and 1913. Amongst the Sydney Champion cows were three females in the Rugia Niblett line, which went on to number 50. At the Melbourne Royal, the Hon JH Angas exhibited the Champion bull on three occasions between 1889 and 1899; whilst he and later his Estate exhibited the Champion cow nine times between 1885 and 1907. To have exhibited cattle with such success over such a lengthy period in different colonies, involving much travel - probably by rail, because this was not the era of motor vehicles - must have taken tremendous enthusiasm and dedication to the breed.

More may be said about Robertson Bros. They held an annual sale in the 1870s. The Society has in its possession a leather-bound catalogue for the January 1879 sale. The detail and workmanship of the catalogue are extraordinary. It states that

*"This fashionable and old-established herd has been in existence for over thirty years, and has gradually risen in public estimation..."*

*...its influence has been felt with very good effect, its blood being widely diffused throughout the leading stud herds of Australia.*

*At the last annual sale there was a great demand for this favourite stock, the result being the highest averages made in the southern hemisphere..."*

One of the bulls then catalogued, but retained, was 5th Duke of Alvie, the 1880 Melbourne Champion. His sire, the catalogue shows, was Oxford Cherry Duke; and his dam was Letitia 7th, second to the Champion cow in 1877.

We know that not every show Champion turns out to be superior breeding animal. The pedigrees of most of the bulls thus far mentioned, both Champions and sires, can be found in the Shorthorn Herd Book of Australia. This suggests that they had breeding worth. But the pedigree of the Champion bull of 1880 is not included in the Herd Book. That may be so for more than one reason. But one possibility must be that he looked better than he bred.

That said, there is really a lot known about the 1880 Champions and their predecessors at Melbourne. The Shorthorn Herd Book of Australia is that tangible link with the past.

And so to the Beef Shorthorn Champions at the 2019 Melbourne Royal. The Champion cow and Supreme Exhibit, Morningtime Kiribati's Blossom 4, had also been Champion cow at Melbourne in 2018. In that earlier year, she had a bull calf at foot - Morningtime Queensferry. It was Queensferry, as Champion bull in 2019, whom she defeated for Supreme Exhibit in 2019.

Blossom 4 is a judicious mix of Australian and Irish/American bloodlines. On both her sire and her dam's side she traces back to purebred shorthorn females introduced into the Beef Shorthorn Herd Book via breeding up in the Australian Shorthorn Herd Book. Her dam, Morningtime Red-06-17 was undoubtedly the most influential female in the history of the Morningtime Stud. She bred 10 calves. Her daughters included Morningtime Soldier's Blossom 20 and Morningtime Soldier's Blossom 32 in addition to the 2019 Champion. Soldier's Blossom 32 was Junior and Grand Champion female at Melbourne,

whilst Soldier's Blossom 20 was the dam of the Junior Champion heifer at Melbourne in 2019 and dam of Nantucket's Dame Melba, twice Reserve Champion at Royal Shows.

Morningtime Queensferry taps into pure Australian bloodlines on his sire's side. His sire, Marrington Minstrel, was Champion at Sydney in 1980. Minstrel's sire was Marrington Genius, three times Champion at Sydney. Genius was bred by the late Arthur Williams, and was Marrington and Terra blood. Completing the circle, after Sydney 1980 Minstrel sold to the late Ron Norris, Faversham, South Australia. He came back to Melbourne later that year. He was Senior Reserve to Morningtime Agis, who went on to be Morningtime's first Champion

bull at a Royal Show.

Consideration of the way in which the Beef Shorthorn, over countless generations, faithfully recorded, has influenced the cattle industry in Australia for the better, is a matter for both pride and reflection. Our cattle have stood the test of time. A matter of tremendous importance, their lengthy past is documented and thus examinable. Documentation shows where undesirable influences crept in and required remedy. Documentation shows when and how remedy was achieved. It shows, too, the bloodlines which have survived and thrived. Those looking to the future would be indeed unwise to ignore the past.

## ISABELLA WHITNEY

### Shorthorn Breeder and Grand Woman of the West

(1845-1941)



*The following article is an extract from the RAS Heritage Times and has connections with this Society; Isabella Whitney's great grand-daughter is Patricia (Trish) King who regularly attends the Shorthorn judging at the Sydney Royal Easter Show. Her grandfather – William Ewart Selwyn King - was married to Isabella's daughter Emelie Margaret (Whitney) King.*

It's a truism that when times get tough in rural Australia, the women on the land step up. But in the past, disaster was sometimes a woman's only opportunity to show her full mettle and take charge.

