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THE SHIRES OF LUSCOMBE



# SHIRE HORSE SOCIETY AUSTRALIA INC.

SHIRE HORSES AND THE PEOPLE INTERESTED IN THEM



## **BORN IN THE SHIRES**

BY GRAHAME WEST

I was born in the very heart of England in Leicestershire. Leicester (pronounced Lester) which means the town at the centre, named 2000 years ago by the Roman invaders, it stands on the River Soar in a fertile farming valley, that often misses the snow and ravages of winter, with good soils and small fields it is really suitable for horse farming.

Being born in June 1939 just before WWII many things were still delivered by the faithful quiet old English carthorse. The coal man with his black face, bright eyes and pink mouth, a leather pad on his shoulder protecting him from the lumpy, heavy sack of coal destined for our shed.

The rag and bone man came around collecting all those things for recycling- the original recycler, he would give children goldfish or chicks for old wares or a few 'bob' to mum and dad for larger items they no longer needed – we would rush out and pat the horse or stroke his nose. Back then there was never any horse manure on the road, if you were lucky the horse would drop his marbles near your home and someone would rush out with a dustpan or spade to collect it for the roses or vegetables, a gift in those meager times.

Of course the bread and milk men were favourites because they came almost every day. My grandfather was a baker, he worked all night and delivered most of the day, then at a point furthest away from grandma, the bakery and shop, he would finish his account book, take off the brake and 'gee up' old Kit his carthorse, then lie down to sleep. Kit knew the way home, even over the cobble stones of the city, the policeman, at the city centre clock tower, would know when he was near and control the traffic so that he passed through without accident. Kit could smell the nosebag waiting at home and was not stopping. Oh how things have changed .....Grandma had the big entrance doors open ready for Kit to come in and then Grandma would unhook the traces after putting on her nosebag. Granddad slept an hour longer on the seat....consequently they had only one child, My lovely Dad.

These were the times when the carthorse was dying out and cheap to buy but may I add it was much like the latest cars, they had a computer and a sort of satellite navigation, that brain knew when and where to stop and start without having to use a clutch or accelerator. It was a friend to talk to in the toil of everyday life whatever your occupation in the city, on the farm or down in the darkness of the mines.

Leicestershire Draughts were moderate in size. Lincolnshire's heavy deep black soil plains needed a huge heavy horse yet Cornwall's short stocky draught horses worked both field and mine.

The term "horses for courses" is very apt and today they have become mostly pets and show horses, fantastically beautiful animals that sometimes pull beer wagons as an advertising exercise.

The Shire Horse is, of course, named after the Shires area that pattern the countryside of that small now heavily populated island.

All this is the stuff of my life and became a part of my consciousness, no wonder I did what I did all those years ago with the Shire Horse Society. In 1974 my family moved from South Australia and escaped the concrete jungle where I had been Art Director of Clemenger Advertising in Adelaide, arriving in the beautiful Tablelands of Far North Queensland and purchasing 600 acres of forestland near Ravenshoe. My brother and I ran cattle and a few horses but I needed more. My heart yearned for those things of my youth, those gentle giants from the photographs I had taken as a boy near my village. I searched, wrote letters, pushed, talked and talked but in Australia the Shire, Clyde and Suffolk were few and far between due mainly to the invention of the tractor. The men working the land didn't ever need registered horses, they simply needed real workhorses, horse of any breed, beasts of

burden, bred and crossed to suit the work and huge variety of climates in this new massive continent they had migrated to.

My knowledge was quite limited but it was growing as I eagerly consumed books and magazines from the UK and USA, writing and making new friends. The world was again waking up to these wonderful animals; some people were actually using them on small farms in a limited manner. I struck up a friendship with the editor of a heavy horse magazine in England who was a fencing contractor who used Shires and Percherons in his business because he could get into fields 2 months earlier than tractors, horses made less damage on the headlands of fields. He and his wife really lived an idyllic life in a small thatched cottage in a tiny village where they bred hunting falcons...Yes we visited them, it was amazing.

I wanted to make sure that the Shire Horse did not die in Australia, the Clydesdale from Scotland was well entrenched from Southern Queensland through NSW to Victoria in those years. I did not want a Clyde, it's white face and pink nose was just no good in the tropics and I could not find the money to import a shire from the U.K.

