

# Foundation Sire

## TOOMBA SNIP – FS HSH

ASH Reg: 4597



TOOMBA SNIP - FS HSH

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**T**oomba Stud is recognised as a breeder of Australian Stock Horses suited to cattlework in the beef industry. Its horses reflect the versatility of the breed, as they are also known for their ability in other fields such as polo, polocrosse and eventing. TOOMBA SNIP - FS HSH has 101 registered progeny and currently 1,930 descendants. The origin of this Foundation Stallion goes back to the early days of settlement in Queensland, and is a story of many generations of both men and horses.

Situated 100 kilometres north-west of Charters Towers, the savannah-covered, volcanic landscape of Toomba Station became one of the first fauna sanctuaries in Queensland

in 1912. The hour-long drive from the main road to the property's front gate accentuates the distances in this part of Queensland and why, historically, the horse is so important.

Southerners, like me, may not realise that most land in Queensland is a Crown Lease, under conditions that dictate the management of the land. The normal lease period could be significantly extended if the (stud) property undertook to annually breed and sell a certain number of purebred cattle. In the case of Toomba, this translated to 150 shorthorn bulls each year. While the Toomba stud label also applied to the property, it is for the horses that the stud is best known.



Ernest Bassingthwaighe is the current owner of Toomba Station and the principal of the stud. With knowledge based on the well-documented history of the property, he tells of the stud's beginnings. 'Bluff Downs was bought from the original settler by my great-great-grandfather in 1872, and then taken on by my great-grandfather, A.W.D. White. To stock the place he brought up cattle and horses from the Brisbane Valley near Beaudesert.

'My grandfather, E.E.D. White, was very good at keeping records and some of the horses can be traced back to these original ones. Toomba was acquired in 1904 and became an outstation of Bluff Downs. E.E.D. White was a well-known cattle and horse breeder in northern Queensland,' said Ernest. He had good Thoroughbred sires which provided the foundation for the stockhorses.

The relative isolation of these parts meant that the limited social opportunities often revolved around horses – and they still do. E. E. D. White had a string of picnic racehorses and was chairman of the local Basalt Race Club. It held a week-long campout and two day race meeting at Fletchervale Station on the banks of Fletcher's Creek. This idyllic creek is a stopover for many of the modern swaggies of the bush. The 50 or more free campers and caravanners who come and go from here would probably be unaware of the history that surrounds them.

Ernest continued, 'Grandfather also bred Percheron draft horses for cane farmers on the coast, standing three stallions at one stage. Additionally, he bred pack horses for the stations about the district'. Most of Bluff Downs was sold in 1937, but Toomba Station was kept in the family and run by a manager.

'Over the years there were a number of Thoroughbred sires used here, and once they developed a good line they stuck to it', commented Ernest about the early days of the stud. North Queensland was fortunate to have the Thoroughbred stallion Hall Mark standing at stud at nearby Ingham. Hall Mark was a champion of his era, winning 16 Principal races over his three year racing career and earning 28,600 Pounds in stakes.

As a three year old in 1933, he had six wins including the AJC Derby, the Champagne Stakes, the AJC Sires'

Produce Stakes, the Victorian Derby and the Melbourne Cup. Hall Mark's win in the Cup is sandwiched between the victories by Peter Pan in 1932 and in 1934. Peter Pan did not run in 1933 as he was sick, and Hall Mark only won by a head, nevertheless it takes nothing away from the string of significant wins in one season. He is one of only a handful of horses to take the Derby Double (Melbourne Cup and Victorian Derby) in one season. It is not surprising that Hall Mark's trainer, Jack Holt was elected to the racing Hall of Fame in 1933.

After a sensational 1933 season, Hall Mark followed up with five wins in each of the next two years, including the VRC St Leger Stakes in 1934 and the AJC Doncaster Handicap in 1935. He was a versatile horse with his winning distances varying from 6 furlongs (1,200m) to 16 furlongs (3,200m).

These three years of the Cup in the early 1930s have significance to the ASH breed, in that Peter Pan was by Pantheon (UK 1921), who was also the sire of Pantler and Panthom. The latter was the sire of Panzer - an important stallion in the pedigree of a number of Hunter Valley-bred horses, the main ones being two of his sons, NABINABAH THE GUN - FS HSH and MYRA BRONZE - FS HSH.