Anyone looking at a photo of Isabella Whitney as a young woman would see she was no shrinking

violet. Taken early in her marriage, the photo shows a girl with a plain, strong face. Her gaze is penetratingly steady. Indeed, she appears utterly unflappable.

As an eighteen year old, Bella chose a husband who was 19 years her senior. Franklin Whitney was a Canadian immigrant; a quiet man, but amiable. He was also a partner in the rapidly expanding coaching firm, Cobb & Co. The complex doings of the company would control their lives for decades, bringing property and fortune on paper, but also the threat of ruin. When Frank died and the shaky foundations of the business were revealed, it fell to Bella to untangle the mess. Though it took years, it was the making of her. Along the way,



she would become the most celebrated female exhibitor of Shorthorn cattle in the history of the RAS.

## BEGINNINGS

Set up in 1853 by Freeman Cobb and three other Americans, Cobb & Co catered to the growing transport demands of the Victorian goldfields. It passed through a number of hands for half a dozen years until a consortium of seven took over, headed by another American, James Rutherford. Frank Whitney was part of that group. although how he raised his share of the capital is unclear. His background was humble, so presumably, he'd had luck at the diggings. Rutherford was an alarmingly energetic character, addicted to making deals. He habitually dashed across hundreds of miles of coaching routes to oversee every aspect of operations.

The company needed to be nimble to respond to the boom and bust cycle of new goldfields and to stay ahead of the railways. Cobb & Co moved into New South Wales and Queensland and Rutherford set up an administration centre and large workshops in Bathurst. The company began stabling horses at the White Horse Hotel where Bella lived with her publican aunt. This is probably where Frank Whitney met Bella Leeds. Bella's origins were humble too: she was an orphan, and the granddaughter of a convict woman, although that was no doubt kept secret.

James Rutherford was clever and sought to control all the inputs to the business, establishing a coach-building factory and buying a network of properties to breed horses and grow feed. Cattle and sheep grazing became lucrative too; and as a hedge against the railways, investments were also made in coal and iron ore mines.

Shortly after their marriage in 1863, Frank and Bella went to run Buckinguy, a vast company station in the remote Macquarie Marshes, stocked with 100,000 cattle.

Not yet 20 when she arrived, Bella needed all her resourcefulness to survive the conditions. Supplies were received twice a year by bullock wagon. Bad luck if anything was forgotten. At Buckinguy, Bella had six of her eleven children. Given the extreme isolation, it seems remarkable that only one child died while they were there.

## A NEW HOME

In 1875 the Whitneys moved to Orange so Frank could more directly assist with administration. Six years later Cobb & Co purchased Coombing Park, near Carcoar, and the family shifted onto land again. Established by Sir Thomas Icely back in 1826, the prestigious property was one of the first land grants west of the Blue Mountains. Icely was a president of the Agricultural Society of New South Wales (1865-



**Equally at home in the paddock or mixing with politicians, Bella was always cool, calm and collected... and as a pioneering woman on the land she certainly had to be in order to survive.**

67) and known for his scientific farming methods. Three hundred of his merinos, bred from Macarthur's stock, went with the sale.

Frank Whitney was good with animals and worked hard to improve Coombing, fencing the 10,000 acre run and using multiple methods to tackle an ongoing rabbit plague. A copper mine on the property employing over 20 men also required his oversight.

By now, Cobb & Co's business empire was vast. It owned over 11,000 square kilometres of land, returning an annual profit of about £80,000; coaching contributed an additional £12,000. Only two of the original partners were left: Rutherford, with a two-thirds stake, and Frank. They should have been comfortably rich, but in truth, there were massive debts and strings of mortgages that Rutherford added to, often without consultation, and seemingly on a whim. His convoluted financial juggling was hard to keep track of. Eventually, the strain got to Rutherford and he slipped into a depression so deep it turned suicidal. Though it's speculation, it's possible he was bi-polar.

Keeping news of his illness quiet was crucial to maintaining confidence in the business, so Rutherford was whisked away by a daughter on a voyage to the US. In a matter of months, he recovered, only to return to worsening economic conditions. A massive loan of £50,000 was required to keep Cobb & Co from collapse. With grave misgivings, Frank agreed to the mortgaging of Coombing Park.