After a lot of searching I found two draughts that were the nearest I had ever seen in Australia to the Shire type. They were of an old style with coarse coat, main and tail but had good bone and very importantly excellent feet. Mr. Harris of Windsor Great Park, UK, the Queen's estate was a Shire judge, he said to me "Only remember this my lad! NO FEET NO HORSE!"

My stallion 'Swithland Big Boy' threw excellent feet, the best I have ever seen in a draught horse anywhere. Now the scene was set in my mind and I decided to try and form a society, I didn't know quite how but with my usual optimism and, now looking back, cheeky enthusiasm I started....Thinking, designing and writing ideas down. Rethinking and throwing away piles of paper, starting again. People sent me photos, phoned with stories of their families with draughts on the stations and in the sugar cane of North Queensland. Locally the draughts were used to haul rainforest timber from the scrub in massive teams down the rough roads to the sawmill, as they were faster than oxen.

I found a colleague in Mr. Stuart Hulbert, an Englishman who had moved to our district from Africa and loved the Shires from his youth in the old country, and yet another in Mr. Clyde Cook, he was always embarrassed by his first name in association with us. Sadly, neither of these gentlemen is still with us.

My memory for all that happened in the beginning of the Shire Horse Society of Australia is a bit faded now but I did inform our parent Society at Peterborough and became a life member in the UK. I still receive their magazine and enjoy my visits to family in England.

Oh boy, it made my heart sing after all this time to get your news of the rebirth and the honour you bestow on me, I am so grateful and we wish you all success and happiness in the future.

Thank You All.  
Grahame West.

Grahame is featured on the front page of this newsletter, visiting BASS Brewery Shire Horses.



Grahame also enjoyed contact with the late Keith Chivers (left), as the accompanying letter shows.

From Keith Chivers  
History of the Shire Horse

Season 22073 (STD Code 0097)

OLD HOME FARM  
ROUSDON  
LYME REGIS  
DT7 3XR

11th January 1979

Dear Graham,

A grovelling apology is due from me for not having answered your long and extremely interesting letter dated 28th October (!!! I can hardly believe it, but no wonder my conscience was pricking me) and all the enclosures, equally interesting. Great stuff, and I do wish you all well.

In history, there must be hundreds of successful movements - and of successful revivals - which were due to the enthusiasm, drive and single-mindedness of just a few who in the first place started things going amid a mass of difficulties. Let's hope here is another one.

(LHA)  
Quite honestly, my mind boggles more than somewhat at even the distances you have to cope with. Rather like my friend Bill Sherman who was over here in the summer looking for shires and, when he got back home, discovered animals that pleased him better - but they were about as far away from him as the ones he had seen here.

And now your further letter, further newsletter, and photo-stats of the old stud-book. Thank you very much. I have been trying to pick my way through the stud-book pages, but keep getting stopped by fascinating combinations of blood - Fens, Scots, sire via New Zealand, and bred in Tasmania: that sort of thing.

This is a bitty and piecy sort of epistle. I should have said this earlier: congratulations on the birth of Switherland Genesis. (What a good name). Strangely enough, I have just finished writing to Joan Grundy who wrote a little piece in "Heavy Horse and Driving" in the summer, to accompany the picture she took of three horses ploughing - a carving on a tombstone in Leicestershire, and a marvellous piece of work. I wonder whether you saw the article and the picture. Real eighteenth century Shires and pre-dating Bakewell by about 20 years. One of the most important pictures I have ever had the luck to see. Now, here comes the coincidence. The tomb, and the Danvers family who were buried under it, are in the parish of Swithland. A pleasing similarity of words between the earliest authentic eighteenth-century and representation of Shires and the genesis of the new-old Australian Shirehorse.

One of the reasons why I did not reply more or less at once to

From Graham Neat  
Ravenhill F.N.Q.  
3.11.04

PTO

your first letter was that I wanted to enquire from the bank or post office how to send a small sum of money to Australia in order to gain associate membership. The answer, when I got it, was silly - it would cost more than the subscription itself. Or if sending about £1000 but not otherwise.

So what I have done, on the bank's advice, is to write a cheque in English pounds: they tell me that about 70 pence will be knocked off it for the trouble of handling. If there are about 1.75 \$ to the £, and I send £5 - then it is only a gesture. Hardly worth putting me on the associate membership list, because next year I might not renew. I seem to belong to so many things that I am already planning to chop them in half. (Societies whose membership has shot up to £10 when, a year or two ago, they used to be £2.50, and that sort of thing.)

