

# MYRA JANE – FM

ASH Reg: 2119

*Grandfather to grandson, "You will breed champions out of her, if only you find the right stallion." What a gift horse – what a legacy for the Stock Horse breed!*

These were the words the old man said as he handed over the gift horse. You see, MYRA JANE - FM was a 21st birthday gift from grandfather TM (Theo) Hooke to his grandson Ted Hooke, way back in 1954. Theo bred this mare for station work but had good reason for his confidence in her breeding potential as he passed her down to the upcoming generation of Hookes. Theo knew of the 100 year breeding history behind her.

Good horses and good horsemen were part of this cattle-raising family. The Hookes owned properties near the Barrington Tops on the north-western side of Gloucester in the tough and isolated mountain district of the Great Divide on the north east side of the Hunter Valley in NSW. Originally a large area of grants and crown leaseholds, the estate when dissolved in 1860, comprised 400,000 ha (one million acres) of land stretching from Wirragulla through Giro to the property now known as Curracabark. The herd totalled some 15,000 cattle of the Durham breed. On dissolution of the estate, individual properties were run by different parts of the family.

Theo lived at the property Crookes Park at Dungog where Ted was born. Ted's father Cally (Calvert) bought back the 1,600 ha (4,000 acre) parcel known as Myra for his family to which Ted moved after he returned home from school in 1949. Living at the interface between the isolation of the old world and the emerging transport technologies of the new, they relied on Stock Horses for their transport and daily work.

Ted, now living in retirement in Forster on the NSW mid-north coast, writes about the early days, "As well as stock work, we rode horses to and from our work of fencing, ringbarking, even rabbit trapping, carrying fifty traps slung across the back of the saddle over carry bags made from corn sacks. We even carried dead rabbits back so we could skin them. The access to the property was difficult with three concrete causeway crossings of the Manning River and twenty one creek crossings topped off by eighteen gates to open and close. In some places the track went along the beds of creeks. All cattle were driven to and from Gloucester which took three days by road. At that time it was the only stock route between the mid-north coast, the Upper Hunter and beyond. Mail came once a week and, at times, we had to meet it at the first river crossing with pack horses, 15 miles from Myra. This was a common occurrence. People from further up had a longer journey still. In wet weather, or when the snow melted on the Barrington Tops, horses were an important part of our everyday life. It was not until the 1960s that the road was improved enough to transport cattle in trucks. Even then only in table-tops as semi-trailers came much later. It was the horse that got us about."

"Grandfather had a knack with breeding, no matter what he turned to, horses or dogs, he could pick the right ones to mate to get good progeny", says Ted. This knack of Studmaster may have been bred into the Hooke family itself as we see the prefixes of Myra, Wirragulla and Curracabark play out in the ASHS Stud Book.

Another branch of the family features Mick Hooke of Wirragulla Polo Team fame - a 10 goal player. Mick was the cousin of Ted's father and their property, Wirragulla, comprises just over 800 ha (2,000) acres of scenic country next door to Crookes Park.

MYRA JANE - FM, a chestnut born in 1950, grew into a 14.2 hand working horse. Ted describes her as, "a plain horse with a small white star in the centre of her forehead." With refreshing honesty, Ted goes on to explain that, "both her dam, Janie, and MYRA JANE - FM were temperamental. Grandfather Hooke told me that after four days on the road droving cattle from Gloucester to Dungog Janie had one of her temperamental outbursts near the

old butter factory in Dungog. MYRA JANE - FM had similar traits. She was always chewing on her bit when being ridden and for some unknown reason would sometimes have a funny turn.'

On the sire's side, MYRA JANE - FM is by Steel Dust, a 15.3 hand, brown/black stallion owned by Mick Hooke who produced a number of good polo ponies. "We played a lot of polo on him and at one stage he went to the Sydney Royal Show and won the water jump - yesterday's equivalent of a single obstacle event, akin to today's three day event obstacles. It was quite a feat. Mick sold horses all over the place with a number going to Jamie Mackay (of polo fame)", says Ted. Steel Dust was by Fairfield, a Thoroughbred stallion, out of a Thoroughbred mare.

MYRA JANE - FM's dam is recorded in the Stud Book as Janie. Ted describes her as, "an ordinary station mare, 14.2hh, chestnut and pretty common in appearance, but very clever. Despite her ability we never worked her much as she was fiery and had the Queensland itch really badly". Janie was out of the mare, Sleeping Thunder by Radium. Her cattle 'smarts' most likely came from Radium, but perhaps her dam's name gives us a clue as to the source of her nature.

