

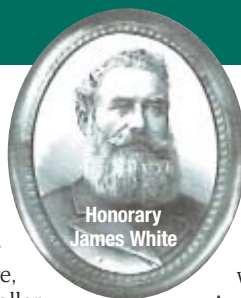
## The Old Stable at Newmarket A RELIC OF BYGONE RACING DAYS

**JESSICA OWERS** met with Arthur Inglis to talk about one of the oldest stables in Sydney. So much a part of Inglis history is it that these days people hardly notice it.

It is five o'clock in the evening at the Newmarket yards, and Arthur Inglis sits in an oval room swallowed by autumn sunlight. For the time of day that it is, he is discerning, a gentleman that is not pursued by time. He talks about the Old Stable like he hasn't had to think about it for a while. Like it's just there, as much a part of the Inglis company as Danehill's head collar on the wall behind him or the oil work of Heroic in the lobby. When I ask him about the Hon. James White, a smile breaches his face at once.

"His story is actually the story of the Stable," Arthur says. "He was, you might as well say, the Bob Ingham of the day. He decided to have the best stable he could possibly have. There are stories they used to tell about him having dinner parties in there. Can you imagine that! A gas-lit chandelier, getting a Derby winner out while guests are having dinner!"

The Hon. James White, a wealthy pastoralist who died 118 years ago, is the first figure behind the Newmarket Stable. He bought the property in 1878 from "Honest John" Tait. It is unclear if he redesigned an existing building or created the stable from the ground, but it is likely he sought the involvement of Joseph Fowles, a marine and equine artist and a skilled draughtsman of the time



who bore considerable celebrity. Between them, the Old Stable came to be fit for only a king's horses, and that is exactly what White put in there.

Between 1884 and his death in 1890, he owned no less than five AJC Derby winners, five Sires Produce winners and five winners of the St Leger. At the Victorian Autumn meeting in 1888 he had nine individual winners,

his horses white-washing every important race on the card. In Sydney the following year, White's thoroughbreds, trained by Michael Fennelly, won the Derby, the Oaks, the Spring Stakes, the Randwick and Craven Plates, the Second Foal and Mycomb Stakes and the Metropolitan. He owned Chester, Martini-Henry, Nordenfeldt, Trident, Dreadnought, Abercorn, Uralla and the very good race mare Volley. He won 252 races with 66 winning horses and made a fortune backing them - £70,000 on Chester during his 1877 Spring Carnival and £25,000 on Martini-Henry's Melbourne Cup/Derby double in 1883. But he had grander plans on his mind. He had bred two Chester colts on Northern Hemisphere time, and there was a reason for that. In 1889 White shipped Kirkham and Narellan to England to win the English Derby.

It was a momentous effort on his behalf. These were days when horses were coming into the colony, not out of it, and after arduous

PHOTO: JESSICA OWERS



time spent at sea the horses and their handler, Septimus A. Stephen, arrived on English doorsteps with only their fancy dream and each other.

Kirkham broke down during trackwork, but Narellan, a colt that White had foaled out of Princess Maud in 1887, became the first Australian-bred horse in history to run in the Epsom Derby. He ran sixth behind Sainfoin, but by then White's racing business was beginning to wither with his poor health. Most of the stock had been dispersed and he died on 13th July 1890 from a heart attack. With him went the first fine memories for the Old Stable.