The main reason for my having abandoned virtually all correspondence in recent weeks has been (before Christmas) my job, which went through a hectic phase and (since then) devoting almost every waking moment to an attempt to edit, abbreviate, re-arrange, re-write and generally mess about with the first volume of the Suffolk stub-book, which celebrates its centenary next year; and all that, without spilling some marvellous writing in it. I hope it all results in an acceptable book. I spent the day in London yesterday, the chief purpose of the visit being to try to convince my publisher that it would be a good idea.

As writing this the evening before the last day of the Test Match, and shall take care to seal it before the result is known (sometime early in the morning, if my alarm clock functions, and I hear it). I went around the place during the previous match saying that it would be the best thing that could happen if Australia won the third match - one in the eye for Packer and a general revival of interest in ~~the~~ the official proper team. Well, Australia duly won of course...and the way things have been going since, I am not sure the series will end with my thinking that earlier result was a good thing after all.

*only to  
be for  
the*

I drove back through ice last night to get the football results - the quickest I have ever driven from Ayrminster station where the train from Waterloo decants me three hours after setting out. Astounded my wife by rushing silently to the telly, switching it on, just in time for the rag-end of news and football results of cup matches postponed from Saturday owing to weather. Bristol City 3, Bolton 1. So that put me in good heart ~~for~~ to-day. (I am a Bristolian, an odd breed.) Would have driven up to the match if

- a) petrol tanker drivers semi-strike has not made justice short
- b) I had not had to go to London - postponed from last week when snow prevented me getting even out of the drive.

All we face now is road transport strike, threatened rail strike and (I forget what the third horror is. Bore wind, I expect. This south coast much battered.) *Let the winter of 1879 & 30th with snow, the*

# SHIRE HORSE SOCIETY AUSTRALIA INCORPORATED

## President's Report

In 1978 a Shire Horse enthusiast, an Englishman by the name of Grahame West started "The Shirehorse Society of Australia." Grahame did a tremendous amount of research in England and Australia and tried in vain to get the Society off the ground. It was about twenty six years too early. Unfortunately back then, there were no imported horses and only two studs with Shire types and a lot of distance between the two to have been of much value to each other. Reluctantly the Society was put on hold until the time was right.

Now, with the numbers of registered horses in the eighties and nineties and the number of studs in the mid-teens the time has finally come for Australia to revive its interest in having its very own Shire Horse Society.

Grahame who had a very successful career in advertising before retiring to a much less stressful country life has generously made a gift to the new Society of his beautifully designed logo. It was designed to be made into horse brasses as well as being used on all of the stationery. Grahame is absolutely thrilled to have his dream realised at last and be a part of the new Shire Horse Society Australia Incorporated.

We are very happy to have Grahame and his vast knowledge of Shire horses and endless amounts of enthusiasm on board.

The Shire breed had died out in Australia until Ladbrook Edward was imported in 1981. He was bred by the late Mr.Arthur Lewis and travelled to Australia on a jumbo jet from England before going to his new home at The Cedars Shire Horse Stud in Kangaroo Valley. Four years later in 1985 a shipment of three fillies arrived, two went to the Cedars Stud and one to the newly formed Longcopy Shire Horse Stud. The following year in 1986 a second shipment of horses arrived consisting of four mares and four geldings. Two mares went to The Cedars Stud and two to the Longcopy Stud. The four geldings went to Swan Brewery in Perth, Western Australia. Australia's second stallion, Cowhill Sovereign arrived in 1987 and went to Longcopy Stud. Now with two studs up and running (The Cedars 1981),(and Longcopy 1985) the long lost journey back for Shire Horses in Australia had begun.

In the late nineties a few of the Shire breeders got together and started meeting at the Sydney Royal Easter Show and formed an informal group with no official membership but all were welcome, you just needed to love Shire horses.

This year the new **Shire Horse Society Australia Incorporated** has been registered with the Office of Fair Trading, and all breeders and enthusiasts are invited to join.

The time has finally come to legitimise our Society and have real members who can vote and take an active interest in helping to guide the future of our wonderful horses. Please tear off the last page of this newsletter and post back your membership form.

The newly formed committee welcome everybody who loves Shire horses to join the new Shire Horse Society and play a part in helping to build a bright future for the Shire Horse breed in Australia.

