

MY COB STORY

My first adventure with a horse was at the farm Melton Wold in the Victoria West district, close to Loxton, where I spent some school holidays in the mid 1950's at the Manor House with the owners Brian and his wife Bobby Torr and their daughters, mainly to be company for other boys who were visiting from the cities. Brian's brother was also 'Bobby' Torr, and owner with Gladys, his wife, of the famous Torbry Stud on the farm Beyersfontein, Pampoenpoort (*see Journal 2006 p40*). Brian had American Five-gaiters and we used these to walk around the perimeter fences of the sheep camps checking and reporting any breach in the jackal proof fencing, that is until the advent of the Austin A40 Bakkie where one could take any repair material at the same time.

My next horse adventure many years later was taking the children to a local riding school in Daleside for what was euphemistically called horse riding. The horses were so used to walking at the slowest pace up to the forest line of trees; that's as far as they were contracted to go according to them, and trotting back at great speed to the stables. That was it and if you did not like it, you had to buy another excursion.

My daughter, Sonya, had a horse at Pauline's livery yard in Daleside. When we went on a trip to Cape Town, we decided to buy some tack for the horse and went to Pet-O-Tel. This is where we met Glynis who was working there at the time. We bought a number of articles for Sonya's horse. When Glynis and I got married the following year I jokingly told her that she would be getting all the tack we bought so if she did not sell us quality it would be her fault! I had two horseboxes at the time and I often wondered whether this was one of the main reasons Glynis married me!



The two Horseboxes prior to restoration



We bought a 21ha farm close to Henley-on-Klip where I was staying at the time and started preparing it for the horses. I travelled down to Cape Town for the wedding with the small pony box which had been completely renovated.

The condition of the farm when we bought it. There was plenty of work to do to make it suitable for the ponies

The Great Trek: The day after we married on 30th June, 1989, we loaded Badgemore Pegasus and his yearling daughter, then Dwyfor Pandora into the horsebox and drove to Henley. The horsebox not only had the two ponies, but all the tack, two cats and what was left of the wedding cake, and in the car Sonya, two dogs and all Glynis's clothes and other paraphernalia. Things were going well until just before Colesburg when a part of the tread of one of the trailer tyres started peeling off. We could not continue like this and first called at a farm whose owner for some reason let us have some sockets for the wheels and the arm and extension. We went to the Mobil Garage just before Colesburg and met the owners, also a newly married couple. They gave us a Mobil ashtray and flag with the Pegasus emblem on as a memento.

Fortunately they had two of the correct sizes of tyres which we bought. They were new to the town and had been told by the Mayor that if they needed anything, they should contact him. So, as they did not have the equipment to change the tyres, they telephoned the Mayor who arranged for a garage owner who did tyres to assist us in changing the tyres. As we did not want to unload the ponies, the tyres were changed while they were still in the horsebox; they did not even make a sound when the trailer was lifted up one side and then the other to change the tyres. Obviously, the tyres had not been removed for some time and had almost frozen

onto the rims requiring the man to use a 16lb hammer to separate the tyre from the rim, which he eventually did with much noise, foul language and expletives. He was not in a good mood having smashed his knuckles of one hand during this process and when a local drunk came past and asked for some money, he received short shrift and landed up in the back of a scrap car having been hit through the back window. He must have spent the rest of the night there!

Having had the tyres changed and having returned the borrowed sockets and extension arm to the farmer who came looking for us, we travelled onwards to Henley, reaching the farm at about 4am, in the middle of a Highveld winter.



What the farm started looking like 7 months later. We had a small caravan as an office, and Piet had a three-roomed house with electricity laid on and water piped in.

Freyja Stud: The farm at Henley had practically no infrastructure, so we started on the building project of making stables with all the necessary services, together with the farmworker Piet Dlamini, installed electricity and re-activated the borehole, pump and tank for water. When we arrived at the

farm in the early hours of the morning, we unloaded Pegasus and Pandora in the

basic stables we had built in the meantime. Dwyfor Perdita and Bukkenburg Eos (*J2022 p39*) arrived by float shortly thereafter. Glynis asked me what I would call the stud and I mentioned that I had used the name 'Freyja', the Swedish Goddess of Love, for a Spearhead sailing boat, and so she decided to change her prefix from Dwyfor.