Janie also produced a colt, Little Echo, who too suffered with the itch. Ted used Little Echo to breed, "He produced quite a few foals for us - but they were a pretty fiery bunch. His progeny seemed very intelligent and responded to TLC very quickly. Most of them were bright but accident prone. I had three or four who showed a lot of promise campdrafting but they all succumbed to some injury or other at a very early age. I bred a gelding named El Dorado, out of a creamy mare purchased from the late Francis Scanlon of Quirindi, NSW, but he died of tetanus." One of Little Echo's best geldings which made it to the campdrafting scene was a chestnut called Suntan owned by Butch Smith of Gloucester. Ted recalls, "This horse was ridden in competition by Harold or Dan Geron of Gloucester". Little Echo only had one foal registered - CURRACABARK FLASHLIGHT, who produced three foals.

The illustrious side of MYRA JANE - FM's pedigree comes from Janie's sire, Echo. There is no record of the breeding of Echo's dam, Secret, but Ted says that his sire Almont was by a Thoroughbred stallion, one of a number having the name Eclipse. Here the records get patchy going back, but Ted Hooke vividly recalls his grandfather's story about the blood stallion named Chilton (Imp), which accompanied John Hooke and his family in the brig 'Courier' in a six month voyage from England arriving in 1828. Young Chilton was bred in NSW sired by Chilton (imp) out of Camerton (imp), who was by Hector. Young Chilton is one of the horses to appear in William Yuille's first Australian Thoroughbred Stud Book (ASB Vol. I, 1878). This listing is in the back section of the stud book as his dam, being an imported horse, is not included with the (Australian) horses in this (ASB) stud book.

The Hooke history records that this horse, settling in Parramatta, competed in a match race for a wager at Randwick against the horse Benelong, owned by Sir John Jamison (founder of the AJC). No doubt the family kept these bloodlines going and later, John Hooke's sons and grandsons bred some of the best horseflesh in the country - Stock Horses or Thoroughbreds. A grandson, Augustus II of Tia River Station near Walcha had good horses, with Blue Spec taking out the Perth Cup, the Kalgoorlie Cup, the Moonee Valley Cup and finally the Melbourne Cup in 1905.

Echo sired seven foals, Janie being the fourth of these. Janie's sister, Flight, was bred to the Dimray son, AVOCA TEDDY to produce FIDGET who had six foals to WILLUNGA RAYMOND.



1972 Gloucester Show MYRA TEMPLE (right) CURRACABARK SOLITARE (left). Photo by Maurice Newstead.



Christine Hooke at Gloucester Rodeo riding MYRA ALLWONG

Another sister Hope, had FAITH, who went on to produce six foals for the Cloverdale Stud and SAPPHIRE who produced ten foals for the Wangilla Pastoral Company. Another sister, Jill, produced RIPPLE who went on to have five Kilderre progeny, a line of which has carried on until today. Echo's last foal was a colt, Snip (not SNIP - FS), who sired GLENUGIE YODLE, a stallion who sired nineteen horses for the Archibalds.

In those early days of the 1950s and 1960s, the Hooke had to ride long distances to compete in Shows and Rodeos, therefore they were quite selective in what they exhibited. In the 1970s their campdrafting was mostly local but they also got down to the Hunter River and up to the New England districts.

Long time readers of this feature article series will recognise this prefix of Myra as it features in Joy Poole's Foundation Stallion article on MYRA BRONZE - FS (ASHS Journal Sept/Oct. 2003, pp 28 - 30). To recap, as a three or four year old colt he was sent with Ted Hooke when he went to manage the family property, Myra Station. MYRA BRONZE - FS was the first foal by the great polo sire Panzer and out of Theo Hill's lovely mare Scarlet. Panzer has the distinction of being the sire of two Foundation Stallions, MYRA BRONZE - FS and NABINABAH THE GUN - FS. "He never got many outside mares as we were so isolated but the ones he got were good ones", says Ted. Joy quotes Ted as saying, "I think the percentage of good horses got by MYRA BRONZE - FS to foals produced was exceptional. Not only did MYRA BRONZE - FS have the capacity to sire good horses but his progeny continued to produce good horses."