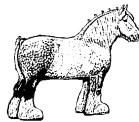
Helene Scarf



## The long journey to Australia comes to an end.



Peplow Princess and Peplow Lady Christing arriving in Australia in 1985 (left) and Peplow Lady Christina, Peplow Princess and Wishful Pearl on board the ship which brought them to their new home. (right)



## Champagne Charlie - the most versatile shire stallion in Australia.



Charlie is still a youngster –at 4 years old, but we think he's the most versatile stallion around. He is ridden, he has recently been broken to harness and he is serving mares.

Kristy is a lovely young lady who is schooling Charlie under saddle. He loves working the wide open space of our riding area rather than in the confines of the round yard.

Charlie was away for 6 weeks being trained to harness and now we have to keep him working and practicing. He is beautiful to drive, I am very pleased with the training he was given. Nothing bothers him out on the roads; we drive out and around an industrial estate near to us. There are logging trucks, pantecs, concrete mixers, motorbikes and even heavy machinery and dogs.

At the moment we only have our show vehicle and show harness, so that's what we work in, but we are both getting better all the time, including backing into the shed.

His only problem is his attraction to the girls; he can get a bit distracted and try to be a show off when the girls are watching. Typical teenager!

We can proudly say we have Charlies first progeny on the ground too - a strong healthy filly, she is a shire cross standard bred. And in the following two weeks we are expecting two more.

We are pretty chuffed with our accomplishments. If someone said to me, even 4 years ago, I'd be driving a stallion in harness. I'd have said they were joking.

Its not all smooth running, we've had a few hiccoughs. But we've learnt from them and we're getting better. The important thing is we enjoy it.

As well as working Charlie, we've also been bringing Tillie back into work too - she's had a spell this winter – for the Nowra Show Society's Centenary parade which was held in September to celebrate the Centenary of the Showground Pavilion.

We took Charlie, Tillie, Kaitlyn and Foxy- Ginnie our Clydesdale into the parade which was arranged

Charlie made a grand entrance leading the parade of ridden horses. Tillie led the field of harness horses with "riding for the disabled" kids on board. And Kaitlyn and Foxy joined the parade of led horses. It was Foxys' first outing into the big wide world.

There were the pony club kids, the jump club, the dressage club; every one who participates in the show was in the parade. Cattle of various shapes and sizes. Pigeons and chickens on floats as well as other support clubs- the fire brigade, the SES, the vintage car club and the cars from the variety club bash too.

We can't forget our very own locally bred and trained bullock team or the remaining 3 members of the original Light horsemen who were stationed at Nowra Showgrounds during the war, prior to the light horse being disbanded. It was a fabulous day for our community.

The parade lasted about 45 minutes and the commentary was fabulous about our shire horses and our Adelaide trolley.

After the parade we enjoyed afternoon tea in the pavilion (you know one of those real ones, with cups & saucers and home baked cakes and slices). We enjoyed chatting to some of the older folk, looking at the memorabilia and photos collected during the past one hundred years.

It took weeks of preparation grooming, cleaning, working, not to mention washing 5 horses the day before. And the logistics of getting 5 BIG horses to the showground and our Adelaide show trolley.

Fortunately, we have a great team of helpers, who enjoy all this as much as we do. So a BIG thankyou to Kylie & Ron, Kristy, Felicia, Leah and Mel.

We haven't finished yet... Tillie will be out waving the banner for Shire horse again at the Shoalhaven Hospital fete on the 13<sup>th</sup> November. We are giving hay rides to raise funds for the hospital as well as running a guess the weight of the horse competition.

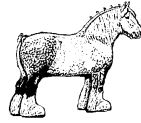
Should be a fun day for us all, out doing what we enjoy –driving.

And remember the south coast shows have Shire horse classes, these are- Kiama 28/29 January  
Berry 4/5 February & Nowra 11/12 February





**Sydney Royal Easter Show 2005** will feature English judge Mr Terry Gardner as the judge for the Shire classes as well as the other heavy breeds.



### **Shire Horses in the cane fields of Queensland**

For many years I have been hearing stories from people who see us at shows telling us about the shires that were used in the cane fields in Queensland.