## DISASTER STRIKES

As the 1890s ticked over, drought and a dire economic depression took hold of the nation. Banks collapsed and Cobb & Co's accounts were frozen. Only further loans from a former partner kept the business going.



Then Frank sickened. He was operated on for an abscess of the liver but died from infection eight weeks later. He was 68. Bella, aged 49, was left with a mountain of trouble and seven children still to raise. Not only that, her hands were tied. Frank had left his share of Cobb & Co to her, but his will stipulated that she must receive it converted into money. Rutherford had no cash to buy her out, and it was the worst time to be selling assets. For Bella to retain her share in property, the will would have to be legally challenged. That would take organising. In the meantime, it was agreed that Bella and Rutherford would continue to run the business as partners.

Although Bella had good advice from her co-executors, there was no doubt as to who the decision maker was on the Whitney side. Rutherford demanded she hire a man to run Coombing Park, but she refused. She supervised it herself, appointing her 22 year old son as the manager under her. The pressure on her was immense. The drought, which became known as the Federation Drought, was the worst in the country's history so far; and rabbits continued to be a menace; Cobb & Co was on the verge of bankruptcy; and Rutherford was falling into another terrible depression, one which would see him hospitalised. What's more, solicitors advised that an act of parliament was required to change the law before Frank's will could be validly challenged. But the political landscape was in a state of flux with terms still being settled for the federation of the colonies.

## **MANAGEMENT MATERIAL**

During Rutherford's absence, Bella ran Cobb & Co with his appointed power of attorney. Hours a day were taken up with business correspondence and would be for many years. Bit by bit Bella built up a clearer picture of the company's complex assets and Rutherford's sometimes slippery dealings. When he resumed his role she insisted on countersigning all cheques. And when she had doubts about the probity of arrangements at the ironworks they owned, he called in auditors. A discrepancy of £20,000 was found and he sued. The matter was settled out of court in Bella's favour for a much smaller sum. Though it sometimes took lawyering-up, negotiation between them always remained possible.

By excellent management, Bella gradually turned the Coombing Park finances around. So much so that by 1900 she was able to build a new homestead, replacing the original twelve-room home with a thirty-two-room mansion.

Bella was now highly respected in business and political circles. (Lobbying continued regarding the will.) Many influential men were among the visitors to Coombing, including Edmund Barton, who was a friend and destined to be the nation's first prime minister. Perhaps at his request, Bella and two of her

daughters were invited to attend the opening of the first federal parliament.

In 1902 the Whitney Estate Act finally passed as a private members Bill through the NSW legislature. Cobb & Co assets could now be formally split, with Bella retaining Coombing Park and another property in Queensland.

**Leading the early charge for women, and indeed working mothers, Bella changed the norms of society... and no matter how long it took, her perseverance meant she was often victorious.**

## **BOSS COCKY**

Now Bella was free to pay even more attention to agricultural matters at Coombing. This may have increased tension between mother and son, for in 1907 the Whitney Pastoral Company was formed with Bella as managing director. Her son cashed out his share and bought Waugoola Station, near Woodstock. At around this time, a stud flock of sheep was established at Coombing, and a stud herd of Shorthorns followed. Bella personally supervised the Shorthorns. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, her judgement and expertise were repeatedly proved in the showring. Coombing's cattle attracted many prizes and the interest of international buyers, who were keen to splurge thousands of pounds on Bella's bloodlines. At the Sydney Royal Easter Show Bella became a much admired figure. There, at the age of 93, she finally achieved her lifelong ambition, winning the Shorthorn Male Championship with the sire Aldsworth Royal Prince (imp.). Loud cheers filled the ring when she claimed the prize.

In those final years of her life, Bella was always good for a newspaper story at Showtime. The 'Grand Old Lady of the West', they called her in headlines above photos that showed her white-haired and diminutive, but still keen-eyed and selfpossessed. She told reporters it was very easy to look after one's own property after the first fifty years. Cattle were very like children, she opined. 'You must be firm. but you must always try to understand them, and have sympathy with their tantrums.' She did not say this frivolously. It was her view that women brought up on the land were better judges of stock than men, 'because they are gifted with keener perception for detail and more sympathetic understanding.'

When Bella died in 1941, aged 96, she was survived by four daughters. To honour her, the Whitney Pastoral Company sponsored a memorial perpetual trophy in her name for many years, for the Grand Champion Beef Shorthorn Bull. The Company continues to operate today, as does Coombing, run by Bella's great, great grandson, George King.