From the 86 registered progeny in the first generation, he has produced a total of 2,581 descendants, as registered to 2007. MYRA BRONZE - FS sired Harold Germon's well performed full brothers CALLY and ANZAC, the latter horse reputed to have initially put MYRA BRONZE - FS on the map. Other prefixes boasting horses sired by MYRA BRONZE - FS are Wirragulla and Loloma.

All this may seem a bit secondary to this Foundation Mare story until you realise that the best mating of this stallion was arguably to MYRA JANE - FM. All of her foals were by him. Perhaps this mare should have been called Eight Carat, instead of leaving that name to her recent and notable Thoroughbred 'cousin' because she produced eight chestnut gems as a broodmare. Most of her progeny grew to about 15 hands high and looked quite similar.

An anomaly, not evident with the seven progeny recorded in the stud book, is that there were eight foals born to this Foundation Mare. The first offspring of the eight successive matings to MYRA BRONZE - FS was a colt born in 1960. Gelded and named Coogan, he is described by Ted as, "an incredible horse who won many Led and Campdrafting ribbons." This horse was often ridden by Harold Germon.

The first of the three fillies out of this Foundation Mare came next in 1964 and was registered as MYRA QUICKSTEP who was sold while being away broken-in with Ted not hearing any more of her. She has no registered progeny. MYRA ABAGAIL was the next born in 1966. Ted kept her for breeding but had no success on that front.

The fourth foal, another colt, has been little heard about. He was significant, not so much for the number of his progeny but, due to him being an ASH pioneer who became the first to reside south of the NSW/Victoria border. CH Mackinnon of Kaladbro Station at Casterton, near Hamilton in Victoria, was looking for a good cattle horse to put over his mainly Thoroughbred mares. The famous buckjumping champion, Ray Crawford, made a strong suggestion that he should look to the Quarter Horse bloodlines, specifically the dual registered DELL MINGO - FS. But CH Mackinnon did his homework and ventured north to the Hunter staying with the Hooke for a little while where he saw the colt as a yearling. Mrs Young, a respected horsewoman from Hamilton, accompanied him in his quest to select a good sire.

The colt was purchased for \$1,500 to breed station horses and polo ponies and was ultimately registered as KALADBRO NIKKI. He arrived in Hamilton by train as a well broken-in two year old. Ian Cameron, who managed Kaladbro Station at that time, remembers him well, "He had a touch of pony about him and while other MYRA BRONZE - FS progeny had more style, this horse could perform well. You didn't have to train him - he had natural ability and was very sure footed. We could just pull him out of the paddock and go campdrafting successfully.' Overall he sired thirty-one registered progeny - seven registered with the Kaladbro prefix. "He produced many good polo ponies with ones out of the better mares sold to Jim McGinley in NSW. The next generation saw his fillies successfully bred to a Sundown stallion, Belthasar that also produced some great horses for polo", said Ian.

His move to Victoria was an important development for the Stock Horse breed which, at that time, had not been formalised. With him being the first Hunter Valley stallion to move to the 'western districts', his good genetics were shared widely throughout the region. The Mackinnons finally parted with him in 1982 to two keen campdrafting mates, Brian McDonald, a saddler from Ballarat and Bob McMahon a cattle buyer living at Colac at the time. Bob, originally from Kempsey, was an active committee Member in the Central and Western Branch of the Society in the early years and represented Victoria and Tasmania as a Director on the Board. His love of campdrafting saw him establish the ABCA Campdraft at Colac and the southern zone of the ABCA, of which he became the first President.

Bob describes him as, "nearly 15.3hh - a tough and sturdy horse, without being heavy". He had done some campdrafting and as Bob was looking to replace his ABBEY - FS bred stallion JERI ALLI ALLI BAR, this horse filled the bill. Bob was a serious competitor and campaigned him all over South Australia and Victoria. Bob says, "he was a very clever horse, easy to train and ride - very versatile. He was pretty good in the camp, but really good on the course outside". When I put to Bob the distinction that Ted had made between the mares and colts out of our Foundation Mare, Bob concurred, "He was very quiet. Yes, you could put him in the bombproof category."