My first Nationals was in 1990. It was decided to take Badgemore Pegasus to attend the 1990 Nationals in Bloemfontein at which Long John Jones of the famous Coed Coch Stud was judging (*J2020 p117*). In the meantime, as the Human Resources executive of my employer, we encountered a threatened illegal strike of the workforce at the Bloemfontein plant and I was more involved in preparing our interdict with the attorneys. So, I did not see much of the show but enough to see that there was a good spirit amongst the competitors. How unfortunately that had changed by the time we attended our next show in 2002 when Brynle Williams judged.

Glynis moved to Bosfontein to assist Myburgh Steicher of the Bukkenburg Stud after the tragic passing of Jane Phillips. After a while we decided to acquire a farm in the district and week after week I scoured the Landbouweekblad and Farmer's Weekly for a suitable property. Towards the end of 1997 I came across a privately placed advert for a 216ha farm on the slopes of the Langeberg mountains.



Glynis went to look at it first as she was living close by at the time and reported to me that evening that she had been to 'horse heaven' with all the infrastructure of a stud other than stables (and proper gates). That weekend I flew down to George, visited the farm and put in an offer to purchase which was accepted on the spot.

The farm Bergfontein was the start of a development for the following almost 18 years through two severe droughts, a fire that destroyed 55% of our grazing and almost 6km of fencing, and some rare floods. During the floods, two of



the bridges to town would be washed away and the local municipal roads department would merely place a drum with a sign 'Road Closed, Flood Damage'. Had it not been for the local farmers, the roads would have taken months to be passable. Our farm was 29km from Albertinia with the first section a 16km tarred road, ending just past Diepkloof which was Myburgh Streicher's Bukkenburg Stud farm. Was it just by chance that the tarred road ended just there? But we must remember that he was also the local Member of Parliament! However it came about, we were thankful during the occasional wet weather that a part of the road to our farm was tarred.



Retirement and becoming a farmer. I commuted to the farm weekly from my work. Fortunately, I travelled a lot because I was responsible for the human resources function of 20 plants and mines throughout South Africa, two being at Albertinia. Glynis was all on her own on the farm until we had completed the house for the new farmworker but during the weekends, I could assist her with the other tasks which needed doing on the farm. When I officially retired

early from my employer in 2001 after 34 years service, because our companies had become 'non-core' for Anglo American, I moved permanently to the farm, although I was still involved with my ex employer on a consulting basis for another 18 months.

Although we had Dorper sheep and Drakensberger cattle, horses were becoming a large part of my life and the development and maintenance of the farm, although tiring and at times frustrating, enjoyable and kept me fit.

Why Cobs? Glynis decided that she would want to specialise in Welsh Cobs. She had been involved in Section A's and Partbreds, mostly Pegasus onto Thoroughbred mares and then an infusion of Arab blood to emulate the British Riding Pony. She swapped the large horse box for Bukkenburg Taran and Bukkenburg Garth. When Myburgh died in 2001, the Stud was left to Myburgh's granddaughter, Louise, who was in America studying fashion designing. Matthys, Myburgh's son, asked Glynis to look after the stud with Andries Joseph, the groom.



In the meantime we had purchased a 10 ton truck which had previously been used as a bread delivery vehicle in Bloemfontein, and were fortunate that the person we engaged to make it horse-friendly for travelling, was Mark

Watters who had been involved in the equine industry and therefore understood and knew what Glynis wanted in the 5 berth float.

Glynis decided to attend the Royal Welsh in 2001, but because of the Foot and Mouth outbreak in the UK, it was cancelled. Brynle Williams of the Cefn Melyn stud was the judge at SA Nationals in 2002 and we took Bukkenburg Disney (Senior Champion Stallion), Bukkenburg Gwenllan (Reserve Senior Mare Champion), Bukkenburg Briant (whom we had saved from the lions, *(J2011 p148)* last in Stallion class), the Section A stallion, Badgemore Pegasus (Stallion 10+) and the Partbred stallion, Freyja Golden Sovereign (Senior Partbred Stallion Champion) *(J2022 p63)*.

After the show Brynle Williams and his daughter Kate accompanied us in our Horse float to the farm taking in the scenery at leisure during the 14 hours it took to get home. We all went to Cape Town enjoying the numerous places of interest and also taking a trip to Robben Island. *(J2022 p62)* Now I must explain that Brynle, after his organising of the fuel strike in the UK in 2000 became politically active for the Tories and was nominated by them for the proportional seats in the Welsh Assembly. When we were in the courtyard of the prison on Robben Island, the politician in him came out and he regaled the international visitors in our group with his views on 'apartheid' and Nelson Mandela; unfortunately, he got most of his 'facts' wrong.