Upon her death, tributes flowed. While the Shorthorn cattle industry lauded her for her outstanding influence on the breed, others remarked on her astuteness, her



**Bella's pioneering spirit is perhaps best summed up by the answer she gave to a curious Coombing Park visitor in 1934, "Nothing is ever too hard," she said, "when one knows how to do it."**

charm, her forward thinking and spirit, evident even in later years. Others remembered her generosity during the worst of the Great Depression when she fed the numerous men on the road who passed by Coombing. The Cobb & Co days were noted in relation to her husband, but Bella's active role in the business went unmentioned.

In more recent years, one delightful aside about Bella has emerged. It seems she was an early adopter of the motor car, perhaps because she had been rattled a good deal in cart and coach in her day. She bought her first vehicle, an Austin, in 1910. This was replaced a few years later with a Rolls Royce Silver Cloud. She never drove herself but had a chauffeur. At her instruction he would drive out into the paddocks so she could survey her land up-close; land she had worked so hard to retain.

## THOUSAND GUINEAS INTO COSTCO

JBS has had some success this year with the Thousand Guineas Brand into retail.

The brand has been performing very well into Food Service both here in Australia and into overseas markets. When Restaurants closed down globally this year in March and April due to Covid, retail demand picked up and JBS were able to sell some Thousand Guineas product into Costco Australia.

The feedback from the team at Costco has been very positive and the brand has been sold into stores in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Canberra and Brisbane with the new Costco store just down the road from the JBS office at Dinmore stocking the



products as can be seen in the pictures.

On another note JBS has made a commercial decision not to publish or broadcast their slaughter and feeder rates, however quotes and inspections can be arranged simply by contacting any one of their buyers direct. A list of all their buyers in all areas is available on the Society's website.



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# VALE

## COLIN KEITH McDONALD

4.7.48 – 8.8.20



Colin McDonald, a stalwart of the Beef Shorthorn Society, having just entered upon his 73rd year, died on 8 August this year. He is survived by his wife Shelley, his children Felicity and Nick, his grandchildren Harriet, Sybil and Fleur, and his mother Noni.

Colin was born on 4 July 1948. His family was a pioneering one at Mortlake in Victoria's Western District. The first of the McDonalds settled in the district in 1856. Colin's grandfather, also Colin, was a well-known grazier, stock and station agent and sportsman. His father, Geoff, was a renowned cattleman, operating under the title 'McDonald Bros', which harked back to the stock and station agency.

After boarding school in Melbourne, Colin returned to Mortlake and worked with his father until struck down by a bleed from a brain aneurysm some 15 years ago.

In the period of their work together, McDonald Bros ran a commercial herd of some 400 Beef Shorthorn/Hereford cross females. Hereford bulls from South Boorook were joined to Beef Shorthorn types, and Beef Shorthorn bulls were used over Hereford types. In 1959, Geoff and Colin established the Lochaber Beef Shorthorn stud. An important aspect of the stud's program was breeding bulls for use in the commercial herd. But the stud also showed with very considerable success at the Melbourne and Sydney Royals over more than 20 years. Major show ring successes included Lochaber Ethel Felicity, Grand Champion female at Sydney 1981 and Melbourne 1993, and Lochaber Fanciful Michelle, Grand Champion female at Sydney 1986.

Colin took a main part in preparing and showing the Lochaber cattle. He was always great company, but that went with him being properly competitive in the show ring.

Colin's enjoyment of the Show environment did not end at the showing exit. Still remembered are the first-class dinner dances at the RACV Roof Garden. Colin was often not quick to leave.

Colin was much involved in the affairs of the Society until the latter part of the 1990s. He was a Victorian Committeeman for many years, and a Federal Councillor. In 1995 and 1996, he was Senior Vice-President of the Council.

Another aspect of Colin's involvement with the Society was his role as editor of the Society Newsletter. That role began when the newsletter took on its present format in 1979. It continued until the latter part of the 1980s. He was tireless in his efforts to produce a newsletter which had both sufficient content and contemporary relevance.

Off the farm, Colin was a keen and competent sportsman. He played in the Melbourne Grammar First XI (just as his father had done), and when back at the farm he played cricket with distinction for Mortlake in the district league.

At just 55, Colin suffered the bleeding aneurysm. It left him significantly incapacitated, and the extent of the incapacity increased as the years passed. Work was impossible. For a vitally active man, it was a cruel blow. It imposed, particularly upon his wife, their children and his parents, a heavy burden. They bore that burden with fortitude.