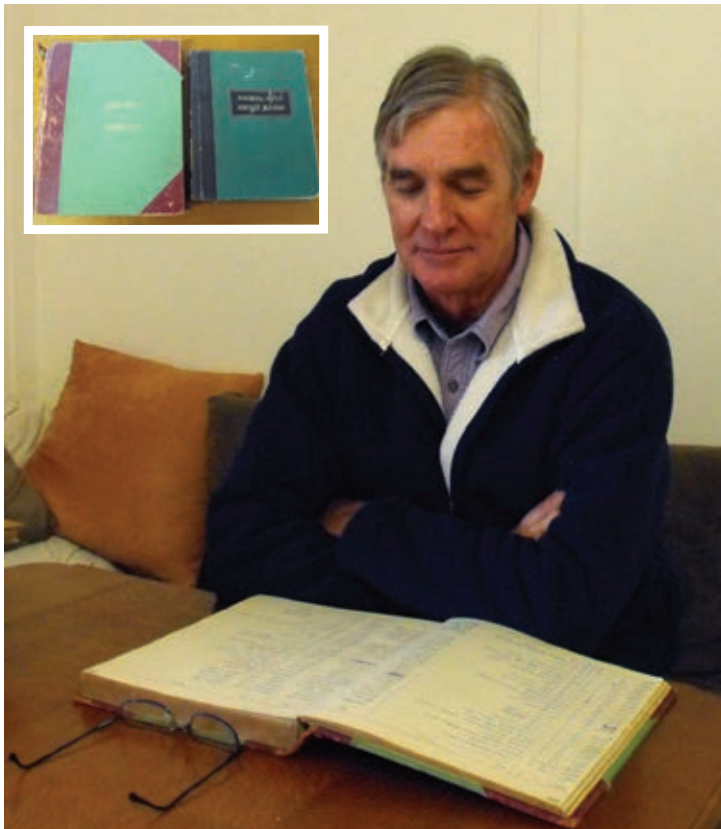
Hall Mark's sire line is well known to stock horse breeders - being by Heroic (AUS 1921), by Valais (GB 1913). Heroic was the leading Thoroughbred sire in Australia for seven successive seasons, and Valais was the premier sire in Australia from 1924-1928.

As a sire, Hall Mark also had success, producing three stakes-winners for six stakes-wins. The most successful of these was Hall Stand (1939), who in 1942 won the STC Rosehill Guineas, the AJC Sires' Produce Stakes and the AJC Hobartville Stakes. It must have been a great boon to the industry in northern Queensland to have a stallion of such quality available for breeding. Ernest explains that a lot of the horses in the north were by this champion, and that his grandfather sent mares to him regularly.

The 2010/2011 floods throughout Queensland are a reminder of the forces of nature that these horses and their breeders have to face. In this district, flooding is a fairly regular occurrence.



**Above left: Aaron Campbell on TOOMBA SNIP - FS HSH in 1965. Above right: Ernest Bassingthwaighe with TOOMBA AMBER (by TOOMBA SNIP - FS HSH), awarded Grand Champion Mare of the 1981 Charters Towers Centenary Show.**



**Main: Ernest Bassingthwaighte checking Toomba stud records.  
Inset: Toomba Stud Horse Books**

As Ernest and I climb up the stairs about two metres above the ground to the orderly office, he explains that this is his haven from the floods which keep him dry 'most of the time'.

It is a real pity that some of the records, kept so meticulously for generations, were destroyed when the first stud book was lost in a flood. The available stud records now only start from 1939. As he thumbs through the hard-bound volume of the 'new' Toomba horse-book, Ernest notes that the first foals by Hall Mark appeared in 1947, continuing through to 1953.

The modern part of the stock horse stud commenced in 1950 with the birth of the chestnut colt by Hall Mark, named Stark. Stark's dam Princess was by Warsash, and on her dams side Ernest can trace back five generations to the mare Lily, whom his grandfather described as 'a beautiful grey mare of arab type'. She was one of the original mob brought up to Bluff Downs from the south.

The first progeny by the young Stark were foaled at Toomba in 1954. He did the right thing by the stud in siring a lot of good stockhorses and in 1959 he went with a group of mares to the property, Georgina Downs. Located on the Georgina River alongside the Queensland/Northern Territory border, the family drew this property in a land ballot and needed to stock it. In 1964 one of the foals Stark sired was a chestnut colt out of the mare Thristful, who had also moved from Toomba.

