

Remounts and Glenthorne

Those two names are inseparable. To tell the story I must give the background of the fine property at O'Halloran Hill. Originally it was named Lizard Lodge, that being the name of Major O'Halloran's home in Ireland. It was later owned by the Porter family, who built the big three storeyed house, Glenthorne, and later still by the Brookmans. It is of historic interest.

Some 600 acres of land surrounded Major O'Halloran's small house. In addition there were small sheds in a wide yard, and one large strongly built one, which served a dual purpose – looped for musketry (the Aborigines were a menace), it provided safe shelter for the women and children of the Major's household. They were enclosed there in case of attack. A fence, only a few yards from the house, was "out of bounds". Later the shed became a coachhouse.

In 1914 Britain's relations with Germany and her ally, Turkey, became more and more strained and the Australian Government was of course, involved. It was obvious that with war in the Middle East very many horses would be needed. A temporary depot was set up in what is now The Ashford Special School on the Anzac Highway until the big property, Glenthorne, was available – an ideal place for the purpose. Lieut. Norman Campbell (a Boer War veteran) was appointed O.C. He travelled widely to Queensland and N.S.W. to buy horses and any owner who tried to sell him 'crocks' was sadly disappointed. He only took the best.

The horses he bought were shipped to Port Adelaide. A weary journey it must have been for them. They had only known life on the wide open spaces where they roamed unfettered. There was open land near Port Adelaide in those days, and the Remount men had their work cut out coping with the ship-weary horses. Each time a ship berthed, the gangways went down and the excited horses were free, they made the most of it! By degrees, and with infinite patience, they were brought under control between fences, and finally found their new temporary home on the slopes and paddocks of Glenthorne. Most of them were unbroken – creeks and dams were all they understood – and they had to learn to drink from water-troughs which they battered to pieces as soon as they could. Their further education was undertaken by expert handlers.

The final shipment of Remounts was sent out of Australia under Capt. Campbell to India, where the horses, 'Walers, as they were called there, were eagerly welcomed as officers' chargers.

One special steed calls for mention. In 1920 when H.R.H. the Prince of Wales visited the Commonwealth and came to South Australia, the Government of the day elected to present him with the finest horse in the land, as a memento of his visit.

In the possession of Mr. H.A.A. West was a gelding, fit for a prince, Erskine. My husband was ordered to examine the horse for build and temperament.

Trains used to run down Jetty Road, Glenelg, in those days and stop at the Square. In this instance there was a stationary train. Riding Erskine, Captain Campbell told the engine driver to sound his starting signal, which he duly did. He rode the horse round and round the hooting monster, and Erskine didn't flinch. This was a great test of nerves.

All other tests had been made and Erskine was proved to be a mount fit for a Prince. At the Victoria Park racecourse, the Prince decided he would rather be driven to the starting point, and Captain Campbell was told to ride Erskine there. The crowd cheered him wildly – one fair man in uniform looks much the same as another! From there, His Highness rode his new mount to the live hare coursing at Plympton

Erskine was shipped to the Prince's stables in England, in the charge of one of the Remount men.

Those old days! The joy and excitement of driving through Adelaide on Christmas Eve after a shopping spree, the horses full of good feed from the stables in Grenfell street were as excited as we were, and it was always a chance on which side of the traces they would come down. In those days, we turned to look at a motor car!

Norman, my husband, and his brothers were crack shots. Across the broad path in front of the house there was a target – a threepenny piece in a slot of a stick. I still have one battered coin as a tribute to their accuracy! Of quail or rabbit shooting expeditions; of the dogs – Norman's pedigreed pointer and my terrier; of Ring the sheepdog who understood more than some humans; or cats, large and small; of learning to unharness a shores (I was proud of that!) ... Glenthorne has so many any memories for me – happy ones, and some not so happy, but all, as in most lives, part of the woven treasure of my life there.

Dora Campbell

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