In 2002 I accompanied Glynis to the UK and came back, returning to fetch her after the Royal Welsh and International Shows, visiting some studs, notably the Danaway Stud. We went to the South-East show at Ardingley where we met Mattie and Jose Attrell for the first time and they insisted that we fetch our clothes at the B&B and spend the night with them. The following morning, we were entertained to the most wonderful exhibition of Stallions that we could ever have wanted, seeing Trevallion Harry, Danaway Flashjack and Danaway Samson, all prepared



Trevallion Harry and Danaway Flashjack

and presented in perfect show condition. We are fortunate that I was able to video this presentation which was magnificent. We visited the mares and foals in the fields and Glynis fell for a black filly, Danaway Rheba. She was unfortunately not for sale being owned by Matt Attrell, Senior. Mattie said that he could possibly get her full brother for us, but we left it there.

My first Cob: Danaway The Sting. Some three weeks after returning home, I received a call from Mattie to say that Rheba's full brother, Danaway The Sting, a 2-y-o colt, who had been particularly successful in the showing at a number of shows, was available to buy. Glynis told me that it was my call as she had bought two mares in foal, Trofarth Dymuniad and Trofarth Lowri, with the colt Trofarth Llysgennad (Ambassador) and filly Trofarth Cymraes at foot. I told Mattie that we would take him and that Sting must come out together with the mares and foals. And so, I became a Cob owner, changing my life forever!

The story of the quarantine and getting Sting, the mares and foals to Bergfontein are recorded in the Journal of 2017. As the mares were in foal, they had to go to a foaling-down quarantine facility which was arranged at the Dageraad Stud in Robertson. But before this, Trofarth Lowri lost her foal at the quarantine station. Although there was much to question about what happened, the final outcome was the report by the Government Veterinary Pathologist that she lost the foal because it had contracted *Pasteurella caballi*, a respiratory disease that had never been identified in SA before, or since to my knowledge. This is confirmed in a 2005 dissertation by Jacqueline Picard¹ who does not even mention *P caballi*. However, before they even knew this, the staff released Lowri, who showed no respiratory distress, to the quarantine station in Robertson in the heart of the Thoroughbred industry, because they wanted to close the station for the Christmas recess. See the article on this quarantine experience in the 2017 Journal p115.

We collected Sting at Dageraad and all they had was what was called a Red Cross Certificate, which had nothing whatsoever to do with the Red Cross. It was a release document with a red cross from corner to corner; nothing else. The story of the release of Sting is recorded in the 2015 Journal p131. The incompetence of the Departmental staff was disgraceful. We expected better. Maybe we were naïve.

¹ 'Respiratory Pathogens in Thoroughbred foals up to one year of age on a Stud Farm in South Africa' by Jacqueline Anita Picard. Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science (MSc)(Veterinary Science) in the Department of Veterinary Tropical Diseases, Faculty of Veterinary Science, University of Pretoria, South Africa, 2005.

Thereafter we attended the Royal Welsh every year although Glynis did miss a year or two, looking after the Cobs on the farm.

In 2003 we attended Nationals which was being judged by Geraint Jones of the Nebo Stud. We took Danaway the Sting (Jnr Champion and Reserve Supreme), Bukkenburg Disney (Supreme), Bukkenburg Dylan (Colt 1st) and Bukkenburg Gwenllan (Reserve Snr Female)



Bukkenburg Cobs: In 2004 Matthys told me that the Bukkenburg cobs were creating a grazing problem on their farm and that he wanted to dispose of them. We were interested in 5 Cobs and we undertook to dispose of the rest but asked that we be given 6 months to do this. He wanted the deal to be struck by the weekend (I always wondered whether it had anything to do with his hunting expedition which

was scheduled for the following two weeks!) and after he told me how much he wanted for the stud, I agreed to pay this by the weekend provided that we had a few months for them to stay on his farm until we were able to dispose of them. He agreed. I went back to our farm and had to tell Glynis that we had just acquired 38 Cobs! Well, we were able to dispose of those which we did not personally want mostly to members of the Society and within 3 months all the Cobs had moved off Diepkloof, leaving us with our selected mares and Disney, and a few more. Unfortunately, before he could be moved to Bergfontein, Disney died of an apparent snake bite at Diepkloof.



Some of the Bukkenburg mares which we bought, at Diepkloof, and the five selected in-foal Bukkenburg mares that we actually wanted, at Bergfontein



Danaway The Sting with his mares in his first season at stud at Freyja in 2003

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