This colt grew to 15.1hh and was named Snip. An alternative to returning Stark to Toomba Station, was to send back one of his young colts. Given the stallion's age and the large number of progeny he already had at Toomba, it seems logical that they selected Snip to return to the land of his forefathers. Stark and Thristful both saw out their days at Georgina Downs, no doubt producing more reliable working cattle horses for the stockmen of the north. Snip was later classified and registered as TOOMBA SNIP (now TOOMBA SNIP - FS HSH). [This horse is not to be confused with the other foundation stallion, SNIP - FS HSH (ASH Reg: 646), born in 1946 by The Cuan.]

He was broken-in and ridden a bit, then used as a paddock stallion. 'He was selected firstly as he was by Stark, whom we

regarded highly, but also due to his good temperament and nice type. He produced a consistent line of excellent stockhorses with good temperament and natural cattle-sense. We branded 124 foals by TOOMBA SNIP - FS HSH', said Ernest as he checked his records. 'Some were top-class stockhorses, most were good and only a handful didn't make the grade. As time went on we used less horses ourselves, so we sold a lot of his progeny.' Some of these were registered with other prefixes, but the ASH Stud Book shows 55 of his progeny with the Toomba prefix.

The Melbourne Cup features in the dam's pedigree as well. Her grandsire was the great stayer Spearfelt, who won the Cup in 1926. He was one of the most successful sires of his time, producing another Cup winner in 1943 in Dark Felt. Spearfelt has 27 progeny in the ASH Stud Book and is the great-grandsire of not only this foundation stallion, but also JOHNSTONS DARK SECRET - FS HSH and KRUETTE - FM HSH. Spearfelt is the sire of Thorn, who was put over his grand-daughter to produce Thristful. Thorn was also the sire of three other Toomba horses including Rose Gay, the dam of the colt TOOMBA GALLANT who sired 53 registered foals.

Another Thoroughbred stallion, Kings Scholar (GB 1911) was used a lot on Bluff Downs. He sired two stakes-winners in Queensland and also fills in one of the gaps in Thristful's registered pedigree, being the sire of Thorn's dam, Ballet. Her dam was the mare Greek Dancer (NZ 1913). Thristful's dam Florence, is by Stalden (AUS 1925) who is by Valais. Valais appears in the fourth generation in both the top and bottom of our foundation stallion's pedigree. Both parents of TOOMBA SNIP - FS HSH were therefore of top staying bloodlines that had adapted to the bush work demanded of them.

In 1965, enter Ernest Bassingthwaighte of Toowoomba, fresh from an education in Sydney. He was headed for some jackerooing but due to a labour shortage ended up at the family property of Toomba to help out. He recalls, 'it was very interesting work and I learnt a lot'. Some 18 months later when the manager left, Ernest assumed leadership of the property, its half dozen stockmen and its horse stud, numbering about 150. Ernest openly says, 'I didn't know much about cattle at the time, but I really enjoyed working with the horses and cattle - I grew into the job'. So Ernest and TOOMBA SNIP - FS HSH started off their careers at about the same time.

Ernest had records showing that they broke-in between 12 and 20 horses each year. He explains that the stud policy is to breed the mares at 10 years of age so as to get a reasonable working and breeding period out of each of them. 'Typical of the time, our station work involved a lot of cutting out in the open, to draft off cull cows and that sort of thing. Early on we had plenty of men and plenty of horses so we had lots of practice at it and our horses were well-trained for competition campdrafting', said Ernest.

Toomba's head stockman for many decades was Ray Hunt, a keen campdrafter. Ernest recalls, 'His success on our horses got me interested in the sport, which I took up in the mid 1970s. It was mostly the horses by TOOMBA SNIP - FS HSH that we campdrafted. When we realised how good our horses were against others, we got more serious about it and have competed ever since. The Toomba crew regularly does the local campdraft circuit of Powlathanga, Greenvale, Charters Towers and Pentland, but the big distances restrict them from competing further afield very often. 'Our Charters Towers Branch was about the third Branch to be formed in Queensland and we started our local campdraft, which is now located at Powlathanga Station.

Ernest and three others also started a sale for their surplus stock, which has now grown into the successful Toomba Invitational sale (see ASHS Journal Sept/Oct, pp54-55). Over the years this has proven to be the main way in which TOOMBA

SNIP - FS HSH's descendants have filtered their way to knowing horsemen outside far north Queensland.

