

AUSTRALIAN VETERINARY HISTORY RECORD

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AUSTRALIAN VETERINARY HISTORY SOCIETY CONFERENCE 2000

The AVHS Annual Conference and Annual General Meeting will be held at the Sydney Veterinary School on Saturday 6 May 2000 commencing at 1.00 pm. The venue will be the JD Stewart Theatre followed by a dinner at the recently opened Conference Centre in the grounds of the Veterinary School.

For the Sunday morning arrangements have been made for a visit to the veterinary facilities at Taronga Park Zoo

The following speakers will be giving papers at the Conference:

Arthur Webster: A History of the Arthur Webster Laboratories.

Robin Giesecke: Ann Flashman – The first woman to enrol in the Sydney Faculty.

John Fisher and George McFarlane: History of the Blue Cross Veterinary Products Pty. Ltd.

Peter Mylrea: New Australian Veterinarians and the NSW Veterinary Surgeons Board.

Marsh Edwards: The changing face of the veterinary students population at Sydney University.

Please note these dates in your diaries. The next Record will give final arrangements for attendance at this Conference. Keith Baker.

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THE STOCKMAN'S HALL OF FAME, LONGREACH: Keith Baker, President

It was suggested at our Conference in Canberra in 1999 that the veterinary profession's contribution to the development of the pastoral industries in Australia be duly acknowledged in the Hall of Fame at Longreach. Following the Conference I contacted Garth McGilvary, President of the AVA and he was very supportive of this suggestion.

On a recent trip to Longreach I broached the idea with the CEO, Mr peter Andrews, and received a favourable hearing. I have now been in contact with the CEO of the AVA, Barbara Horsefield, who has undertaken to take the plan to the Boaed of our Association for their approval and how best to implement this concept. I now await further developments. Hopefully more favourable news in the next Record.

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CORRECTION: Paul Canfield

I wish to make a correction to my article on 'Women in the Faculty of Veterinary Science' which appeared in the July 1999 issue (no 25) of the Australian Veterinary History Record. Dr Graham Ward has pointed out that Jenifer Edols was not the first woman to be a President of a Division of the AVA. He has confirmed with the WA Divisional Office that Gwen Ward (nee Griffith) was elected WA Divisional President in 1953.

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**“SPRING” AND OTHER HEROES OF AUSTRALIAN
EXPLORATION: J.H. Auty, 1 Chatham Street, Flemington,
Victoria 3031.**

[A paper given at the Society’s Annual Conference, Sydney, May 1998 – Editor.]

Australia’s explorers had to deal with a strange land. Colonised by sea, and to a large extent, by seafarers, Australia lacked navigable rivers which might be used as highways to the inland. Where such rivers did exist their presence was often obscured by their outfall – for example, the Murray-Darling system – or made difficult of access by sandbars – for example, the Shoalhaven.

This meant that once Port Jackson and the large bay systems to the north and south had exhausted the possibilities of access, exploration had to be made by land. This exploration was made more difficult by the characteristics of the larger game and a lack of knowledge of indigenous vegetable products and their preparation.

The large game was limited to the macropodia and birds such as the emu. The macropods, by their nature, were difficult to shoot. They had to be stalked before they could be shot using the unsatisfactory firearms of the period or run down by dogs and then despatched. The use of dogs presented problems. Imported dogs lacked acclimatisation to the temperatures experienced in Australia and the kangaroos were able to defend themselves by their rapid and erratic escape movements and if caught, their well-developed defences.