Colin was held in the highest esteem, as a man and as a cattleman, by members of the Society and his many other friends. The Society extends its deep sympathy to Shelley, Felicity, Nick, Noni and the grandchildren.

(Tribute written by David Ashley)

## WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

The Society extends its welcome to the following new members:

Phillip & Richele Loane, Tasmania  
Tony Hart, Tasmania (Associate)  
Tom Stuckey, NSW  
Laura McBride and Brandon Healey, Victoria  
Wermatong Pty Ltd, NSW

# BIG SPRINGS STATION

## Home To The Wilson Family For Over 150 Years



Situated in the foothills of the Flakney Ranges (30 kilometres south-east of Wagga Wagga) the family farm was established in the 1800's. The Wilson family have run mostly cattle, sheep and grown crops on the land since it was established in 1865 by George Wilson (great grandfather to the current owner George (Pato) Wilson). Pato's father passed away in March of this year and he also had a love of Shorthorn cattle.

Pato recalls -

"As far as I can make out great grandfather had Shorthorns pretty much from that date. In 1869 George Wilson was instrumental in setting up The Murrumbidgee and Lachlan Cattle-stealing Prevention Association. Which leads me to believe they always had cattle. (The photo of the Cattle in the Lake was taken in about 1905). Back in those days the steer calves were grown out to be bullocks. Which were walked to Uranquinty, then railed to Melbourne.

The cattle were always kept on the better country, which included the horse paddock around the homestead. Dad in the sixties used Dairy Shorthorn to increase size and milk

production. Most calf's were being sold as vealers. Sheep were always the main enterprise up until the early 1970 when Dad had had enough of foot rot. He sold the lot and then ran a wholly cattle operation, Shorthorn and Hereford which he bought across from a property he had sold on the Murrumbidgee. After leaving school I did an A.I course, using top Shorthorn semen to upgrade our herd. We also tried Limousin and Charolais over the Shorthorn. Plus Simmentals over the Herefords.

During the drought of 1994 Pato decided to diversify, and thought it would be a great idea to bottle the pristine natural spring water from the Station. From 1994 until 2004 Big Springs Natural Spring Water was bottled onsite at Big Springs Station. Starting with a handful of customers, by 2004 the high demand and increase in customers resulted in a purpose-built factory and administration facility being built in Wagga Wagga. Today Big Springs Water now employs over 20 staff including Pato's son Angus. As for the Station itself the property now welcomes couples to the working property to host their wedding or special celebration.





# PHOTO ARCHIVE



Rhys Aitken, Tatura Heifer Spectacular



Luke Spencer at Sydney Show with Elanora Blackberry  
22nd Junior Champion Heifer sashed by Mrs Neil Watson



George Crockford and Keith Grigg



Margaret Hallyburton



Alistair Brook judge, Dawn Morris, Eumemerring  
Sudden Impact (Junior & Grand Champion Bull), David Spencer



Shed accommodation for exhibitors, old Melbourne Showground



Peter Falls and Carolyn Shannon, Ballarat Show



# PHOTO ARCHIVE



Barrie Crotty, Barvon



Jeff Swan and Leo Swan with a representative from VACC



Shirley Swan and Darren Rowlands, steer judging Royal Melbourne Show



Rachael Shannon and Natalie Spencer attending promotions stand, Royal Melbourne Show



Les and Carolyn Shannon with Lynette Jubb



Jade Aitken, Luke Spencer and Rhys Aitken



Lindsay Fox, Eumemerring Princess and Luke Spencer, Royal Melbourne Feature Show



# PHOTO ARCHIVE



Alan Mathers



Quarantine in shed - masks mandatory!



Lockie Falls and Brett Dodd, Blue Frame judging ring, Royal Melbourne Show



Stud groom Clinton Rogers for Wyndora, Adelaide Show



David Ashley awarding George Crockford his Life Membership to Society



Margaret Hallyburton and daughter Emma



Lockie, Andrea and Susie Falls, Ballarat Feature Show



# PHOTO ARCHIVE



Carolyn and Rhys Aitken and Joan Burke



Kathy Grigg and daughter Joanne Grigg



Barbara and Alec Loane with Supreme Beef Shorthorn Exhibit Dunroan Russell, Royal Melbourne Feature Breed



Andrea Falls Sydney Show and Miss Showgirl 1999



Wangaratta Show, Junior Brigade



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