

Early Arabian influences in Australia

Douglas M. Barrie

Horses came to Australia with European settlement, although the First Fleet "seven" left no lasting influence.

The foundation stock that bred on was introduced from 1796. From that year and until 1820 and probably later the foundation of the Australian "Waler" was Arabian. The name Waler denoted 'bred in New South Wales', the designation of all the continent at the time.

Some early sires did come from England, namely **Rockingham** (imported 1799), **Northumberland** (1802), **Wellington** (1806), **The Governor** (1817), **Steeltrap** (1823), **The Baron** and **Camerton** (1824), **Herald**, **Viscount** and **Peter Fin** (1826), **Skeleton** (from Ireland 1827), **Rous's Emigrant** and **Theorem** (1828) and **Toss** (1829). All were of Thoroughbred blood and so not many generations from Arabian ancestors.

With the exception of these few notables, the pioneer breeding stock of the Australian Waler consisted of Arabian stallions and mares brought from India and the Middle East.

ARABIAN INFLUENCES ON THE THOROUGHBRED

The greatest of all Thoroughbred foundation sires was **Eclipse**, foaled in 1764 and still alive in 1789. His extended pedigree demonstrates the overwhelming influence of Arabian and other Oriental blood in the background of the Thoroughbred. Eclipse was a direct male-line descendent of the Darley Arabian. His dam, **Spiletta**, was a direct descendent of the Godolphin Arabian.

There were strong infusions of other Eastern blood - Leedes' Arabian, the Lister Turk (four lines), D'Arcys White Turk (two lines) and Darcy's Yellow Turk.

All living Thoroughbreds descend from three sires in the male line. **Eclipse** (as above), **Herod** (foaled 1758) from the Byerley Turk, and **Matchem** (1749), a grandson of the Godolphin Arabian. Like Eclipse, Herod and Matchem also had Arabian blood on the distaff side.

EARLY ARABIAN IMPORTATIONS INTO AUSTRALIA

In the early nineteenth century, it was easier to bring horses from ports nearest to Australia. Most ancestors of the Waler were mares and stallions of Arabian blood transported from India, Persia or even directly from Arabia.

The greatest early influence was the bay Purebred Arabian stallion Hector, brought from India to Sydney in 1803. He left multiplying sons and grandsons and his descendents may still be traced in the Australian Thoroughbred Stud Book. Other notable Arabian sires were White William (imported to Hobart in 1804 and later to Macarthur's Camden Park Stud) and Shark, a pure Arabian who stood at the Government's Toongabbie Stud from 1804. Hook's Arabian was a dark brown horse imported in 1809. Saladin, a purebred bay was at stud near Camden before 1810. Two horses named Sheik were imported, the first in 1814, a horse of high caste sent back to India at the end of 1816, and another, who stood near the Nepean in the 1820s.

These and many other purebred Arabian stallions and mares gave horse breeding in the colony great impetus.

ARABIAN RACEHORSES

The first notable racehorse in Australia was **Junius**, foaled in '1819 and undisputed champion of the colony until 1827, carrying weights up to 11 stone in races up to three miles. He was an Australian-bred Arabian, being sired by Hector out of an inbred mare by

Shark, grand-dam by Shark, third dam an Arabian mare imported from India.

Junius' successor on the local turf was **Jorrocks**, "the iron gelding", who won more than 60 races on the principal courses of NSW from the years 1841 to 1851. Jorrocks was by the Thoroughbred Whisker, imported in 1830, a son of the English Derby winner Whisker. His dam was Matilda (1827) by the Thoroughbred Steeltrap, grand-dam Vesta (1822) by Model (Arab), and third dam Cariboo by Hector (Arab).

Model, imported from Bengal to Abbotsbury in 12818, was a very fine Arabian who sired many early racehorses. The bay Arab **Satellite**, imported in 1828,

provided the mounted police with troop horses "which could scarcely be over-weighted or over-ridden". He was later in private studs in the Hunter Valley and at Macarthur's at Camden.

A strong motive to import the best Arabians from India was the export trade in Walers. Arabians with racecourse success in India made their Australian progeny more saleable once taken back to that country. The Calcutta Derby winner **Crab** came for that purpose in 1848. Others of his time were **Glendower**, **Bedouin**, **Commissioner** and **The Friar**, all Arabians with racing successes in India.

Arabian horses continued to be imported by leading nineteenth-century Australian breeders of racehorses, stockhorses and Walers for export. Before 1860, races were run in heats of two miles, sometimes of three miles.

Endurance was demanded of a racehorse and Arabian blood gave that endurance.

Pegasus, a grey Purebred imported into Victoria in the early 1860s was the sire of Saladin (1865), who won the 1872 VRC Australian Cup of two miles -winning in a run-off after two dead heats in one day.

In the 1870s, Purebreds were still imported by leading racehorse breeders. Mr.R.J. Hunter imported the chestnut Simoon in 1873. W. Learmouth brought The Gift, a grey Seglawi, to Victoria also. Ali-Baba came to Queensland. Mr.R.R. Dangar, of Upper Hunter, imported several - the stallion Farhan in 1868, Alif, a "Kehilan Hedeli" and Jemima, a "Kehilet Nowagieh" direct from Arabia. Sir Thomas Elder imported Abd-el-Kadir to South Australia in 1879.

THE END OF ARABIAN RACING

At the International Exhibition of Bloodstock held in 1871, 130 horses were exhibited, of which 46 were classified as "purebred bloodstock". This class for Blood Stallions Three Years and Over was won by the fine Thoroughbred race-horse Tarragon from another locally-bred great in Yattendon. This class included Dangar's Arabian Farhan, as Arabians were still classified as 'blood horses' at that time.

Saladin was the last Arabian bred winner of a big Australian stakes event. The discontinuance of heats racing and an altered pattern of distances produced conditions more suited to Thoroughbreds, by then dominating the race scene. Arabians continued to be imported and to be used to breed Walers, which were also got by Thoroughbred sires.

STUD BOOKS AND REGISTERS

There were several attempts to compile an Australian Stud Book of Racing and Bloodstock, commencing as early as 1814. In 1842 the Australian Jockey Club tried to commence a Register. F. B. Price's Stud Book of New South Wales of 1859 recorded both Arabians and Thoroughbreds known to that time. This practice continued in the Victorian Stud Book, published in Melbourne after Price and continued until 1875 when Volume I of the Victorian Register appeared.

In England, the General Stud Book (the world's oldest register) had admitted Arabians until about 1840. In 1878, the Australian Jockey Club acquired the rights to build on the Victorian publication and published the first volume of the Australian Stud Book. This Volume I recorded the earlier Arabians used to breed racing stock; so Hector, Model, Satellite, Crab, Shark and company were recorded. But after Volume I of the ASB no later Arabians were admitted into the register and thereafter Arabians were not called "blood horses.

This meant that for another 80 years, until Volume I of The Australian Arab Horse Stud Book appeared in 1960, there was no register to record Arabians in Australia. So many, many very fine Arabians that helped to mold the wonderful Waler were not recorded and therefore were not recognized in international Arabian breeding.

Arabians are not new to Australia - they have a history dating to before 1800.