These defences involved grasping with the forelegs and kicking with the powerful hind legs. The only large predator in Australia, the dingo, was a solitary hunter except when a bitch had half grown pupsⁱ and preferred to hunt small game rather than tangle with the larger macropods.ⁱⁱ The danger even for large dogs when hunting kangaroos were recorded as early as 1789 when Lieutenant Bradley

reported to Governor Phillip that after his greyhound followed a large kangaroo into the sea, it was grasped by the animal and would have been killed if the hunter had not cut the throat of the kangaroo.ⁱⁱⁱ

Following the opening of the Blue Mountains, Assistant Surveyor Evans was instructed by Governor Macquarie to follow up the track and measure the distance for road making. Early in his journey Evan's dogs went after game and returned "severely cut". Evans later found the kangaroo they had killed. Some days later they caught another "altho' the dogs are so much hurt". Evans was however unable to set on the dogs after emus.^{iv}

Having broken the mountain barrier the Governor set about encouraging the exploration of the interior. Unlike Evans who had used sumpter horses and relied for part of his food on hunting the numerous kangaroos and birds, Oxley, Hume and Hovell, Sturt and Mitchell used military lines of supply methods with horses, bullock drays and even boats in case they encountered Oxley's supposed inland sea. These methods continued to be used up until the Burke and Wills' fiasco, but were interspersed with expeditions using riding and pack horses and ponies.

Grey was sent from the United Kingdom to explore the extreme north west. He made landfall near Hanover Bay on 2 December 1837. He set out to walk to Hanover Bay taking with him three of his dogs. Within hours the men were all suffering from heat exhaustion and the three dogs in like condition fell and were left. One was later found dead and another crazed. Even though he still had three dogs Grey was unable to take kangaroos to supplement his meat supplies. The Cape sheep and goats, and the ponies he had obtained from Timor died off rapidly apparently from plant poisoning and heat.^v

In 1840 Eyre traversed the Australian Bight starting with nine horses, a pony and six sheep. On several occasions he was unable to water the horses for four or more days. When the horses were obviously in a dying condition, he killed and jerked them for rations. After a journey of more than three months Eyre, with Wylie, his black companion, and one horse met with a ship on 2 June. Having received some rations he continued his journey reaching Albany on 7 July 1840.^{vi}

In 1844 the eccentric Ludwig Leichhardt set off in "comparatively light marching order" to cross from Moreton Bay to Port Essington. His outfit included 16 cattle and 17 horses. Convinced that his horses could not pack his outfit he commenced breaking in his bullocks to the packs. Knowing nothing of bullocks "it was a long time before we were reconciled to the dangerous vicinity of their horns". Nothing came amiss to Leichhardt's dietary but his enthusiasm for strange foods was not always shared by his white companions.

From experience Leichhardt wrote that "old and heavy bullocks" should not be selected for such work. The dog of choice was a cross between the kangaroo dog and the bloodhound and water should be carried. Although two of Leichhardt's dogs died early in the expedition "Spring" frequently added to the larder by running down game. "Spring" died apparently from heat exhaustion, when the journey was nearly completed. His death led Leichhardt to write about their animal companions. "Our attachment [to animals] became still greater when they not only shared our sufferings, but aid greatly to alleviate them"; "We became so familiar with every one of them, that the slightest change in their walk or in their looks was readily observed"; "Every bullock, every horse, had its peculiar characteristics which formed the frequent topic of our conversation in which we all most willingly joined".^{vii}

After Leichhardt's disappearance and Kennedy's death in 1848 there was something of an hiatus in exploration in the east. The Gregorys successfully traversed northern Australia in 1855-6. Experienced bushman and explorers, they successfully mixed a water landing of horses and sheep, repair of the "Tom Tough", and the building of a base camp and establishment of a garden. Having explored the Victoria River district to the margins of the deserts they set out for the east coast with 34 horses and seven men. Gregory's greatest problem was to keep his botanist, von Mueller, mounted. He knocked up four horses in seven months.^{viii}

The Burke and Wills' expedition of 1860-61 is best commented on by Tom Collins' bullock driver camped at the selection. "Wills was a pore harmless weed, so he kin pass; but look 'ere – there ain't a drover, nor yet a bullock driver, nor yet a stock-keeper from 'ere to 'ell that couldn't bossed that expegiton straight through to the Gulf an' back agen, an' never turned a 'air – with sich a season as Burke had ... He Burked that expegiton, right enough".^{ix}