One of his early crops in 1968 produced the filly TOOMBA AMBER, whom Ernest considers his most successful. She performed well in the showring and at work. In campdrafting she was twice Runner Up ACA Horse of the Year. She also produced well, with seven foals to her credit, including two fillies that went on to produce a total of 16 foals with the Toomba prefix. She also produced TOOMBA NOONBA, a colt that sired 42 foals.

In retrospect, TOOMBA SNIP - FS HSH did very well as a sire of broodmares, with Ernest reeling off the names of many of his fillies who matured into valued broodmares: TOOMBA JET and TOOMBA TWINKLE produced seven progeny each; TOOMBA STARLIGHT produced nine. TOOMBA LOTUS produced six foals including TOOMBA WARLOCK (by STANTON STUD BLACK BREEZE), which the stud used as one of its own sires to produce 43 foals.

One of TOOMBA SNIP - FS HSH's progeny is the colt TOOMBA WIZARD who sired 71 foals. A lot of TOOMBA SNIP - FS HSH's descendants also come from MT HOPE ZORRO, by RED ROCK DOLPHIN out of TOOMBA OLYMPIA. This grandson has sired 101 progeny, who are spread far and wide.

A number of TOOMBA SNIP - FS HSH's progeny played polo successfully and were recognizable anywhere in the world by the 'Z6Z' brand on their hip. Pat McGinley tells of the six horses that the New Zealander, Kenny Brown bought directly from Toomba in 1981. Ernest identifies two of them as #421 and #428 in his records. One of these was a grey mare called Miami and the other was a chestnut colt called Longpocket. These horses were sold, went down to Victoria for breaking-in and both ended up as well respected horses playing high goal polo in Florida. McGinley writes, 'Longpocket proved very successful and went on to play World Cup Finals before Eduardo Heguy played him in three chukkas in the 40 Goal played in the US in the 1990s. At the height of his career, he was leased at \$1500 per chukka – not bad for a little chestnut colt from the bush'.

Ernest was one of the leaders up this way in the early days of the Australian Stock Horse Society. 'I thought that the formation of the Society and the Stud Book was a great idea as our breed is as good as any in the world. I am all for the registration of progeny', he declares. Ernest was host for the classifiers' first trip to the district in 1972 which included Jim Sparkes and



Arthur McIntyre. They were accompanied by the Society's Secretary, Arthur Clothier. It was not until the classifiers' second trip to the district in 1973 that Ernest got the Toomba Station horses classified. Ernest later became President of the North Queensland Management Council when it formed in 1984.

With such a strong history, one might expect that Bluff Downs station is also still active in stock horse breeding, but Ernest assures me that this is not the case anymore. 'The MacDougalls, who were managers of the property for some time, registered the Bluff Downs prefix and took it with them when they moved on', explained Ernest.

Toomba Station today is a place that still relies heavily on the horse, despite the occasional use of helicopters and bikes for mustering its 4,500 Droughtmaster cattle. 'We have 30,000 hectares of usable

country, so our three stockmen still use horses in the rough country', said Ernest. In the stud they started branding using numerals on the near hindquarter in 1951, and have numbered their horses consecutively over the years. In 2010 they branded foal number '1,000' and have now started back at number '1'.

TOOMBA SNIP - FS HSH died relatively young, being discovered dead in the paddock at the age of 17. Ernest found that he was a sire who was difficult to replace. He was only one of the stallions that contributed to the large tally of horses bred at Toomba Station, but was a successful and significant one. Like his ancestors, his descendants are now bringing country people together as they compete in various horse sports. These people have at least one valuable thing in common: horses of world-class Thoroughbred genetics, moulded to suit the Australian bush. 🇦🇺

## TOOMBA SNIP - FS HSH

**Colour:** Chestnut **Height:** 15.1hh **Lifespan:** 1964-81 (17yrs)

**Breeder:** Toomba Station Pty Ltd

**Performance:** Station Sire

**Progeny:** 101, most notable being the mare TOOMBA AMBER and the colt TOOMBA WIZARD.



TOOMBA SNIP - FS HSH ASH Reg: 4597	stark 02	hall mark 02	heroic 02
			herowinkie 02
		princess 09	warsash 02
			sunbonnet 02
	thristful 02	thorn 02	spearfelt 02
			ballet 01
		florence 02	stalden 001
			rose gay 02