A recent trip to the Mackay district produced these photo's, which are reported to be "Shires". It seems that from speaking to the older folk, the Shire was preferred in the cane fields to the Clydesdale. This according to sources was because the Shire withstood the conditions better. It is also interesting to note that around the Beenleigh district, the sugar cane farms were worked with the Suffolk Punch, again because it worked better in the demanding conditions. There were a few shire names quoted such as Mojo Elizabeth, who was reported to be a fantastic working mare. She must have been an "Australian" Shire, as she does not appear in the English stud book.



If anyone has any old Australian photo's of shire descendants working on the mainland or in Tasmania they would be most welcome to submit them to the newsletter. Tasmania was another stronghold for the Shire with many reputable imported bloodlines residing there.

## The Horses Mouth

The horse's mouth is a very important part of the digestive system and also forms a vital link between the horse and it's rider or driver. The following information has been provided as a basic guide to equine dental care.

### 1. Why do the horse's teeth need regular filing?

Unlike our teeth the horse's teeth continue to erupt or grow during most of its life. The upper molar (grinding teeth) are wider than the lower molar growing teeth. As the horse chews their feed they will develop sharp edges on the inside of the lower teeth and the outside of the upper teeth. These sharp edges need to be correctly filed to prevent damage to the cheeks and tongue. Abnormal wear is a common condition that can be improved by regular filing.

### 2. When to begin equine dental care?

It is recommended that the horse's teeth be filed before it is mouthed if possible

### 3. How often should the horse's teeth be checked or treated?

Paddock fed horses 5 years or younger every 3 – 6 months

Paddock fed horses 5 years or older every 12 months

Stable fed horses 5 years or younger every 3 – 4 months

Stable fed horses 5 years or older every 6 months

It is harmful to file teeth excessively; your dentist will only render the necessary treatment. Most dental procedures should take approximately 10 – 30 minutes.

### 4. What are the signs that the horse needs Dental Attention?

The most obvious sign of dental trouble is a change in chewing habits. The horse may hold its head to the side when eating. The horse may "quid" its food which is rolled into balls and dropped on the ground rather than being chewed and swallowed. A horse that is unable to chew it's food properly is more likely to have problems such as colic, choke and indigestion.

Other signs of dental trouble include the presence of excessive saliva, excessive spilling of feed, swelling of the face or jaw and difficulty or refusal to eat hard grains and loss of condition.

A horse with dental problems may become nervous, develop habits such as stall weaving or cribbing. Under saddle the horse may head toss, lug rear and be generally unsettled and unwilling to perform correctly. Remember the horse is a creature of habit. If dental related problems develop, bad habits may be difficult to break even when the dental problems are alleviated. It is hopeful that you will employ REGULAR dental care to your horse to ensure his value and prolong his life performance.

### 5. What about realignments?

The Equine Dental Association of Australia, does not support persons offering procedures, which involve major "realignments" of the dental anatomy, or persons using non water cooled high speed electrical instruments. These procedures are potentially harmful as well as expensive and have no basis in current veterinary science.

### 6. How many teeth does the horse have?

All together between 36 and 42 teeth consisting of 12 incisors (front teeth) which are used for tearing off the feed or grasping it. All 12 incisors erupt as milk teeth and are later replaced by permanent incisors. 24 molars of which the first twelve erupt as milk teeth. The molars are used to finely grind the feed before it is swallowed. 4 canine teeth are located between the incisors and the molars. They are commonly called bridle teeth. These teeth erupt at about five years of age in the male and are usually absent or in a small percentage of the female population. The horse may also have up to 4 wolf teeth but more commonly only 2. these are positioned just in front of the first molars. They are very small and are extracted by the dentist when ready because they cause a lot of problems with the bit.

### 7. When do "caps" need to be removed?

Between 2 ½ and 4 ½ years of age the horse loses 24 milk teeth or deciduous teeth, which are also called "caps". The equine dentist will remove them when due as stable fed horses have a lot of trouble losing these.

### 8. Is sedation required?

Most horses experience little discomfort from routine dental care and sedation is not required. Sedatives can only legally be prescribed and dispensed by a veterinarian.



I hope you have enjoyed this, the first Shire Horse Society Australia newsletter. If you would like to continue to receive them, please fill in the accompanying form. Also please remember if you have anything you would like to contribute, please forward photo's and article to Sue Bailey, 51 Shaws Pocket Rd, Luscombe, QLD 4207 or email [suebailey@ozemail.com.au](mailto:suebailey@ozemail.com.au)

I am hoping to have foal photo's for the next edition as well as some other article of what people have been doing with their Shires.