The disappearance of Burke put several parties into the field to find him. All were successful but McKinley's was notable, for it was the first time that an explorer took to the field with bullocks, camels, sheep and horses. Where Burke had lost his camels and Billy (his horse whose remains McKinley found, 14 February 1862) McKinley took sheep through to the Gulf where he killed and salted the last three. Like Leichhardt he killed and jerked his bullocks, his camels and finally his horses. When he finally reached the Burdekin River he had been out for thirteen months, and despite illness, had not had a death in his party. He saved eleven of his twenty-six horses.^x

Ernest Giles, the forgotten explorer who made five journeys through Central and Western Australia in 1872-76, began his explorations with horses. Giles was considerate towards his animals but the desert conditions took a dreadful toll. His method was to establish a base camp and taking water in kegs and water in bags strike out in the

direction he wished to travel hoping to find water and bring up and establish a new base.

It was the failure of one such reconnaissance that led to the death of Gibson for whom the Gibson Desert is named. And it was the failure of this, his second thrust to the west with horses, that led to Giles turning to camels for his fourth and fifth journeys, to Perth and return. Giles measured the advantage of camels not only by their capacity to travel without water but also by their height. In desert scrub as Giles records "their loads are mostly raised into the less resisting upper branches of the low trees" and "camels travel in one long single file and where the leading camel forces his way the others will follow".

Giles' consideration for his animal companions shines through his journals. After travelling thirteen waterless days through the desert and not knowing when he would reach water he divided the remaining kegs between his camels. "To give away this quantity of water in such a region was like parting with our blood; but it was the creatures' right".^{x1}

The final expedition I wish to deal with is the Calvert expedition of 1896-7 which, despite the experience of the leader, Wells, ended in disaster by repeating all the errors of the past. It was a south-north traverse of the western deserts with camels. It started too late in the season and there was a fatal division of the party at a time when it appeared unnecessary. This resulted in the smaller group of two men and three camels lacking any fallback when illness struck.^{xii}

It seems clear from the historical record that once knowledge of the capacity of animals in the Australian environment had been gained it was human failure rather than that of their animals which led to disasters in exploration. Even when animals were overworked and underfed they still served their masters as food. And of their masters

it is clear that it was experienced bushmen such as the Gregorys, McKinley and Giles who never “Burked” their expeditions.

References

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- ⁱ Wheelwright HW. *Bush wanderings of a Naturalist*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1979; 36.
- ⁱⁱ Bonwick J. *Romance of the Wool Trade*. Griffith, Farran, O’Keden & Welsh, London, 1887; 93.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Cobby J. *Sydney Cove 1789-1790*. Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1963; 101.
- ^{iv} HRA Series I. vol 8; 167, 168, 171.
- ^v Grey G. *Two Journeys of Discovery*. Libraries Board of South Australia Facsimile. Adelaide, 1964; 1: 65 et seq.
- ^{vi} Firth Scott G. *The Romance of Australian Exploring*. McMillan, Toronto, 1910; 214 et seq.
- ^{vii} Leichhardt L. *Journal of an Overland Expedition in Australia*. Libraries Board of South Australia Facsimile, Adelaide, 1964; xvii, 393, 437-9.
- ^{viii} Gregory AC. Gregory FT. *Journals of Australian Explorations*. Libraries Board of South Australia Facsimile, Adelaide, 1969; 163.
- ^{ix} Collins T. *Such is Life*. Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1944; 32-3.
- ^x Whyte D. *Sketch of Explorations*. Libraries Board of South Australia Facsimile, Adelaide, 1964; 13, 35, 41.
- ^{xi} Giles E. *Australia Twice Traversed*. Libraries Board of South Australia Facsimile, Adelaide, 1964; 2: 179-80, 194.
- ^{xii} Western Australian Parliament. *Journal of the Calvert Scientific Exploring Expedition 1896-7*. Watson, Government Printer, Perth, 1902.