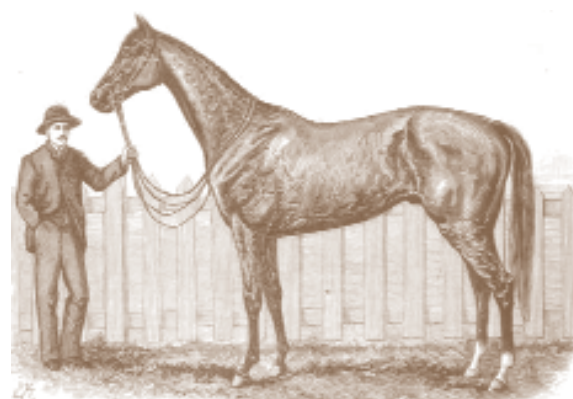
Tom Niericker was an old trainer who lived across the road in Young Street, and he later recalled seeing Martini-Henry being led back into the Stable after his Cup win. Another document recalls a visitor being led around the grounds by Thomas Payten, White's trainer after Fennelly's death, whereupon they encountered Spice, the 1889 Oaks winner and full-sister to Abercorn, grazing on the small home paddock that is now long gone. "Spice, turned out for a rest, came towards us to sniff at the stranger," it reads. "Like the rest of Chester's progeny, she is perfectly quiet and well behaved." That same stranger goes on to a rich and vivid description of the Old Stable as he saw it that evening.

*"The floor, from which one could have eaten the proverbial dinner, was perfectly clean and had a light coating of sand. On either side are eight stables or horse boxes, and three are at the end, making 19 in all. It is impossible to make the boxes quite dark, but light can be either increased or decreased by means of a side window and slide. In addition, gas is provided in each box. Every precaution is made against fire, and there is a large fire hose, spick and span and in good order, in the centre. The light and ventilation of this splendid stable is everything that can be desired, and there was not even the faintest odour or unwholesomeness in any part of it."*

Arthur Inglis recalls that by 1985, after a century of weathering beneath countless hundreds of horse feet, the Old Stable was a dangerous feature of the Newmarket grounds.

"It was still recognisable to its original condition," he says, "but the timber work had suffered a lot of termite damage and dry rot, and its main supports were very fragile. We'd been told by consultant engineers that it was unsafe."

The building had passed through the Hon. James White's estate



**"An old trainer later recalled seeing Martini-Henry being led back into the Stable after his Cup win."**

to his last trainer Thomas Payten in May 1891 for £7,500. In October 1918, Payten retired and sold Newmarket to Arthur Reginald Inglis, and in 1922 the property moved into the books of family company William Inglis & Son Ltd.

But life can go full circle at times, for the Stable was subdivided from the remaining property and sold, and it saw many a career change before it came back to Inglis ownership in 1962. Between those years it housed the training establishments of Alan Edwin Cooper and WJ Smith, and rumour abounds that Jim Pike leased it in his later years as a trainer. Pike was very patriotic to Sydney town, once commenting that the only good thing about Melbourne was the afternoon train back to Sydney. His training career was largely unsuccessful and if he did spend time in the Old Stable, he was not graced with the same good fortune as James White.

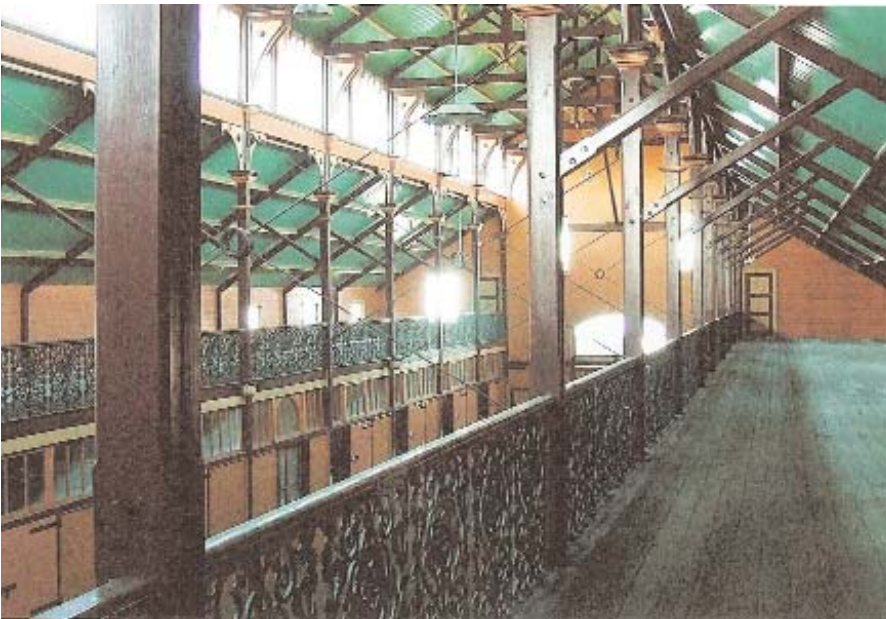
During the second World War, the stable building was deployed as a detention barracks with prisoners being confined to locked stables, arguably unaware of the priceless horseflesh that had been in there before them. Later it became a laminex factory. In 1982 it was a set location for the film *Phar Lap*, a production heralded for its attention to accuracy and period recreation. In all of this time though, the original fittings of the building remained untouched.