Bob took him on to win a few Open Campdrafts with his daughter also winning a few in the Junior and Ladies category. "We were invited to the Melbourne Show Campdraft twice, and he was the ABCA Victorian Horse of the Year in Campdraft for two years. He





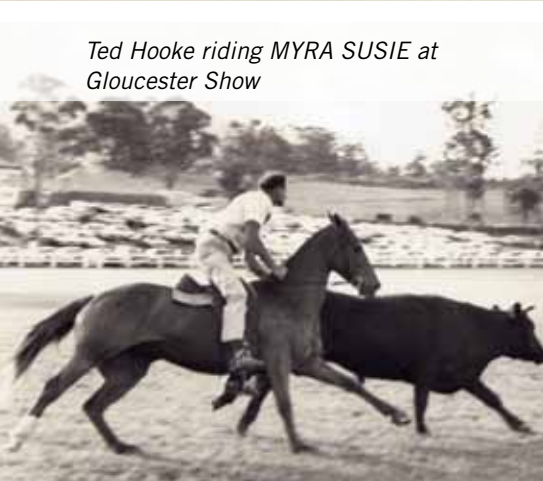
*Ted Hooke riding MYRA ALLWONG at Wingham Show*



*Harold Germon riding Coogan at 1967 Gloucester Show*



*Ted Hooke riding MYRA SUSIE at 1973 Dungog Show. Photo by Maurice Newstead.*



*Ted Hooke riding MYRA SUSIE at Gloucester Show*

was well up in the national standings when he injured his leg and retired," said Bob, with a sense of disappointment.

In 1986/1987, he spent a season at Mike Donelan's, near The Rock in the Riverina and sired eight horses with the Bullenbong prefix. Another well known Victorian horseman, the late Ray Mitchell who was a long time President of the Sub-Branch at Bendigo, used him to breed FAIRVIEW LODGE BOBBY. This bay gelding performed well for Ray across Victoria, especially in Ridden and Working classes, but was equally good as a mount for beginners and children. Unfortunately for Bob, he didn't have much success with the stallion on his own mares, only managing to breed a few foals from him.

The mare MYRA SUSIE was born about 1963 and was the first of the eight progeny to be classified. Harold Germon who broke her in, exclaimed, "Ted, I have a good one here, but you have a problem. She is very temperamental!" - "How right he was", says Ted, "but she proved to be an exceptional wet weather horse." She passed this ability onto her three progeny. Two of these, MYRA ALLWONG and MYRA CHEETAH by Harold Willard's TARGET, were registered. Ted recalls that, "These two in particular showed a promise of being as good, or perhaps better than their dam. MYRA ALLWONG was successfully campdrafted by my daughter Christine who won many Ladies Campdrafts on him. After I retired he was given to Robert and Barbara Frazier of Gladstone near Kempsey, where he ended his life in retirement. MYRA CHEETAH unfortunately, tore a tendon during her first campdraft at Nowendoc, from which she never recovered." As a breeder, Ted thought it interesting to note that all the females of this line were rather temperamental - they had to be coaxed and not pushed. In contrast, the stallions and geldings were the complete opposite - they were almost bombproof. Anyone could ride them, even down to the smallest child, but the mares were one-person horses.

The last three foals were all colts, proving to be sires of note whose exploits have been fairly well recorded. CURRACABARK SOLITARE, born in 1967, was a champion campdrafter and sired twenty four progeny. Predominantly these were mares carrying the Curracabark prefix.

MYRA TEMPLE, born in 1970, was an outstanding sire with fifty two progeny registered. He sired five Myra fillies and a colt along with many to outside breeders. His final home was with Wiljohn ASH Stud at Dungog where he sired nine horses with their prefix between 1993 and 1996. The team of his progeny, WILJOHN BOOMERANG, WILJOHN GOLDUST and WILJOHN JAN gave the Oakley family wins and many placings at the National Championships in 2001 and 2002. A sire

son, WILJOHN TEMPO, is forging a new generation for the line with ten progeny to date and his services being offered at last year's ASHS online Helmsman Auction.

The chestnut octet was completed with MYRA PALEFACE, the last foal to be born in 1974. Like his sibling before him, he blazed the ASH trail interstate, taking the bloodline over to Western Australia. Being a good outcross to the existing Western Australian gene pool, he was used extensively by his owner, Malcolm Henderson, with some nineteen progeny registered with their Ynabla prefix. He has had the greatest direct numerical influence of all the MYRA JANE - FM colts by siring eighty three registered progeny with the last registered being born in 1997. Many of these were successful at all ASH disciplines, winning for a number of different breeders at Shows and State Championships in the west. His main impact in breeding has been through the colt YNABLA PALEJET who produced nineteen foals.