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THE FORMATION OF THE AUSTRALIAN VETERINARY ASSOCIATION AND ITS PROGRESS TO INCORPORATION UNDER THE NEW SOUTH WALES COMPANIES' ACT IN 1932. Part I. to 1918: W.A.N. Robertson

[W.A.N. Robertson wrote extensively on Australian veterinary history in the 1930s. A biographical note and a paper on graduates from the Melbourne Veterinary College was printed in the AVHS Newsletter, number 16, November 1996 and an article on Australian quarantine was in the AVH Record, number 22, July 1988.

Our member Jessica Taylor has found the originals of Robertson’s papers in the archives at Melbourne University. Unfortunately they contain no information about the sources of his information and Jessica believes his writing were in draft form and that the definitive version was never completed.

However in the case of the present work the lack of references is probably not critical. Robertson graduated from the W.T. Kendall's Melbourne Veterinary College in 1898. Quite possibly he wrote from what he had learnt from Kendall and other veterinarians who were involved in the developments in the 1880s and 90s. Thereafter he was directly involved in veterinary association matters and wrote from his direct knowledge. He died in 1939 aged 65.]

In considering the history of the organisation of any body of professional men into associations for the protection of their professions in Australia we must keep in mind that up to the year 1901 Australia consisted of six self-governing Colonies., individually responsible to the Crown, to a large extent independent of one another and even with customs officers in inter-colony boundaries. There was much inter-colony rivalry and jealousy. Under these conditions it appears almost inevitable that any movement to form professional societies would have had to be on colony basis. In spite of this the first recorded veterinary association formed in Australia took to itself the title of the 'Australasian Veterinary Medical Association. It was formed in Melbourne and was successful in enrolling members in all the other colonies (except West Australia) and in New Zealand. When it is recalled that W.T. Kendall has written that in 1880 there were not more than a dozen qualified veterinarians in practice in Australia, and not one solely employed in Government service in any Colony, we can realise how ambitious the title now sounds. Yet it was in this year 1880 that Kendall called a meeting of qualified veterinarians at Menzies Hotel, Melbourne, with the object of forming the Association. Graham Mitchell was in the chair at the inaugural meeting and he was elected President. Kendall became Secretary. In 1881 Mitchell became General Secretary for Australia and there were branch secretaries in all the colonies and New Zealand. For a young association with a small membership it was very active although its functions were confined mainly to Victoria. Through its efforts a parliamentary committee was appointed to enquire into the Victorian

"Diseases of Stock Act", and it published an Australasian register of Veterinary Surgeons without there being any legal requirement to register

In 1882 the Association commenced publication of "The Australasian Veterinary Journal". It was hoped to enlist the support of graziers and animal breeders in this periodical by the inclusion of articles in popular language of general interest to stockowners.

At a special meeting in May 1882 it was proposed to hold an "Inter-colonial Veterinary Conference" to consider amongst other matters:-

The desirability of uniform legislation for the control of animal diseases.

The introduction of Veterinary Surgeons' Bills in each colony

The establishment of veterinary schools

The control of epizootic diseases

The effects of poisonous plants

At a subsequent meeting it was suggested that the meeting be held in Melbourne during

'Cup Week' but there is no record that the meeting took place. The fact that such a meeting was seriously proposed is an indication of the progressive spirit of the Association

One of the foremost in the agitation for the establishment of a veterinary school in Melbourne was Graham Mitchell. He had obtained his diploma from the Highland Agricultural Society after attending the Dick Veterinary College. In 1871 he became a member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and subsequently he

was a foundation fellow. Without getting full authority from the Veterinary Association he arranged for plans for a veterinary school to be drawn up by an architect and submitted the accounts to the Association. They refused to pay and the dispute which followed led to the break-up of the Association and the discontinuance of the Journal.

Victoria still remained the centre for veterinary organisation but another association was formed a few years later but it was short lived.