"The architects scratched back the paint to its original colour,"

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## The Old Stable at Newmarket A RELIC OF BYGONE RACING DAYS (cont)

PHOTO: JESSICA OWERS




### Dreadnought was by White's grand old Chester out of Trafalgar by Blair Athol

Telford paid for Phar Lap in 1928. Flight was cheaper still at 60 guineas. Chatham is rumoured to have boarded there in the days when he clashed with Peter Pan and Rogilla. In the face of multi-million dollar thoroughbreds stepping through the sales ring today, it is easy to forget details like these.

The Old Stable was listed on 2nd August 1985 under the Heritage Act of 1977, protected by a permanent conservation order. At sale time every year a draft of Arrowfield horses move in and occupy the now 18 extraordinarily spacious boxes. Arthur jokes that the boxes are so large they make the yearlings look small, but he is sure the horses don't complain over such human trivialities. Arrowfield Stud has enjoyed their unique privilege since the barn began operating as a working yearling stable post renovation.

"You'd be surprised how many people come to the yearling sale and don't really notice it," Arthur adds. "In current times you don't have to go to the box to see a horse. You just go to one of the grooms or the presenter of the yearling draft and they get the horse out for you, so a lot of times people don't even see the stable the horse is in."

He is self-effacing about his own personal link to the Stable, a connection forged through five generations of William Inglis & Sons Ltd. "It's a great tangible link with the past," he says. "It's great that it is used as a stable, a building that is evidence of how things were done in the past. It's good to recognise that."

I shake hands with Arthur after that, impressed by the history that runs thick and deep around him at Newmarket and by his animated recollection of it. Outside, the paths are perfectly trimmed that lead to the barn at the end of Young Street. It is early evening now and the sunlight drenches the Old Stable's aisle and boxes through the clerestory windows in the roof, just like Tom Payten's stranger said it would. 

Arthur begins as he recounts the inevitable decision made in 1985 to restore the Old Stable. It was work undertaken by the same company that Inglis has always used to maintain the surrounding stables. The project was led by Timothy Court who had been an understudy architect in 1981, the year the sale ring was designed. "There were just layers and layers of paint that had been applied over the years. They got heritage consultants in and recreated the exact tones. Some of the wrought iron in the banister at the top was missing, and they got the mould from the existing wrought iron and recreated it to fill in the spaces."

The steel crossbeams that brace the stable's ceiling were one of the only new additions the restoration crew made in an effort to straighten an otherwise leaning building. The gas chandelier - though not live - is an original piece, as is the fire hose that so

impressed a visiting stranger so long ago. And still keeping time in a completely new era is the grand clock at the lower end of the barn, a piece that Arthur holds in considerable esteem.

"It is an Australian-made clock, which is quite interesting," he muses. "There wouldn't have been many clocks made in Australia during the 1870s of that size. When we had the building restored we had the clock wagon cleaned and serviced, and there were a few clock enthusiasts who were asking us to write out a price on it. I don't know what it's worth, I've got no idea. It might be worth more than the stable!"

In 1947, Shannon was sold for 25,000 guineas in the shadow of the Old Stable. Heroic was sold for 14,000 guineas, and his son Ajax for 13,000. Windbag, 1925 Melbourne Cup winner, was a famous bargain for 160 guineas, the same price that