Back in NSW, Ted Hooke was a founding Member of the Society in 1971, its first treasurer and remains a stalwart of the Eastern Branch in NSW. With the founding of the Society he was quick to promote the breed widely throughout Australia. To do that, he travelled the countryside with his Foundation Mare progeny - the mare MYRA SUSIE and colt MYRA TEMPLE. In the spring of 1973 he made his first trip south to the Riverina town of Culcairn, where he was invited by the Goodes to their Glenelg Murray Grey Stud to demonstrate the ASH at their stud cattle sale. This was organised by The Australian Stock Horse Society and the late John Vinge.

There was plenty of scope there for good Stock Horses. In 1972, it was not uncommon, on that flat plains country, to be asked to jump on the tractor to bring in a mob of cattle. The price of fuel was much lower then but still, it would have made more sense to me to be riding a good Stock Horse. Ted's horses impressed the crowd at the sale. One lady, who came late and missed the demonstration, was given an impromptu display by Ted riding MYRA SUSIE. With the cattle sale on in the ring and the carpark full, Ted and his Stock Horse gave the work out on the gravel road.

Ted came out of a northern drought into a wet, southern season and during the same trip visited Tallangatta and Mansfield in Victoria's north-east. Undaunted, and with no other options, he performed his demonstration in deep mud at the local saleyards without MYRA SUSIE missing a stride. The wide consensus by the Gloucester and Dungog district horsemen was that this family had special ability in the use of their hind legs and an unusual capacity to handle wet conditions. These attributes were clearly on display that day.

From northern Victoria Ted travelled down into Gippsland. There he converted to the Stock Horse breed, a young Alistair Irving, who was later to become The Australian Stock Horse Society National President. Following the Victorian leg of the trip, Ted visited Narranderra, NSW to do a campdraft school for the Riverina Branch at the request of John Dodwell who was Branch President at the time. Unfortunately, MYRA TEMPLE hurt his leg and could not be ridden. On Ted went on his ASH promotional trip, demonstrating and classifying into Tasmania and over to Western Australia, sowing the seed for a deep-seated interest in the breed which thrives today.

Such promotional trips were a marketing strategy of the fledgling Society which proved successful. Ultimately, these promotions were partly responsible for breeding stock being sold to these areas. They also encouraged horsemen to emerge who would come to take a place in the building of the Society.

When we see the photos of Harold Germon and Ted Hooke riding their talented mounts, we get the impression that good teamwork seemed to be going on throughout the story of the Myra horses. Ted says, "Harold used to break-in for me and then I would get them going - and vice versa. Inevitably, we would end up spoiling them if we did the whole job ourselves, so we used to share the whole process." Perhaps this was the secret to dealing with temperamental mares and to giving Ted the perseverance that must have been needed to reach the well-deserved reward of his 'bombproof' colts.

MYRA JANE - FM was finally put down because of old age, somewhere about the mid 1970s. Ted apologises that there are no photos of the mare, or her sire or dam, "I was too busy in those days and not much of a photographer."

In looking at any of the families in the stud book in the early years, many reached the foal recording stage of registration, but not many proceeded through to full stud book status. This family, with seven progeny fully registered, is evidence of the high opinion held by Ted and the classifiers of the potential of these horses. The many progeny, resulting from just the five that bred on, is evidence of how highly other horsemen from all round Australia viewed them also. As at 2007, there were 660 registered descendants from this Foundation Mare.

Ted may not be a photographer but the Stock Horse community of today can be thankful that he excelled as a horseman, studmaster and as an ambassador for the breed. 🐾

#### Profile: MYRA JANE - FM

<b>Colour</b>	Chestnut
<b>Height</b>	14.2hh
<b>Lifespan</b>	25 years (1950-1975)
<b>Breeder</b>	Theo Hooke, Gloucester district, NSW
<b>Performance</b>	Station horse – good with cattle
<b>Progeny</b>	8 (5 males and three fillies) Most notable being the stallions, MYRA TEMPLE and MYRA PALEFACE and the mare MYRA SUSIE.

MYRA JANE - FM ASH REG: 2119	Steel Dust	Fairfield	
		Thoroughbred Mare	
	Janie	Echo	Almont
			Secret
		Sleeping Thunder	Radium
			Unknown Dam