The year 1890 saw the start of another body, The Veterinary Association of Victoria. At its first Annual Meeting (1891) the name was changed to 'The Royal Veterinary Graduates Society'. This was to, distinguish it from 'The Veterinary Medical Association of Australia', a body made up of practitioners most of who had become registered under the seven years practice clause of the Victorian Veterinary Surgeons' Act of 1887. Although its membership was much greater than that of the graduates' society it had but a short life. In 1896 The Veterinary Surgeons' Society wrote to the Veterinary Surgeons' Board of Victoria supporting a proposal that graduates of the Melbourne Veterinary College (Kendall's school) be recognised by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons of London. It is not clear if this was a new society or not but it seems probable that the name of the Royal Veterinary Graduates' Society had been changed to permit membership to graduates of the Melbourne college. Robertson says that soon after this the society expired. The students of the Melbourne college then formed their own association and graduates were admitted to membership. Efforts were made from time to time to arouse interest in veterinary organisations but without success until 1901 when the Victorian Veterinary Association was started. It published the Australian Veterinary Journal, with W.A.N. Robertson as editor. This journal ran for one year only and the Association itself died.

Meanwhile veterinarians in New South Wales were bestirring themselves and in October 1894, a meeting of eight members of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons was held to discuss the formation of a veterinary association. Messrs T. Green, A.P. Gribben and J.D. Stewart were appointed a committee to draft by laws. Stewart was the junior member of the group - he was but twenty-five years of age and had received his diploma only the year before - and it is interesting to note that even in these early days of his career he was active in the organisation of the profession. The first meeting of the newly formed New South Wales Veterinary Association was held on November 12, 1894 when John Stewart Jr. M.R.C.V.S. was elected President. In his address to the association he referred to the depressing conditions under which veterinary surgeons had worked for many years and unqualified men were practising as qualified veterinarians whilst the qualified veterinary surgeons were neglected by stockowners and ignored by Governments and Courts of Law. He forecast that the tide would turn with the formation of the Association. During its the first year the Association held twelve meetings which were well attended. Thereafter interest waned, and in 1896 meetings lapsed for want of a quorum. In the following year members holding positions with the Board of Health resigned and in spite of efforts to carry on by admitting a number of Associates, the Association went out of existence in 1898. In May. 1912 the Association was formed again mainly as a result of the activity of Max Henry and J.D. Stewart. In the intervening period more veterinary surgeons

had arrived in the state and the new association commenced with twenty four members under the presidency of the Chief Inspector of Stock, S.T.D. Symons. Included were two Canadian graduates, one American and four who had qualified at the Melbourne Veterinary College. Early in 1914 the Sydney University Veterinary School turned out its first batch of eight graduates and these were bolstered by another newly arrived M.R.C.V.S who joined the association.

Although, as yet, there was no general move anywhere in Australia to form a national body to represent the profession, there were veterinarians who recognised the need for a common meeting ground especially for presentation of articles of scientific interest. The body to which they turned was The Australian Association for the Advancement of Science. In 1911 J.A. Gilruth read a paper to Section 'G' 11 (Agriculture) at the Thirteenth general Meeting. Other papers were contributed by veterinarians but Gilruth's was the only one printed in full in the A.A.A.S. Year Book. At the next General Meeting, Veterinary Science had become a sub-section of Section 'K' (Agriculture) with J.D. Stewart as President of the Sub-section. Two papers of historical interest were read at the meeting one by W.T. Kendall and the other the presidential address by Stewart. From the professional point of view, however, the most important paper was the one presented by Max Henry entitled "A Plea for the Organisation of the Veterinary Profession in Australia". In this Henry stressed the necessity for the formation of a strong Australian Veterinary Association. The paper was warmly received and in the discussion which followed it was agreed that the first step should be the formation of an association in each State. When this was done consideration could be given to some form of union of

of the State bodies. New South Wales already had an active association and immediate steps were taken in Victoria and South Australia to form their associations. No action was taken to organise in the other states. The next move was in January 1914 when a meeting was held in Melbourne to consider the steps necessary for the establishment of the Australian Veterinary Association. This meeting was attended by representatives of the three states in which Veterinary Associations had been established. The meeting decided that an Australian Veterinary Association should be formed and Max Henry was appointed Organising Secretary. Any further action at that time was prevented by the outbreak of war in 1914. The great majority of qualified veterinarians in Australia enlisted for in the Australian Army Veterinary Corps and went abroad with horses

units and action for the putting into effect the measures proposed at the meeting January were postponed until the war was over.

However as Henry later pointed out in an editorial in the first issue of the Journal of the Australian Veterinary Association (1925), the war had the effect of throwing together in their military duties, veterinary officers from all States and of creating a fellowship in the common service that could not but assist in the union of the profession when war ceased and soldiers returned to their civil duties in the several States. Henry wrote:-

"For the first time in our history men from all over Australia were thrown together in such a way as to obliterate the names of the different States ... So there grew up in the minds of many of us a great determination that when the time came we would allow no obstacle to stand in the way of achieving that unity which alone could give our profession its due and just rewards. Although the AVA was conceived in the ante-bellum days, it was surely growing in the womb of fate through the times of the A.I.F. to be borne in the peaceful days of 1921."

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ARTICLES ON VETERINARY HISTORY

[Our member John Fisher has written extensively on various aspects of veterinary history. Some of these are in sources which would not be familiar to members. For the convenience of readers and researchers these are listed here. PJ Mylrea, Editor.]

Articles in AVH Record

'Mad Cow Disease: A New Disease but an Old and Familiar Story',
Australian Veterinary History Record, 21, March 1998, 13-20.

'Meeting sheep scab on an early Victorian pastoral property: a story from the Clyde Company Papers', , Australian Veterinary History Record, 24, March 1999, 4-11.

Other Articles

'Technical and Institutional Innovation in Nineteenth Century Australian Pastoralism: The Eradication of Psoroptic Mange in Australia', Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society, 84, June 1998, pp.38-55.

'Cattle Plagues Past and Present: The Mystery of Mad Cow Disease', Journal of Contemporary History, 33, April 1998, pp.215-28.

'Innovation, Property Rights and Collective Action in the Pastoral Sector: The Eradication of Sheep Scab in Australia,' University of Newcastle, Dept of Economics, R.R.O.P., No.236, August 1997, pp.29.

*'Procreation and Profit: European Domesticated Livestock and the Invasion of Australia', in A Vieira, ed., History and Environment: The Impact of European Expansion, Lisbon, forthcoming, 1999.

'The Origins of Animal Quarantine in Australia', Australian Veterinary Journal, forthcoming, 76, 1999.

'The Awful Consequences of the Common Agricultural Policy', Policy, forthcoming, 1999.

Conference and seminar papers

(in absentia, with P.A. Koolmees) 'Livestock diseases and the veterinary profession: BSE and swine fever in historical

perspective', World Congress on Food Hygiene, The Hague, The Netherlands, August 24-29, 1997.

(with J.A. Perkins) 'From Stud Bulls to Mad Cows: BSE, Britain and the European Union', Britain in Europe, Goethe Institute, Sydney, 25-27 July, 1997.

(with J.A. Perkins), 'Quarantining Australia: The origins and development of exclusionist policies against micro and macro pests', The River AHA Regional Conference, Newcastle, 30 September, 1997.

'Stocking the Colony', paper in the seminar series 'Foundations of Colonial Prosperity', for the Royal Australian Historical Society at History House, Sydney, 3 March, 1998.

'The origins of animal quarantine in Australia,' Australian Veterinary Association, Annual Conference, Sydney, 18 May, 1998.

*'Procreation and Profit: European Domesticated Livestock and the Invasion of Australia', at the international seminar on 'History and Environment: The Impact of European Expansion', at the Atlantic History Study Centre, Funchal, Madeira, 9 April, 1999.

'Whose Union? The Farmers' Union!', at 'The Wall and After', a Conference on Europe in the Late 20th Century', at the University of New South Wales, 15 July, 1999.

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